



Moonshine: How a Return to the Sunshine Policy under President Moon Jae-In will bring Stability to the Korean Peninsula

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Abstract:

Following ten years of conservative rule in South Korea, the election of President Moon Jae-In presents an opportunity to improve its relationship with North Korea. A major architect of the Sunshine Policy, many of Moon's proposed policy changes echo those of the Sunshine Policy. This paper will present and evaluate the merits of the Sunshine Policy, and compare them to Vision 3000: Denuclearization and Openness, the alternative presented during the governments of Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye. Finally, this paper will present the merits of a return to such policies of reconciliation and openness with North Korea, examining the structural factors leading to North Korean proliferation.

Résumé :

Après dix années de régime conservateur en Corée du Sud, l'élection du président Moon Jae-In est l'occasion d'améliorer ses relations avec la Corée du Nord. Grand architecte de la politique Sunshine, bon nombre de changements proposés par Moon font écho à ceux de la politique Sunshine. Ce document présentera et évaluera les mérites de la politique Sunshine, et les comparera à Vision 3000 : Dénucléarisation et Ouverture, l'alternative présentée pendant les gouvernements de Lee Myung-bak et Park Geun-hye. Enfin, ce document présentera les mérites d'un retour à de telles politiques de réconciliation et d'ouverture avec la Corée du Nord, en examinant les facteurs structurels conduisant à la prolifération nord-coréenne.

Keywords: Sunshine Policy, Vision 3000, ROK-DPRK Relations, Moon Jae-In, diplomatic history, nuclear brinkmanship, game theory

“Our Sunshine Policy is a truly difficult proposition. It requires courage and perseverance as well as faithfulness and wisdom. Our tasks will be many and varied. However, I firmly believe that the policy is the call of history. It represents the aspiration of all peoples and the Korean nation's only viable route to survival.”

- Korean President Kim Dae-jung at
the Jeju Peace Forum, 16 June, 2001¹

Introduction

On July 17th, 2017, the recently sworn-in government of Moon Jae-in moved for bilateral military talks with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to discuss aversion of a military crisis at the nation’s volatile border.² The move comes at a time when Inter-Korean and Washington-Pyongyang relations are at an all-time low, and the DPRK boasts that it has recently tested the technology necessary to deliver a nuclear weapon across the Pacific Ocean.³ The move signals a major shift in Inter-Korean relations by the administration of Moon Jae-in, and a stark shift from the policies of conservative Park Geun-hye. Moon, a human rights lawyer and Chief of Staff under former-President Roh Moo-hyun,⁴ campaigned during the 2017 presidential election on a platform of “Reform and Unity”, including reviving bilateral talks with the DPRK, arguing that the path to Korean unification and nonproliferation on the peninsula lies within dialogue and economic exchange between the two regimes.⁵

¹ “Address by President Kim Dae-Jung at the Jeju Peace Forum,” *Institute for National Security Strategy* 15, no. 1 (2001): 174-79.

² Adam Taylor, “There are 3 Big Reasons Why South Korea’s New President Wants Talks with North Korea,” *The Washington Post*, published July 17, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/07/17/there-are-3-big-reasons-south-koreas-new-president-wants-talks-with-north-korea/>.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ S. Nathan Park, “Moon’s Secret Weapon is Sunshine,” *Foreign Policy*, May 19, 2017, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/05/19/mons-secret-weapon-is-sunshine-south-korea-kim-jong-un/>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

Moon's positions echo those of the Sunshine Policy, the set of policies directed at the DPRK by the Democratic governments of Kim Dae-jung (1997-2003) and Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2008). The Sunshine Policy was outlined by President Kim Dae-jung with the stated goal of "improv[ing] inter-Korean relations by promoting peace, reconciliation, and cooperation."⁶ The Sunshine Policy would lead to an inter-Korean dialogue and a reduced emphasis on military confrontation as a means to achieve reunification. The Sunshine Policy views Korean unification as a *process*, rather than a climatic, singular objective.⁷ It prioritizes the establishment of peaceful coexistence and reconciliation, forgoing a focus on reunification until a later time.

The Sunshine Policy was a marked break from the unification policies of conservative governments before and since, which have been marked by the use of the military as a deterrent and primary means through which unification was to be achieved. The elite of South Korean society are notoriously anti-communist, and therefore are distrustful of any dialogue with the North.⁸ This was evident during the past ten years of conservative rule. The presidencies of Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye were marked by a rollback of the Sunshine Policy, and the obituaries of warmer inter-Korean relations were written as the North increased military tensions and refused to halt their nuclear weapons program.⁹

Inter-Korean relations currently stand at a critical juncture, as the DPRK claim they have successfully conducted their first tests of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles.¹⁰ At the time of writing, there are currently no official channels for emergency coordination between the two

⁶ Haksoon Paik, "Assessment of the Sunshine Policy: A Korean Perspective," *Asian Perspective* 26, no. 3 (2002):14.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid, 17.

⁹ Christian Caryl, "Goodbye Sunshine," *Foreign Policy*, published January 21, 2017, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/05/21/goodbye-sunshine/>.

