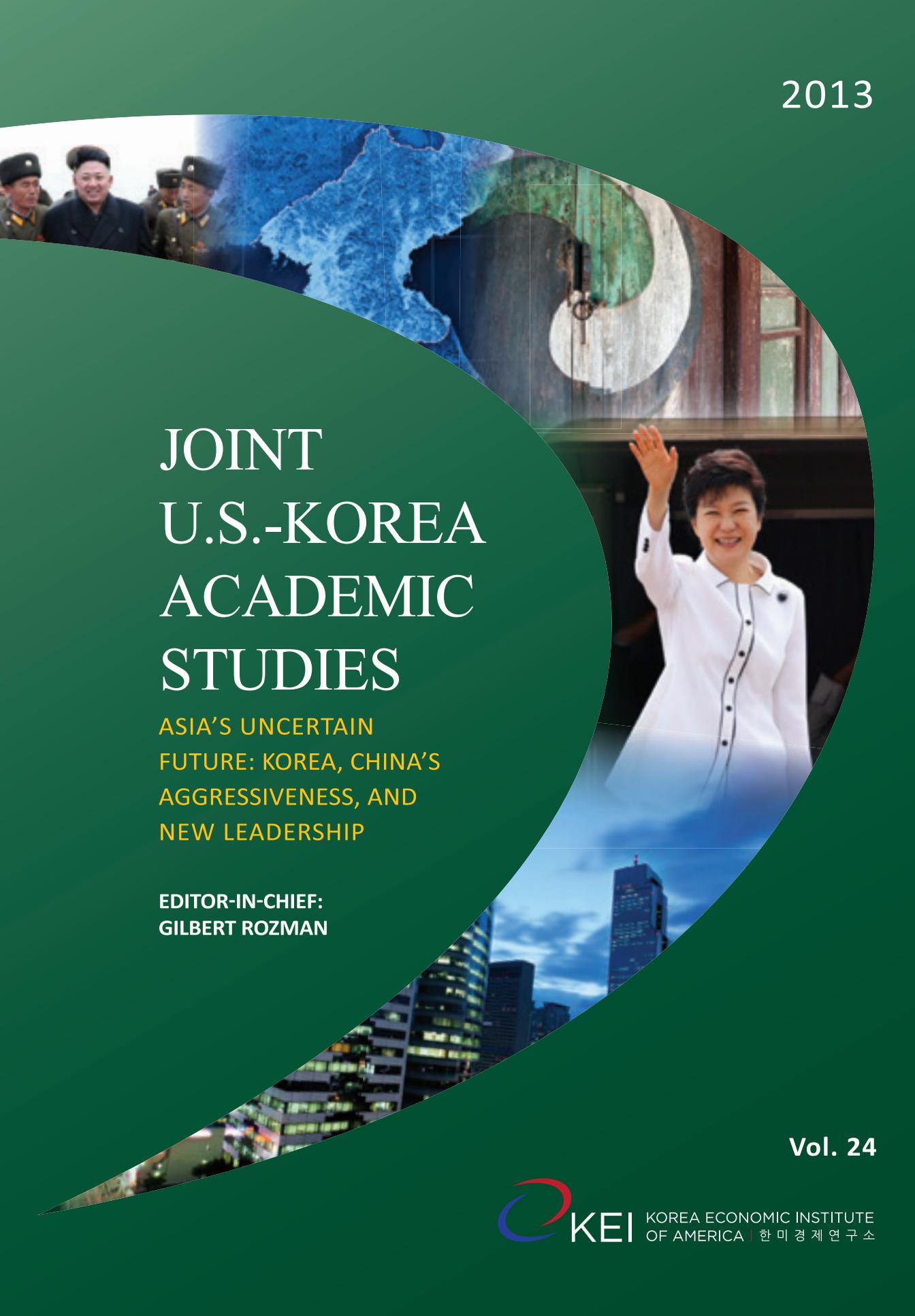


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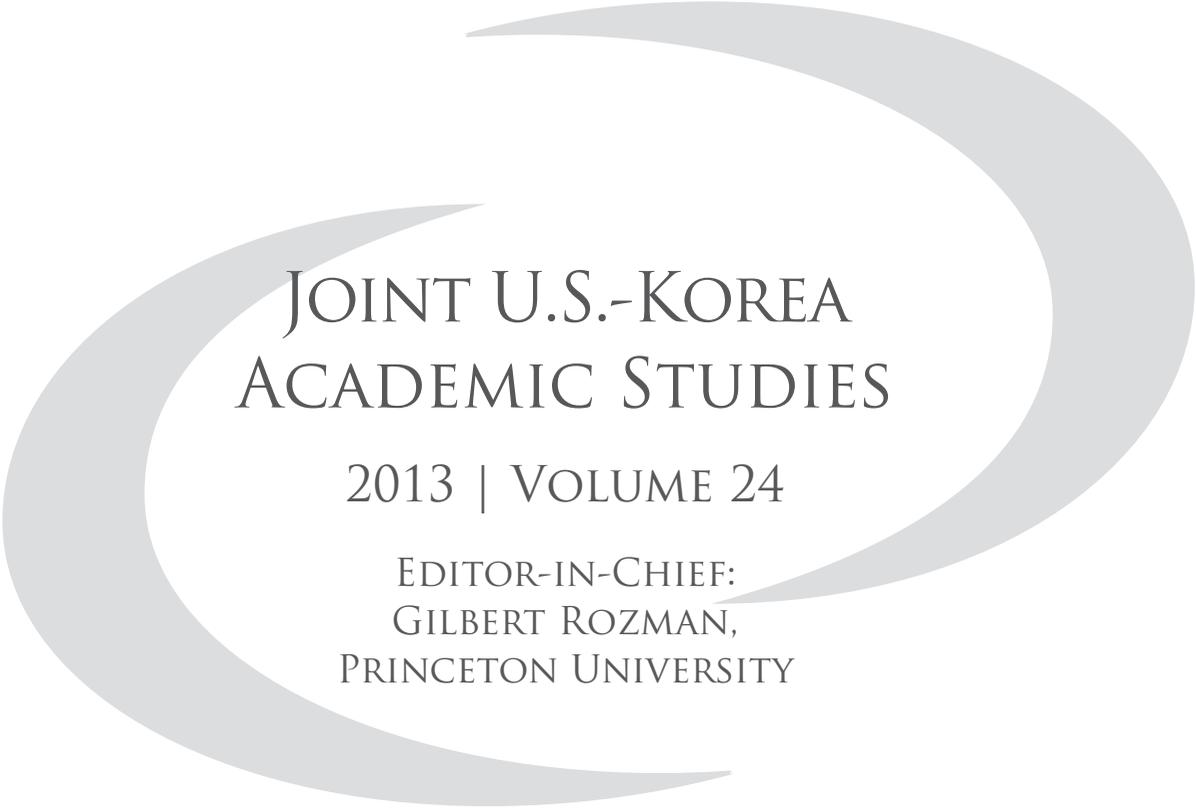


# JOINT U.S.-KOREA ACADEMIC STUDIES

ASIA'S UNCERTAIN  
FUTURE: KOREA, CHINA'S  
AGGRESSIVENESS, AND  
NEW LEADERSHIP

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PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES FOR  
KOREAN REUNIFICATION

## INTRODUCTION

In April 2013 North Korea was determined to show the world that it was prepared to stop at nothing in order to be accepted as a nuclear power. Instead of commonplace scenarios of North Korea's collapse and absorption by South Korea, the message it sought to convey was of a powerful, determined state whose military might entitled it to a deciding voice on the future of the Korean Peninsula, however undesirable that was to other countries. After two decades of discussion about how reunification can be facilitated by engagement that reassures the North's leadership that regime change is not what is driving the policy of other states or, alternatively, by illumination that awakens the North Korean people to outside support for their well-being and human rights, the Kim Jong-un regime sent unmistakable signals that reunification will only be possible on its terms. The debate on Korean reunification also has been recast by President Park Geun-hye, even in the midst of North Korea's barrage of threats, making a steadfast appeal for a "Korean Peninsula trust process."

Just two weeks before Park was inaugurated, North Korea tested its third nuclear bomb. When the United Nations Security Council agreed on imposing more sanctions, the North responded angrily. The first two months of Park's tenure went forward in the shadow of unparalleled North Korean bluster, even to the point of suggesting that the North would unleash a nuclear war. Yet, as Park prepared to go to the United States to meet Barack Obama and the U.S.-South Korean joint exercises reached their planned conclusion, the tone in Pyongyang was changing. Whether the gap with other states would narrow enough to allow for the resumption of bilateral talks with the United States, North-South talks, or Six-Party Talks using the format of 2003-08 remained unclear, but the issue of reunification could not be ignored.

