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**REPUBLIC OF KOREA FOREIGN POLICIES AND  
UNITED STATES REACTIONS: THE CASES OF  
THE TWO NORDPOLITIKS**

Chu, Mijung

Monterey, CA; Naval Postgraduate School

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**NAVAL  
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**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**REPUBLIC OF KOREA FOREIGN POLICIES AND  
UNITED STATES REACTIONS: THE CASES OF THE  
TWO NORDPOLITIKS**

by

Mijung Chu

December 2021

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

Wade L. Huntley  
Robert J. Weiner

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**REPUBLIC OF KOREA FOREIGN POLICIES AND UNITED STATES  
REACTIONS: THE CASES OF THE TWO NORDPOLITIKS**

Mijung Chu  
So-ryeong, Republic of Korea Air Force  
BME, The Republic of Korea Air Force Academy, 2009

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(EAST ASIA AND THE INDO-PACIFIC)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
December 2021**

Approved by: Wade L. Huntley  
Advisor

Robert J. Weiner  
Second Reader

Afshon P. Ostovar  
Associate Chair for Research  
Department of National Security Affairs

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis studies the influence of the United States on the Republic of Korea's Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies, and the interaction between the ROK and the United States in the process of executing the two policies. The Neo-Nordpolitik policy is a foreign and unification policy currently being pursued by the Moon Jae-in government in South Korea, subsequent to the Nordpolitik policy of the Roh Tae-woo administration in the early 1990s. This thesis focuses in-depth on the practical role the United States played in the process of promoting and implementing the two policies. The research for this thesis finds that the United States treated the ROK largely with consistency and consideration over the period spanning these two policies but behaved quite differently toward the two policies themselves. The United States, directly and indirectly, took a supportive position regarding the Nordpolitik policy. On the contrary, the United States, in an indirect manner, has effectively taken a divergent position regarding the Neo-Nordpolitik policy. The thesis explains the different responses of the United States in terms of the two policies' alignments with U.S. interests in the overall circumstances in the Northeast Asia region, which was strong in the first case but is weak in the current case.



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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CNEC	Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation
CRS	Congressional Research Service
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
CVID	complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICBM	intercontinental ballistic missile
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSC	National Security Council
ROK	Republic of Korea
SCM	Security Consultative Meeting
UN	United Nations

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

The major research question posed in this thesis is, “How have the United States’ policies and actions in Northeast Asia affected the choices and outcomes of the Republic of Korea’s (ROK) Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies?” In the question just posed, the term *Nordpolitik* means northern policy in Korean. Nordpolitik was a foreign policy toward northern countries and a unification policy toward North Korea carried out by President Roh Tae-woo from 1988 to 1993. Starting with the Roh administration’s Nordpolitik, subsequent ROK governments have continued to pursue northern policies under different names.<sup>1</sup> (Refer to Table 1 for the northern policies of subsequent ROK governments after the Roh Tae-woo administration.) Today, Neo-Nordpolitik is being carried out by President Moon Jae-in. President Moon, who took office in May 2017, is pushing again the original Nordpolitik under the name of Neo-Nordpolitik.<sup>2</sup> The gist of both foreign policies is to achieve unification of the Korean Peninsula or a peace settlement on the Korean Peninsula through cooperation with northern countries; by the ROK’s standards, “northern countries” refers specifically to neighboring North Korea. Hence, the term *northern* differs in the two policies. In the Nordpolitik, the *Nord* referred to the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea.<sup>3</sup> In the Neo-Nordpolitik, however, the *Nord* stands for

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<sup>1</sup> Giwoong Jung, “ROK’s Northern Policy after Roh Tae-woo Government: From Unification Policies to National Strategies,” *International Area Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 2021): 252.

<sup>2</sup> The Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies are written in Korean as one term, 북방정책 and 신북방정책, respectively. English translations are a mixture of different terms; Nordpolitik, Northern Policy, Northward Policy, Neo-Nordpolitik, and New Northern Policy, respectively. In this thesis, the Roh administration’s northern policy is called Nordpolitik, and the Moon administration’s northern policy is called Neo-Nordpolitik, for simplicity and to distinguish them from various other northern policies.

<sup>3</sup> According to Jung, the Institute of Foreign Affairs defined the northern diplomacy as follows: “Northern diplomacy refers to diplomatic policy and diplomatic activities that seek to improve relations with the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea individually, two countries at the same time, or the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea at the same time” [translated]; Jung, “ROK’s Northern Policy after Roh Tae-woo Government: From Unification Policies to National Strategies,” 246.

fourteen states, which is much wider in scope.<sup>4</sup> Unlike Nordpolitik, North Korea is not named explicitly in the countries that Neo-Nordpolitik policy targets. Considering that the ultimate goal of both Nordpolitik and neo-Nordpolitik policies is unification of the Korean peninsula, it may seem that toppling the Kim Jong-un regime in one way or another is implied. Perhaps the reason why North Korea is omitted from the list may be to dull the implication that the North Korean regime is the ultimate target of both policies.

Both Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik have relied on the United States for support. Prior research, however, has not established how much or in what ways U.S. actions influenced the two policies. Prior research also has not effectively examined how overall conditions in Northeast Asia have affected the Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik. This thesis evaluates the impact of the external environment surrounding policy implementation, especially the impact of the United States on both Nordpolitik policies.

Table 1. The northern policies of Roh administration and subsequent ROK governments

1988–1993	Roh Tae-woo Administration	Nordpolitik
1993–1998	Kim Young-sam Administration	Globalization Policy
1998–2003	Kim Dae-jung Administration	Sunshine Policy
2003–2008	Roh Moo-hyun Administration	Peace-Prosperity Policy
2008–2013	Lee Myung-bak Administration	Resource Foreign Policy
2013–2017	Park Geun-hye Administration	Eurasia Initiative Policy
2017-	Moon Jae-in Administration	Neo-Nordpolitik

## B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Since the Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies have yet to achieve their goal of improving inter-Korean relations, the northern policy is an important foreign and reunification policy of the ROK that will likely continue in the future. This research is

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<sup>4</sup> The fourteen target states are as follows: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, China (Heilongjiang Province, Kirin Province, and Liaoning Province), Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. The Presidential Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation, *Target Countries of Neo-Nordpolitik* (Seoul: The Presidential Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation, 2017), [https://www.bukbang.go.kr/bukbang/vision\\_policy/nation/](https://www.bukbang.go.kr/bukbang/vision_policy/nation/).

significant for the following three reasons: Because the ultimate goal of the two policies is to improve inter-Korean relations—which have not improved after over thirty years of implementing the northern policies—1) this research can help present the future direction of the northern policy, which the ROK government needs to establish; 2) this research can provide a better understanding of the nature of the ROK-U.S. alliance; 3) this research can also suggest the importance of the ROK-U.S. cooperation on Neo-Nordpolitik in terms of defending against North Korea’s nuclear and missile threats.

The Korean Peninsula has been separated between the ROK and North Korea since 1953 when the representatives of the United States, the Soviet Union, and North Korea signed the armistice agreement and the Korean War ended.<sup>5</sup> Since this was a tragic division that the Korean people did not want, the ROK government has made efforts to improve inter-Korean relations and ultimately reunify the two Koreas, pursuing various forms of northern policies based on the Roh administration’s Nordpolitik. As mentioned previously, President Roh introduced the Nordpolitik policy when he announced *A Special Declaration for National Pride and Prosperity of Unification* on July 7, 1998.<sup>6</sup> The July 7 Declaration marked the symbolic beginning of the Nordpolitik drive, as it sought reconciliation and cooperation between the two Koreas and declared the improvement in relations with socialist states. Since then, the ROK governments have carried out northern policies that include a “northern orientation,” although each northern policy has had a different name and vision.<sup>7</sup> President Moon, unlike other previous presidents, reverted back to the earlier Nordpolitik policy, even adopting a similar policy name, Neo-Nordpolitik. Of course, there are some differences in the details of the policies; however, Neo-Nordpolitik is a return to the foreign policy of thirty years ago, given that the fundamental approach to addressing

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<sup>5</sup> Emma Chanlett-Avery et al., *A Peace Treaty with North Korea?* CRS Report No. R45169 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2018), 2, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45169>.

<sup>6</sup> Roh, Tae-woo, “A Special Declaration for National Pride and Prosperity of Unification,” Presidential Archives, Ministry of Public Administration and Security, accessed April 9, 2021, <https://www.pa.go.kr/research/contents/speech/index.jsp>.

<sup>7</sup> Jung, “ROK’s Northern Policy after Roh Tae-woo Government: From Unification Policies to National Strategies,” 243.

the Korean Peninsula issue is the same between Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik in that both seek to improve relations with North Korea through cooperation with countries neighboring North Korea.

When we see the steadily pursued northern policies so far, we are bound to have expectations for their achievements. Despite thirty years of northern policies, however, the relationship between the two Koreas does not seem to have improved at all. Given the continued northern policies from 1988 to the present, the standard way of thinking about northern policy is that the ROK government will be pursuing some form of northern policy until peace arrives on the Korean Peninsula. This raises the need to inspect the ROK's northern policy at this point. This is because if a policy is to be pursued in the future, it is essential to establish a policy that can overcome past ineffectuality and produce the desired results. Now that the Neo-Nordpolitik policy is being pushed forward and the Nordpolitik policy is being recalled at the same time, research on the two policies could have implications in this regard. This study thus investigates President Moon's decision to return to the original Nordpolitik policy. Through such a process, this research can provide recommendations to the ROK government to set the direction of a future northern policy and implement potential policy changes, especially focusing on ROK relations with the United States.

Studying this research question from the perspective of ROK relations with the United States is crucial, since this relationship has enormous impacts on the ROK's policy. The U.S. factor is one of the important considerations for the ROK in establishing foreign policy in the sense that it is inseparable from any Korean policy. This is related to the particularity of ROK-U.S. relations. South Korea signed the ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty on November 18, 1954, after being divided into South and North Korea, and U.S. troops have remained in the ROK for nearly 70 years.<sup>8</sup> Also, under the bilateral defense treaty, the United States has exerted influence on the ROK in various fields, including military, diplomatic, and economic areas, as ROK-U.S. relations have developed. The results of this research are beneficial as they help clarify the United States' role in the

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Seth, *A Concise History of Modern Korea* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 125.

Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik, by examining how the United States relates to the two policies. That largely contributes to a better understanding of the nature of the ROK-U.S. alliance relations.

Studying this research question is also valuable due to the emergence of nuclear-armed North Korea. North's current nuclear capabilities are a stark difference compared to the late 1980s when the Nordpolitik began. Therefore, it is important for the ROK government to think about how it should implement northern policy since North Korea gained nuclear capability. Further, the importance of the ROK-U.S. alliance for missile defense cooperation is highlighted more than ever for the success of the policy. North Korea has conducted a total of six nuclear tests since it announced its withdrawal from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1993 that followed the first nuclear crisis.<sup>9</sup> North Korea has raised great concern for the international community, including the ROK, by showing off its increasingly advanced nuclear technology through nuclear tests despite international sanctions.<sup>10</sup> Considering that North Korea now has significant nuclear capabilities compared to what it had at the end of the 1980s, when it was in its early stages of nuclear development, this thesis meets the need for the ROK government to restructure its future northern policy to factor in a nuclear-armed North Korea as well as looks back on the beginning and end of the ROK's northern policy—that is, Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik—so far. This thesis also illuminates how cooperation between the ROK and the United States should take place in the push for future northern policy.

### C. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is divided into two sections: studies of the original Nordpolitik policy and studies of the new Neo-Nordpolitik policy.

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<sup>9</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., *A Peace Treaty with North Korea?* 4; Emma Chanlett-Avery and Mark E. Manyin, *U.S.-North Korea Relations*, CRS Report No. IF10246 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2020), 2, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10246>.

<sup>10</sup> “North Korea: What Can the Outside World Do?” *BBC News*, July 4, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39216803>.

## 1. Nordpolitik Policy

Existing studies on Nordpolitik are very extensive. They can be broadly classified into three categories.

First, there are studies on Nordpolitik from a domestic political point of view. Among the numerous studies on the Nordpolitik policy, Dal-choong Kim and Jin Woo Son studied the policy's origins,<sup>11</sup> while Yeon-Chul Kim, Jung-Chul Lee, and Chongki An and Sunryung Park revealed its achievements and limitations.<sup>12</sup> Duckjoon Chang identified another northern policy derived from the original Nordpolitik policy,<sup>13</sup> and Jung-Hyun Shin compared a different northern policy to the original Nordpolitik policy.<sup>14</sup> Most recently, Gi-woong Jung reviewed all northern policies of previous governments since the Roh administration in his article "ROK's Northern Policy After Roh Tae-woo Government: From Unification Policies to National Strategies (2021)."<sup>15</sup>

Second, there are studies focusing on the relationship between Nordpolitik and the countries at which it is aimed. Many studies have covered the relationship between

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<sup>11</sup> Dal-choong Kim, "Nordpolitik: Its Concept, Objects and Background," *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 2 (March 1990): 41–51, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/journal/articleDetail?nodeId=NODE00992074>; Jin Woo Son, "A Study on the Origin of Nordpolitik in South Korea: Origin · Exploration Settlement" (PhD diss., University of North Korean Studies, 2015), <http://www.riss.kr/link?id=T13846486>.

<sup>12</sup> Yeon-Chul Kim, "Rho Tae Woo Government's Nordpolitik and the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement: Achievement and Limitation," *Critical Review of History* no. 97 (November 2011): 80–110, Korea Citation Index; Jung-Chul Lee, "An Evaluation of the Roh, Tae-woo Administration's Policy on North Korea," *Korean Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (June 2012): 130–161, 10.25024/ksq.35.2.201206.131; Chongki An and Sunryung Park, "Research on Main Factors in Roh Tae Woo Administration's Nordpolitik (Northward Policy) and Possibility of Re-Evaluation," *Legislation and Policy Studies* 7, no. 1 (June 2015): 131–156, 10.22809/nars.2015.7.1.006.

<sup>13</sup> Duckjoon Chang, "'The Nordpolitik' Revisited: In Search of a Prototype for Overhauling 'The Eurasia Initiative' and After," *Slav Gazette* 32, no. 1 (March 2017): 277–317, 10.46694/JSS.2017.03.32.1.277.

<sup>14</sup> Jung-Hyun Shin, "A Comparative Study on Roh Tae-Woo and Kim Dae-Jung Administration's Policy Towards North Korea," (master's thesis, University of North Korean Studies, 2015), [http://www.riss.kr/search/detail/DetailView.do?p\\_mat\\_type=be54d9b8bc7cdb09&control\\_no=4e3ebca62dd256adffe0bdc3ef48d419](http://www.riss.kr/search/detail/DetailView.do?p_mat_type=be54d9b8bc7cdb09&control_no=4e3ebca62dd256adffe0bdc3ef48d419).

<sup>15</sup> Jung, "ROK's Northern Policy after Roh Tae-woo Government: From Unification Policies to National Strategies."