¹⁰ Adam Taylor, "There are 3 Big Reasons Why South Korea's New President Wants Talks with North Korea."

Korean regimes,¹¹ and the new norm shirking administration in the United States has not solidified its foreign policy process, nor has it filled many political appointments in the Departments of State or Defence.¹² In seeking to rekindle many of the policies that comprised the Sunshine Policy, it is worth examining the record of the Policy with that of its successor. Vision 3000 was the alternative offered by the conservative administrations following Roh Moo-hyun's presidency. This paper will lay out and evaluate the main pillars of the Sunshine Policy, as well as Vision 3000.

This paper will take a constructivist approach in its analysis, looking closely at the structural factors leading to policy shifts in approaches to unification. I will argue that the Sunshine Policy of 1997-2003 allowed the Republic of Korea to be more *proactive* in its inter-Korean policy, allowing it to engage in a peaceful dialogue with the North, while giving the South the flexibility to respond resolutely to norm violations committed by the North. Further, this paper will examine the oft-cited claims that the DPRK is not a rational actor and argue forcefully using the international relations theory that the North is pursuing a rational, self-defence motivated nuclear policy. A resumption of the Sunshine Policy would allow Moon Jae-in the opportunity to restore normative diplomacy with the DPRK, ensuring that war on the Korean peninsula remains a fantasy.

A Policy of Compromise: The Origins of the Sunshine Policy

From a constructivist perspective, it is imperative to examine the systematic factors that limit and enable the agency of all actors, and critically examine actors' actions defying their

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Karen Yourish and Gregor Aisch, "The Top Jobs in Trump's Administration are Mostly Vacant: Who's to Blame?," The New York Times, published on July 20, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/07/17/us/politics/trump-appointments.html>.

systematic constraints. In the case of the Korean unification policy, the constraint was evident through economic crisis, leading to a restructuring by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).¹³ Until 1996, the Republic of Korea was the model for economic success in East Asia. Its strategy of state-led growth created an average GDP growth of 8% per annum, and a corresponding average increase in wages of 7%. However, by 1997, a decade of ill-advised financial liberalization¹⁴ heavily fueled by short-term loans from foreign banks, created an investment-led boom. During the Asian Tiger Crisis in 1997, foreign banks demanded an immediate repayment of loans. Without the liquid assets required to affect such a repayment, many Korean firms and banks were near the brink of defaulting on their loans.¹⁵ As was the case throughout the region during the Asian Tiger crisis, the IMF was soon to offer a restructuring program to the Republic of Korea. Ever the reformist, Kim Dae-jung welcomed IMF restructuring with open arms, and such a program began in December 1997. The IMF immediately ordered that massive macroeconomic austerity measures be undertaken, including a 30% interest-rate hike. The effect on the economy was felt immediately; GDP growth plummeted, and unemployment skyrocketed.¹⁶ Part of the austerity measures enacted by the Republic of Korea included cuts to the defence budget.¹⁷ Constrained by the IMF restructuring, it was necessary for Kim Dae-jung to rethink South Korean policy towards the

¹³ Paik, "Assessment of the Sunshine Policy: A Korean Perspective," 17.

¹⁴ James Crotty and Lee Kang-Kook, "A Political-economic Analysis of the Failure of Neo-liberal Restructuring in Post-crisis Korea," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 26, no. 5 (2002): 668: Buckling to pressure from foreign firms seeking a share in the Korean 'miracle', and family owned conglomerates (*chaebol*), the South Korean government liberalized markets by ending the longtime practice of controlling *chaebol* investment decisions, deregulated markets, and liberalized capital flows.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ The unemployment rate in the Republic of Korea rose from 2.7% in 1997 to 6.96% in 1999: see "South Korea Unemployment rate," TheGlobalEconomy.com, Accessed September 25, 2017, http://www.theglobaleconomy.com/South-Korea/Unemployment_rate/.

¹⁷ Between 1997 and 2004, the Korean defence budget fell from 2.663% of GDP to 2.331%: "Military expenditure (% of GDP)," The World Bank, Accessed September 25, 2017, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?end=2016&locations=KR&start=1960&view=chart>.

DPRK. The result of financial constraints on the Korean military was a new policy of reconciliation, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence with the North.¹⁸

Parallel to the constraints of IMF restructuring was an increase of tension on the peninsula from two significant events in 1998. First, the Rumsfeld Commission outlined secret plans by the DPRK to develop an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM), the Taepo Dong 2, in July 1998.¹⁹ The second event was the firing of the Taepo Dong 2 over the Sea of Japan in September 1998.²⁰ While these events would normally result in an increase of military tensions, President Kim Dae-jung viewed these events as an opportunity to reform the inter-Korean relationship. Thus, it was this air of reform that led to a resumption of dialogue between the peninsula's two regimes in 2000.²¹

After seven years during which the two regimes suspended diplomatic relations, a historic Inter-Korean Summit took place in Pyongyang in June 2000 and was personally attended by both heads of state. The two nations are technically still in a state of war, therefore this move displayed a great deal of trust on the part of Kim Dae-jung.²² It was through these talks that the electoral promise of dialogue would become realized, surmised in five main efforts outlined in the North-South Joint Declaration on June 15, 2000. The document first affirmed both parties' commitment to reunification of the peninsula through peaceful means; second, the parties agreed on the similarity of the future political systems sought by both the North and South, confederation, and

¹⁸ Paik, "Assessment of the Sunshine Policy: A Korean Perspective."