In Washington on May 7 Park and Obama held a joint news conference while Park also gave an interview discussing her approach to North Korea. Appearing with Obama, she spoke of "synergy between President Obama's policy of rebalancing to Asia and my initiative for peace and cooperation in Northeast Asia," adding "We share the view about playing the role of co-architects to flesh out this vision." Obama stressed that "we will be prepared for deterrence, that we will respond to aggression, that we will not reward provocative actions, but that we will maintain an openness to an engagement process when we see North Korea taking steps that would indicate that it is following a different path."<sup>1</sup> Separately, Park appealed for China to do more to get North Korea to change and looked forward to "very candid discussions" with President Xi Jinping on North Korea. She also explained her peace and cooperation initiative for Northeast Asia, including the United States. Building trust through a firmly-anchored alliance with the United States, President Park reaffirmed the effort at "keeping open the window to dialogue with North Korea at all times."<sup>2</sup>

Observers differed in which dimensions they prioritized in preparing the groundwork for reunification. For many in North Korea, South Korea, and the United States, the priority is security. North Koreans seek a "peace regime," but decided to abrogate the sixty-year old armistice in March to make its point. South Koreans seek confidence-building measures, but see no option but to strengthen the alliance with the United States in response to a deepening threat. Some also call for their country to develop nuclear weapons in opposition to North Korea. In Washington, security became a more urgent concern after North Korea's

successful December 2012 test of a long-range missile. Regardless of the many proposals since the 1990s for trust building focused on other dimensions of relations, security stands in the forefront.

Park took office calling for humanitarian assistance as the opening wedge in reviving relations with Pyongyang. She also kept one eye on human rights in North Korea, refusing to downplay that theme in order to entice the North into talks. Yet, denuclearization remained a principal goal, requiring multilateral negotiations and having uncertain impact on the prospects for direct talks with the North. Its effect on the survival of North Korea and the chances for reunification remain unclear.

John Park starts off our discussion of reunification, contrasting the response of South Korea and the United States to a crisis in North Korea utilizing the alliance and showcasing the legitimacy of South Korea to the response of China to obtain international legitimacy for its actions through the Security Council. In doing so, he draws attention to the prime mover advantage in the external response to a major change in North Korea. Sticking to the theme of legitimacy, Park notes that defectors might mobilize a new political base in North Korea, defying plans in Seoul for a more gradual transition overcoming the divide between North and South. Raising a third theme, he argues that a pattern of cooperation could be achieved through a short-term mission of dismantling and verifying the dismantling of the North's nuclear weapons program. These clear messages point to challenges many have hesitated to address regarding what might happen in the early stages of reunification.

Ho-Yeol Yoo focuses specifically on South Korean policies toward unification. He places Park Geun-hye's approach in 2013 in the context of Lee Myung-bak's prior policies and North Korea's responses. Yoo sees her envisioning "happy unification" through a three-step process: normalization through trust, progression from small to big unification, and strengthening the capacity for unification. Much depends on the situation in North Korea, which Yoo discusses in some detail. He points to some conditions that will determine whether the process Park proposes will be realized.

Abraham Kim observes that the field of international relations has paid scant attention to the problems of achieving reunification. He seeks to fill the gap through a combined approach of strategic bargaining and national identity politics. His analysis leads to four generalizations with policy implications: 1) Stable states tend to delay reunification as long as possible because they can afford to do so; 2) a trade-off exists between peaceful and international engagement and the prospects for reunification; 3) reunification dyads face a security dilemma; and 4) within an identity community, greater engagement between reunification states could lead to the erosion of the idea of reunification in the long term. This systematic approach to the dynamics of reunification draws together a framework from recently completed academic writings.

Part IV of this book introduces reunification scholarship starting from different perspectives. Park draws on his experience in Track 1.5 dialogues. Yoo focuses on policy discussions in South Korea. Kim is informed by the literature in international relations studies. All face the challenge of making assumptions about developments in North Korea. Rather than waiting to see how these developments unfold, these authors recognize the urgency of thinking

seriously about far-reaching changes for which policymakers and academic analysts remain largely unprepared. These final chapters should be read as efforts to prepare for what might become a rapidly changing context even if reunification seems far off today.

## ENDNOTES

1. “President Obama Holds a Press Conference with President Park of South Korea,” [www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2013/05/07/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2013/05/07/).
2. *The Washington Post*, May 8, 2013, p. A19.

# **Competing Regional Interests and Reunification**

John Park

As with many complex situations, any effort to address the question of how competing regional interests would play out in response to Korean reunification begins with “it depends.”<sup>1</sup> Countless reunification studies conducted by governments, think tanks and universities in a host of capitals have yielded policy recommendations that are heavily affected by case selection bias—specifically, an overreliance on the German reunification experience as a roadmap. As investment brochures warn, however, past performance is usually a poor metric when investing in stocks. The goal of this chapter is to provide readers with an analytical framework through which they can assess competing regional interests related to reunification and identify ways to address challenges and maximize opportunities.<sup>2</sup>

In the first part of this chapter, I outline two main factors that heavily influence the course of policy discussions regarding reunification. One is South Korea and the United States primarily responding to the situation through their military alliance. The other is China responding through the mechanism of the UN Security Council. I explain how the manner in which a party takes the initiative disproportionately affects the type of ensuing reunification path.

In the second part, I explore the under-examined potential role that the North Korean defector community in South Korea could play in response to reunification. The South Korean government’s current plan is to extend its jurisdiction over the former North Korean state in a reunification scenario. This plan predates the existence of the 24,000-member strong defector community now resident in South Korea. Small groups in this community have styled themselves as a North Korean exile government. Their plan is to return and launch political groups to help their former compatriots adjust to new realities in a distorted, democratic, market-oriented country. In the early days of Korean reunification, there is likely to be a question of legitimacy as the South Korean government and defector organizations vie for the hearts and minds of the new body politic in the North. The South Korean government will seek to implement its plan for gradual integration of the former North Koreans via economic development projects that utilize cheap labor. In contrast, the defector organizations will look to bring about an early realization of access to the full opportunities of a democratic, market-oriented country rather than Seoul’s plan of initially preserving a divided peninsula for the sake of gradual political, social, and economic integration. How this competition plays out will influence the manner in which regional neighbors respond to reunification.

In the third part, I lay out a policy recommendation on how to minimize competition and maximize cooperation in response to reunification. If reunification is framed in terms of the short-term collective mission of dismantling and verifying dismantlement of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program, it would be possible to develop a common focus and build nascent trust. The question then becomes how the countries involved could apply this trust-building activity to the broader goal of aligning and harmonizing competing interests.

## HOW KEY PARTIES INITIALLY RESPOND TO REUNIFICATION WILL DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECT THE REACTIONS OF OTHER COUNTRIES

A central pattern that emerged during Track 1.5 dialogues that the author directed—and others in which he participated<sup>3</sup>—over a five-year period was the high degree to which South Korea’s initial response to reunification was framed in the context of its alliance with the United States. This response triggered regional responses that played out in a zero-

sum gain manner. (Ho-Yeol Yoo addresses the South Korean perspective in his chapter). Seeking to avoid losing the initiative and yielding ground as security alignments began to transform, regional powers sought to preserve their respective definition of the status quo. Any perceived threat to this definition resulted in security actions involving armed forces or paramilitary police.

The driving force behind South Korea's utilization of its alliance was to demonstrate to all the regional parties that it had both the legitimacy and the resources to reunify the peninsula. It also provided the means to respond to humanitarian as well as security challenges. Rather than building international consensus around South Korea's reunification plan, Seoul presumed that the international community would grant de facto recognition of it. This assumption was largely based on the notion that this community would be sympathetic to Seoul finally resolving the chronic division of the Korean people. Given historical legacies and deep mutual distrust in the region, the absence of a high-level consultative process and the abundance of divergent assumptions do not bode well for realizing a smooth reunification.

Another major pattern was China's tendency to frame its response to reunification through the UN Security Council (UNSC). Seeking internationally recognized legitimacy of its actions, Chinese government think tank analysts who participated in these Track 1.5 dialogues pointed out that Beijing's priority was to support a UNSC resolution centered on promoting regional peace and stability during this transitional period. By doing so, Beijing sought to counter any perception of its efforts to respond to humanitarian or security issues in the early phase of reunification as a pretext to establish a sphere of influence in the northern part of Korea.

Beijing's focus on securing a UNSC resolution was also an effort to provide a multilateral reference point as various regional parties responded to a transitional period on the peninsula. In the absence of such a reference point, the likelihood of reaction feeding into reaction would rise significantly. The zero-sum mentality whereby one party's perceived gain would be at the expense of another party's national interests could be countered with a UNSC resolution that established common goals to bolster regional security and stability during the reunification process.

Overall, Beijing's objective was to foster an atmosphere of cooperation rather than competition as new opportunities and challenges arose on the Korean Peninsula. Wary of any country attempting to take advantage of the situation to the detriment of the other powers in an unstructured security environment, Beijing deemed the UNSC the primary international channel of interaction that could be tailored to the Northeast Asia region. Whether and how this channel is used by regional powers will largely determine if regional interests develop into patterns of competition or cooperation.

South Korea and the United States tend to underestimate the prime mover advantage of a coordinated international response to change on the peninsula. Although the United States possesses a veto on the Security Council, a transitional situation on the peninsula could provide opportunities for China and Russia to coordinate in calling emergency meetings in an effort to build early consensus on addressing security and humanitarian issues.

## DETERMINING INTERNAL LEGITIMACY IN REUNIFICATION: THE DEFECTOR FACTOR

How reunification evolves internally will influence the ways in which competing external interests play out. The long-held assumption is that the South Korean government would be the sole actor in terms of extending its sovereignty in the event of the North Korean regime's collapse. In determining Korean legitimacy there is now the defector factor. Implicit in the South Korean government plan is de facto continuation of a divided peninsula in order to utilize the large pool of cheap labor in the North. Doing so would give South Korean companies a competitive edge in the global economy and slowly raise living standards in the North.