Nordpolitik and the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, Byung-Chul Seo believed that Nordpolitik refers to a “relationship with all socialist countries except for North Korea” and studied the relationship between Nordpolitik and Eastern Europe, noting the outcomes of the ROK establishing diplomatic relations with Eastern European countries such as Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Rumania as the ROK actively promoted Nordpolitik.<sup>17</sup>

Lastly, there are studies focusing on the relationship between Nordpolitik and the ROK’s allies, though the Nordpolitik policy did not aim at allies. This thesis belongs to the third category. Contrary to the second category, studies dealing with the relationship between the Nordpolitik policy and allies are very few. In a 2003 book *Nordpolitik: Origin, Development, Impact*, Yong-chul Ha argued that Nordpolitik was an example of the ROK’s first attempt at independent diplomacy and a “stark illustration in which the autonomy of South Korean diplomacy warps” in the relationship with, especially, the United States among international factors.<sup>18</sup> Despite the importance of related research, however, he contended that “in-depth research on the actual role the United States played in and the extent of its impact on South and North Korea in terms of the Nordpolitik and subsequent South Korea’s foreign policies” are rare.<sup>19</sup> His claim in 2003 clearly shows that research on the relationship between Nordpolitik and the ROK’s allies, including the United States

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<sup>16</sup> Young-Ho Park, “Nordpolitik and North Korea’s Foreign Relations,” *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 2 (March 1990): 117–130, <https://www.dbpia.co.kr/journal/articleDetail?nodeId=NODE00992080>; Se-Hyun Jeong, “North Korea’s Reactions to Nordpolitik,” *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 2 (March 1990): 131–141, <https://www.dbpia.co.kr/journal/articleDetail?nodeId=NODE00992081>; Hee-Young Kwon, “The Northern Diplomacy and the South Korea-Soviet Union Relationship,” *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 2 (March 1990): 87–93, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/journal/articleDetail?nodeId=NODE00992077>.

<sup>17</sup> Byung-Chul Seo, “Nordpolitik and the Relations of South Korea to the Eastern European Countries,” *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 2 (March 1990): 95–104, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/journal/articleDetail?nodeId=NODE00992078>; Byung-Chul Seo, “Improvement of ROK-Eastern Europe Relations and Its Impact on South and North Korea,” *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 30, no. 1 (August 1990): 97–112, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/journal/articleDetail?nodeId=NODE00993008>.

<sup>18</sup> Yong-chul Ha et al., *Nordpolitik: Origin, Development, Impact* (Seoul: Seoul University Press, 2003), preface.

<sup>19</sup> Ha et al., preface.



among others, is important but had been far from sufficient up to then. Since then, it is still difficult to find studies that have specifically analyzed the impact of the United States on Nordpolitik. The following three articles are the only articles that specifically analyze the relationship between Nordpolitik and the United States.<sup>20</sup>

In 1993, Sang-gyu Kim studied the relationship between the Nordpolitik policy and the U.S. policies in East Asia, especially focusing on parts which approached the Soviet Union and China, among other things.<sup>21</sup> According to Kim, the United States is one of the most important factors in promoting the Nordpolitik policy. This is because the attempt to approach the northern area was made possible by the new U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union. Political support from the United States was the driving force for the results of Nordpolitik policy despite some conflicts between the ROK and the United States in the early days of the launch of the policy.<sup>22</sup> In this article, however, Kim did not provide any specific explanations or examples of how the ROK experienced friction with the United States in the early days of the launch of the Nordpolitik policy. Kim also gave no specific examples of the United States' support and cooperative attitudes toward the Nordpolitik policy.

Regarding whether the ROK's approach to the Soviet Union and China in the Nordpolitik policy is structurally consistent within the U.S. East Asian policy, he saw that Nordpolitik was "in general harmony with the U.S. East Asian policy structure."<sup>23</sup> Kim

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<sup>20</sup> The three articles are all written in Korean. There are also English writings on Nordpolitik, albeit rarely; Dan Sanford, "ROK's Nordpolitik: Revisited," *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 7, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 1993): 1–31, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23254205>, and Jung-Mi Cha, "Analysis of the Implementation of South Korea's Nordpolitik in 1970s-1990s: Focusing on the Interaction between Environment and Foreign Policy Decision-Making," *Korea Observer* 51, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 71–97, <https://doi.org/10.29152/kOIKS.2020.51.1.71>. However, these two articles are not included in the text because they do not focus on the Nordpolitik and its relevance to the United States. Sanford addressed the evolution of the policy during the five-year term of the Roh administration and evaluated the performance of Nordpolitik. Also, Cha addressed comprehensively the internal and external environment surrounding the implementation of Nordpolitik. The interaction of ROK-U.S. policies over the Nordpolitik, which is occasionally mentioned in Sanford's writing, is useful for this thesis.

<sup>21</sup> Sang-gyu Kim, "South Korea's Nordpolitik in South Korea-the United States Relations," *Sino-Soviet Affairs* 58 (June 1993): 235–236.

<sup>22</sup> Kim, 235–236.

<sup>23</sup> Kim, 242.

presented the following evidence to explain this: at that time, U.S. cooperation with China and the Soviet Union “provided a big fence” for the ROK to normalize relations with the two countries.<sup>24</sup> Also, the ROK-Soviet Union summit in San Francisco in June 1990 and the U.S. support for both Koreas joining the United Nations together showed the United States’ cooperative attitude toward the Nordpolitik policy.

According to Kim, by the way, there were also structural inconsistencies between the ROK’s northern diplomacy and the U.S. East Asian policy.<sup>25</sup> Kim argued that considering the geopolitical factors of the United States, if the United States reduced its involvement and even loosened the solidity of relations with individual countries, there could be a possible decrease of U.S. influence in East Asia, which could adversely affect the Nordpolitik policy.<sup>26</sup> In conclusion, Kim contended that it is possible for relatively small countries to change the structure of foreign policy only when they are fitted in the foreign policy structure of the allied great powers, and this is confirmed through the Nordpolitik policy.<sup>27</sup>

In the article “South Korea’s Nordpolitik and the United States,” Chang-jae Baek comprehensively evaluated the positive and negative effects of the United States on Nordpolitik.<sup>28</sup> In this article, he assessed that the Nordpolitik was a failed policy in that it did not achieve the ultimate goal of improving inter-Korean relations, which was because the U.S.-North Korea relationship did not improve.<sup>29</sup> Baek explained that the ROK government did not want to improve relations between the United States and North Korea, but that it was a premise for opening up from North Korea’s point of view.<sup>30</sup> The reason

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<sup>24</sup> Kim, 242.

<sup>25</sup> Kim, 242.

<sup>26</sup> Kim, 244.

<sup>27</sup> Kim, 245.

<sup>28</sup> Chang-jae Baek, “South Korea’s Nordpolitik and the United States,” in *Nordpolitik: Origin, Development, Impact*, ed. Yong-chul Ha et al. (Seoul: Seoul University Press, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> Baek, 169–170.

<sup>30</sup> Baek, 181.

why the U.S.-North Korea relationship had not improved was, according to him, that the United States tried to negotiate with North Korea on the one hand, but on the other, continued its policy implemented during the Cold War that included containment and economic sanctions toward North Korea.<sup>31</sup>

Baek evaluated that the United States in general had an “inactive attitude” toward the Nordpolitik policy and suggested three reasons for this response.<sup>32</sup> First, the United States has not changed its negative perception of North Korea, such as seeing it as a state that threatens the status quo. Second, ROK’s insistence on a leading role in inter-Korean-U.S. relations while pursuing its Nordpolitik prevented the United States from actively changing its policy toward North Korea.<sup>33</sup> Third, the early 1990s, when Nordpolitik was being pursued, was a transitional period for the United States as it adopted newly established East Asian policies during the Post-Cold War era and the restructuring of the world order.<sup>34</sup>

As such, this article scrutinized the dynamics between the Nordpolitik policy and the United States. Baek analyzed the U.S. influences on the process and results of the Nordpolitik policy in considerable depth by presenting sufficient examples. The method of presenting cases and the analysis of the U.S. elements in Baek’s article provided a useful guide that can be applied to the analysis between the Neo-Nordpolitik policy and the U.S. elements in Chapter III of this thesis.

More than a decade before Baek, Hong-kyu Park assessed that the United States had “a negative and cautious response” to South Korea’s diplomatic actions implementing Nordpolitik, such as actively promoting contact and interactions with Community bloc countries.<sup>35</sup> His reasoning was that the United States exerted “the most exclusive

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<sup>31</sup> Baek, 181.

<sup>32</sup> Ha et al., Nordpolitik: Origin, Development, Impact, 21.

<sup>33</sup> Baek, 181–183.

<sup>34</sup> Baek, 183.

<sup>35</sup> Hong-kyoo Park, “Nordpolitik and Korean Relations with the U.S. and Japan,” *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 2 (March 1990).

influence” on ROK foreign policy and “made up the greatest portion” of the balance of power in Northeast Asia.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, the United States judged, according to Park, that the ROK’s independent pursuit of foreign policy would “have a negative impact on the existing interests of the U.S.”<sup>37</sup> He also argued that the “friendship relationship” between the ROK and the United States “somewhat became estranged” following the ROK’s adoption of independent policy.<sup>38</sup> As such, since the U.S. response was surprisingly cautious, according to Park, there would be many important things to consider when the ROK pushes for northern diplomacy in the future.<sup>39</sup> Besides, Park argued that the ROK insists on “maximum efforts” to maintain friendly and cooperative relations, especially with the United States, in pursuing its Nordpolitik.<sup>40</sup> He also claimed that northern diplomacy “should be developed in a complementary tone rather than damaging relations with allies such as the United States.”<sup>41</sup> Park made an accurate analysis of the factors to consider regarding the United States in the process of promoting Nordpolitik, but there are not enough examples of sufficient cases.

The three authors just described, as most scholars say, emphasized the importance of an alliance with the United States in pursuing Nordpolitik, focused on Nordpolitik and ROK-U.S. relations and offered policy recommendations. While most scholars briefly remark that ROK-U.S. relations are of course significant to the ROK’s policy drive, the three articles just discussed stand out in that these specifically analyzed Nordpolitik and its relationship with the United States, and thus serve as a useful starting point for this thesis. The three articles also afford generally good analyses of the U.S. response to Nordpolitik, cooperation between the ROK and the United States, U.S. support, and offer examples of those topics. From a positive view, these analyses and examples provide a good reference

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<sup>36</sup> Park, 107.

<sup>37</sup> Park, 107.

<sup>38</sup> Park, 108.

<sup>39</sup> Park, 108.

<sup>40</sup> Park, 110.

<sup>41</sup> Park, 114.

point for analyzing Neo-Nordpolitik since there is no independent study of Neo-Nordpolitik and its relation to the United States. Yet, from a contrasting view, none of them focused solely on the interaction between the two countries in the process of implementing Nordpolitik. The three articles rather explained and assessed the United States as a chief factor that affects the ROK's policy during the execution of Nordpolitik in various and different ways within a large framework. This study fills the gap by diving deeper into a smaller framework of diplomatic relations and trying to understand the diplomatic interactions between the two countries, aiming to explain implications for future interactions.

## **2. Neo-Nordpolitik Policy**

As to the Neo-Nordpolitik policy, there are not many articles yet comparing it to the Nordpolitik policy because it is an ongoing policy. Particularly, the articles are rare that analyze Neo-Nordpolitik focusing only on relations with the United States.

In 2018, Jun-mo Woo analyzed the vision of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy from an international relations perspective and emphasized the importance of an alliance with the United States.<sup>42</sup> Woo claimed that Neo-Nordpolitik is “the starting point of efforts to realize Northeast Asia as a multilateral security system and an economic community while suppressing North Korea's provocations through solidifying the ROK-U.S. alliance and cooperating with global society collectively.”<sup>43</sup> That is, he claimed, robust security of the ROK should be the base priority for peace on the Korean peninsula, and to make it possible, the ROK should push Neo-Nordpolitik while constantly maintaining a solid alliance with the United States. This article emphasized the importance of alliance with the United States in promoting the Neo-Nordpolitik policy but did not specifically analyze it. As such, there has been no independent and practical study of Neo-Nordpolitik and its relationship with the United States.

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<sup>42</sup> June-Mo Woo, “On the Vision of Korea's New Northern Policy: Context of International Relations Theory and the contact with the ‘New East Asia Policy’ of Russia,” *International Area Studies* 21, no. 5 (January 2018).

<sup>43</sup> Woo, 124.

#### **D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS**

This thesis studies how the United States' policies and actions have affected the ROK's foreign policy. Yet, how can we know their effects and the extent of those effects? The range of possible effects is quite broad. For example, this range includes not only what the United States intended but also what it actually achieved. That is, the attitudes and preferences of the United States may be distinct from its behavior. This includes the possibility that the United States, although not intending to have any effect, may have taken actions that ultimately affected the ROK's policies. Hence, to limit the scope of this thesis, the proposed research only deals with the impact of the United States on the ROK's policies based on actual U.S. actions—not that country's hidden thoughts or intentions.

Even though this thesis faces challenges because of the enormity of various impacts, the study can categorize overall impacts in one of the following four ways based on the literature review:

1. The United States has taken a supportive position on either one or both Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies.
2. (a) The United States has taken an obstructive position on either one or both Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies, and South Korea has complied with the United States actions pertaining to either one or both Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies.  
(b) The United States has taken an obstructive position on either one or both Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies, but South Korea has resisted United States actions pertaining to either one or both Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies.
3. Rather than support or impede either one or both Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies, the United States has merely taken divergent positions, and South Korea and the United States have reconciled these differences.
4. The United States has had an indirect and unintentional influence on either one or both Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies.

5. The United States has had no effect at all on both the Nordpolitik policy and the Neo-Nordpolitik policy, or on either policy.

Based on the aforementioned categorization method, this thesis considers the degree of influence, using range from supportive (directly or indirectly) to obstructive (directly or indirectly). This thesis analyzes the content of the U.S. policies and the U.S. behaviors relevant to the Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies and determines their impact of the United States on the two ROK policies. This thesis does not consider other effects except for the range just described.

## **E. METHODS AND SOURCES**

This thesis analyzes the impact of the United States specifically on the ROK's Nordpolitik foreign policy. To examine the research question presented earlier, this thesis investigates the various diplomatic interactions and interdependencies between the ROK and U.S. governments in the process of implementing Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik.

Many events have happened in the process of promoting Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik. This research requires attention to various events. In pursuing the Nordpolitik policy, for example, the following main events happened:

- the establishment of official diplomatic relations between the ROK and the Soviet Union (September 30, 1990),
- the establishment of official diplomatic relations between the ROK and China (August 24, 1992),
- the ROK's and North Korea's simultaneous entry into the United Nations (September 18, 1991),
- the signing of the Basic Inter-Korean Agreement (December 13, 1991).

In promoting the Neo-Nordpolitik policy, the following main events happened:

- three rounds of inter-Korean summits (April 27, 2018; May 26, 2018; and September 18–20, 2018),

- two rounds of U.S.-North Korea summits (June 12, 2018; and February 27–28, 2019),
- the 2019 Koreas-United States Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) Summit (June 30, 2019),
- the ROK-Russia summit (September 6, 2017; and June 22, 2018).<sup>44</sup>

This research looks at those major events in terms of diplomatic action and reaction between the ROK and the United States. To this end, various data is analyzed and used as evidence to support the claim of this thesis.