¹⁹ United States, Congress and House Committee on National Security, *Findings and Conclusions of the Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States: Hearing before the Committee on National Security, House of Representatives, One Hundred Fifth Congress: Second Session, Hearing Held July 16, 1998* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998), 9.

²⁰ Sheryl Wudunn, "North Korea Fires Missile Over Japanese Territory," *The New York Times*, published September 1, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/01/world/north-korea-fires-missile-over-japanese-territory.html>.

²¹ Chung-in Moon, "The Kim Dae Jung Government's Peace Policy Towards North Korea," *Asian Perspective*, 25, no. 2 (2001): 178-179.

²² *Ibid*, 178.

federalism respectively. Third, the document commits to family reunification; fourth, to the promotion of economic cooperation and cultural exchanges. Finally, the Declaration commits both nations to begin a dialogue.²³

While the declaration calls on both nations to reduce tensions and outlines a format for dialogue to begin, it does not diminish the military rivalry between both nations. The Korean peninsula continues to be locked in a classical security dilemma. Both nations perceive the other as a threat, and therefore procure advanced conventional arms, such as *Aegis* equipped Guided Missile Destroyers, and keep large standing armies. The militaries of both nations combined exceed 1.8 million service members.²⁴ Therefore, it can be observed that the Sunshine Policy is not a complete break from the established foreign policy of the Republic of Korea, rather, it expands the total options available to pressure the North. The Kim government did not surrender its powerful deterrent against the North, which is a vital force for maintaining the status quo on the peninsula. Deterrence can be described as *peacekeeping*, and is pursued through two main efforts; first, the indigenous military capabilities of the Republic of Korea, and secondly, the large military presence of the United States on the peninsula.²⁵ The efforts of the Sunshine Policy can therefore be described as *peacemaking*; transforming the relationship into one that is more peaceful through diplomatic means, such as arms control, and normalizing diplomatic relations. These efforts are fully realized as a *peacebuilding* process, or the crafting of a lasting peace without the need of large deterrence measures.²⁶ Peacebuilding would require the Republic of Korea to exert pressure on the DPRK to change the structural factors leading to inter-Korean conflict, such as cracking the fortified *Juche* of the DPRK to introduce market reforms, including commercial

²³ Ibid, 180.

²⁴ Ibid, 181.

²⁵ Ibid, 184.

²⁶ Ibid, 186.

relations, and membership in International Financial Organizations (IFOs), thereby normalizing the interactions of the DPRK with the international community.

Solar Eclipse: The Death of The Sunshine Policy

The successive embattled liberal governments of Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun fell in 2008 to conservative Lee Myung-bak. The proposition of the Lee administration was that the Sunshine Policy had failed in its main objective; after ten years of openness with the North, the Sunshine Policy had failed to induce the North to reform itself into a normal state.²⁷ The Lee government argued that unconditional and unilateral concessions to the North²⁸ in fact strengthened its position domestically and internationally, and it failed to deter nuclear tests in 2002 and 2006. Sunshine was successful in economic and cultural exchanges, as by 2008 more than 30 000 North Korean workers were employed in 70 South Korean firms and cooperation revitalized the North Korean tourism industry.²⁹ However, the Kim and Roh governments were not successful in achieving the cited goals of reducing tensions along the Demilitarized Zone through a bilateral agreement to reduce the number of soldiers at the border. Additionally, they were unable to negotiate any agreements to dismantle the North's nuclear program or build any significant confidence measures between the two regimes.

To respond to the perceived failure of Sunshine, the Lee government announced its unification policy, 'Vision 3000: Denuclearization and Openness', that would be goal-oriented and tied to reciprocal relaxation of tensions with the North. This policy placed the denuclearization of

²⁷Hong-Nack Kim, "The Lee Mung-Bak Government's North Korea Policy and the Prospects for Inter-Korean Relations," *International Journal of Korean Studies* XII, no. 1 (2008): 2.

²⁸ Ibid, 3: By 2008, the South had provided the North with \$3.5 billion in assistance.

²⁹ Ibid, 3-4: Hyundai Asan invested in the Mt. Kumhang Tourism Project in North Korea, which boasted 30,000 visits per month by 2008.

the North as the single most important objective in inter-Korean relations, and Vision 3000 does not place dialogue as mandatory in inter-Korean relations.³⁰ While many economic cooperation policies were continued in principle, an element of reciprocity was introduced in its practice. The Lee government proclaimed that humanitarian aid would only be provided to the North with assurances that it would repatriate South Korean Prisoners of War and commit to family reunification. Further, economic development would continue with the ambitious goal to raise the North's GNI in ten years,³¹ through pressuring it to transition into a market-based export economy. The Lee government's Vision 3000 plan also included securing international development funds from IFOs and ambitious infrastructure investments.³² Although these measures may resemble those of the Sunshine Policy in their appearance of openness and corporation, the underlying theories and motivations have changed. While the Sunshine Policy conceived of the unification of the two Koreas as a process achieved only through the long process of deliberate diplomacy and trust building measures, Vision 3000 conceives of unification as sound investment strategy - stated explicitly by the Lee government in its outlining of Vision 3000.³³

Vision 3000 portrayed the North Korean nuclear weapons program as an existential threat to the Republic of Korea, and drew on the proposition that the Kim dynasty is irrational, or in a situation of desperation.³⁴ However, David C. Kang argues authoritatively that the weapons program in the North is a matter of state-survival rather than of aggressive motivations. A common

³⁰ Kim, "The Lee Mung-Bak Government's North Korea Policy and the Prospects for Inter-Korean Relations."