This approach, however, runs counter to the democratic ideals of equality and economic freedom. U.S. expectations of walls—physical and political—coming down would be met with new barriers—economic and social—going up instead. China is likely to adhere to its primary principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries, while, in economic terms, it may prove to be more appealing as a labor market for former North Koreans. A 2013 South Korean report estimates that approximately 79,600 North Korean workers are in China.<sup>4</sup> While there may be some short-term decline in that figure in the aftermath of North Korea's February 2013 nuclear test, the overall trend line points upward. As wages continue to rise in China, the demand for guest workers keeps rising too. It is likely that Chinese and South Korean interests will compete with respect to the new political economy reality of reunification.

A different situation could emerge if the defector community effectively and quickly mobilizes the new political base in the North. Their collective experience trying to cope in South Korean society has enabled them to develop basic organizational skills that can be applied to politically mobilizing residents in the North. These unique characteristics may give them an early advantage on three key fronts: forming local political parties to advocate political and economic freedoms in the North; seeking to add a local voice to the development of the vast mineral deposits in the northeastern corridor of the peninsula; and promoting the integration of the local economy with neighboring economies in the South and in the Chinese border region. A defector, community-led, local political configuration could conduct its own commercial relations and become a distinct voice amid competing interests regarding reunification. How the competition for legitimacy between Seoul's plan and the defector community's plan plays out will influence the manner in which regional neighbors respond to reunification.

## BUILDING TRUST BY VERIFYING DISMANTLEMENT OF NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR ARSENAL

In the security sphere, near-term competing interests regarding reunification could be more aligned if Seoul takes the initiative in framing an important aspect of it—achieving the collective goal of dismantling and multilaterally verifying the dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear weapons program. In a region with recurring security tensions regarding issues ranging from territorial disputes to Beijing's containment fears to the rise of China, this task-specific objective could provide a formative experience for regional powers in substantive security cooperation. Since comprehensive nuclear dismantlement and clean up could take many years in multiple stages,<sup>5</sup> the prospect for regional cooperation will require multilateral planning and implementation. Such an undertaking is unprecedented in a region that has traditionally lacked a multilateral security organization. The requirements of nuclear

dismantlement offer the unique opportunity to build trust among countries that have long-standing mistrust of each other.

The question then becomes how the countries involved could apply this trust-building activity to the broader goal of managing competing security interests in response to reunification. In practice, a dismantlement-focused multilateral security organization will require the operation of a dialogue mechanism that will help inform the development and coordination of national policies. These patterns of interaction could continue if effectively associated with a neutral multilateral security organization. Rather than launching a regional organization that is solely centered on nuclear dismantlement, there is the opportunity for Seoul to think in a long-term strategic manner and view the task of dismantlement as the foundation for this elusive stabilizing, regional security body.

## CONCLUSION

Although reunification is likely to initially trigger competing interests, regional players contending with the challenge of navigating through the turbulence of major short-term changes will also encounter the opportunity to leverage clear common goals like nuclear dismantlement in the North to foster patterns of consultation and policy coordination. In a region with a chronic misalignment of shifting policy priorities, managing these patterns will be fraught with setbacks. Sustained political support and leadership will be crucial. A visionary group of leaders will need to invest their scarce political capital to leverage reunification as a catalyst for creating durable security in the region. Such a path will, in effect, maximize their respective country's national interests as myopically focused management of the reunification process could exacerbate historic animosities and mistrust, thereby deepening other divisions in the region.

## ENDNOTES

1. Although dynastic succession to a third generation of the Kim family in North Korea is now complete, there is a growing consensus among North Korea watchers from various countries that regime cohesion will not be sustainable in the medium term. For the purposes of this chapter, I will not examine the main North Korean regime collapse scenarios discussed in policy circles, but rather focus on reunification in terms of South Korea extending its sovereignty over a post-collapse North Korea.
2. From 2007-2011, the author directed Track 1.5 dialogues in Washington, Beijing, Shanghai, Seoul, and Tokyo with government think tank partners in the region. Participants in these "policy R&D" workshops included current and former policymakers, military officials, diplomats, Congressional staffers, and select think tank analysts. Agenda topics covered traditional and non-traditional security issues, as well as economic policy. In developing an analytical framework for this chapter, the author draws on key findings from Korean reunification-focused policy discussions during these Track 1.5 dialogues.
3. David Kang and Victor Cha, *Approaching Korean Unification*, December 2010. Accessed: [http://csis.org/files/publication/101217\\_Cha\\_ApproachingUnification\\_WEB.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/101217_Cha_ApproachingUnification_WEB.pdf).
4. "China tightens oversight over migrant N. Korean workers," Yonhap News, Feb. 28, 2013. Accessed at: <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2013/02/28/59/040100000AEN20130228004300315F.HTML>.
5. David Albright and Corey Hinderstein, "Dismantling the DPRK's Nuclear Weapons Program: A Practicable, Verifiable Plan of Action," *USIP Peaceworks No. 54* (Washington, D.C.: USIP Press, January 2006).

# **South Korea's Unification Policy and Prospects**

Ho-Yeol Yoo

The Park Geun-hye administration's foreign policy/North Korean policy keyword is "trust," which is intended to be the base on which to build a "New Korean Peninsula" and a new order of peace and security in Northeast Asia. Park has reiterated that she will work to develop trust between the South and the North based on the principle of deterrence, and while remaining strict on that point, she will continue to work through the "Korean Peninsula trust process" toward building the basis for a "unification era," in which all people can live prosperous and free lives and achieve their dreams. As trust is built when the two sides talk and keep their promises, she urged that North Korea respect international norms and make correct choices.

Efforts such as sanctions on North Korea by the United States and the international community are designed to pressure North Korea to adopt an attitude of responsibility regarding the Cheonan sinking and to allow for the reopening of the Six-Party Talks on denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. If the talks are unable to find an appropriate solution to the North Korean nuclear issue, then new measures and strategies may be considered. Following the unilateral violation of the Leap Day 2012 agreement by North Korea, the United States announced new sanctions against the regime as well as preconditions for the restoration of the Six-Party Talks, and has reiterated its position that the relaxation or cessation of sanctions can only be considered as part of serious talks. After the North's third nuclear test on February 12, 2013, the UN Security Council agreed on additional sanctions supported by South Korea. Park's pursuit of "trust" proceeds in the shadow of these measures.

While North Korea has announced its abandonment of denuclearization talks, it is possible that the remaining countries in the Six-Party Talks can discuss reopening the talks with strong prerequisites, including banning further nuclear and long-range missile tests. If the Six-Party Talks do reopen, a new North Korean nuclear issue management structure can be developed based on concrete, realistic discussions for the construction of a peace regime structure on the Korean Peninsula and the relaxation of the sanctions that North Korea is requesting. Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula was the primary goal of the Lee Myung-bak government's North Korea policy. It will remain the most important principle related to North-South relations for the Park government.

If Kim Jong-un's government engages in aggression in the name of regime survival and national dignity despite the new Security Council resolution, South Korea will agree to further strengthening sanctions together with the international community in general and the United States in particular. If North Korea commits to a concrete sequence for denuclearization, participants of the Six-Party Talks, including the United States, will initiate comprehensive aid to allow North Korea to maintain stability and develop its economy. South Koreans must define the structure of their country's leading role in preparing for that burden. That is the objective of this chapter, which outlines South Korea's unification policy if circumstances permit.

## THE PARK ADMINISTRATION'S UNIFICATION POLICY

Park has stated that unification begins by overcoming distrust and conflict to create a new Korean Peninsula of trust and peace, ultimately leading to a unified Korea that will represent the full completion of the Republic of Korea. To this end, she has presented "happy unification" as the core goal for realizing the construction of a new Korean Peninsula based on trust, through the presentation of a rough blueprint for unification that begins with a foundation of realistic

peace and construction of an economic community, leading finally to political federation. She envisions three steps: 1) normalization of North-South relations through a trust process; 2) progression from “small unification” to “big unification”; and 3) realistic preparation for unification through strengthening the capacity for it.

While the administration is preparing against North Korea's continual aggressive threats and seeks to resolve the nuclear issue through close cooperation with the international community, relying on UN Security Council resolutions, if the situation stabilizes and North Korea agrees to a serious denuclearization policy, the government has also opened the way for a variety of dialogue channels, including inter-Korean summits.

- Plans are being devised for the installation of a North-South Exchange and Cooperation Office in Seoul and Pyongyang for economic cooperation and socio-cultural exchanges.
- Plans are being devised to provide appropriate aid through the North-South Exchange and Cooperation Office for the Kaesong industrial complex and agricultural development as well as in the area of development cooperation.
- For large-scale economic assistance to begin, however, the issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons must take priority. If there is trust built between North and South and a degree of progress seen on the denuclearization issue, the so-called “Vision Korea Project” will be initiated. While there are some differences with the “Denuclearization-Opening-3000” policy of the Lee Myung-bak government, in the end, it is always the denuclearization issue that is the most critical point of contention.