This thesis mainly uses official documents published by government agencies and government-sponsored agencies as data sources. First, regarding the details of the Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies, there are no government-issued policy reports from the Roh administration. Hence, this research analyzes Roh Tae-woo’s memoir to complement the absence of official government documents related to the Nordpolitik policy. Former President Roh Tae-woo’s remarks on Nordpolitik in his memoirs show the vision, intentions, and goals of President Roh, who pushed for Nordpolitik.<sup>45</sup> The memoir is also very meaningful because it contains behind-the-scenes diplomatic stories related to the U.S. government during the Roh administration.

Unlike the lack of Nordpolitik policy documentation during the Roh administration, the Moon administration published materials holding detailed policy briefings on the Neo-Nordpolitik policy. In terms of the details and the overall process of the policy, this thesis looks at the website of policy briefings of the ROK and the Presidential Committee on

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<sup>44</sup> Wan Suk Hong, “Multiple Implications of New Northern Policy: Motive and Consideration,” *The Korean Journal of Slavic Studies* 36, no. 3 (September 2020): 8–9, 16, <https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/ci/sereArticleSearch/ciSereArtiView.kci?sereArticleSearchBean.artiId=ART002629818>; Chanlett-Avery and Manyin, *U.S.-North Korea Relations*, 1; Seong-Mook Moon, “Evaluation of the South-North Korean · the U.S.-North Korean Summits and Our Correspondent Strategy: A Study on the Evaluation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> South-North Korean Summit and the Prospects of the 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S.-North Korean Summit,” *KRINS Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (2018): 13, 10.46322/KRINSQ.3.3.1.

<sup>45</sup> Tae-woo Roh, *Roh Tae-wo’s Memoirs: Vol 2. The Grand Strategy of the Transition Period* (Seoul: Choson News Press, 2011).



Northern Economic Cooperation (CNEC), the official website of the Korean government. President Moon instructed the establishment of the CNEC as an organization dedicated to promoting Neo-Nordpolitik and directed the CNEC to lead Neo-Nordpolitik in a central location.<sup>46</sup> On the website of the CNEC, we can identify the basic direction of the policy, the CNEC's detailed policy tasks, the progress in implementation, and the mid- to long-term plans.

This thesis also analyzes ROK presidential speeches on the Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies. This thesis looks at President Roh's and President Moon's official speeches related to both policies to comprehend the intrinsic properties of both policies.

When it comes to the U.S. policy toward Northeast Asia, this thesis analyzes the policy report published by the U.S. Department of Defense as the official report of the U.S. government. This thesis also analyzes reports from the Congressional Research Service and RAND corporation. Further, this thesis examines the basic direction of the U.S. foreign and security strategy toward the ROK through the U.S. Department of Defense's strategic reports released between 1988 and 1993. Specifically, the U.S. Department of Defense published *A Strategic Framework for the Asian-Pacific Rim* in 1990 and *A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim, Report to the Congress* in 1992, and since 2017 it has published *An Indo-Pacific Strategic Report* in 2019. The U.S. response to ROK policies can be understood by inferring from the basic U.S. strategic direction.

With respect to diplomatic interactions between the ROK and the United States, this research refers to secondary sources to gather sufficient evidence of the U.S. impacts upon South Korean policy and checks relevant credible journal articles and expert comments to confirm the reactions of the ROK government and the U.S. government to the major events.

Lastly, even though there is no directly relevant report of Nordpolitik, it is possible to check the diplomatic documents surrounding Nordpolitik on the ROK government's

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<sup>46</sup> The Presidential Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation, *Progress / Background* (Seoul: The Presidential Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation, 2017), [https://www.bukbang.go.kr/bukbang/vision\\_policy/history/](https://www.bukbang.go.kr/bukbang/vision_policy/history/).

website of the Diplomatic Archives. Indeed, since the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the ROK only releases diplomatic documents thirty years after their release to the public, documents that are declassified and open to the public so far are those produced until 1990. According to media reports, the diplomatic document in 1990, released on March 29 this year, includes information about President Roh's visit to the United States, the ROK's push to join the U.N., and official diplomatic relations between the ROK and the Soviet Union.<sup>47</sup> In the case of Nordpolitik, the official diplomatic documents now openly available, though there is no directly stated policy report, will fill the gap.

## **F. THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE**

Following Chapter I, Chapter II examines and analyzes the interactions between the ROK and the U.S. foreign and security policies surrounding Nordpolitik. In other words, Chapter II identifies all the processes and ways in which the two countries exchange opinions and make decisions for interrelated issues in establishing and implementing Nordpolitik and their results and discerns any causal relationships and mutual impacts between actions and what happened thereafter. Taken together, the conclusion of this chapter evaluates whether the overall impact of the United States on Nordpolitik was supportive, obstructive, or something in between, and presents the grounds—derived from entire research—to support the argument.

Chapter III applies the same method as Chapter II to the Neo-Nordpolitik policy. Unlike Chapter II, Chapter III adds one more related topic. While Section A of Chapter II offers a general description of the Nordpolitik, Section A of Chapter III adds similarities and differences between Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik in addition to a general description of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy.

Chapter IV first compares and incorporates findings from Chapters II and III. Following that, Chapter IV examines how Nordpolitik and neo-Nordpolitik, which have a thirty-year time difference, differ in their interactions with the United States within the

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<sup>47</sup> Sang-yong Han, “[Diplomatic Document] Code Name ‘Taebaeksan’...The First South Korea-Soviet Summit Proceeded in Top Secret under the Threat of Kim Il-sung,” *Yonhap News Agency*, March 29, 2021, <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20210326165000504?input=1195m>

changed international environment. Based on this comparison, integration, and analysis of differences, Chapter IV contemplates the overall role of the United States in the Nordpolitik and neo-Nordpolitik policies and develops implications from this study for the ROK's foreign policy, ROK-U.S. relations, and the issue of North Korea's nuclear capability. Lastly, Chapter IV concludes this thesis by identifying the limitations encountered throughout this research and presenting suggestions for future research based on the conclusions generated by this thesis.

## **II. NORDPOLITIK**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, before discussing the impact of the United States on the Nordpolitik policy in section C, section B describes the Nordpolitik policy in general. Chapter I explained that Nordpolitik was the beginning of the ROK government's northern policies, which have continued under separate names and strategies since the Roh Tae-woo administration. Some argue that, however, the concept of Nordpolitik began before the Roh Tae-woo administration (Nordpolitik might have begun as a concept before it became an official policy). Therefore, section B briefly introduces the emergence of Nordpolitik as first an idea and later as an official ROK policy. Following that, the strategy and significance of the Nordpolitik policy are explained with President Roh Tae-woo's own words and writings. Lastly, section B explains the end of the policy following the replacement of the Roh administration.

Section C concerns the diplomatic activities and responses between ROK and U.S. decision makers and the relationship between these two countries and determines how the United States engaged in the Nordpolitik policy, by studying several important events that took place during the Nordpolitik era.

### **B. POLICY FOUNDATION**

Nordpolitik is a policy directed toward North Korea with the goal of achieving peace on the Korean Peninsula and unification of the two Koreas. It is also a foreign policy that, in order to approach North Korea, seeks to forge new links and cooperate with communist countries located to the north of South Korea and in proximity to North Korea, even though those countries' ideologies differ from those of the ROK. Nordpolitik is considered a landmark foreign policy in Korean diplomatic history. This is because, with the Nordpolitik policy as a starting point, the ROK changed from the U.S.-dependent and passive diplomacy of the past to a new diplomacy that voluntarily seeks diplomatic routes and boldly speaks out and engages in diplomatic activities in the international community.

This policy was created from the beliefs of ROK President Roh Tae-woo in 1988.<sup>48</sup> At the inauguration ceremony in February 1988, he said, “This diplomatic passage to the north will also pave the way for unification,” expressing his intention to practice northern diplomacy for the first time.<sup>49</sup>

Opinions about the timing of the onset of the northern policy differ slightly depending on their focus and starting point. This is because, before the Roh administration and even during the Roh administration, the ROK government never officially used the term “northern policy” or “Nordpolitik” except for once in 1983, when the foreign minister publicly referred to it, and there is no government-published documentation on the northern policy during this period. Therefore, some argue that the northern policy started in 1983 while others argue it was in 1973, before the Roh administration. They argue that 1973 was the beginning of the policy because the Park Chung-hee government adopted the policy of opening the door to the communist bloc in 1973. Others contend that 1983 was the

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<sup>48</sup> According to President Roh’s memoir, he came up with the northern policy in 1980 when he took office as the head of the Security Command, considering the inter-Korean issues. Also, according to Yeon-Chul Kim, Roh again recognized the need for the northern policy in 1981 when he was appointed chairman of the hosting committee for the 1988 Olympics and when he served as chairman of the organizing committee for the Olympics from 1983 to 1986. According to Kim, the ROK’s successful hosting of the 1988 Seoul Olympics depended on the participation of socialist countries in the Olympics, as the two previous Olympic Games in Moscow and Los Angeles were held only half-way between socialist and Western countries, respectively. Roh Tae-woo tried to induce socialist countries to participate in the Olympics, which laid the foundation for President Roh’s belief in the northern strategy. Roh, *Roh Tae-woo’s Memoir: Vol 2. The Grand Strategy of the Transition Period*, 136; Kim, “Rho Tae Woo Government’s Nordpolitik and the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement: Achievement and Limitation,” 86.

<sup>49</sup> Tae-woo Roh, *The Thirteenth President’s Inaugural Address*, Presidential Archives, Ministry of Public Administration and Security, accessed August 2, 2021, <https://www.pa.go.kr/research/contents/speech/index.jsp>.

commencement because the material in a lecture given by the then Foreign Minister in 1983 contained the word “northern policy.”<sup>50</sup>

Nonetheless, this thesis treats the “Special Declaration for National Self-esteem, Unification, and Prosperity” announced by Roh on July 7, 1988, as the official beginning of the northern policy.<sup>51</sup> This is because the northern policy of the Roh administration was given a direct, active tone in the declaration and was implemented concretely with phased strategies, while the North-oriented policies or northern policies before the Roh administration had indirect, inactive tone and were not implemented specifically. Therefore, this thesis uses the term “Nordpolitik” to refer only to the Roh administration’s northern policy, in order to distinguish it from other characterless northern policies.

In a special declaration on July 7, 1988, Roh publicly proposed peaceful unification. To achieve this, he presented concrete plans for improving inter-Korean relations and diplomatic routes. The six stipulations in this declaration called for: 1) exchanges between South and North Koreans and free visits to both Korea by overseas Koreans, 2) communication between separated families and the arrangement of reciprocal visits, 3) the removal of North Korea’s economic barriers and trade of goods between the two Korea, 4) consents to trade between South Korea’s allies and North Korea on non-military goods, 5) avoidance of confrontational diplomacy between the two Korea and inter-Korean

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<sup>50</sup> Yeon-Chul Kim explained that the terms “northern policy” and “northern diplomacy” began to be used after the Park Chung-hee administration adopted the open-door policy for the Communist bloc with the June 23rd Declaration in 1973. According to Kim, academia began to refer to the opening of the Communist bloc as a northern policy, reminiscent of West Germany’s eastern policy (Ostpolitik), thinking that the policy refers to China and the Soviet Union in the north of Korea. Meanwhile, the term “northern policy” was officially used by the government in 1983 for the first time. The reference material distributed by Foreign Minister Bum-seok Lee at a lecture at the Korea Graduate School of National Defense on June 29 of that year included the term *Northern Policy*. According to Giwoong Jung, Minister Bum-seok Lee said in his speech, “The top task for our diplomacy in the future is to realize the northern policy of normalizing relations with the Soviet Union and China.” However, according to Chongki An and Sunryung Park, those events represented little to the northern policy because there barely existed “specific plans and strategies.” Kim, “Rho Tae Woo Government’s Nordpolitik and the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement: Achievement and Limitation,” 81; Jung, “ROK’s Northern Policy after Roh Tae-woo Government: From Unification Policies to National Strategies,” 244; An and Park, “Research on Main Factors in Roh Tae Woo Administration’s Nordpolitik (Northward Policy) and Possibility of Re-Evaluation,” 133.

<sup>51</sup> Kim, “Rho Tae Woo Government’s Nordpolitik and the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement: Achievement and Limitation,” 81.

cooperation on the international stage, 6) the improvement of North Korea's relations with the United States and Japan, and South Korea improving relations with China and the Soviet Union.<sup>52</sup> The July 7 declaration first organized measures for unification and shifted the South Korean perception of North Korea from one of hostile ideology to one of constructive identity of a national community. In the declaration, the exploration of reconciliation and cooperation between the two Koreas and the call for improved relations with socialist countries became the basis of Nordpolitik.

Former President Roh Tae-woo later explained Nordpolitik in his memoir as follows: "I decided to look for a way to Pyongyang via Moscow and Beijing."<sup>53</sup> This one sentence contains the defining characteristic of Nordpolitik.<sup>54</sup> Namely, Nordpolitik aimed to improve relations with northern communist countries and resolve hostile relations with North Korea based on these improved relations with North Korea's allies. According to Roh's memoir, his strategy toward North Korea was that North Korea's opening would lead to unification.<sup>55</sup> Based on this basic strategy, the Roh administration implemented the policy in three stages: The first stage was to establish diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union, China, and Eastern European socialist countries; the second stage was the reunification of South and North Korea; and the third stage was "the expansion of [Korea's] life and cultural sphere to the north," such as in Yanbian and Primorsky Krai.<sup>56</sup> In addition, President Roh set the immediate and final goals on the basis of his firm conviction in promoting the Nordpolitik policy. "The immediate goal was unification of the two Koreas, and the final goal was to expand [Korea's] life and culture sphere to the north."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Roh, A Special Declaration for National Self-esteem and Unification Prosperity.

<sup>53</sup> Roh, Roh Tae-wo's Memoir: Vol 2. The Grand Strategy of the Transition Period, 141.

<sup>54</sup> Gijung Kim, "'To Pyongyang via Moscow and Beijing' Tae-woo Roh's Nordpolitik Re-examination," *Korea JoongAng Daily*, June 24, 2020, <https://news.joins.com/article/23809790>.

<sup>55</sup> Roh, Roh Tae-wo's Memoir: Vol 2. The Grand Strategy of the Transition Period.

<sup>56</sup> Gabje Cho, "Roh Tae-woo's Voice Memoirs (1) - Nordpolitik's Philosophy and Strategy (4)," Chogabje.com, July 4, 2003, [https://www.chogabje.com/board/view.asp?C\\_IDX=10516&C\\_CC=BJ](https://www.chogabje.com/board/view.asp?C_IDX=10516&C_CC=BJ).

<sup>57</sup> Roh, Roh Tae-wo's Memoir: Vol 2. The Grand Strategy of the Transition Period, 141.

According to his explanation, the north he talked of is specifically Yanbian and Primorsky Kray (Maritime Territory). Yanbian is an autonomous region in Jilin Province of northeastern China, and Primorsky Kray (territory) is one of the nine Kray, located in the Russian Far East.<sup>58</sup> President Roh said in his memoir that he thought Korea would have a stature as a central country, not a marginal country in Northeast Asia, by expanding Korea's life and cultural sphere.<sup>59</sup> He planned to set Yanbian and Primorsky Province as the starting point to further develop South Korea's influence into the Northeast Asian continent after achieving unification of the two Koreas.