³¹ Ibid, 8: The 2005 GNI of the DPRK was \$650, and the Lee government's plan proposed to raise that figure to \$3000 in ten years. The plan called for the development of several free trade areas in the North, and the establishment of science and technology institutions in North Korea for the purpose of training 300,000 professionals.

³² Ibid, 9: Vision 3000 included plans by the Lee government to secure \$40 billion in funds from the IMF, WBG, and Inter-Korean Cooperation fund, as well as making investments in a new inter-Korean railroad, "Seoul-Sinuiju," communications networks, and infrastructure including ports, railways, and highways.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ David C. Kang, "International Relations Theory and the Second Korean War," *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (2003):301-324.

assertion levelled at the North is that its leadership is irrational and if its situation becomes dire, it is likely to use force to rebalance the status quo on the peninsula. Theories typically imagine the South as a stalwart defender while the North is a rogue challenger to the established order. Even theorists who imagine the Northern leadership to be rational envision that it is conceivable for the DPRK to rationally initiate war in a ‘desperation’ scenario - under which the North initiates hostilities with the South because the status quo is less preferable than the potential disasters potentially caused by open conflict.³⁵

North Korea and the Melian Dialogue: What if Melos could Nuke Athens?

The question of North Korea’s nuclear weapons goes right to the heart of the Melian Dialogue. While a myopic analysis of the classical Grecian work focuses on that infamous phrase uttered in negotiation with the people of Melos, “This is the safe rule - to stand up to one’s equals, to behave with deference to one’s superiors, and treat one’s inferiors with moderation,”³⁶ what is often missing from discussions of the Melian dialogue is its context, and its applicability to the political situation on the Korean peninsula.

In the *Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides and a delegation of Athenians arrive on the Island of Melos to demand tribute from the Melians to Athens. Melos, a colony of Sparta, had not followed its neighbours in the Aegean Sea, the majority of whom entered into a tributary relationship with Athens. In negotiations, the Melians demand the principles of ‘fair play’ and ‘just dealing’, and the Athenians respond that those who preserve their independence do so because they are strong. The Melian Dialogue presents the issue of *sovereignty*, the right of Melos to

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Thucydides, “History of the Peloponnesian War,” Chapter XVII, Mount Holyoke College, Accessed September 29, 2017, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/melian.htm>.

determine its foreign relations for itself, and to be free to manage its affairs without intervention from either of the classical hegemonies – Athens and Sparta. The Melian dialogue ends with Athens laying siege to Melos; and although the Melians are initially successful in countering the siege, the Athenian lines are quickly reinforced, and Melos overrun by Athens. The dialogue closes with Thucydides recounting the punishment for Melos’ defiance; after surrendering unconditionally, all Melian men of military age were executed, the women and children were sold as slaves, and the remainder of the city became a colony of Athens.³⁷ The lessons of the Melian dialogue for the DPRK are clear - exercising one’s sovereignty can be a dangerous exercise in brinkmanship for a state rivalling nearby hegemonic powers. Most telling in the Melian Dialogue is the justification for the Athenians intervening in the affairs of Melos,

“We are not so much frightened of states on the continent. They have their liberty, and this means that it will be a long time before they begin to take precautions against us. We are more concerned about islanders like yourselves, who are still unsubdued, or subjects who have already become embittered by the constraint which our empire imposes on them.”³⁸

In short, the Athenians are concerned by the proximity of the Melians to their empire, for the Athenians are the hegemonic power of the Aegean Sea. The Melians are subject to the imperial dictates of the Athenians because they are within their sphere of influence. While nations outside of Athenian influence, or those within the spheres of other hegemonic nations are not subject to the whims of Athens, the Melians, as a free city in the Aegean Sea, lose their ability to contravene their neighbourhood hegemon. Melos is therefore threatened not only by *relative power*, but also by its *proximity* relative to a hegemonic power.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

North Korea is in a much more dangerous neighbourhood, as it shares a border with the burgeoning People's Republic of China, but also lies under threat of the United States, the world's undisputed superpower since 1945. In order to abate the threat posed to the regime by the competing interests of the two rival powers, the North has adopted an inward looking ideology known as *Juche*, postured as Kim Il-sung's contribution to revolutionary thought.³⁹ The ideology's most complete conception, *On the Juche Idea*, was published under Kim Il-sung's name in 1982, proclaiming that only through self-reliance can a nation achieve true socialism. *Juche* is marked by its emphasis on political independence (sovereignty, *jaju*), national economy (*jarip*), and self-defence (*jawi*).⁴⁰ As the example of the Melian dialogue clearly shows, the North's ideology of self-reliance is a dangerous position to occupy. This is amplified given the relative power of the North Korean state against its rivals. Analyzing the most important statistics in international relations theory, GDP and defense spending, it is clear that the North is not able to compete with the South. By 2000, North Korean GNP had fallen to be less than 10% of South Korea, and per capita the ratio between the two nations fell to 5:1 in favour of the South.⁴¹ In terms of military spending, According to the US State Department's World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 2016 report, the North spent a yearly average of US\$3 Billion, while the South spent an average of US\$30 Billion in the same period.