A sustainable medium-to-long-term roadmap will be presented for future governments to use to strengthen peace on the Korean Peninsula and cooperation in North-South relations in case there are signs of positive changes in North Korea. Despite the fact that agreements such as the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement and the June 15, 2000 and October 4, 2007 declarations played a role in their respective periods in mediating North-South relations, the fact that these agreements proved inadequate means that work is required to develop new agreements for cooperation, which show promise for actual realization. Therefore, in order to restart dialogue and cooperation with the North, the Park government must, on the one hand, consistently demand responsible measures regarding North Korea's military provocations, and, on the other, also maintain flexibility in initiating North-South dialogue (such as was seen at the first and second round of talks in 2011 between the chief delegates to the Six-Party Talks from the North and South). This means establishing a comprehensive (governmental and civil), medium-to-long-term strategy for the support of new relations between the North and South, and continuing to pursue this strategy in stages. It also means reassessing tourism to Mt. Kungang and other forms of economic cooperation taking into account factors such as the stability of North-South relations and their economic feasibility. While North Korea lacks serious interest in opening and reform, North-South economic cooperation will take time to be of practical economic benefit.

For this strategy to be applied, a political agenda will have to be pursued under a complex design that does not recognize the separation of politics and economics but in reality is a fusion of the two. Moreover, issues such as separated families and related humanitarian aid will have

to be judged strategically on concrete analysis of the practical gains and losses. In terms of the necessary division of labor between public and private roles, there will need to be research on the political results of business with North Korea (including civil exchange) and the dynamic relationship with unification, given the precedence of the failure of the previous Sunshine Policy. In terms of issues such as the food loans to the North, and the cash-in-advance currency payments related to Mt. Kumgang tourism, structural imperfections need to be rectified and responsibility appropriately placed.

In order to build consensus among the people and the international community, emphasis should be placed on the maintenance of consistency in unification policy and clarity of intentions to pursue unification education and unification diplomacy at the same time. As Park explained, “We will maintain consistency in our unification policy by succeeding and developing a unification model for a national community based on liberal democracy.” She gives special weight to pursuing a “sustainable North Korea policy.” Unification preparation plans, accordingly, must be pursued keeping in mind both the gradual model of unification by stages as well as the possibility of sudden unification caused by an emergency situation.

As a candidate, Park said that we cannot afford to ignore the North Korean human rights problem, and showed serious intent to enact the “North Korean Human Rights Law,” which has been the subject of much political infighting between the government and the opposition. Yet, because it became a symbol of internal conflict and failed to pass either the 17th or 18th National Assembly, it will be extremely difficult to pass without extraordinary political will. Given the equal footing of the government and opposition in the 19th National Assembly, the breakdown of the legislative process due to fierce competition in the presidential election, and the likelihood of repeated protests outside the Assembly, securing support from the Assembly, the people, and the media must be Park’s first priority. Considering that the North Korea Human Rights Law is the bare minimum of humanitarian consideration for North Koreans and also the starting point for building trust, convincing the various political parties and gaining broad consensus among South Koreans is essential.

- The North Korean Human Rights Law has a lot of significance as a symbol and expression of the position and intention of South Korea to reflect the anger and interest of the international community to the inferior human rights circumstances in North Korea.
- It is also important in its concrete details as a milestone for the long-term prospects for the people and elite of North Korea.
- We need to consider the importance of presenting a thorough recognition of the anti-humanitarian, anti-democratic and criminal nature of the North Korean regime and to actively promote this recognition amongst our own citizens.

The North Korean regime is maintaining the succession system that has passed through three generations from Kim Il-sung through Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong-un. With the accession of Kim Jong-un to the highest positions in the party, military and government at the Fourth Conference of the Workers’ Party of Korea, held on April 4, 2012, it can now be said that the Kim Jong-un government has fully arrived. However, we need to consider the stability of the succession and the long-term viability of the regime and government

separately, and continue to research and make preparations for the possibility of a crisis situation or internal struggle.

- After the sudden removal of Chief of General Staff Ri Yong-ho from his position on July 15, Kim Jong-un's succession system was consolidated on July 18, 2012 with Kim Jong-un receiving the highest military rank. It remains unknown whether he will engage in changes in the party-military relationship or bring real results of reform measures for North Korea's internal economy.
- North Korea's internal situation should not be mentioned or interfered with on a government level, but there should be support for the strengthening of the roles of civil groups and international organizations.
- We need to establish think tanks that can deal constructively and comprehensively with the various core national strategies related to diplomacy, unification, security and North-South relations.

The prospects for improvement in North Korea under Kim Jong-un are unlikely due to lack of any fundamental change in terms of opening and reform or in the structural contradictions of the North Korean regime itself. The instability of the North Korean internal situation, following the succession to a third generation of leadership, may impact South Korean and foreign policy fronts unpredictably. We need to remember that it is going to take some time before there can be real improvement in North-South relations and the construction of peace and security in East Asia.

- While some members of Kim Jong-un's family show signs of freedom to move and live abroad, we need to pay attention to the inherent duplicity. North Korea is strengthening both internal control methods, such as crackdowns and punishment of defectors, as well public security activities meant to enforce regime unity at the same time.

The future of the Korean Peninsula will be more unstable and dynamic in the medium-to-long term rather than in the immediate next five years, and therefore the Park Geun-hye government needs to prepare both public and classified action plans and frequently reassess and revise them.

- North Korea has been judged as unlikely to engage in any provocation reckless enough to lead to war and potentially cause the collapse of its regime, so effective responses to threats should be enough to prevent any extreme crisis.
- The Park Geun-hye government needs to thoroughly examine the merits and flaws of the North Korean and unification diplomacy policies of Lee Myung-bak, Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun in order to develop realistic alternatives. At the same time it needs to establish the principle that bad behavior or reckless provocation by North Korea will not be tolerated, as well as push a multifaceted approach that a crisis situation can be turned into a unification process through established strategy.

For the maintenance of sustainable peace and development within East Asia, the "East Asia Peace/Cooperation Conception" was presented, which seeks to build trust, cooperative

security, economic/social cooperation and human security with each of the relevant countries in the region. This is the Seoul Process, which can be described as the East Asian version of Helsinki Process.

- The Helsinki Process refers to the process of enacting the Helsinki Accords in 1975, signed by 35 countries divided between the Cold War factions of the U.S.-centered NATO and the Soviet-centered Warsaw Pact. This Accord contained the measures by which peace could be maintained in Europe through trust building.
- During the presidential elections, President Park expressed hopes that the Seoul Process could be used as a means to reduce the potential for conflict between the United States and China in the East Asian region, and that Seoul could function as a peace builder for the East Asian region.

For the Seoul Process to succeed, at the very minimum the national interests of the related countries need to be protected and a widespread collective agreement formed for the maintenance of the post-Cold War status quo in Northeast Asia. There still exists the possibility that North Korea will engage in further provocation or posturing towards South Korea, and to deal with this possibility we need realistic preparations that respond to the fact that the North will use these provocations as a strategic means to repeatedly gain the high ground in negotiations with the South, the United States and Japan.

- As can be seen in the attacks on the Cheonan-ham and Yeongpyeong-do in 2010, some of the most aggressive military moves along the border regions since the end of the Korean War, we cannot rule out that North Korean threats could lead to military attacks and even to the outbreak of war.

In 2013 in East Asia the emergence of new leadership will see the rise of many new challenges and difficulties to be faced. Through President Park's normalized diplomacy with neighboring countries, however, a new foundation for trust can be built. As a middle-ranking power, South Korea can use its balanced and cooperative diplomacy to create a new era of permanent peace and cooperation.

- The conventional structure of the U.S.-China rivalry revolves around the strengthening of the U.S.-Japan alliance and the expansion of the China-Russia strategic cooperation regime leading potentially to the rise of a new Cold War era. However, we need to remember that the cooperation and reliance of each nation in this region on the others is ever increasing, and we must actively develop integrated networks such as Track 1.5 or 2 cooperation dialogues such as a regional FTA.
- In East Asia, the China-Japan territorial disputes and the Japan-ROK dispute over Dokdo, as well as the problems of past history in the regime, are becoming elements of conflict that are entering into a collision course with the North Korean issue. We need to develop three-party and four-party strategic dialogue talk structures between the United States, South Korea, China, and Japan.

# **Understanding Peaceful Reunification: Its Dynamics and Challenges**

Abraham Kim

The reunification of the Korean Peninsula has been an important aspiration of the Korean people on both sides of the 38th parallel for nearly six decades. The emotional family reunions of loved ones wrenched apart for more than half a century illustrate the deep desire for reunification, at least, among the older generation of Koreans. Despite this mutual desire to reconnect and after rounds of North-South negotiations, the two Koreas have failed to reunify. Their inability to do so after all these years naturally begs the basic, yet loaded, question of why is it so difficult. Although it is easy to respond that ideological differences or a history of rivalry are the reasons, these ostensible explanations do not explain the complex nuances of how such factors ultimately serve to promote or prevent reunification. This ambiguity is endemic to the existing policy literature on reunification. In addition, the current international relations literature has generally ignored the problems of achieving reunification despite the importance of this issue in shaping present-day geopolitics in Northeast Asia.

To address this gap, this chapter applies a combined approach of strategic bargaining and national identity politics to understand the relational dynamics and challenges that lie ahead for reunification dyads. Although political science literature has not tackled the issue of reunification directly, scholars have written broadly on the challenges related to negotiating power-sharing arrangements, states seeking to cooperate in high stakes and competitive bargaining situations, and the influence of nationalism and identity politics on government behavior. Drawing from this rich body of work, this paper views the reunification process through the lens of recently completed works on strategic bargaining and national identity politics, and to draw implications that will encourage deeper exploration and research of this issue in the future. The first objective is to highlight problems with extant schools of thought on reunification, namely nationalist, functionalist, and collapsist perspectives, whose views are found in policy literature and other venues. These approaches are at best inadequate, if not problematic, in their logic, to explain and prescribe solutions for peaceful reunification on the Korean Peninsula.