The Nordpolitik policy was pursued actively for five years from 1988 to 1993. Nevertheless, it almost disappeared as the Roh administration ended and the subsequent Kim Young-sam administration began in late February 1993, even though it not only was an energetically driven policy but also produced spectacular tangible results.<sup>60</sup> With the end of the Roh administration, the ROK government's strong impetus for peaceful unification and special interest in northern countries faded. There were two main reasons for this near disappearance: the North Korean nuclear crisis and chronic policy discontinuity in South Korean politics.

First, the North Korean nuclear crisis escalated at the end of the Roh administration's term, increasing criticism of its constructivism approach to North Korea. The North Korean nuclear crisis at that time was precipitated by the North's declaration of its withdrawal from the NPT in March 1993. And this situation began to show signs in 1992, while the Nordpolitik policy continued to be keenly pursued.

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<sup>58</sup> Britannica, s.v. "Jilin," accessed August 2, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Jilin-province-China>; Britannica, s.v. "Primorsky," accessed August 2, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Primorye>.

<sup>59</sup> Roh, Roh Tae-wo's Memoir: Vol 2. The Grand Strategy of the Transition Period, 141.

<sup>60</sup> Jung, "ROK's Northern Policy after Roh Tae-woo Government: From Unification Policies to National Strategies," 250.



North Korea is presumed today to have started nuclear development in earnest in the 1980s.<sup>61</sup> North Korea joined the NPT in December 1985, but North Korea's entry was reportedly because it expected to obtain military and economic assistance from the Soviet Union, as the Soviet Union promised.<sup>62</sup> The NPT permits member states to utilize nuclear materials, such as uranium, and to legally acquire nuclear processing technologies, but only for peaceful purposes.<sup>63</sup> It is highly probable that North Korea had continued to develop nuclear weapons by cleverly exploiting the provisions of the NPT. It was in 1989 that the North Korean nuclear issue came to the forefront in the international community, and after that, in 1992, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) raised suspicions of North Korea's nuclear development and demanded that the North undergo special inspections. The inspections were carried out six times in 1992, and a report in July 1992 revealed that the actual amount of plutonium was different from that in the report North Korea had submitted. North Korea also denied an inspection of the unreported facilities and the situation worsened. North Korea eventually declared its withdrawal from the NPT on March 12, 1993.

During the five-year term of the Roh administration, the two Koreas seemed to have entered a path of reconciliation and cooperation, at least outwardly. However, the end of the Roh administration in late February 1993 was the beginning of the North Korean nuclear crisis. The crisis on the Korean Peninsula triggered by the North Korean nuclear crisis made Roh's goals and efforts fruitless.

Second, the Nordpolitik policy was dismissed when the administration was replaced by Kim Young-sam, the next president, in February 1993. This shift aligned with the same principle that the ROK has historically changed the policy framework whenever

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<sup>61</sup> Kathleen J. McInnis et al., *The North Korean Nuclear Challenge: Military Options and Issues for Congress*, CRS Report No. R44994 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2017), 6, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44994>.

<sup>62</sup> Kyung-ha Lee, "CIA, 'North Joined NPT for Soviet Union Aid'," *Radio Free Asia*, October 30, 2017, [https://www.rfa.org/korean/in\\_focus/nk\\_nuclear\\_talks/nknt-10302017165250.html](https://www.rfa.org/korean/in_focus/nk_nuclear_talks/nknt-10302017165250.html).

<sup>63</sup> According to Article IV of the NPT text, all parties to the treaty have the "inalienable right [s]" to the research, production, and use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes; Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, full text. (1970).

the president changes. In the field of comparative politics, there are evaluations that the ROK's foreign policy fluctuates greatly and lacks policy continuity due to the single five-year presidential terms, the overwhelming influence of the president, and rampant pursuit of policy differentiation.<sup>64</sup> These assessments fit well with the Nordpolitik policy. Considering the fact that the division between the two Koreas has been maintained since 1953 and that the North Korea policy ultimately aims at a unified Korea, which is such a difficult problem, the ROK government should have taken the policy from a long-term perspective rather than a short-term perspective. Yet, the Kim Young-sam administration created a new globalization policy instead of continuing the previous government's Nordpolitik. The globalization policy did not have as conspicuous a purpose toward North Korea as the Nordpolitik policy, even though it continued to expand relations with the former communist countries.<sup>65</sup> In sum, the Nordpolitik policy was discontinued because of the North Korean nuclear crisis and the new perspective of the incoming president on foreign policy.

### **C. POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND U.S. IMPACTS**

This section analyzes the diplomatic interplays between the ROK and the United States in the process of implementing the Nordpolitik policy.

#### **1. Origins of the Nordpolitik Policy**

The following section deals with two important events in the early stage of policy implementation, when the Nordpolitik policy was established and first announced.

##### **a. *Declaration of Nordpolitik: The Special Declaration by Roh (July 7, 1988)***

After declaring the Nordpolitik policy in 1988, the ROK asked the United States for assistance in order to properly realize this policy. The United States accepted the ROK's

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<sup>64</sup> Jeffrey Robertson, "Continuity in South Korean Foreign Policy," *Academic Paper Series* 88 (April 2017): 3-4, [http://www.keia.org/sites/default/files/publications/kei\\_aps\\_robertson\\_170414.pdf](http://www.keia.org/sites/default/files/publications/kei_aps_robertson_170414.pdf).

<sup>65</sup> Jung, "ROK's Northern Policy after Roh Tae-woo Government: From Unification Policies to National Strategies," 251.

request and favored the ROK's efforts to transform its diplomatic path. The basic stance of the United States toward North Korea, however, initially remained unchanged because it took a "wait and see" approach.

President Roh first declared Nordpolitik on July 7, 1988, approximately four months after his inauguration, in the Special Declaration for National Self-esteem and Unification Prosperity. In the declaration, Roh proclaimed six specific plans to push forward, which included that the ROK would seek to improve relations with North Korea's allies, namely China, the Soviet Union, and socialist countries, as well as cooperate with North Korea to improve its relations with South Korea's allies, such as the United States, to create a peaceful atmosphere on the Korean Peninsula and promote the development of relations with North Korea.

According to Don Oberdorfer, the declaration was independently formulated by the ROK government without prior consultation with the United States, and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Shin Dong Won contacted James Lilly, U.S. Ambassador to South Korea, only two days before the official announcement.<sup>66</sup> The ROK wanted the contents of the declaration to be delivered to China and the Soviet Union, but the ROK had no direct communication channels with China and the Soviet Union.<sup>67</sup> The ROK government therefore asked the U.S. ambassador to deliver the advance copies of the declaration to the Soviet Union and China, and he did exactly that.

According to Oberdorfer, the United States openly lauded the ROK's Nordpolitik, evaluating it as a "positive and constructive" initiative.<sup>68</sup> The U.S. State Department also appraised the Nordpolitik policy as "a major—indeed historic—reversal of traditional ROKG [ROK government] policy" in its internal documents.<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, although the United States positively assessed Nordpolitik and the ROK urged the U.S. government to

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<sup>66</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 192.

<sup>67</sup> Oberdorfer, 193.

<sup>68</sup> Oberdorfer, 193.

<sup>69</sup> Oberdorfer, 193.

improve relations with North Korea, the U.S. stance toward North Korea remained the same. The United States had earlier repeated its position that in order to improve relations between the U.S. and North Korea governments, improved relations between the two Koreas should take precedence. The United States said it should continue to review the behaviors required by the U.S. administration, but there was no immediate U.S. action toward North Korea. Instead, the United States conveyed to North Korea that it would consider positive measures if inter-Korean dialogue resumed without sabotaging the upcoming Seoul Olympics, which was planned to begin in mid-September. About two months after the Special Declaration, Seoul was planned to host the Olympics, and North Korea had made various attempts to prevent the Olympics from taking place, including spreading false information and fomenting anxiety among the participating countries.<sup>70</sup>

To sum up, the ROK autonomously devised the Nordpolitik policy, and the United States positively evaluated it when the ROK told the United States the policy right before its announcement. Yet the United States was not willing to align its position with that of the ROK. The United States seemed to take a “wait and see” approach. That is, despite the ROK’s encouragement for better relations between the United States and North Korea, the United States did not try to approach North Korea proactively and instead demanded a preemptive change in North Korea’s behavior before engagement.

***b. “The Modest Initiative”: The New U.S. Policy toward North Korea (October 31, 1988)***

A few months after the announcement of the Nordpolitik policy, the United States came up with a new policy toward North Korea, which was influenced by and resembled the ROK’s Nordpolitik policy, and which the U.S. government discussed with President Roh. At this time, President Roh acknowledged the move and showed buoyant diplomatic behaviors to the extent that he asked the United States to delay the official announcement date. The United States acted in a way that empowered the Nordpolitik policy in order to

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<sup>70</sup> Matt Stiles, “The Last Time South Korea Hosted the Olympics, the CIA Set off Alarms about North Korea,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 18, 2017, <https://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-korea-olympics-threat-20171218-htmlstory.html>.

keep pace with the ROK and suggested that it judged the new initiative was helpful for the U.S. interests in stabilizing the Korean Peninsula.<sup>71</sup>

President Roh declared that he would cooperate in improving North Korea's relations with the United States in his speech on July 7, and shortly after that, the U.S. government revised its policy toward North Korea through internal review in October. This was possible because of the new direction of South Korean foreign policy. The Soviet Union and China had long insisted that the United States face North Korea, and South Korea had opposed it.<sup>72</sup> The ROK, however, had shifted its stance toward improving relations between the United States and North Korea over Nordpolitik, which meant that a significant barrier to improving relations with North Korea was eliminated for the U.S. government.

According to Oberdorfer, therefore, Gaston Sigur, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific, and his superior, William Clark, the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State who had served earlier as a political adviser in Seoul, were assured that "it was time to move again with Pyongyang" after Roh's speech.<sup>73</sup> According to Sigur, the U.S. Department of State concluded in internal debates on North Korea that "to reach some sort of peace on the Korean Peninsula, the only way to do that is to take some steps to try to open the place."<sup>74</sup> This meant that the United States would need to modify its policy in the same direction as the ROK's Nordpolitik policy. As a result, the U.S. State Department came up with a new policy toward North Korea in October 1988, dubbed the "modest initiative."<sup>75</sup> The plan included allowing North Koreans to visit the United States on an informal, civilian level, alleviating strict financial regulations that hindered U.S. citizens' travel to the North, allowing commercial exports of U.S. humanitarian goods to the North

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<sup>71</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 195.

<sup>72</sup> Oberdorfer, 194.

<sup>73</sup> Oberdorfer, 194.

<sup>74</sup> Oberdorfer, 194.

<sup>75</sup> Joel Wit, "The United States and North Korea," *Brookings Policy Brief* no. 74 (March 2001): 1, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-united-states-and-north-korea/>.

in limited circumstances, and allowing U.S. diplomats to engage in practical dialogue with the North in neutral places. The plan was to keep pace with the Roh administration's new approach to restoring trust between the two Koreas and starting private-sector exchanges.

On October 20, President Reagan, U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz, and President Roh discussed the new U.S. policy together.<sup>76</sup> At the time, Roh was visiting the United States on a four-day visit to speak at the UN General Assembly. On October 18, 1988, Roh delivered a speech titled "Promotion of peace, reconciliation, and dialogue in the Korean Peninsula" at the UN General Assembly.<sup>77</sup> The speech to the international community after the successful Olympics was an extension of the July declaration. In his speech, Roh said, "It is our wish that our allies and friends will contribute to the progress and opening of North Korea by engaging Pyongyang in expanding relation. It is also our position that those socialist countries with close ties to North Korea continue to maintain positive relations and co-operate with North Korea even as they improve their relations with us."<sup>78</sup> Roh also proposed a six-party council for peace in Northeast Asia in the speech. President Roh, who determinedly showed a reconciling gesture to the international community, "approved" the new initiative of the United States and asked the U.S. government to announce it after he arrived in Seoul.<sup>79</sup> Meanwhile, U.S. diplomats were reported to have informed foreign governments, including Soviet republics, about the initiative. On October 25, the U.S. State Department sent international telegrams to U.S. embassies, saying "these proposed measures are being taken both to stay in step with (but not in advance of) the ROKG [ROK government] in this matter, but also because we have substantial interests of our own in seeking to reduce tensions on the Korean peninsula and in promoting dialogue between the North and the South."<sup>80</sup> Also on October 28, the U.S.

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<sup>76</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 195.

<sup>77</sup> United Nations, "General Assembly Provisional Verbatim Record of the Thirty-Third Meeting," in *General Assembly, Forty-third session* (New York: United Nations, 1988), 1, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/50315?ln=en>.

<sup>78</sup> United Nations, 33.

<sup>79</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 195.

<sup>80</sup> Oberdorfer, 195.

State Department delivered the following explanation to the Chinese and Soviet governments on the direction of the new policy toward North Korea, and particularly asked China to deliver it to North Korea: “The door is open for the DPRK to pursue an improvement of relations with the United States, if the DPRK abandons belligerence, confrontation and terrorism in favor of dialogue.”<sup>81</sup>

In response to this policy switch, the Reagan administration demanded a “positive, constructive” response from North Korea.<sup>82</sup> The United States specifically delivered a proposal comprised of five steps to North Korea through China: progress on inter-Korean dialogue, repatriation of the remains of U.S. soldiers still missing from the Korean War, suspension of anti-U.S. political propaganda, implementation of mutual trust-building measures in the DMZ, and reliable guarantees of abandonment of terrorist acts.

North Korea showed the “positive, constructive” response, asking for bilateral talks with U.S. diplomats in Beijing. Under “the Modest Initiative,” the U.S. government held talks with North Korea in Beijing on December 5, 1988, which was the first time that they had talked since the 1953 armistice agreement.<sup>83</sup> It was the first official dialogue between the United States and North Korea, and a dialogue channel was set up to discuss pending issues between the two countries in the future. The U.S. government, however, emphasized this as “communications” at the level of the U.S. quest for North Korea rather than “negotiations” to improve U.S.-North Korea relations, and maintained its previous position that all transactions related to the Korean Peninsula should involve the ROK government.<sup>84</sup> The U.S. government also did not retract economic sanctions against North Korea.<sup>85</sup> What the U.S. behavior really meant was that the United States kept pace with the ROK’s policy while at the same time approaching North Korea without rushing. The U.S. government

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<sup>81</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 195–196.

<sup>82</sup> Robert Carlin and Joel S. Wit, “How the Olympics Could Help Defuse the North Korea Crisis,” *The Atlantic*, January 8, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/01/winter-olympic-games-south-korea-opportunity-for-diplomacy-with-north-korea/549893/>.

<sup>83</sup> Baek, “South Korea’s Nordpolitik and the United States,” 178.

<sup>84</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 196.