Luckily for the North Koreans, weapons of war have advanced to a point that allows for an advantage to small nations. The potential firestorm that could be unleashed by munitions carrying a nuclear payload are devastating, and due to imperfect countermeasures, described in a US Joint

³⁹ Kim Il Sung, "On the Juche Idea," Official Democratic People's Republic of Korea Articles and Korean Friendship Association USA, 1982, <http://www.korea-dpr.com/lib/Kim%20Jong%20Il%20-%204/ON%20THE%20JUCHE%20IDEA.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Erik Gartzke and Jon R. Lindsay, "The U.S. wants to stop North Korean missiles before they launch. That may not be a great idea," The Washington Post, published March 15, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/03/15/the-u-s-wants-to-stop-north-korean-missiles-before-they-launch-that-may-not-be-a-great-idea/>.

Chief of Staff report as ‘trying to hit a bullet with a bullet’ and counter-countermeasures⁴², defense against nuclear attack is very difficult. These structural constraints render the prospect of winning a nuclear war meaningless. However, it is possible for a state possessing nuclear weapons to manipulate the risk associated with nuclear war. Players are therefore engaged in a game of brinksmanship on the assumption that the other player will defer before nuclear hostilities commence. Nuclear brinksmanship is a game of ‘chicken’, and the price paid by players engaged in a game of nuclear chicken has the potential to end in disaster. However, successfully manipulating the game of nuclear brinksmanship has an incredibly deterring effect on players opposed to states engaging in nuclear brinksmanship. When the North makes bellicose statements such as those it made in August 2017 threatening to test nuclear weapons off the coast of Guam,⁴³ the purpose of these statements is to manipulate the risk associated with the North’s nuclear arsenal, and disincentivize any meaningful response from the United States.

The images of the Kim regime in Pyongyang that circulate the popular media portray the actions of the regime in either a satirical or irrational light. The underlying narrative of this assumption is that the North is committed to achieving its goals in a way that defies normative cost/benefit analysis. The calculations contributing to actions taken by the regime towards the North’s goal of unification can be summed thusly; the value attributed to the goal, the costs of attaining the goal, and the probability of success. In order to take action, the regime would have to value all calculations very highly, however as shown previously, the North is highly imbalanced against the South in terms of economic output, military spending, and military transfers from sponsor states. A rational actor would therefore conclude that military action taken towards

⁴² Ibid: Counter-counter measures are designed to limit the possibility that a missile once launched will be able to deliver its payload to its intended target. Examples include use of decoys; multiple warheads and missile volleys.

⁴³ Choe Sang-Hun, “North Korea Says it Might Fire Missiles into Waters Near Guam,” The New York Times, published August 9, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/09/world/asia/north-korea-missiles-guam.html>.

reunification is ill-advised, and it can be asserted that the North has made this calculation as evidenced by the lasting peace on the peninsula.⁴⁴ North Korea is rational because although it highly values unification, it is restrained by a calculation that success is unlikely, and the risk associated is too high.

Insights into the Pyongyang's motives can be taken directly from the North's publicly released statements justifying its proliferation. North Korea has said in statements that,

“History proves that powerful nuclear deterrence serves as the strongest treasured sword for frustrating outsiders' aggression. [...] The Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq and the Gaddafi regime in Libya could not escape the fate of destruction after being deprived of their foundations for nuclear development and giving up nuclear programmes of their own accord.”⁴⁵

Libya, which buckled to pressure and dismantled its nuclear programme in 2003, faced a western sponsored rebellion in 2011 that ultimately led to the decapitation of that regime.⁴⁶

While limited-war options seen during the Libyan campaign were possible before the DPRK developed a nuclear capability, such as pre-emptive strikes against nuclear facilities or decapitation operations against the regime's leadership, such options are now unattractive due to the potential massive cost. The Republic of Korea and the United States are now faced with an unattractive but unavoidable reality - a nuclear Korean peninsula. However, feeling abandoned by its allies in Moscow and Beijing, and continued hostilities

⁴⁴ Kang, “International Relations Theory and the Second Korean War,” 301-324.

⁴⁵ Stephen Evans, “The Saddam Factor in North Korea's Nuclear Strategy,” BBC World Service, published September 9, 2016, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-37321686>.

⁴⁶ Edward Chang, “North Korea has Nuclear Weapons so it Won't End Up Like Libya,” The National Interest, published April 6, 2017. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/north-korea-has-nuclear-weapons-so-it-wont-end-libya-20060>.

from its adversaries in Tokyo and Washington, the DPRK chose to develop nuclear weapons as a matter of state survival.