The second objective of this chapter is to offer an alternative, more useful framework to understand the characteristics, obstacles, and structure of reunification dyads. The goal here is not to provide a grand explanation as to what might give rise to peaceful reunification, but to take a more fundamental approach by laying out a different prism by which we can understand the challenges ahead for states that seek a negotiated union. This is an important step to take before we can begin to understand what will ultimately bring about a peaceful reunification. With that said, the alternative framework proposed in this paper is strategic bargaining, while incorporating national identity politics as a force that shapes reunification engagement. This presentation leads to the following generalizations with policy implications:

1. Stable states tend to delay reunification as long as they can because they can afford to do so.
2. There is a trade-off between peaceful and international engagement and the prospects for reunification.
3. Reunification dyads face a security dilemma.
4. Within an identity community, greater engagement between reunification states could lead to the erosion of the idea of reunification in the long term.

## DEFINING PEACEFUL REUNIFICATION

The most basic definition of reunification, or national unification, is the merger of two or more states that share a common ethnic national identity and the belief that their nation formerly existed as a single political unit.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, it is the irreversible integration of governing institutions, functions and authorities of two governments into one.<sup>2</sup> Peaceful unification requires the cooperation of the two states involved.<sup>3</sup> It is a negotiated merger where two states adjust their divergent interests and demands, coordinate their behavior, and each makes accommodations to establish a common government over the people of both countries.<sup>4</sup> Military violence is not used to achieve unification. In other words, states voluntarily pursue a union, free from external coercion or any foreign subversive action. This is not to suggest that adjustments are necessarily symmetrical and the benefits derived are equal. This merger can materialize in two ways: (1) the transfer of multiple centers of power to a new single government that has overriding political authority over all constituent states (i.e., symmetric power-sharing); or (2) the transfer of governing authority of one or more states to a single dominant polity that has sovereign authority over all involved territories (i.e., asymmetric power-sharing; for example, West Germany in the case of German reunification).<sup>5</sup> Thus, “peaceful” reunification is the condition in which states voluntarily choose to reunify, free from external coercion or any foreign sponsored, extra-legal or subversive action that would force leaders to make a decision they would otherwise not make. This is not to suggest that when states face a decision to reunify there will be no domestic pressures or a crisis; it simply means that leaders’ decisions were intentional, negotiated, and not made under duress.

## DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON REUNIFICATION

Although many yearn for peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula, the factors involved in reaching this goal are frequently contested. Policy analysts, pundits, and journalists have written countless articles and books on the topic, but these are mostly descriptive or prescriptive, providing much detailed information on particular cases without offering systematic and generalizable knowledge on what enables peaceful reunification. Mainstream international relations theory has also overlooked this important subject. This neglect is puzzling given how states seeking to reunify are not only major political and economic powers, but their unification could reshape the political and security environments of their regions, if not the globe.

The dominant explanations offered by policymakers, pundits, and scholars can be categorized into three main schools of thought: (1) ethno-nationalist/divided nation perspective; (2) functionalist/integrative perspective; (3) collapsist perspective. Below I examine each school for the arguments presented on its behalf and some analytical shortcomings found therein.

Ethno-Nationalist/Divided Nation Perspective. The ethno-nationalist perspective is a dominant belief which frequently shows up in the foundational documents, such as constitutions and legislation, as well as in writings and rhetoric of nationalist policymakers and pundits regarding reunification.<sup>6</sup> This perspective attributes the deep emotional and spiritual attachment to the homogenous national community defined by its long history, common heritage, and language as the galvanizing force that will eventually drive people within both states to overcome their political differences and restore the nation-state.

Many scholars have embraced these arguments to explain why states reunify. One Korean academic writes:

The long historical root of Korea's nationhood supports the expectation that Korea will reunite sooner or later. This is an issue that touches the hearts of Koreans and is tied to their sense of national identity. Although there are sharp political cleavages between the two Korean halves that are not easily bridged, in historical perspective, an eventual return to normality seems assured<sup>77</sup>

A slight variation on this perspective is what Gregory Henderson, Richard Ned Lebow, and John Stoessinger presented in the early 1970s, known as the “divided-nation approach.”<sup>78</sup> Focusing primarily on nations that have been divided as a result of the Cold War, their model suggests that the common cultural identity and the deep-seated commitment by all parties involved to restore the original unified state will drive these states through a series of phases of unification. Their teleological argument maintains that divided nations will begin with a high level of hostility and non-recognition, evolve to coexistence, tacit recognition, and reduced ideological competition, and eventually move to active rapprochement and communication, ending with a loose political amalgamation and symbolic unification. While these ethnic-nationalist perspectives provide insights into *why* reunification is important for various groups, it falls short in providing an explanation for *how* reunification is to be achieved. The nationalist account, for example, cannot explain why nearly sixty years have passed on the Korean Peninsula where the fervor for reunification has arguably been among the strongest.

Another shortfall is that these explanations imply a primordial view of nationalism, as if identities are historically fixed and immutable. As generations pass, however, a divided people can gradually see reunification as unlikely or undesirable, thus diminishing the demand for it. Such a change of attitude is arguably occurring in places like South Korea and Taiwan. For example, Gilbert Rozman and Andrew Kim write about the rising support for the “*gukmin*” (or state-based) form of national identity that accepts the status quo division of the peninsula rather than the “*minjok*” (ethnic-based) form that supports the need for reunification. Citing South Korean polls that show that Koreans are not interested in paying for reunification, they write: “These shifts provide compelling evidence that *gukmin* identity is taking precedence in the South Korean psyche. South Koreans are increasingly tolerant of, if not satisfied with, the notion that striving for a unified state is not worth the potential costs and damage that might be inflicted on the state they already have. Koreans may be bound by blood but South Koreans are also bound by the success of their state...”<sup>79</sup> In Taiwan, popular opinion is also increasingly supportive of greater national autonomy, albeit a majority still prefers the status quo. The strongest indication of this was the election and eight-year tenure of Chen Shui-bian, an independence sympathizer of the Democratic People's Party, as president. His presidency toppled the Kuomintang Party, a long-time proponent of reunification with the PRC, although that party regained power in 2008.

The most problematic assumption is that nationalist sentiments are inherently benign and facilitate cooperation between states by mobilizing groups of people who share an identity. If there is one standard bearer, then the ideational community is likely to be cohesive. However, if there are multiple entrepreneurs with varying and incompatible visions regarding what principles or which leaders should govern the national community and state, then it becomes

a competitive, if not conflictual, environment. As Marc Ross writes: “It should be pointed out that in a shared meaning and identity system the fact that different individuals and groups understand each other does not imply agreement that widely held meanings are necessarily acceptable to all. Rather, meaning and identity, control over symbols and rituals, and the ability to impose one interpretation rather than another on a situation are frequently bitterly contested.”<sup>10</sup> Nationalist communities can often be factionalized, making national identity an indeterminate force for reunification.<sup>11</sup>

Neo-functionalism/Integration Perspective. Another frequently cited argument that has had a profound influence on the reunification discourse is functionalism—a liberalist-inspired perspective on political integration. This combines the idea of common cultural identity and the desire to maximize economic efficiency and prosperity as the driving factors of political integration, which will result from low levels of economic and cultural engagement compelling higher levels. Prompted by the model of European integration, one functionalist concept that has inspired policy-makers and analysts is the notion of a “spillover effect.” As one theorist argues, peace “is more likely to grow through doing things together than in chancelleries.”<sup>12</sup> As both functionalist and neo-functional theorists argue, integration does not start with costly, high-risk political integration efforts, but rather with low-key economic and social exchanges, and then gains momentum as both domestic forces and governments learn the value of active exchanges and close coordination of policies. Success builds trust and confidence for more frequent and higher forms of economic, social, and eventually political cooperation that requires greater risks, closer cooperation, and increasingly higher levels of trust. Ultimately, the culmination of cooperation across different functional domains provides the environment for reunification.<sup>13</sup>

A close look at the writings and speeches of leaders in divided nations reveals that these functionalist ideas are deeply embedded in their views of how to achieve peaceful reunification. Kim Dae-jung’s “Sunshine Policy” to North Korea, which was subsequently continued by Roh Moo-hyun’s “Peace and Prosperity” policy, illustrates this point. Chung-in Moon summarizes Kim’s functionalist-inspired strategy as a three-step process: (1) peaceful coexistence (peace building through the termination of hostile relations, arms reduction, and mutual surveillance as well as through the establishment of a multilateral security cooperation regime); (2) peaceful exchange (restoration of common national identity through political, economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian interactions and expansion of common interests through increased economic exchanges); and (3) peaceful reunification (incremental unification and the rejection of unification by absorption, military power, or manipulation).<sup>14</sup> This linear progressive notion is even evident in Lee Myung-bak’s idea of unification, which was set forth in the following way: (a) the creation of a “new Korean peace structure” to actively respond to the changing situation on the peninsula; (b) the establishment of “North-South economic collaboration” and, in doing so, dramatically improving the quality of people’s lives; and (c) the development of an environment in which the political unity of the people is possible, thereby ensuring long-term economic prosperity.<sup>15</sup>

Although these functionalist arguments seem appealing, there are shortcomings. First, the successful operations of factors that encourage integration requires a relatively stable, long-established, and often democratic political system in which economic and social interest groups play a recognized role in political life. Joseph Nye critiques this functional perspective as being

inapplicable to integration cases outside of Western Europe, where regional communities do not necessarily share common political and ideological systems: “It only makes sense to pay primary attention to economic interests when one can take for granted the political, ideological, and institutional framework within which economic interest can function. This is an impossible assumption in Africa (or any other developing areas) where one of the prime concerns of politicians is to change the framework.”<sup>16</sup> The cooperating governments need to be adhering to similar political and ideological systems and playing by similar institutional rules. As in any state relationship, greater levels of engagement eventually lead to conflicts as both sides work to resolve the disparity of interests in various issues, which requires a common institutional framework. Western Europe is unique. This cannot be assumed for integration efforts among developing countries or, for that matter, for reunification cases where two contending states have dramatically divergent political systems.