<sup>85</sup> Baek, “South Korea’s Nordpolitik and the United States,” 178.

also did not rule out a role for the ROK government in improving relations with North Korea. Oberdorfer believes that the commencement of contact between the United States and North Korea “was fundamentally the result of Seoul’s policy reversal rather than a reflection of new thinking in Washington.”<sup>86</sup>

The preemptive change in the attitude of the United States had brought a change of attitude to North Korea. According to Baek, “North Korea, which was in a sense of crisis of isolation as the ROK’s Nordpolitik policy had been rapidly pushed forward,” constructively responded in various ways as a dialogue channel with Washington was established.<sup>87</sup> At the Supreme People’s Assembly held on May 24, 1990, Kim Il-sung expressed a conciliatory stance to accommodate the gradual withdrawal of U.S. troops from the ROK: “If the United States cannot draw all [its] troops from South Korea at once, [it] will be able to do so by stages.”<sup>88</sup> Kim’s remarks show that North Korea had taken a step back from the unconditional withdrawal of U.S. troops. The text of Kim’s speech was delivered to Washington at the tenth U.S.-North Korean political advisers’ meeting in Beijing on May 30.<sup>89</sup> North Korea also delivered the remains of five U.S. soldiers killed during the Korean War to the United States on May 28 and announced a new plan for armaments reduction on May 31, when the meeting of Gorbachev and Roh was officially announced.

The U.S. government nonetheless remained unimpressed by the North’s response.<sup>90</sup> At that time, the issue of North Korea’s nuclear program development was emerging as an international issue, and the United States, which was increasingly anxious about it, could not welcome the North’s gesture of reconciliation. Even at the meeting of George H.W. Bush and Roh in Washington on June 6, 1990, the United States did not

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<sup>86</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 196.

<sup>87</sup> Baek, “South Korea’s Nordpolitik and the United States,” 179.

<sup>88</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 224.

<sup>89</sup> Oberdorfer, 224.

<sup>90</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 224.



consider Pyongyang's earlier responses as a topic of dialogue, except for a brief mention of the repatriation of the remains of U.S. soldiers.

## **2. Events during Policy Implementation**

The following section deals with five important events related to the overall policy implementation during the Nordpolitik era.

### ***a. The Establishment of Diplomatic Ties between the ROK and Soviet Union (September 30, 1990)***

The United States had no direct role in establishing official diplomatic relations between South Korea and the Soviet Union in September 1990. The United States, however, satisfied South Korea's desires when South Korea wanted to prove its strong ROK-U.S. alliance. This indirectly sent a message to North Korea and socialist countries, the targets of the Nordpolitik policy, that the United States supported the ROK's foreign policy.

On June 5, 1990, a summit between the ROK and the Soviet Union was held in San Francisco. This meeting arose during Gorbachev's visit to the United States for the planned U.S.-Soviet summit in Washington.<sup>91</sup> Although the venue for the summit was the United States, there was little practical U.S. role in this. The summit was realized as the interests of both the ROK and the Soviet Union closely accorded with each other: the ROK wanted the outcomes of Nordpolitik and the Soviet Union desired economic aid.<sup>92</sup> For the ROK, establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union would be a key breakthrough in isolating North Korea and bringing North Korea to a forum for conversation at the same time in the implementation of Nordpolitik. Accordingly, since the summer of 1988, when the ROK began its Nordpolitik, it had been making steady efforts to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, starting with Roh's letter extolling the Soviet Union's

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<sup>91</sup> Kim, "South Korea's Nordpolitik in South Korea-the United States Relations," 243.

<sup>92</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 224.

perestroika economic policy and asking for diplomatic relations for peace and stability in Asia.<sup>93</sup>

For the Soviet Union, Gorbachev needed a beneficial relationship with the ROK for the recovery of his reputation at home, which was forced into a corner, and the Soviet Union's new economic dynamism. His political status at home was declining in direct opposition to his rise in international status by, for example, seeking nuclear reductions through a summit with President Reagan and drawing reconciliation from confrontation over the revisionist dispute through meeting with Deng Xiaoping.<sup>94</sup> At that time, the Soviet Union was going through a painful economic transition owing to the radical perestroika reform policy carried out by Gorbachev. Gorbachev launched the introduction of a market economy and a private property system to revive the Soviet Union's sluggish economy due to a communist-characteristic planned economy and excessive spending on arms. However, with the price of goods determined by the Communist Party for too long in the market economy, state-run companies sold goods at high prices on the black market, causing inflation to rise as the distribution system was disrupted.

The talks regarding a summit between the ROK and the Soviet Union took place at the Blue House, Seoul, on May 23, a few days before the real summit.<sup>95</sup> There, Anatoli Dobrynin, a senior Soviet foreign policy adviser, President Roh, and Kim Chong Whi, Roh's security adviser and Nordpolitik architect, met secretly. Dobrynin delivered the news that Gorbachev hoped to meet with Roh, and they agreed to hold talks in San Francisco in two weeks (Gorbachev was scheduled to visit San Francisco after a summit with President Bush in Washington). The presidents of the ROK and the Soviet Union finally met on June 4, 1990, and shortly after that, the presidents of the ROK and the United States met at the White House on June 6.

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<sup>93</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 201.

<sup>94</sup> Oberdorfer, 205.

<sup>95</sup> Oberdorfer, 209.

The talks between the ROK and the United States were at the request of the ROK. After deciding on the summit with Russia, the ROK called for an ROK-U.S. summit at the White House shortly after the ROK-Soviet summit, and Washington, according to Oberdorfer, “did all it could to facilitate” the Gorbachev-Roh meeting.<sup>96</sup> The ROK believed it was important that the ROK-U.S. alliance prove unproblematic and crucial, and the U.S. government agreed with this sentiment. Donald Gregg, U.S. ambassador to the ROK at the time, reported to Washington that the “visible show of American support for the breakthrough ... may finally drive a stake through the heart” of the belief many Koreans had that the United States would have objected to direct engagement between the ROK and the Soviet Union.<sup>97</sup> Based on this request of the ROK to the U.S. government, it appears important for the ROK to have demonstrated its alliance with the United States both domestically and internationally at the time.

The U.S. government, which had not responded to the constructive response of North Korea, released a statement after the Bush-Roh meeting as follows: “The United States reaffirms that it is not a threat to North Korean security, and we seek to improve relations with that country ... the pace and scope of any improvement will depend importantly on North Korea’s actions.”<sup>98</sup> This announcement put pressure on North Korea to accept IAEA nuclear inspections. Washington, however, only took issue with North Korea on its development of a nuclear program. It evaded other appeasing messages from North Korea.

On September 30, 1990, diplomatic relations between South Korea and the Soviet Union were realized despite North Korea’s earnest requests and strong opposition.<sup>99</sup> The meeting between Gorbachev and Roh was followed by the Soviet Union’s decision to establish official relations with the ROK. And the Soviet Union sent a special envoy to North Korea to communicate and discuss this. North Korea understandably tried to change

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<sup>96</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 211.

<sup>97</sup> Oberdorfer, 211.

<sup>98</sup> Oberdorfer, 224.

<sup>99</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 214–216.

the Soviet leadership's mind, asking for reconsideration of its decision and threatening to build nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union's decision, however, was already firm and unchanged.

The ROK showed a sense of urgency and passion in establishing official ties with the Soviet Union, suggesting that a planned signing schedule should be carried out immediately, ahead of schedule. Forming an official relationship was originally supposed to be held on January 1, 1991, by the issuance of a joint statement. However, at the UN General Assembly in New York on September 30, South Korean Foreign Minister Choi Ho Jong, as directed by Seoul, proposed to Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze that the effective date of the joint statement be advanced to the very day they met.<sup>100</sup> Choi persuaded Shevardnadze, saying "You do not have to hesitate or delay it when you do the right thing," to which Shevardnadze agreed.<sup>101</sup> Thus, the relationship began three months earlier than originally scheduled, as the joint agreement became effective on September 30 rather than January 1. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, diplomatic relations between the ROK and Russia, which legally succeeded the Soviet Union, were automatically inherited.

***b. The Simultaneous Accession of the Two Koreas to the United Nations (September 17, 1991)***

The two Koreas' joint entrance into the United Nations (UN) in 1991 was mostly due to the shifted stances of both the former Soviet Union and China. The underlying cause of these shifts was the ROK government's aggressive execution of the Nordpolitik policy. The United States' continual support was also a helpful factor, but it alone cannot explain this achievement.

The two Koreas had taken competing positions for more than forty years on the issue of joining the UN. UN membership meant being recognized as a member of the

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<sup>100</sup> Oberdorfer, 217.

<sup>101</sup> Yoojin Kim, "Code Name 'Taebaeksan' ... South Korea-Soviet Union's First Summit Was Planned with Utmost Secrecy," *Kyunghyang Journal*, March 29, 2021, <https://www.khan.co.kr/politics/defense-diplomacy/article/202103292112015>.

international community and achieving dominance over the other side, which at the outset led the two Koreas to try to join the UN respectively. In the 1970s, the ROK began to seek peace on the Korean Peninsula, changing its stance that the two Koreas should join the UN with their respective seats at the same time, but North Korea insisted that the two Koreas join with a single seat.

The ROK had attempted to join the UN several times since it first submitted its application to join the UN on January 19, 1949. It, however, had repeatedly been thwarted by the veto of the Soviet Union, a permanent member of the UN Security Council.<sup>102</sup> It was in 1973 that the ROK began to seek simultaneous entrance into the UN.<sup>103</sup> By the 1970s, the ROK began to pursue peace on the Korean Peninsula based on the expansion of its national power. President Park Chung-hee said that “I have no objection to joining the UN with North Korea” on June 23, 1973, in the Declaration of Diplomatic Policy for Peaceful Unification, one of the points at which the northern policy is alleged to have begun, which became a major turning point for the ROK’s policy of joining the UN.<sup>104</sup> In response, North Korea did not budge from its position that it would only join the UN as a joint single seat between the two Koreas with the logic that simultaneous membership was a plan to perpetuate the division of the Korean Peninsula.<sup>105</sup> In the 1980s, the ROK participated in various UN activities with the backdrop of increasing its national power and devoted diplomatic efforts to persuade UN member states to the justification of the ROK’s entry into the UN. Opposition from the Soviet Union and China, however, was an obstacle that the ROK would need to address (China was elected as a permanent member of the UN Security Council in 1971).

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<sup>102</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Sixty years of South Korean Diplomacy* (Seoul: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2009), 179–181, [https://www.mofa.go.kr/www/wpge/m\\_4098/contents.do](https://www.mofa.go.kr/www/wpge/m_4098/contents.do).

<sup>103</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Sixty Years of South Korean Diplomacy*, 181

<sup>104</sup> Jong-dae Shin, “Inter-Korean Diplomatic Competition and the June 23 Declaration,” *Review of North Korean Studies* 22, no. 3 (2019): 213, <https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/ci/sereArticleSearch/ciSereArtiView.kci?sereArticleSearchBean.artiId=ART002540607>.

<sup>105</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Sixty Years of South Korean Diplomacy*, 181.

In the late 1980s, the mood changed. The following events are said to have created a favorable atmosphere for the ROK to join the UN; reform and openness policies of the Soviet Union and China in the late 1980s; the arrival of a new international order, such as American-Soviet détente; Nordpolitik executed since Roh took office in 1988; and the participation of communist countries in the Seoul Olympics. In addition, not inconsiderable diplomatic achievements in the process of promoting Nordpolitik in 1989 and 1990 had increased the feasibility of the ROK's entry into the UN. For example, as a result of the ROK's active implementation of Nordpolitik, it established diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union and other several communist countries, starting with Hungary in February 1989, and also agreed to exchange trade representatives with China on October 20, 1990.<sup>106</sup> At the 45th UN General Assembly in the fall of that year, 71 countries including the United States expressed their strong support for the ROK's entry into the UN. On the other hand, no one supported North Korea's single-seat bid. Inspired by the improved political milieu, the ROK government dedicated itself to realizing its UN membership in 1991: the ROK government dispatched a special negotiation team to 37 countries to secure support from each country.<sup>107</sup> On August 8, 1991, the ROK eventually was able to join the UN simultaneously with North Korea at the 46th UN General Assembly.<sup>108</sup>

Several factors can be adduced, such as increased international support, to explain the two Koreas' joint UN entry. However, this was practically made possible by a change of stance of both the Soviet Union and China, which were the only "obstacles."<sup>109</sup> First, the ROK and the Soviet Union formed diplomatic ties on September 30, 1990, because of an accord of interests between the two countries, namely the ROK's diplomatic interests and the Soviet Union's economic one. Roh held a total of three summits with Gorbachev in the ten months since his first meeting in June 1990, the third of which was held on Jeju Island, ROK, in April 1991. Gorbachev publicly expressed his endorsement for the ROK's

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<sup>106</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 182.

<sup>107</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Sixty Years of South Korean Diplomacy*, 182–183.

<sup>108</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 183.

<sup>109</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 231.

proposed accession to the UN and promised to support it at this third summit.<sup>110</sup> China began to change its mind about joint UN membership between the two Koreas in mid-1991.<sup>111</sup> China's persuasion of North Korea to join the UN had been caused by a number of regional situations: the Soviet Union's shifted move toward the ROK, fast-growing trade with the ROK which far surpassed that with North Korea, the end of the China-Soviet dispute, and relations that gradually had become strained between the Soviet Union and North Korea. This made it less likely that North Korea would leverage the Soviet Union for China's change in stance even if China adjusted relations with the ROK. In May 1991, Li Peng, Chinese Premier, visited North Korea for four days to persuade it to join the UN.<sup>112</sup> Specifically, China had informed North Korea that it did not oppose South Korea's and North Korea's entry into the UN, and it would not veto the ROK's membership even if North Korea opposed joining the UN at the same time.

At that time, the ROK was considering joining the UN solely without North Korea. Roh said in his memoir, "With the achievements of the '88 Seoul Olympics and the northern policy, it was intended that the ROK would join alone if North Korea refused with confidence that neither the Soviet Union nor China would veto ROK's sole membership."<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless, North Korea, which eventually recognized the overwhelming atmosphere of support from the international community for the ROK's entry into the UN, issued a statement from the Foreign Ministry on May 27, 1991, to announce its decision to join the UN.<sup>114</sup> In a statement, North Korea stressed that it was an inevitable measure, saying that it had "no choice" but to join the UN even though

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<sup>110</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Sixty Years of South Korean Diplomacy*, 183; Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 231.

<sup>111</sup> Oberdorfer, 231.

<sup>112</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 231.

<sup>113</sup> Roh, *Roh's Memoir*, 189; Jin-ho Jung, "[Yesterday's Today] South and North Korea Joining the UN at the Same Time in 1991," *Kyung-hyang Journal*, September 16, 2011, [https://www.khan.co.kr/print.html?art\\_id=201109162134275](https://www.khan.co.kr/print.html?art_id=201109162134275).