The Road Forward: How to Stop Worrying and Learn to Love the Bomb

Perhaps the current security dilemma could have been avoided if certain steps were taken. At the end of the Cold War, the United States neglected to follow the example of the Russian Federation and People's Republic of China's normalization of relations with the Republic of Korea, by normalizing relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.⁴⁷ This would have presented an excellent opportunity to work multilaterally with the Republic of Korea during the Kim Dae-jung administration's initial push for the normalization of relations. Instead, the United States insisted that any normalization of relations or negotiated end to the Korean War be impinged upon a negotiated path to complete, verifiable, and irreversible disarmament (CVID).⁴⁸ Much like the conservative administrations in the Republic of Korea, the United States sees the cessation of proliferation as a precondition rather than a goal, and as a singular event rather than a process. The normalization of relations is not an endorsement of the actions of any state, rather it is an acceptance of the fact that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a nation-state with a functioning government.⁴⁹ The normalization of relations with North Korea is important for two reasons; assuring the Kim regime that the United States is not committed to regime change, and increasing the diplomatic arsenal available to the ROK and the United States to effect the goal of continued peace on the peninsula as expressed by all parties.

⁴⁷ David Lai and Alyssa Blair, "How to Live with a Nuclear North Korea," *Foreign Policy*, August 7, 2017, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/08/07/how-to-learn-to-live-with-a-nuclear-north-korea/>.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

While the claim is often made that diplomatic efforts have been tried and been unsuccessful, they fail to mention that past diplomatic efforts have been singularly focused on the issue of disarmament and have not been part of a larger peace process addressing the structural concerns of the Kim regime in Pyongyang. On 18 September 2017, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe wrote a powerful editorial for the *New York Times*, outlining what he sees as a dire situation, in which the DPRK has systematically rebuked the non-proliferation regime, by withdrawing from both the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the International Atomic Energy Agency, in 2003 and 2002, respectively.⁵⁰ Abe argues that the international community acted with solidarity in addressing the threat posed by proliferation, through the Six-Party Talks (China, Russia, Japan, the United States, and North and South Korea) in attempting to persuade North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambitions.⁵¹

Prime Minister Abe fails to mention that these talks were predicated upon the North abandoning its program without any concessions made to the North in order to address the root causes of North Korean proliferation. Prime Minister Abe argues that the DPRK would view any attempt at further diplomacy as “proof that other countries succumbed to the success of its missile launches and nuclear tests”,⁵² and therefore humiliate the West and embolden North Korea. However, there has been no attempt at negotiating a solution to proliferation and none have been proposed.

On 10 May 2017, Moon Jae-in was sworn in as President of the Republic of Korea. A human rights lawyer and former Chief of Staff for Democratic President Roh Moo-hyun, Moon was elected on a promise to revive some keystone policies of the Sunshine Policy and notably

⁵⁰ Shinzo Abe, “Shinzo Abe: Solidarity Against the North Korean Threat,” *The New York Times*, September 17, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/17/opinion/north-korea-shinzo-abe-japan.html>.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

nominated some key architects of the Policy to cabinet, such as Suh Hoon, the architect of the two Inter-Korean summits, who President Moon has chosen to head the National Intelligence Service.⁵³ President Moon, like his Democratic predecessors, understands that the ultimate risk of continuing the sanctions regime and military posturing against the North is a nuclear tragedy on the Korean peninsula, in a horrific end to the game of nuclear chicken currently taking place. Therefore, President Moon has advocated for a policy of re-engaging in diplomacy with the North, but despite this change in policy, also sees the necessity of a military deterrent.⁵⁴ Unlike his predecessors, President Moon contends that while maintaining a deterrent and sanctions regime is important to pressure the North, the road to a lasting peace is through dialogue.⁵⁵ However, despite the arguments of Joshua Stanton, Sung-Yoon Lee, and Bruce Klingner, that a return to the Sunshine Policy means a turn to appeasement of the Kim regime,⁵⁶ the Republic of Korea has maintained a strong military deterrent.

Since Moon Jae-in's inauguration, the ROK has participated in bilateral exercises with the United States, some of the largest of their kind, involving 7,500 American soldiers, and 50,000 South Korean troops, exercising the country's emergency response to conventional, asymmetric, and nuclear threats.⁵⁷ Further, the ROK has announced what it calls a 'decapitation unit', which it has publicly stated could be used to conduct cross-border raids against the leadership of the Kim

⁵³ "South Korea's Moon Jae-in Sworn in vowing to address North," BBC World Service, May 10, 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-39866696>.

⁵⁴ Choe Sang-Hun, "South Korea Elects Moon Jae-in, Who Backs Talks with North, as President," The New York Times, published May 9, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/09/world/asia/south-korea-election-president-moon-jae-in.html>.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Choe Sang-Hun, "South Korea Faces an Uncomfortable Reality: A Nuclear Neighbour," The New York Times, published August 21, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/21/world/asia/south-korea-north-nuclear-weapons.html>.