Another widely criticized point regarding functionalist explanations is that they are not so much causal theories for integration as they are normative statements, outlining what should be done to achieve reunification, but not what factors cause states to decide to reunify. A related problem with functionalist theories is that they are teleological. An assumption is that nurturing trust and goodwill through building mutually beneficial and deeper cooperation in the economic and cultural arenas will not only heal decades of political separation and strife, but will also build the foundation for higher levels of political cooperation and, ultimately, reunification. This is an oddly idealistic view of state leaders. Governments have a natural tendency to avoid making decisions that would encroach upon their political prerogatives and work against their self-interest, voluntarily relinquishing their power for the sake of integration rather than attempting to protect their interests while trying to expand their power through reunification.

Policy-makers fail to consider whether the path to congenial interstate relations and the road to power-sharing under reunification are similar. Will increased economic and social interaction necessarily lead governments to ultimately give up their sovereignty? The context and dynamics of these two forms of cooperation are different. In security alliances, international economic regimes, and other types of interstate cooperation, governments collaborate with each other because through these efforts, wealth, welfare, and/or security constituents are increased. By improving the lives of citizens living in their countries, the authority of incumbent leaders is reinforced and their power strengthened. In interstate cooperation, mutual aggrandizement, in most cases, improves the condition of all governments involved.

In the case of reunification, however, cooperation is not necessarily mutually beneficial. The goal of peaceful reunification is power-sharing and establishing institutions in which stakeholders must be subjected to former competitors. By empowering an opposing state by offering economic assistance or political compromise, collaboration is complicated by the underlying competition among the elites of member states who seek greater influence, if not domination, in the reunified government.<sup>17</sup> States within reunification dyads have incentives and disincentives to cooperate. In short, it appears that the functionalist logic for reunification may actually be detrimental to political integration efforts rather than supportive of them.

*Collapsist Perspective.* The underlying assumption of writings from the collapsist perspective is that the two countries are fundamentally incompatible and that competing leaders are not

willing to relinquish their authority for the sake of reunification. In this view, the only means of reunification is either the overthrow of one state by the other state, or the political implosion of one state. In the mid-1990s, the collapsist perspective was popular in discussing how the two Koreas could possibly achieve reunification. Seeing an unprecedented famine and paralyzed economy, many predicted that the regime and state would crumble under the weight of an anachronistic economic system and overly rigid totalitarian government; the “inevitable” collapse would lead to a German-style reunification. Nicholas Eberstadt, a collapsist supporter, encouraged the international community to hasten a “contained collapse” of North Korea.<sup>18</sup>

There are two serious problems in this view. First, as Samuel Kim points out, many predictions of North Korea’s collapse commit “the fallacy of premature economic reductionism based on a mistaken conception that equates economic breakdown with system collapse or even with the collapse of the North Korean state.”<sup>19</sup> Economic conditions often do play an important role in contributing to political stability and boosting the authority of governing elites, especially in non-democratic countries where performance-based legitimacy is critical. However, these serve more as an intervening variable to political conditions, which are the primary factors in the regime downfalls. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan in their celebrated book on democratic transitions and consolidation emphasize this:

If the political situation is such that there is no strong perception of a possible alternative, a non-democratic regime can often continue to rule by coercion. However, when the belief grows that other alternatives are possible (as well as preferable), the political economy of legitimacy and coercion sharply changes. If the coercive capacity of the non-democratic regime decreases (due say to internal dissent or the withdrawal of vital external guarantees), then the political economy of prolonged stagnation can contribute to the erosion of the regime. *It is not changes in the economy, but changes in politics, that trigger regime erosion—that is, the effects of a poor economy often have to be mediated by political change.*<sup>20</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Although the DPRK underwent its most severe economic crisis in the 1990s since the end of the Korean War, the country’s tightly controlled “theocratic” totalitarian political system limited the exposure of its population to the outside world, suppressed any internal forces liable to challenge the establishment, and maintained a strong coercive apparatus to ensure security and regime stability. Even Hwang Jang-yop, the highest-ranking North Korean political figure to defect to the South, warned of the solidarity of the DPRK: “The republic [North Korea] is in economic difficulty but remains politically united and there’s no danger of its collapse.”<sup>21</sup> In short, economic crisis alone will not guarantee any form of political change unless it is accompanied by political fragmentation and polarization.

A second problem is the over-deterministic argument that state collapse leads to reunification, which fails to specify what causal mechanism links the two phenomena together. It is not clear why the collapsed state would not rather choose to reestablish a new government than choose to merge with its reunification partner state, especially when the two have been hostile rivals. An underlying assumption is that all failing states in a reunification dyad will behave like East Germany in 1990, as seen in Aidan Foster-Carter’s 1994 assessment:

The “collapsist” scenario seems the most plausible. Although I fully share the hope, which is widespread in South Korea, for a gradual, stable, peaceful, and inexpensive evolution, indications point to collapse. The key element of my reasoning is that North Korea cannot continue indefinitely as it is . . . [T]he North Korean regime will be overthrown. As in Germany, there will then be a strong popular demand for immediate integration . . . version of the German scenario seems likely.<sup>22</sup>

This generalization about the German reunification and its likelihood to be repeated in the Korean Peninsula reveals the failure of reunification analysts to fully comprehend the complexity of what happened in Germany during 1989-1990, and creates a false basis for what might happen in North Korea if it collapsed. Analysts who link the German experience to Korea, among a number of mistakes, make the error of *post hoc determinism*. In other words, the impression is that there was no alternative path for East Germany besides asymmetric reunification with West Germany.

A more contingent turn of events and more complex environment could have easily led to an alternative end for East Germany than being asymmetrically incorporated into the West German political system. Three possible futures were discussed prior to the March 8, 1990, elections that finally determined what policy East Germany would pursue: (1) accession to West Germany (Article 23 of the Basic Law); (2) gradual and negotiated reunification (Article 146 of the Basic Law); or (3) reform and remaining independent as a social democracy.<sup>23</sup> There was both support and opposition to merging the two countries, but the more common public belief was that they would remain divided in a state of peaceful coexistence for some time. Prior to the 1990 election, the victory of the “Alliance for Germany” coalition led by the East German Christian Democratic Union party (i.e. those who supported immediate reunification by being asymmetrically merged with the Federal Republic) was in doubt. Many thought that the Socialist Democratic Party in support of a gradual reunification policy would win. But, through a complex series of events, including direct campaigning by West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in East Germany, the Alliance for Germany coalition won.<sup>24</sup> Even German unification was the result of conditional events. The regime’s deterioration was not sufficient cause for the union.

The discussion of the three perspectives above highlights shortcomings in explaining what causes reunification. There are logical flaws, underdeveloped lines of reasoning, and a lack of empirical support. This, however, is not to suggest that the perspectives above are completely without merit. It would be difficult to imagine states unifying if there were no shared identity that they belong together. Yet, this overview makes clear the need for further research to understand reunification and what may compel states to move toward it. To take a first step, the remainder of this chapter explores how strategic bargaining and national identity politics offer refreshing and counterintuitive insights for understanding what may induce states to negotiate reunification.<sup>25</sup>

## NEW VIEW ON PEACEFUL REUNIFICATION – STRATEGIC BARGAINING AND IDENTITY POLITICS

Setting aside for now any attempt to answer the question what causes states to peacefully reunify, the objective here is to consider the challenge of peaceful reunification as a strategic

bargaining situation between two states with competing interests and high stakes, drawing on work that provides useful insights to help understand the dynamics that states face as they try to cooperate toward a power-sharing arrangement. To inform this bargaining situation, I examine how the fact that both states are embedded in a common political identity community further shapes, and at times, makes more contentious, their relationship within a reunification dyad.