<sup>114</sup> Yoojin Kim, "30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Simultaneous Joining of the United Nations by South and North Korea 'Splendid Feat for South Korea, Defeat for North Korea?'" *Kyung-hyang Journal*, February 13, 2021, <https://www.khan.co.kr/politics/north-korea/article/202102130852001>.

simultaneous membership would hamper reunification since it could not neglect the ROK's sole accession to the UN.<sup>115</sup> That is, for North Korea, simultaneous entrance into the UN was a decision that was reluctantly accepted at a time when international public opinion was completely energized toward the ROK. Along with the diplomatic success of Nordpolitik which led to a shift of Soviet and Chinese positions in support of ROK's UN membership, withdrawal of Soviet subsidies and concessionary trade agreements also forced North Korea to "engage in more concerned diplomacy" with the ROK.<sup>116</sup> Particularly, China's persuasion just before North Korea's announcement on May 27 is believed to have been the decisive factor in North Korea's decision to join the UN. The UN Security Council unanimously adopted the two Koreas' applications to join the UN without discussion, and the two Koreas joined the UN simultaneously on September 17, 1991, the opening day of the 46th General Assembly.<sup>117</sup>

Speaking of the U.S. role in the ROK's entry into the UN, even though the United States backed the ROK's efforts to join the UN from the beginning, it merely played a supportive role, not the decisive role. The United States had been stationed in the ROK as a military ally since signing the Mutual Defense Treaty between the Republic of Korea and the United States of America in 1953.<sup>118</sup> As the ROK's application for UN membership since 1949 was stalled by Soviet vetoes, thirteen countries representing the United States jointly submitted a resolution to the Security Council requesting a retrial on the ROK's application for membership at the 11<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in 1956.<sup>119</sup> This later won ten votes out of eleven member states in favor of the eight-nations resolution recommending

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<sup>115</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 232; Kim, "30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Simultaneous Joining of the United Nations by South and North Korea 'Splendid Feat for South Korea, Defeat for North Korea?'"

<sup>116</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., *A Peace Treaty with North Korea?* 4.

<sup>117</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Sixty Years of South Korean Diplomacy*, 183.

<sup>118</sup> Mark E. Manyin, *South Korea: Background and U.S. Relations*, CRS Report No. IF10165 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2021), 1, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10165>.

<sup>119</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Sixty Years of South Korean Diplomacy*, 180.



the ROK join but was repeatedly rejected by the Soviet Union's continued veto. At the time, the Soviet Union submitted a resolution urging the two Koreas to join simultaneously in the form of an amendment to the eight-nations resolution, but all nine countries except the Soviet Union disagreed. On October 9, thirteen countries, including the United States, expressed regret over the Security Council's rejection of their recommendation to admit the ROK.<sup>120</sup>

During the 13th General Assembly in 1958, the United States again raised the issue of the ROK's membership in the Security Council, but it was also rejected by the Soviet Union.<sup>121</sup> The United States also publicly expressed its support for inter-Korean UN membership in 1990.<sup>122</sup> President Bush was the first to publicly and firmly support the ROK's position in his keynote speech to the 45th UN General Assembly. While representatives of seventy-one countries actively supported the ROK's entry into the UN, none supported North Korea's so-called single-seat proposal. Being encouraged by the favorable situation, the ROK set the realization of UN membership as its top diplomatic priority in 1991, and strongly declared its willingness to join the UN within that year at various international events.

In summary, the United States had shown continued support since the 1950s, when the ROK began making efforts to join the UN. The U.S. support, which had consistently influenced the world, clearly worked in favor of the ROK's entry into the UN, but it is not the only factor that explains the two Koreas' entry into the UN in 1991. The two Koreas' simultaneous entrance to the UN was ultimately realized thanks to changes in the positions of the Soviet Union and China, which were possible due to the atmosphere of global order reorganization along with the ROK's aggressive implementation of Nordpolitik.

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<sup>120</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Sixty Years of South Korean Diplomacy*, 180–181.

<sup>121</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 181.

<sup>122</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 182.

*c. The Increased Nuclear Risk from North Korea*

The issue of North Korea's nuclear development first surfaced in the early 1990s, when the Nordpolitik policy was in full swing and producing several positive results. The U.S. decision in September 1991 to withdraw its nuclear weapons from the ROK territory impacted North Korea's acceptance of the IAEA's inspection.<sup>123</sup> Although the United States cooperated with South Korea in settling the nuclear issue posed by North Korea, South Korea's intentions were not a significant consideration for the United States, as President Bush was determined to address the changing international order. In other words, the United States appears to have made an arbitrary decision in dealing with the North Korean nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula.

The history of North Korea's nuclear development begins in 1965 when the Soviet Union provided North Korea with a small experimental reactor.<sup>124</sup> The Soviet Union claimed that the aid was limited to civilian activities, not military activities such as weapons development.<sup>125</sup> North Korea is presumed to have started developing nuclear programs in earnest since the 1980s.<sup>126</sup> The United States had detected and monitored suspicious circumstances that were suspected to be North Korea's nuclear development facilities by using satellite imagery since the early 1980s, and in the late 1980s, the United States became confident in their intelligence analysis that North Korea was indeed pursuing nuclear development.<sup>127</sup>

North Korea joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in December 1985 as a non-nuclear power, but its accession was a condition for North Korea receiving military

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<sup>123</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 260.

<sup>124</sup> Oberdorfer, 252; Donghee Chang, "Loopholes in the NPT Regime and Ways and Means to Plug Them Up: Based on the Lessons from the Cases of Iran and North Korea," *The Korean Journal of International Law* 63, no. 4 (December 2018): 99, <https://www.dbpia.co.kr/journal/articleDetail?nodeId=NODE07613289>.

<sup>125</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 252.

<sup>126</sup> McInnis et al., *The North Korean Nuclear Challenge: Military Options and Issues for Congress*, 6.

<sup>127</sup> Mark E. Manyin, Mary Beth D. Nikitin, and Emma Chanlett-Avery, *Nuclear Negotiations with North Korea*, CRS Report No. R45033 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2021), Summary, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45033>.

and economic support from the Soviet Union.<sup>128</sup> North Korea also might have joined the NPT to legitimately acquire nuclear materials, such as uranium, and nuclear processing technologies for ostensibly peaceful purposes—peaceful purposes are justifiable for an NPT member.<sup>129</sup> According to a U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) classified report *North Korea-USSR: Implications of NPT Accession in March 1986*, the CIA expressed concern over North Korea’s withdrawal, saying that NPT has “inherent weaknesses,” such as members being able to withdraw by notifying NPT three months in advance after acquiring the necessary skills.<sup>130</sup>

Article III of the NPT states that negotiation on a safeguards agreement with the IAEA are to be initiated within 180 days of joining the NPT and signed within eighteen months since the commencement of negotiation.<sup>131</sup> North Korea, however, had not implemented it without a single word until the end of 1980s. The Bush administration, which had been keeping a close eye on North Korea’s nuclear development through reconnaissance activities, decided to inform South Korea, Japan, China, and the Soviet Union of the situation regarding the North’s nuclear program and sent a team of government officials and experts to these countries.<sup>132</sup> It did so because cooperation with these countries would be necessary to control North Korea’s actions. In May 1989, a team of five American experts went to South Korea and directly briefed the Korean government.<sup>133</sup> According to James Baker, then U.S. Secretary of State, the U.S. diplomatic strategy at the time was to exert international pressure on North Korea to fulfill its obligation to sign a safety agreement with the IAEA. However, North Korea had linked a safeguards agreement with the IAEA to the withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from

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<sup>128</sup> Lee, “CIA, ‘North Joined NPT for Soviet Union Aid.’”

<sup>129</sup> According to Article IV of the NPT text, all parties to the treaty have the “inalienable right [s]” to the research, production, and use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes; Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, full text (1970).

<sup>130</sup> Lee, “CIA, ‘North Joined NPT for Soviet Union aid.’”

<sup>131</sup> Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, full text (1970).

<sup>132</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 250–251, 256.

<sup>133</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 256.

South Korea. U.S. nuclear weapons had been deployed on the Korean Peninsula since 1958.<sup>134</sup> North Korea clung to its stance that it could never accept the safeguards agreement when threatened with U.S. nuclear weapons.<sup>135</sup> North Korea's argument "had undeniable logic and appeal."<sup>136</sup> With U.S. nuclear weapons deployed in South Korea, there was no justifiable reason for stopping North Korea from developing nuclear weapons and made it difficult to form international consensus.

In the United States, there had been conflicting opinions and accompanying concerns about removing nuclear weapons from South Korea. In October 1990, Donald Gregg, the U.S. ambassador to South Korea, consulted with General Robert RisCassi, the U.S. army commander in the ROK, and recommended Washington remove U.S. nuclear weapons from South Korea to "facilitate" negotiations with North Korea and prevent further "serious political issue [s]" in South Korea.<sup>137</sup> Also, William J. Crowe, former Joint Chiefs of Staff and Asian expert, publicly insisted on withdrawing nuclear weapons for "a deal with North Korea." In contrast, President Bush's national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, tellingly argued that the United States should not give way to the North first when the North "had done nothing" to receive such compensation. The U.S. government, meanwhile, had to consider South Korea's position as well as North Korea's when it was considering whether to withdraw its nuclear weapons from the South Korean territory. Concerns could have increased that eliminating nuclear weapons in South Korea would undermine both U.S. nuclear deterrence toward North Korea and U.S. dedication to South Korea's security.

In the spring of 1991, a series of discussions between the security sector of South Korea and the United States took place in the ROK.<sup>138</sup> In early August 1991, a two-day

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<sup>134</sup> Amy F. Woolf and Emma Chanlett-Avery, *Redeploying U.S. Nuclear Weapons to South Korea: Background and Implications in Brief*, CRS Report No. R44950 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2017), 1, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44950>.

<sup>135</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 256.

<sup>136</sup> Oberdorfer, 257.

<sup>137</sup> Oberdorfer, 258.

<sup>138</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 258–259.

meeting between South Korea and the U.S. military and civilian experts at the headquarters of the Pacific Command in Hawaii continued to discuss the issue in depth.<sup>139</sup> At that time, the U.S. government seems to have almost concluded that it would take out U.S. nuclear weapons from South Korea. According to Oberdorfer, “Washington’s real proposal was to be sure that the Koreans would be comfortable with removal of the remaining American nuclear weapons.”<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, during the meeting, the representative of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that Pentagon’s conclusion was that nuclear deployment to the ROK would no longer be necessary for the defense of the ROK. During the meeting, the ROK reportedly did not offer any strong opposition. And the meeting ended without any official agreement. Although the United States seems to have valued its security alliance with the ROK, it does not seem to have made decisions based on outcomes after exchanging views. Rather, it does not seem to have taken notice of the ROK’s opinion.

On September 27, 1991, President Bush announced the withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons from all overseas sources.<sup>141</sup> This was not because of a North Korean nuclear issue but because of the international situation in which the Soviet Union was collapsing, the end of the Cold War, and the consequent change in the U.S. nuclear posture. Prior to the official announcement, Bush told President Roh at a UN meeting in mid-September that the United States would continue to provide nuclear umbrellas, whether or not the U.S. nuclear weapons were on the Korean Peninsula—that is, the U.S. government notified the ROK about the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from its territory rather than conducting talks with it.<sup>142</sup> (Since then, the ROK has been included in the U.S. nuclear umbrella to prepare for North Korea’s nuclear attack.<sup>143</sup>) On December 18, 1991, after all nuclear bombs in the ROK were pulled out, President Roh officially announced that no

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<sup>139</sup> Oberdorfer, 259.

<sup>140</sup> Oberdorfer, 259.

<sup>141</sup> Chang, “Loopholes in the NPT Regime and Ways and Means to Plug Them Up: Based on the Lessons from the Cases of Iran and North Korea,” 99.

<sup>142</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 260.

<sup>143</sup> Mark E. Manyin et al., *U.S.-South Korea Relations*, CRS Report No. R41481 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2017), 18, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R41481.pdf>.

nuclear weapons existed in South Korea with the permission of the United States.<sup>144</sup> The U.S. decision to withdraw its nuclear weapons made it difficult for North Korea to delay signing a safeguards agreement, which it signed on January 30, 1992. From May 1992 to January 1993, the IAEA inspected North Korean nuclear facilities, which raised suspicions about North Korea's nuclear development.<sup>145</sup> On March 12, 1993, shortly after the end of President Roh's term in February 1993, North Korea declared it would withdraw from the NPT. Although this did not mean that North Korea would leave the NPT immediately, the declaration itself shocked the international community, including the ROK and the United States.

In summary, the United States decided to withdraw its nuclear weapons from South Korea in order to stop North Korea from developing nuclear weapons and to force North Korea to sign a safeguards agreement with the IAEA. The U.S. decision was largely influenced by changes in the international situation, such as the collapse of the Soviet Union at the time, and the resultant change in the nuclear posture of the United States. The United States, of course, discussed the issue with the ROK, the country concerned and a longtime military ally, but South Korea's opinion was hardly enough to affect the U.S. final decision. Rather, the U.S. government had already made its own decision and then discussed it with the ROK. The United States apparently believed that the ROK's opinion was not important in dealing with North Korea's nuclear issue.

***d. High-Level Talks and Two Resultant Agreements between the Two Koreas (December 13, 1991, and January 20, 1992)***

As a result of the Nordpolitik policy, the Roh administration held a total of eight high-level inter-Korean talks throughout 1989–1992, and the two Koreas reached two important agreements in 1991 and 1992, respectively. These achievements were possible

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<sup>144</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 260.

<sup>145</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, *Knowledge Dictionary on Inter-Korean Relations* (Seoul: National Institute for Unification Education, 2015), 147, [file:///C:/Users/mijun/Downloads/0\\_%EB%82%A8%EB%B6%81%EA%B4%80%EA%B3%84%EC%A7%80%EC%8B%9D%EC%82%AC%EC%A0%84\\_%EB%82%B4%EC%A7%80\\_%EC%B5%9C%EC%A2%85%EC%9D%B8%EC%87%84\(%ED%99%94%EB%A9%B4%EC%9A%A9\)%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/mijun/Downloads/0_%EB%82%A8%EB%B6%81%EA%B4%80%EA%B3%84%EC%A7%80%EC%8B%9D%EC%82%AC%EC%A0%84_%EB%82%B4%EC%A7%80_%EC%B5%9C%EC%A2%85%EC%9D%B8%EC%87%84(%ED%99%94%EB%A9%B4%EC%9A%A9)%20(1).pdf).

because North Korea inevitably made a strategic shift against the backdrop of a change in the world order at the end of the Cold War. Although the United States was not directly involved in the talks, the U.S. decision to withdraw foreign-based nuclear weapons and the decision to suspend the ROK-U.S. Team Spirit military exercises indirectly contributed to the change in North Korea's attitude and the development of inter-Korean relations that Roh expected through the Nordpolitik policy.

Since his inauguration in February 1988, President Roh, who was strong-willed in pursuing the Nordpolitik policy, had made a bold proposal to open dialogue with North Korea, such as the inter-Korean Red Cross talks and high-ranking officials' talks.<sup>146</sup> He also offered an inter-Korean summit in a congratulatory speech on August 15, Independence Day.<sup>147</sup>

Meanwhile, North Korea first proposed holding high-level inter-Korean political and military talks in the name of Prime Minister Chung Moo-won.<sup>148</sup> Even though Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister, declared in November 1988 that the Cold War was over, it was a time when Nordpolitik just began to push ahead and could not be expected to produce any kind of results. It is not known what intention North Korea had at the time to respond to the dialogue. This thesis' view, however, is that North Korea would not have asked for dialogue if the ROK did not offer dialogue several times in 1988. On December 28, 1988, South Korea suggested in response to the North's proposal by Kang Young-hoon, then-Prime Minister, to hold prime ministerial talks between the two Koreas "on the agenda of suspending slander, mutual respect and non-intervention, conducting multilateral exchanges and cooperation, building military trust, and holding inter-Korean summits."<sup>149</sup> In September 1990, the first high-level talks were held with the prime

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<sup>146</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, *Knowledge Dictionary on Inter-Korean Relations*, 143.