⁵⁷ Choe Sang-Hun, "South Korea Plans 'Decapitation Unit' to Try to Scare North's Leaders," The New York Times, September 12, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/12/world/asia/north-south-korea-decapitation-.html>.

regime.⁵⁸ President Moon has pledged to increase military spending to 2.9% of GDP, from 2.4% left by the previous conservative government,⁵⁹ which includes three arms-build up plans, Kill Chain; the Korea Air and Missile Defense program, and; the Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation Initiative, designed to preemptively strike missile launches, missile interceptors, and short-range ballistic missiles, respectively.⁶⁰ Evidently, the claims of the Sunshine Policy's detractors do not hold water against the reality of Moon Jae-in's policies. Further, deterrence does not preclude the possibility of limited, defensive engagements against aggression from the North, such as those taken in retaliation for the North Korean Navy crossing the Northern Limit Line in 1999 and 2002. The Republic of Korea Navy responded with force, killing dozens of DPRK sailors.⁶¹ To contrast this with a conservative administration, the Lee Myung-bak administration failed to respond effectively to the 2010 sinking of a South Korean corvette, merely issuing verbal denunciations.⁶²

The underlying fault of the conservative vision of unification policy is that it cedes the status quo to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. When Stanton et. al write that "Washington must threaten the one thing that Pyongyang values more than its nuclear weapons: its survival"⁶³ they are ceding to the Kim regime the guarantee of the survival of their oppressive and totalitarian regime. The fundamental assertion of the Sunshine Policy is that the status quo is not acceptable and maintains the dream of Korean unification. However, while some in the current American administration may see this as only possible through the use of military force on the

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Park, "Moon's Secret Weapon is Sunshine."

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Joshua Stanton, Sung-Yoon Lee, and Bruce Klingner, "Getting Tough on North Korea: How to Hit Pyongyang Where It Hurts," *Foreign Affairs*, September 24, 2017, Accessed September 24, 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-korea/2017-04-17/getting-tough-north-korea>.

peninsula, the Sunshine Policy is confident in the superiority of its ideals. While Vision 3000 made aid and economic exchanges conditional and reciprocal, the Sunshine Policy understands that the Liberal ideals of South Korea have brought it freedom, prosperity, and abundance. Showcasing Liberal ideals to the North is a powerful enough weapon to shake the regime to its core. A powerful example of the destabilizing impact that the Sunshine Policy had on North Korea is the moon shaped Choco Pie. North Korean workers on exchange in South Korea were increasingly exposed to artifacts of South Korean wealth, and the Kaesong Industrial Complex began distributing Choco Pies to their workers.⁶⁴ These pies in turn became so popular that workers stopped eating all of their Choco Pies, and many made their way back into North Korea to be sold in the country's large markets.⁶⁵

The impact of exposure to Choco Pies and other artifacts of South Korean culture was immediate. By 2001, one year after the start of the program at Kaesong, the number of defectors spiked to more than 500, and to more than 2000 by 2002.⁶⁶ More than any ballistic missile program or armed resistance to North Korean proliferation, the Choco Pie and South Korean cultural objects may be one of the most effective weapons at the disposal of Moon Jae-in. The Kim regime, although tolerating the sale of Choco Pies at the country's markets, has pressured the Kaesong Industrial Complex to cease distributing the treats to its North Korean workers as part of their compensation package.⁶⁷ However, the Kim regime is dependent on the revenue generated by its overseas workers. Numbering as many as 100 000, they generate up to US\$2.3 billion for the

⁶⁴ Heesun Wee, "In North Korea, Will Work for Choco Pie," CNBC, published October 7, 2013, <https://www.cnbc.com/2013/10/04/choco-pie-north-koreas-most-coveted-snack.html>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Park, "Moon's Secret Weapon is Sunshine."

⁶⁷ Wee, "In North Korea, Will Work for Choco Pie."

country,⁶⁸ therefore the DPRK is at a disadvantage when fighting Choco Pie distribution. These weapons are powerful not for their destructive power, but for the destabilizing effect they have on the Kim regime. In each Choco Pie is contained a promise, that a better life is within reach, and the only obstacle is the Kim dynasty. If the West truly believes in its Liberal ideals, then it is necessary to showcase them confidently, and show the oppressed North Korean people that better is truly possible.

Conclusion: The Sunshine Policy vs Fire & Fury

On September 20th, 2017, President Donald Trump outlined an ultimatum to the regime in Pyongyang (or, as he dubbed North Korean leader Kim Jong-un -‘Rocket Man’), either denuclearize, or ‘we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea’.⁶⁹ While the President is perhaps the most extreme iteration of this policy, the basic premise has been argued by many before him, including every American administration since President Clinton, as well as the Conservative governments of Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye in the Republic of Korea. The assumptions of these governments is thus; the North Korean regime is irrational, and seeks to reunify the Korean peninsula through violent subversion of their southern neighbour and their Western allies, Japan and the United States. They argue that diplomacy with a rogue nation as such cannot be possible, as doing so would embolden the regime and strengthen their convictions to rebuke international law.

⁶⁸ Oliver Holmes and Tom Phillips, “‘Guest Workers’: The North Korean Expats Forced to Feed the Regime,” The Guardian, published July 5, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/05/north-koreas-global-money-makers-us-scolds-countries-hosting-guest-workers>.