Reunification as Strategic Bargaining. To understand how states cooperate, the political science strategic bargaining literature provides a simple and useful framework, which focuses on the leaders of the reunification dyads,<sup>26</sup> assuming that they are rational and security-minded, and their principal interests are to protect their political authority and ensure their survival when faced with a political crisis.<sup>27</sup> They survey their environment, carefully weigh the available options, and, to the best of their ability, choose the strategy that optimally meets their subjectively defined goals.<sup>28</sup> In a bargaining scenario, states cooperate when both believe it will make them better off than choosing not to do so. This is feasible only when the lowest common denominator is mutually acceptable (i.e. one side's bottom line is not more than what the other side is willing to give up.) But, even if the range of acceptable agreements between the two overlaps and there is room for compromise, leaders will still face the challenge of reaching an array of possible solutions that have varying levels of payoff to each participant. Some agreements may benefit one actor more, and thus are preferred over other arrangements.<sup>29</sup>

The challenge is to identify stress points and apply pressure that would compel one's opponent to reassess its willingness to incur costs, forego benefits, and ultimately accept an agreement.<sup>30</sup> In other words, how does a state make the cost of non-cooperation for its opponent so high that it decides to moderate its demands and pursue an agreement? When two partners cannot reach an agreement, they incur the opportunity costs of failure and the loss of benefits for not reaching a resolution. In high stakes negotiations for agreements with long-term effects political scientists note: (1) the incentive to reach an agreement quickly diminishes; and (2) the sensitivity to relative gains can rise. This implies: (a) stable states tend to delay reunification as long as possible; (b) there may be trade-offs between peaceful and international engagement and the prospects for reunification. Below I examine these suppositions and how they can shape states' decision-making calculus to venture toward peaceful reunification.

**Implication One: Stable states tend to delay reunification as long as they can because they can afford to do so.**

James Fearon argues that the more actors care about the future payoffs of an agreement and the longer the anticipated duration of the agreement, the greater the incentive for the bargaining parties to continue to negotiate to attain a better deal. "The longer the time horizon of the agreement is, the greater the possible expected benefit one can reap over time by locking in the greater distributional advantage in the agreement and concomitantly, the relative costs of holding out to reach the better deal diminishes as the shadow of the future lengthens."<sup>31</sup> Because the time horizon for reunification is indefinite, the negotiating leaders have high incentives to extract the greatest advantage in power-sharing efforts because any disproportional advantage can contribute toward becoming the dominant power in a new state arrangement. As long as the cost of non-cooperation is low, state leaders will resist committing themselves to a settlement, hoping that their opponent will face pressure to capitulate. Fearon argues that this stalemate becomes a "classical war of attrition" where both sides may inflict costs but not enough to prompt change until the "no cooperation" status becomes unsustainable or no longer cost-

effective for one side. If the involved states are capable of absorbing large costs for the sake of potentially achieving a better agreement in the long term, the stalemate may go on indefinitely.

As we think about what would drive the costs high enough to compel states to choose reunification, it is worth linking the question to civil war termination and post-war nation-building. Both share the challenge of compelling political elites and their supporters to work together toward building a single government. Characteristics of intrastate war – such as high distrust, the competitive dynamics of elites, and the willingness of elites to go to great lengths to dominate rather than cooperate – are comparable to reunification state relations. In the case of civil wars, sustained armed conflicts are the main cost drivers to compel states to capitulate or engage in a compromise agreement to share power. For reunification cases, the conflict takes place on the political and diplomatic front. Economic competition, military threats, political posturing, terrorist attacks, and other less violent or non-violent measures have been the weapons of choice.<sup>32</sup> In reunification there is no condition that dramatically alters the cost-benefit calculus of member states that drives them toward a power-sharing arrangement. Without forces to impact the cost-benefit equilibrium, the inclination of governments is not to pursue potentially risky cooperation agreements that do not guarantee a positive future for the stakeholders involved. As Arthur Stein points out, states tend to be risk adverse in situations when survival is at stake.<sup>33</sup>

Not only are states reluctant to reach agreements on high stakes issues, they also tend to be more sensitive to relative gains. Any skewed distribution of economic resources, military power and/or political authority may result in a serious threat to the power and even survival of the relatively disadvantaged elites when building a long-term power-sharing arrangement.<sup>34</sup> When relative gains become increasingly important, Duncan Snidal argues that cooperation becomes more difficult. He writes, “[E]ven in purely harmonious absolute gains situations between two-actors, they approximate zero-sum conflictual contests when relative gains are important. If room for cooperation remains, agreements are often less viable, since states’ incentives to violate them increase under relative gains. Thus, relative gains decrease states’ interests in cooperation as well as their ability to maintain self-enforcement agreements in anarchy.”<sup>35</sup> This compounds states’ unwillingness to reach reunification agreements.

By viewing the reunification process as a high stakes strategic bargaining process, we can anticipate that states will defer agreement to the long term. Their sensitivity to relative costs makes the possibility of cooperation more difficult. Unlike a power-sharing arrangement driven by intrastate wars, there are no obvious forces that change the cost-benefit calculations. Thus, a state will sustain the status quo until the costs of non-cooperation are so overwhelming that it accepts the demands of the other state. We cannot conclude that stable states are inclined to reunify because they can afford to wait until the agreement is best suited to their demands.

**Implication Two: There is a trade-off between peaceful international engagement and the prospects for reunification.**

The supposition that stable states are not inclined to reunify highlights a trade-off between political-economic engagement that stabilizes states and the goal of reunification. If embattled states facing an uncertain future are more inclined than stable states to consider reunification, then efforts to engage and assist a weak state may be counterproductive for reunification. This

logic challenges progressive views of reunification. Roh Moo-hyun argued in his “Peace and Prosperity” policy that North Korea needs to be strengthened economically and the wealth gap must narrow before reunification can occur. However, the discussion above predicts the opposite outcome: strengthening North Korea would provide it with a buffer to absorb short to medium-term costs and enable it to defer further the decision to reunify. This does not deny that increased positive interaction between competing states is likely to contribute to stabilizing relations that were historically contentious, but it highlights the existence of trade-offs between promoting peaceful coexistence and creating conditions favorable for reunification.

This framework also clarifies how regional powers and neighboring states can delay reunification. These dyads do not exist in an international political vacuum. Any change in a region as significant as the union of two states can arouse anxiety and even threaten neighboring states. Thus, outside powers may have a strong incentive to sustain the status quo, even trying to intervene and prevent reunification by buttressing a dyad under the pretext of assisting an ally. An example of such an intervention occurred during the 1953 Berlin Uprising, when the Soviet military intervened on behalf of the East German government when it could not control violent demonstrations that nearly brought down Walter Ulbricht’s regime. The DPRK persists today because of China’s generous economic and political support, even though it is internationally ostracized. International support (and threats) can change the calculus and resolve of bargaining states by providing a weak state with the resources it needs to sustain its independence. Regional powers can change the calculus of reunification states by intervening militarily or politically (or at least threatening to), thereby disrupting cooperation. Saudi Arabia’s repeated use of the tribal elements in North Yemen to pressure its leaders to halt their collaboration with the South are examples of this.<sup>36</sup>

If we assume that states involved in a high stakes strategic bargaining process to share power are predisposed not to cooperate, then we can see why efforts to strengthen one or both states will actually give them the resources to further delay reunification. Conceptualizing reunification in this framework helps us understand how political and/or economic engagement from abroad or within the reunification dyad could delay consideration of reunification.

## THE CHALLENGES OF SHARED NATIONAL IDENTITY

Reunification dyads mutually perceive a common national identity, which influences the dynamics governments face when considering political integration. Sharing an identity does not necessarily promote cooperation among stakeholders, but rather can make relations even more contentious. Ideological competition and a history of rivalry make national identity politics in reunification cases more competitive, as each side feels vulnerable to its counterpart state. The result is a security dilemma because the other side always serves as a “counter-hegemony,” a reality with important policy implications for reunification.

Why are national identity politics within reunification dyads so contentious? Elites and the general populace in both countries accept a dominant narrative that they belong to a common national community that shares a unique history, culture, religion, language, institutions, and/or set of values as well as a common destiny that makes them homogenous. They share the aspiration to return to a “golden era” when the entire nation existed as a single political unit. These beliefs are institutionalized in the constitution, law, historical texts, and other

political and/or societal edicts to memorialize this national identity. As part of this identity, there are often emotionally and politically charged collective memories of the past, which provide idiographic material for leaders to weave stories to stir up nationalist feelings, develop a sense of connection among people who share these sentiments, and mobilize support. One important goal is to be unified under a common political leadership, recovering from colonial subjugation, national shame, or oppression, which are linked to the nationalist narrative and the origin of the division. The division serves as a vestige of this painful past. National unification represents the final shedding of the nation's colonial past as a proud independent state is born. The close ties between unification and nationalism link these two factors closely to state legitimacy. Ernst Gellner writes: “[N]ationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones.”<sup>37</sup> A reunification state, the defender of the nation, may be judged on how effectively it achieves this goal of restoring the nation.

Given the highly charged nature of the reunification issue, it is no surprise that leaders have used this issue to mobilize domestic support and strengthen their control when faced with governing challenges. Park Chung-hee used the euphoria that accompanied the signing of the 1972 North-South Korea Joint Communiqué and associated negotiations, after almost thirty years of mutual isolation, to push through his authoritarian Yusin policy that dissolved the parliament and essentially ensured that he would retain the presidency indefinitely. He packaged the policy as an effort to strengthen South Korea to meet the challenges of reunification and the changing international environment.

Shared identities can be both a forum for cooperation as well as for contestation.<sup>38</sup> If there is one agreed set of values and norms for the ideational community, then its members are likely to be cooperative and the group cohesive. However, if there are multiple entrepreneurs with varying and incompatible opinions regarding what ideology, principles, or leaders should govern the national community, then it becomes a contentious environment.<sup>39</sup>

Reunification dyads often emerge immediately after a catastrophic war or the collapse of colonial control at a time when no dominant indigenous power emerges to fill the vacuum left by the discredited outgoing authority. While nationalist entrepreneurs and parties share a common definition of community membership, they fight over what principles, secular ideology, or shared norms should organize and govern that society. One side typically represents some form of leftist or communist ideology, while the other promotes a conservative, non-communist ideal. The inability of competing political groups with antithetical visions to build a nation with a single political system that would manage conflicts results in a fractured polity. If left on their own, the political groups would fight until one emerged as the victor and legitimate successor of the new state, while competitors were neutralized. Outside powers intervene to ensure that friendly leaders will prevail, ultimately preventing a decisive winner and fueling an endless struggle to take control.