<sup>147</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, 144.

<sup>148</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, *Knowledge Dictionary on Inter-Korean Relations*, 144.

<sup>149</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, 144.

ministers of the two Koreas as their chief representatives.<sup>150</sup> In the meantime, on November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall, a symbol of the Cold War between East and West, collapsed. At the first round of talks, the South proposed a basic agreement to improve inter-Korean relations, as a working title, consisting of eight clauses, while the North proposed three urgent tasks to be discussed prior to full-fledged talks: joining the UN with a single seat, suspending U.S.-South Korea Team Spirit military exercises, and releasing detainees who were in prison due to visiting the North.<sup>151</sup> This shows how important North Korea considered the issue of joining the UN and the South Korea-U.S. combined military training.

In the second round of talks, the two sides fiercely confronted each other over the priorities of the agenda to be addressed and a unification plan.<sup>152</sup> North Korea stressed that political and military issues should be resolved first and did not concede its claim to unify into one country with one regime and institution.<sup>153</sup> In contrast, South Korea argued that the two Koreas should first realize economic exchange and cooperation and counter-attacked against North Korea's three urgent tasks by saying that the two Koreas should first resolve the North's abandonment of its revolutionary route to the South, the realization of separated families' hometown visits, and revitalization of economic exchange and cooperation.<sup>154</sup>

The inter-Korean high-level talks began to make substantive progress at the fourth round of talks in October 1991, after the two Koreas joined the United Nations at the same

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<sup>150</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, 144.

<sup>151</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, 145.

<sup>152</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, *Knowledge Dictionary on Inter-Korean Relations*, 145.

<sup>153</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, 145–146.

<sup>154</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, 146.



time.<sup>155</sup> There the two sides named the documents to be agreed upon and made progress in the specifics of the agreement.<sup>156</sup>

The fifth round of talks took place in Seoul on December 10, 1991, and the two prime ministers signed the Basic Inter-Korean Agreement on December 13, 1991, to make significant progress in inter-Korean relations.<sup>157</sup> This agreement came into force on February 19, 1992. The agreement is an abbreviation of the Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-aggression, and Exchange and Cooperation between the South and North, and is a historical document that agreed on a basic framework for peaceful coexistence between the two Koreas. Specifically, the two Koreas defined inter-Korean relations as “not being a relationship between states, [but constituting] a special interim relationship stemming from the process towards unification,” promising to recognize the reality of division and work together to achieve unification. In addition, the two Koreas did not recognize each other’s regime and regarded it as a target for destruction and subversion, and the agreement said that the two Koreas promised to ban armed aggression and create military trust, thereby increasing stability of the Korea Peninsula and transparency of promises.

The inter-Korean high-level talks took place three more times until the eighth round of talks held on September 15, 1992.<sup>158</sup> During this period, the two Koreas established a structure for implementing the Basic Inter-Korean Agreement, while laying the groundwork for resolving the North Korean nuclear issue.<sup>159</sup> Consequently, the two Koreas signed the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula on January 20, 1992.

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<sup>155</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, 146.

<sup>156</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, 146.

<sup>157</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, 146.

<sup>158</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, *Knowledge Dictionary on Inter-Korean Relations*, 146.

<sup>159</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, 146.

As explained earlier, the IAEA's inspection of North Korean nuclear facilities since May 1992 raised suspicions about North Korea's nuclear development in January 1993.<sup>160</sup> After the eighth round of talks, the Korea-U.S. Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) announced that it would resume training for Team Spirit.<sup>161</sup> North Korea canceled the planned ninth round of talks under the pretext of Team Spirit training and declared that it would suspend all inter-Korean dialogue on January 29, 1993.<sup>162</sup> As a result, at the end of the Roh administration's term, the inter-Korean high-level consultative body collapsed, and not a single clause of the inter-Korean agreement could be put into practice.

The inter-Korean high-level talks were able to proceed because the ROK's push for Nordpolitik coincided with the whirlwind of change worldwide. In other words, it can be explained that high-ranking officials of the two Koreas were able to talk during the Roh administration because of the change in the international situation and the South Korean government's efforts to establish inter-Korean relations in a beneficial way on the Korean Peninsula. It is not clear why North Korea responded to South Korea's proposal for dialogue earlier than expected. However, predicting the reasons, the rapidly changing world, such as German reunification, and visible achievements of Nordpolitik, such as diplomatic ties between South Korea and the Soviet Union and the establishment of a South Korea-China trade representative office, would inevitably have kept North Korea in talks as a survival strategy.

*e. The Establishment of ROK-China Diplomatic Ties (August 24, 1992)*

Like the creation of official ROK-Soviet Union relations two years earlier, there was no direct U.S. participation in the establishment of diplomatic ties between the ROK and China in 1992. Yet, the relatively comfortable international situation led by the United States after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 indirectly created an appropriate environment for diplomatic ties between the ROK and China to be established. At the same

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<sup>160</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, 147.

<sup>161</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, 147.

<sup>162</sup> National Institute for Unification Education, 147.

time, the alignment of interests between the ROK and China was also one of the major contributing factors to the accomplishment of diplomatic ties.

The interests of both nations were as follows. For the ROK, “China [was] the highest-priority target of [the ROK’s] Nordpolitik policy.”<sup>163</sup> China, along with the Soviet Union, was a traditional ally of North Korea, both strategically and economically. This was the reason President Roh began making efforts to establish relations with China as soon as his term began.<sup>164</sup> Initially, he primarily used a private approach by entrepreneurs or an unofficial approach by personal emissary. He also urged the United States and the U.K. to refrain from their actions against the Chinese government’s violent repression of pro-democracy protesters at Tiananmen Square in June 1989.<sup>165</sup>

For China, the ROK was a fast-growing economic partner vital to China’s growth. China had adopted pragmatism by pursuing market economy reforms in 1978 while maintaining Communist Party dictatorship, which ultimately led China to think that enhancing relations with the ROK was inevitable to produce tangible results.<sup>166</sup> At that time, China was trying to redefine itself. In other words, it was attempting a leap forward and a revival from its dark past, 150 years after the Opium War. China’s change of mind toward the ROK is understandable. The ROK at the time had remarkable economic growth, and trade between the two countries continued to grow, although no official diplomatic relationship was established between the ROK and China.

Another reason China needed official diplomatic ties with the ROK was because it had to stop Taiwan from expanding diplomatic relations. This was a more sensitive issue for China than the Korean Peninsula issue.<sup>167</sup> Taiwan, then active in informal diplomatic contacts and visits around the world, was an annoyance to China, and China had to

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<sup>163</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 242.

<sup>164</sup> Oberdorfer, 242.

<sup>165</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 243.

<sup>166</sup> Oberdorfer, 240.

<sup>167</sup> Oberdorfer, 246.

somehow undermine Taiwan's international status. Hence, China presented the severance of all diplomatic links with Taiwan as a condition for diplomatic ties to the ROK, and the ROK chose China instead of Taiwan after much contemplation.

### **3. Outcomes of the Nordpolitik Policy**

This section examines the policy outcomes achieved by the end of Nordpolitik, which coincided with the resignation of the Roh administration.

The Nordpolitik policy consisted of three phased goals, and for this, the policy was implemented in stages. Among them, the Nordpolitik policy achieved only the first-stage goal—to establish diplomatic ties with the socialist countries. As a result of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy, the ROK established official relations with Hungary on September 13, 1988; with Poland on November 1, 1989; with Yugoslavia on December 28, 1990; with Czechoslovakia on March 23, 1990; with Bulgaria on March 30, 1990; and with Romania on March 30, 1990—not all of those cases are covered in this thesis.<sup>168</sup> By establishing diplomatic ties with China along with the above countries, the Roh administration achieved the first-phase goal of the Nordpolitik policy, which attained diplomatic relations with socialist countries in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and China.

Except for the first-stage goal, the second-stage goal of unifying the two Koreas and the third-stage goal of expanding life and cultural spheres to the north were not achieved. Even so, the eight high-level meetings between the two Koreas and the resulting two agreements reached for the first time between the two Koreas are tangible achievements that have increased the likelihood of eventual unification in that the two Koreas started discussing the plan for unification. By joining the UN at the same time, furthermore, the two Koreas were also able to acknowledge that they were two separate countries with different regimes and ideologies, and to begin a new path toward “exchange,

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<sup>168</sup> Seo-Young Kim, “Which Communist Country Was the First to Establish Diplomatic Ties with South Korea on September 13?” *Kyung-Hyang Journal*, September 13, 2018, <https://www.khan.co.kr/national/national-general/article/201809130009001?www>.

reconciliation, and unification.”<sup>169</sup> Considering that unification is not a simple goal that can be achieved within the term of a single administration, but a difficult goal in which neighboring countries are intricately intertwined, even this level of achievement can be evaluated as meaningful progress toward achieving the second stage of the Neo-Nordpolitik strategy. Regarding the third-stage goal, it is difficult to find any progress.

#### **D. CONCLUSION: WHAT WAS THE OVERALL U.S. EFFECT ON THE NORDPOLITIK POLICY?**

Looking at the diplomatic interaction between the ROK and the United States in various cases during the Nordpolitik era, the U.S. impact on Nordpolitik varied and in general acted to strengthen the ROK’s Nordpolitik. The U.S. government accepted the request of the ROK government in July 1988 when the ROK asked it to deliver the contents of the new policy to the Soviet Union and China just before declaring its new policy. This is when the United States became a strong supporter of Nordpolitik—when the ROK was on the starting line for official diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and China.

The United States also established a new North Korean policy called “The Modest Initiative” in October of the same year to keep pace with the ROK’s new policy. After the U.S. government eased its belligerent attitude toward North Korea through this initiative, North Korea offered engage in dialogue with Washington, which was obviously beneficial to the South Korean government seeking dialogue with the North. With North Korea’s offer of dialogue as an opportunity, official dialogue between the United States and North Korea began for the first time, and several working-level talks were held.

When President Roh asked President Bush to meet at the White House in June 1990 after the ROK’s first summit with the Soviet Union, the United States also accepted. In a way, the response of Washington equaled supporting the establishment of a new relationship between the ROK and the Soviet Union. The United States also satisfied South

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<sup>169</sup> Sally Ho, “At UN, Moon Pushes Peace with N Korea after Missile Tests,” *AP NEWS*, September 21, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/united-nations-general-assembly-coronavirus-pandemic-united-nations-health-moon-jae-in-25e89e2f8a8b599e6d727b306e30b36d>.

Korea's desire to emphasize the robustness of the ROK-U.S. alliance, even though the ROK forged friendships with communist countries while pursuing the Nordpolitik policy.

This chapter assesses that this U.S. action helped the South Korean government to dispel concerns about its own relations with the United States and to continue implementing Nordpolitik. When the ROK government made efforts to join the UN with North Korea, President Bush made a speech publicly supporting South Korea's position at the UN General Assembly in 1990.<sup>170</sup> The U.S. public support undoubtedly influenced more than 70 countries' strong support for South Korea's membership in the UN. Finally, the Bush administration's decision to withdraw nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula was a beneficial decision for the South Korean government, which needed a peaceful foundation for unification.

It is valuable to think about the reasons why the United States supported the ROK's Nordpolitik policy. This was good timing for both the ROK and the United States. At that time, there was a huge structural change between East and West, marking the end of the Cold War.<sup>171</sup> With the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, Germany was unified in 1990, and it also was essential for the Soviet Union to reduce its preexisting military capabilities due to economic difficulties. This fundamentally changed the U.S. national strategy, followed by a change of U.S. interest in the Korean Peninsula.<sup>172</sup>

Moreover, looking at the role of the United States in a series of cases, the United States acted in its own interests in many ways, rather than merely supporting the ROK's foreign policy. When first informed of the Nordpolitik policy, the United States seemed cautious and did not offer any response to the policy. The United States created a new initiative on North Korea in line with South Korea, but it was limited to the private sector and the U.S. government continued to maintain economic sanctions against the North. Through this, the United States made it seem as if its negative view of North Korea

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<sup>170</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Sixty Years of South Korean Diplomacy*, 182.

<sup>171</sup> Yong-chul Ha et al., *Nordpolitik: Origin, Development, Impact* (Seoul: Seoul University Press, 2003), 15.

<sup>172</sup> Ha et al., 15.

continued to be deep, although the U.S. government did not prevent South Korea from implementing Nordpolitik. Washington did not play a direct role in establishing diplomatic relations between South Korea and the Soviet Union, and there was no mention of North Korea when the U.S. government expressed its support for South Korea's entrance into the UN. Finally, when considering the removal of U.S. nuclear weapons from South Korea, South Korea's concern about North Korea's nuclear threat was not a direct consideration in the U.S. decision to withdraw nuclear weapons from the ROK territory.

Good timing alone is not enough to explain the multiple positive outcomes of Nordpolitik, and despite the good timing, it is clear that the United States contributed in various ways to the multiple outcomes of the ROK's Nordpolitik. Without the assistance and acceptance of the United States, it would have been difficult for the ROK to carry out its foreign policy with such confidence and consistency. Relations with Russia established in 1990 have continued to be friendly to this day, and the two Koreas' accession to the UN in 1991 continues to be effective.

### **III. NEO-NORDPOLITIK**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Before discussing the impact of the United States on the Neo-Nordpolitik policy in section C, section B describes the Neo-Nordpolitik policy in general. First, section B briefly introduces the emergence of the policy. Following that, the strategy and significance of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy are explained with President Moon's own words. There is no explanation for the end of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy since it is still in progress. The outcomes are also not available for assessment for the same reason.

One major difference between Chapter III. section B and Chapter II. section B. is that the latter additionally compares the Neo-Nordpolitik policy to the Nordpolitik one in terms of the policy itself. Comparing the two policies with correlation and coherence is a necessary step before comparing the U.S. impact on the two policies. Although the two policies are similar as they have the same names, there are also obvious differences between them. Section B in this chapter, thus, will further explain the differences between the two policies.

Section C in this chapter concerns the diplomatic activities and responses between ROK and U.S. decision makers and the relationships between these two countries and determines how the United States engaged in the Neo-Nordpolitik policy, by studying several important events that took place during the Neo-Nordpolitik era.

#### **B. POLICY FOUNDATION**

President Moon, who took office in May 2017, instructed the establishment of a committee to lead the northern economic affairs on June 26, stressing the importance of triangular (i.e., the two Koreas and Russia) cooperation and coordination with Russia for the development of the Far East.<sup>173</sup> Considering his direct order shortly after his inauguration to establish a presidential body to carry out the Neo-Nordpolitik policy,

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<sup>173</sup> Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation, *Progress* (Seoul: The Presidential Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation, 2017), <http://bukbang.go.kr/bukbang/policy/0001/>.



Moon's strong commitment to push for a strategy to emphasize cooperation with Russia and North Korea seems to have been in place early on.