⁶⁹ Kelly Swanson, “Read: Trump’s Full Speech to the UN General Assembly,” Vox News, published September 19, 2017, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/9/19/16333290/trump-full-speech-transcript-un-general-assembly>.

This paper has examined the North Korean security dilemma from a constructivist perspective and argues that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is locked in a Melian dilemma. With no negotiated settlement to the Korean War and absent normal diplomatic relations with the United States, the survival of the regime is not guaranteed. The ideological and geopolitical allies of the DPRK, the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, have established normal relations with the Republic of Korea. Further, the Chinese have an entrenched and normalized relationship with the United States, and the threat of war on the Korean Peninsula is disadvantageous to the Chinese, whose primary goal in the crisis is stability.⁷⁰ War would bring refugees, North Korean soldiers, and possibly radiation over the Yalu and Tumen rivers, which has led many power brokers in Beijing to question the long-held alliance with the North Korean regime.⁷¹ These factors have led to a security dilemma in Pyongyang, whereby their survival is not guaranteed. The spiritual successors to Melos, the North Koreans have fully embraced Thucydides' eternal words to "[...] stand up to one's equals, to behave with deference to one's superiors, and treat one's inferiors with moderation".⁷²

The only guarantor to state survival for the North Korean regime is the development of nuclear weapons. If the regime in Pyongyang was committed to a violent reunification of the peninsula, they are more disadvantaged than at any time in their history. The Kim Il-sung government in the 1960s had the largest relative military strength compared to the South.⁷³ Since then, the Chaebol system in South Korea has meant that the economic and military might of the ROK has far surpassed the North, with indigenous South Korean expenditures being tenfold that

⁷⁰ Adam Mount. "How China Sees North Korea". *The Atlantic*. 29 August 2017.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/08/china-military-strength-north-korea-crisis/538344/>

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Thucydides, "History of the Peloponnesian War," Chapter XVII.

⁷³ David C Kang. "International Relations Theory and the Second Korean War." *International Studies Quarterly* 47.3 (2003):301-24.

of the North by 2017. Supporting the perspective that Northern proliferation is defensive in nature is Dr. Jon Lindsay's piece, which clearly outlines that the purpose of nuclear armaments is not their destructive power, but rather the political posturing that leveraging nuclear weapons allows. Acknowledging the rational choices made by the North Korean regime, a major pillar of Vision 3000 and much of the world's reaction to the North Korean crisis are puzzling. The future of a nuclear Korean peninsula is no longer a potentiality, but rather now an unavoidable fact of life. Therefore, a well-thought out unification policy can no longer be impinged upon a denuclearized Korean peninsula.

In order to avoid a ruinous reignition of hostilities, any unification policy must be focused on attacking the underlying systemic issues that have given rise to the security dilemma in Pyongyang. The only precedent for such a policy is the Sunshine Policy of the Kim Dae-jung government, which sought to maintain a powerful military deterrent against the North, while negotiating a settlement of the Korean War with the DPRK. While many detractors decry this policy as a symbol of weakness and appeasement of the totalitarian Kim regime due to its inception as a result of an IMF restructuring program, the Policy first and foremost created stability on the peninsula. When surveyed in 2000, four years after the beginning of the Sunshine Policy, 77% of respondents viewed the program favourably, with a de-escalation of military tensions as the most cited reason.⁷⁴

The Sunshine Policy was unique in that it did not cede any ground to the Kim regime. While Vision 3000 and American policies are complacent with North Korea as long as it is non-nuclear, the Sunshine Policy is committed to meaningful unification. Through direct negotiation in the unprecedented Inter-Korean summit in 2000, as well as cultural and economic exchanges,

⁷⁴ Park, "Moon's Secret Weapon is Sunshine."

the Sunshine Policy proudly commits the Republic of Korea to a project of unification under Liberal democracy. As demonstrated by the introduction of Choco Pies (an unlikely ally in International Relations) to North Korean workers in Kaesong Industrial Complex, simple artifacts of life in South Korea showcase the superiority of Western ideas, shaking the Kim regime to its core. While ten years of the Sunshine Policy failed to prevent proliferation, it led to a reduction in tensions, and the beginning of normal relations. Kim Dae-jung once said that “[the Sunshine Policy] requires courage and perseverance as well as faithfulness and wisdom”,⁷⁵ and these are needed to solve the crisis on the peninsula. The solution lies in removing the need for proliferation, by assuring the North that the United States is not committed to regime change, normalizing relations, and officially ending the Korean War. Although this is not a politically palatable solution, Ronald Reagan once said, “There are no easy answers, but there are simple answers. We must have the courage to do what we know is morally right.”⁷⁶

⁷⁵ “Address by President Kim Dae-Jung at the Jeju Peace Forum,” 174-79.

⁷⁶ Ronald Reagan, “A Time for Choosing,” *The Constitution Reader*: Hillsdale College, October 27, 1964: 783, <http://www.constitutionreader.com/reader.engz?doc=constitution&chapter=OEBPS/Text/ch123.xhtml>.

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