In the case of reunification, two competing groups set up governments within their territory of control, each claiming to be the only true legitimate representative over the entire nation, while assailing their opponent as charlatans. As Chaim Kaufman argues, the primary interest in ideological conflict is not to control territory, but more importantly to win the hearts and minds of all nationals.<sup>40</sup> Although political borders are drawn, territories secured, and

governments established, these competing states struggle with their opponents to win control and eliminate the rival government. Leaders promise not to rest until the nation is united.

Adversaries divided along ideological lines rarely overcome their differences. Donald Horowitz and Alex Groth argue that when “ideology forms the basis for understanding conflict, the participants see different worlds, speak different languages, and often define the conflict as one between incommensurable principles. Groups produce sustaining myths that create an image of ‘others,’ which is characterized by hostility, malevolence, suspicion, and mistrust.”<sup>41</sup> In a similar vein, Gi-wook Shin et al. maintain that when ideological cleavages emerge within a social identity group like a nation, the “black sheep effect” occurs, where competing groups view their opponents as a profound threat to the “in-group homogeneity” and to the viability of the ethnic community.<sup>42</sup> Given these threats, the objective of competing groups is the elimination of their rivals or the overthrow of the opposing government, making conflict resolution difficult.

In order to reach a negotiated settlement, both sides must forego claims to be the only legitimate authority of the national community and agree to a common political system, even if it is not consonant with the group’s ideological disposition. Many oppose any compromise to their ideological principles that endangers the viability of their philosophical order and governing power. If leaders with such a resolute position on either one or both sides hold political sway, a negotiated reunification where the two states compromise and agree to power-sharing is unlikely. Only by neutralizing this internal resistance would peaceful reunification be feasible. In short, the combination of national identity politics and ideological competition results in a significant impediment to reach common ground for peaceful reunification. As shown below, these factors may cause even greater problems for these states than just achieving reunification.

### Implication One: Reunification dyads face a security dilemma.

One consequence of perpetuating the narrative that the two states share the same national identity is that it contributes to what Robert Jervis calls a “security dilemma.”<sup>43</sup> The two stand as alternative political systems. Citizens compare their living conditions with their compatriots just across the border. As Adam Pzeworski writes: “[A]s long as no collective alternatives are available, individual attitudes toward the regime matter little for its stability. What is threatening to authoritarian regimes is not the breakdown of legitimacy, but the organization of counter-hegemony: collective projects for an alternative future.”<sup>44</sup> If the two countries function under different ideological systems, the more prosperous society and its political institutions could serve as a “counterhegemony” for the ailing society. For example, beginning in the early 1970s, ordinary East German citizens were able to watch West German television programs every evening. What they saw was the wealth of their capitalist brothers, glamorous images of prosperity, consumerism, and freedom. This experience arguably contributed to the steady stream of East Germans defecting to the West in pursuit of better lives, and later led to the explosive support for immediate German reunification when the West German chancellor spoke about its possibility. Also, it is no surprise that the North Korean regime cracks down hard on the smuggling of South Korean DVDs that contain soap operas, news, and other programming that expose its citizens to South Korean society and uncover lies about the prosperity just beyond the DMZ.

The common language, culture, and national identity open the possibility of a more deliberate means of influence, where one state or even societal group could try to influence the populace of its counterpart — a bargaining strategy called “suasive reverberation.”<sup>45</sup> Leaders of one side may try to communicate directly, shaping attitudes toward the other side’s position in a bargaining situation. Applying pressure on their dyadic opponents by speaking directly to their constituents may force their government into accepting a particular position. In the most extreme case, a state may use persuasion, side payments, targeted messages, and other means to convince societal groups to overthrow their opponent’s ruling elite for another more compliant leader that will be more willing to adopt certain bargaining positions. Aware of their political, military, and/or economic advantages, the stronger state has tried to highlight this disparity between them to weaken popular support of the weaker state, often by offering peaceful reunification during politically vulnerable periods of the weaker state. North Korea, for example, repeatedly used this tactic to appeal to the South Korean public and create conditions for a communist revolution in the country. For example, after the fall of Syngman Rhee and mass student demonstrations, it offered a plan for peaceful reunification, intended not to actually promote intergovernmental cooperation, but rather to encourage radical South Korean students and intellectuals, who helped bring down the Rhee government, to apply pressure on the weak Prime Minister Chang Myon to move toward reunification during a period of enormous political and economic strains.

### **Implication Two: Within an identity community, greater engagement between reunification states could lead to the erosion of the idea of reunification in the long-term.**

When dyadic relations actually improve, and political, economic, and societal engagement increases, we would expect the weaker of the two states to feel increasingly insecure, especially if the disparities are stark, leaving it vulnerable to criticism by its own citizens. Under these conditions, what policy options are available to protect the weak state’s legitimacy from being eroded? We would anticipate ruling elites of the weak state to distance themselves rather than emphasize commonalities. They would seek to weaken the bonds of common identity in order to persuade their citizens that the two should not be compared. Empirically, we see this in East Germany after the initiation of Ostpolitik and detente, Erich Honecker’s Abgrenzung’s (demarcation) policy attempted to redefine the country’s identity, culture, language, history, and worldview not as “German” but as socialist and tied to the Soviet Union. He even abandoned the idea of unification for fear of being overwhelmed. Taiwan’s independence movement and “Taiwanese” identity are also examples of this. Both the GDR and ROC faced dominant reunification partners and began this quest of “identity uniqueness” soon after their relations improved and exchanges dramatically increased. This identity redefinition has not occurred on the Korean Peninsula, but North Korea’s attempt to isolate its population from South Korea and cordon off areas where South Korean businesspeople and tourists travel to the DPRK reveal this “distancing.” These developments run contrary to functionalist expectations that increased relations between reunification partners lead to greater trust, cooperation, and eventually reunification. Instead, the tendency is greater insecurity and political movement away from reunification even to the extent of breaking down the national identity that binds the dyad.

## CONCLUSION

Drawing on a different, more systematic way to analyze the dynamics of reunification, this chapter views the reunification process as a strategic bargaining process between two states that share a common national identity. Although the political science scholarship shows scant interest in the reunification question, there is a rich source of scholarly work on strategic bargaining and national identity that can generate insights on reunification. I derived four broad implications for further exploration:

1. Stable states tend to delay reunification as long as they can because they can afford to do so.
2. There is a trade-off between peaceful and international engagement and the prospects for reunification.
3. Reunification dyads face a security dilemma.
4. Within an identity community, greater engagement between reunification states could lead to the erosion of the idea of reunification in the long-term.

This is not to suggest that these are the only implications or hypotheses that can be drawn from this framework, but as we look at the challenges more systematically, we can better understand the dynamics of the reunification process. The next step is to explore what actually causes peaceful reunification.

## ENDNOTES

1. For our purposes, a state is a territorially bounded political unit with a central government, possessing a monopoly of legitimate violence within this polity. Moreover, the government is recognized by members of the international community as a sovereign state.
2. This permanent union contrasts to what some call “national community”—the existence of two independent states that support the idea of cultural oneness, while allowing goods and people to flow freely between them. It is not a confederation where states share decision-making power over a few functional areas (e.g., foreign policy), but where most political authority is retained in the constituent states and each has the right to pull out of the arrangement.
3. As an example, North Vietnamese troops toppled the South Vietnamese government in Saigon, reunifying the two countries under the authority of Hanoi.
4. Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 51.
5. The reunification of Germany was a negotiated integration. Negotiations took place between Bonn and Berlin, and a mutual agreement was reached to reunify under Article 23. East Germany relinquished its authority to that of the FRG in exchange for a promise of prosperity.
6. This is a constructivist approach, focusing on the role of ideational factors that are collectively shared.
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10. Marc Ross, “Culture in Comparative Political Analysis,” in Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, eds., *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 138.

11. Michael Barnett, "Identity and Alliances in the Middle East," in Peter Katzenstein, ed., *Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 409-10.
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22. Aidan Foster Carter, "Korea: Sociopolitical Realities of Reuniting a Divided Nation," in Thomas Henriksen and Kyongsoo Lho, eds., *One Korea? Challenges and Prospects for Reunification* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1994), pp. 32-33.
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24. James McAdams, *Germany Divided: From the Wall to Reunification* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).
25. On viewing state building as a strategic bargaining process following civil wars, see David Mason and Patrick Fetts, "How Wars End: A Rational Choice Approach," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (December 1996); Donald Wittman, "How Wars End: A Rational Choice Model," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (1979).
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30. H.E. Goemens, *War and Punishment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Donald Wittman, "How Wars End: A rational choice model," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (1979), pp. 743-763.
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43. Robert Jervis and Jack Snyder, "Civil War and the Security Dilemma," in Barbara Walter and Jack Snyder, eds. *Civil Wars, Insecurity and Intervention* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
44. Adam Pzeworski, *Democracy and the Market* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 54-55.
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