In July 2017, the Moon government announced 100 policy tasks to conduct state affairs for the next five years. Among the 100 tasks, task numbers 90, 97, and 98 were presented as tasks related to the implementation of Neo-Nordpolitik.<sup>174</sup> Task no. 90 is “to realize the ‘new economic map for the Korean Peninsula’ and economic unification.”<sup>175</sup> The new economic map connects the two Koreas and the DMZ in the form of an H, and the H-form becomes the three major economic belts of the Korean Peninsula. Task no. 90 aims to carve out a future economy through inter-Korean economic cooperation and to establish a foundation for economic unification. Task no. 97 is “to cooperate diplomatically with the four countries whose interests converge on the Korea Peninsula.”<sup>176</sup> Task no. 97 aims for a confident and active cooperative diplomacy with the United States, China, Japan, and Russia. This task especially emphasizes economic cooperation with Russia, a major partner in Neo-Nordpolitik.<sup>177</sup> Task no. 98 is “to create a responsible ‘Northeast Asia Plus Community’.”<sup>178</sup> This task is the most fundamental task of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy. The goal of this task is to create an environment of peace and cooperation that is amicable to a united Korea and prosperity in the long run amid geopolitical competition in Northeast Asia.<sup>179</sup> The three tasks highlight the policy's approach through economic means, and the ROK's leading role in pursuing it. Also, all of these tasks are to cultivate a foundation for peace on the Korean Peninsula and joint prosperity between the two Koreas.

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<sup>174</sup> Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation, *Progress*.

<sup>175</sup> Blue House, “100 Policy Tasks Five-year Plan of the Moon Jae-in Administration” (Seoul: Blue House, 2017), 26, <https://www.korea.net/Resources/Publications/About-Korea/view?articleId=7959>.

<sup>176</sup> Blue House, 26.

<sup>177</sup> Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation, *Progress*.

<sup>178</sup> Blue House, “100 Policy Tasks Five-year Plan of the Moon Jae-in Administration,” 26.

<sup>179</sup> Woo, “On the Vision of Korea's New Northern Policy: Context of International Relations Theory and the contact with the ‘New East Asia Policy’ of Russia,” 114.

On August 25, 2017, the Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation was launched as a presidential organization that will pursue Neo-Nordpolitik in accordance with the president's instruction.

The Neo-Nordpolitik policy has two central axes: peace and prosperity. Peace means peace on the Korean Peninsula and prosperity means economic cooperation and economic community in Northeast Asia. President Moon's two speeches in Germany and Russia right after his inauguration give clarity to his innermost thoughts and the unmistakable direction of the policy concerning peace and prosperity.

First, the speech at City Hall in Berlin on July 6, 2017, shows the policy initiative related to peace, one of two central axes of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy.<sup>180</sup> The site where he gave his speech had an important meaning as it was the same place where the German reunification treaty negotiations took place. According to his speech, Germany had continued the Eastern policy, which is the origin of the term Nordpolitik or Northern policy, for around two decades, which had built broad public support and confidence in unification and elicited support from the international community. He said that the German unification process could be a lesson in the direction for the two Koreas. In this speech, he expressed his willingness and plan to realize a peaceful Korean Peninsula. He also conveyed a willingness to lead peace on the Korean Peninsula and bring about common prosperity in a similar way to Germany. At the same time, five policy directions were presented as a way to make this concrete: 1) pursuit of a peaceful Korean Peninsula—this does not mean either “the collapse of North Korea” or “unification through absorption,” according to the speech; 2) pursuit of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula that guarantees the security of the North Korean regime; 3) establishment of a permanent peace regime (institutionalization of the peace); 4) presentation of a new economic map (economic cooperation wherein the two Koreas can prosper together as the basis for establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula); 5) promotion of non-political exchange and cooperation projects. Moon showed his firm determination to strive for peace on the

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<sup>180</sup> Moon Jae-in, *A Speech Invited by the Korber Foundation on July 6, 2017*, Moon Jae-in Collection of Speeches (Seoul: The Blue House, 2017), 203–213.

Korean Peninsula in this speech. His strategy to achieve the peace is to resume inter-Korean dialogue and especially utilize economic cooperation as a means.

In addition, President Moon declared the Neo-Nordpolitik policy's economic vision in the keynote address at Vladivostok in Russia on September 6, 2017, in the third East Economic Forum. According to the speech, the vision of Neo-Nordpolitik was, in short, economic cooperation with the northern regions, including Russia.<sup>181</sup> He mentioned that Neo-Nordpolitik was in line with Russia's Neo-Eastern Policy, which aims to develop the Far East, and that Neo-Nordpolitik was based on cooperation with Russia. He especially proposed a 9-Bridge strategy for multiple and simultaneous cooperation in nine areas between the ROK and Russia and active participation of the ROK in the development of the Far East. This plan shows how much close cooperation with Russia comprises an important segment in the Neo-Nordpolitik policy, as opposed to Nordpolitik. Moon also said he had a huge vision for the Northeast Asian economic community and multilateral security system.<sup>182</sup> This refers to the future economic and security status of the ROK that President Moon expects through pursuing the Neo-Nordpolitik policy.

Based on the two speeches, the strategy of Neo-Nordpolitik is as follows. The vision of Neo-Nordpolitik is the "Northern Economic Community of Peace and Prosperity," according to government-introduced data.<sup>183</sup> It signifies peace and common economic prosperity in Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula. As previously stated, there are two central pillars: peace and prosperity. In regard to peace issues, first, Moon is pushing "to build peace regime on the Korean Peninsula," saying that "reunification will be achieved naturally by an agreement between South and North Korea when peace is established."<sup>184</sup> Since the North Korean nuclear issue must be resolved for peace on the

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<sup>181</sup> Moon Jae-in, *A Speech Invited by the Third East Economic Forum Conference on September 7, 2017*, Moon Jae-in Collection of Speeches (Seoul: The Blue House, 2017), 308–315.

<sup>182</sup> Moon, 313.

<sup>183</sup> The Presidential Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation, *Progress Direction of Neo-Nordpolitik* (Seoul: The Presidential Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation, 2017), [http://bukbang.go.kr/bukbang/vision\\_policy/way/](http://bukbang.go.kr/bukbang/vision_policy/way/).

<sup>184</sup> Moon, *A Speech Invited by the Korber Foundation on July 6, 2017*, 208.

Korean Peninsula, the Neo-Nordpolitik policy brings together the peace mechanism and the North Korean nuclear issue, pushing for a full denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula and a peace treaty at the same time. It also promotes the establishment of a peace foundation in Northeast Asia by promoting minilateral cooperation with fourteen Eurasian countries.<sup>185</sup>

On prosperity, or economic issues, Neo-Nordpolitik pursues strengthening economic cooperation with Eurasian countries with the aim of “restoring the identity of a bridge state linking the oceans and continents.”<sup>186</sup> It is also pushing for the idea of a new economic map on the Korean Peninsula to secure new economic growth engines on the Korean Peninsula and create a prosperous economic community between the two Koreas. Through this, the Neo-Nordpolitik aims for economic integration between the two Koreas and further links a combined economy through economic cooperation with northern countries. Improving inter-Korean relations is an important factor for the success of Neo-Nordpolitik on the economic axis, because for South Korea, North Korea blocks the road to the continent.

### **Comparison of Context, Strategy, and Approach between the Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik Policies**

Both the Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies have the same basic strategy. Both strategies are, first, to knock on the door of North Korea through cooperation with countries around the North Korea, which are connected in some way. The slight difference is that the Nordpolitik policy generally targeted China, the Soviet Union, and Eastern European socialist countries, whereas the Neo-Nordpolitik policy specifically calls for outreach to seventeen countries. Both policies also emphasize the leading and independent role of the ROK government. Moon’s wish for peace on the Korean peninsula is very strong, as was President Roh’s. Moon appears to have re-adopted the Nordpolitik policy as

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<sup>185</sup> The Presidential Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation, *Target Countries of Northern Policy* (Seoul: The Presidential Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation, 2017), [http://bukbang.go.kr/bukbang/vision\\_policy/nation/](http://bukbang.go.kr/bukbang/vision_policy/nation/).

<sup>186</sup> The Presidential Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation, *Progress Direction of Neo-Nordpolitik*.

a governmental task with the desire to similarly reproduce the initiative of the Roh administration and some of the accomplishments through it.

More significantly, there are three main different points between the Neo-Nordpolitik and the original Nordpolitik policies. Firstly, Neo-Nordpolitik places much greater emphasis on peace than on unification.<sup>187</sup> President Moon seems to be trying to get closer to North Korea with the word peace rather than the word unification, which could inspire antipathy to North Korea, and enables him to talk about one Korean Peninsula initiative internationally by drawing isolated North Korea into the global community. This is because discussion of the future direction together becomes a possibility once North Korea opens its mind.

Second, President Moon ordered creation of the Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation and made it a presidential office, whereas the Roh administration did not have a separate office leading Nordpolitik. Nordpolitik was pursued by a small number of close political forces around the president.<sup>188</sup> A pivotal point of assigning responsibilities of interdepartmental cooperation and division of labor amid Neo-Nordpolitik typifies the Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation.

Lastly, along the two axes, the Neo-Nordpolitik policy focuses more on the economy than on peace, while the Nordpolitik policy focused more on diplomacy, which has the same context as peace, rather than on the economy. In the Nordpolitik policy, of course, there was a plan for expanding the economic sphere to the continental region, but there was no actual promotion in the economic field. The first stage of policy promotion, the establishment of diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union, China, and the Eastern Bloc, concentrated on diplomacy-oriented policies that expanded the diplomatic domain to the communist countries and only bore fruit in the diplomatic domain.

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<sup>187</sup> Jung, "ROK's Northern Policy after Roh Tae-woo Government: From Unification Policies to National Strategies."

<sup>188</sup> Chongki An and Sunryung Park, "Research on Main Factors in Roh Tae Woo Administration's Nordpolitik (Northward Policy) and Possibility of Re-Evaluation," *Legislation and Policy Studies* 7, no. 1 (June 2015): 140.

On the other hand, the vision of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy is building an economic community with the north. Even the name of the organization in charge of the policy, the Presidential Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation, and economic cooperation centered on trade and investment, reveals Neo-Nordpolitik as an economic-oriented policy. The fact that the goal of diplomatic efforts is ultimately to expand economic cooperation through an agreement also shows the economic-centric nature of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy.

### **C. POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND U.S. IMPACTS**

This section analyzes the diplomatic interplays between the ROK and the United States in the process of implementing the Neo-Nordpolitik policy.

#### **1. Origins of the Neo-Nordpolitik Policy**

This section concerns diplomatic activities and responses between the ROK and the United States the early stage of the implementation of the ROK's Neo-Nordpolitik policy from June 2017, just before the first declaration of Neo-Nordpolitik, to the end of 2017. Although Moon's government was enthusiastic in executing the Neo-Nordpolitik policy since his inauguration in May 2017, North Korea's series of missile launches and its sixth nuclear test left a negative impact, as if North Korea was laughing at the ROK's push for the Neo-Nordpolitik policy. Relations between the United States and Russia were also getting worse. The United States in turn did not support Neo-Nordpolitik, which contradicted the U.S. position, and as a result, relations between the two countries over the ROK's policy toward North Korea and Russia were quite unstable.

The ROK government's policy direction and concrete concepts on peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula, as the two main pillars of Neo-Nordpolitik, were presented separately in two speeches: the speech in July 2017 in Berlin concerned peace, and the speech in September 2017 in Vladivostok concerned prosperity.

First, Moon gave a speech on the axis of peace, one of the two pillars of Neo-Nordpolitik, in July 2017, two months after he took office, and announced his plan to build

a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>189</sup> Moon proposed the conclusion of a peace treaty as a specific strategy for this, linking it to complete denuclearization.<sup>190</sup>

President Moon visited the United States to meet U.S. President Trump at the end of June, right before the Berlin speech, and tried to form a broad consensus and an understanding of his North Korea policy.<sup>191</sup> The summit between the two leaders took place at the White House in Washington on June 30. This was the first summit that Moon planned since he took office on May 10. It is explicable how important pre-coordination and exchange of views with the U.S. government is to the South Korean government in terms of North Korea policy by the fact that the ROK held the first summit with the United States and set the timing just before the scheduled Berlin address. In a joint press release after the summit, President Moon said that during his meeting with President Trump, he had prioritized resolving the North Korean nuclear issue and focused on closely coordinating related policies and discussed these points.<sup>192</sup>

At the time, North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile issues, among other things, were urgent challenges. In a New Year's address on January 1, 2017, Kim Jong Un said that the project to prepare for the launch of an intercontinental ballistic rocket was in the final stages, and concerns over North Korea had deepened around the world, including in the United States, due to fear of North Korea's provocations and the death of Otto Warmbier, who was detained by North Korea while sightseeing and died shortly after returning to the United States.<sup>193</sup> Hence, President Trump was in a position to raise the

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<sup>189</sup> Moon, A Speech Invited by the Korber Foundation on July 6, 2017, 209.

<sup>190</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., A Peace Treaty with North Korea? 7.

<sup>191</sup> "What Happened at President Moon Jae-in's First ROK-U.S. Summit," *Sunday Journal*, July 13, 2017, <https://sundayjournalusa.com/2017/07/13/%EB%AC%B8%EC%9E%AC%EC%9D%B8-%EB%8C%80%ED%86%B5%EB%A0%B9-%EC%B2%AB-%EB%B2%88%EC%A7%B8-%ED%95%9C%EB%AF%B8-%EC%A0%95%EC%83%81%ED%9A%8C%EB%8B%B4%EC%97%90-%EC%9E%88%EC%97%88%EB%8D%98-%EC%9D%BC%EB%93%A4/>.

<sup>192</sup> Jae-in Moon, *A Joint Press Release by South Korea and the United States Leaders on June 30, 2017*, Moon Jae-in Collection of Speeches (Seoul: The Blue House, 2017), 173.

<sup>193</sup> Kent Boydston, "Kim Jong-un's 2017 New Year's Address," *PIIE* (blog), January 4, 2017, <https://www.piie.com/blogs/north-korea-witness-transformation/kim-jong-uns-2017-new-years-address>.

North's nuclear issue as a top priority in U.S. foreign policy and impose tougher sanctions on North Korea, as a Congressional Research Service (CRS) report noted, "in the hope of persuading the North to de-escalate return to the path of dialogue."<sup>194</sup> However, Moon made it clear during his visit to the United States that the ROK's approach to North Korea needed to be moderate or engaged.<sup>195</sup> The two presidents' conflicting positions in dealing with the North Korean issue were not negotiable, so they only acknowledged each other's positions. The reason for such an analysis is that the joint press announcement after the summit contained both sides' positions, not one consensus. The joint statement, on the one hand, stated that the two countries would achieve North Korea's nuclear dismantlement through non-military means that combine sanctions and dialogue, not force.<sup>196</sup> The summit in particular could serve as a springboard to the government which was about to construct and implement a new roadmap of North Korean policy in a sense that the joint press presented that "the door to dialogue with North Korea is open."<sup>197</sup> On the other hand, the joint statement supported taking a strong response to the North Korean nuclear issue, which had threatened peace on the Korean Peninsula and in the region.<sup>198</sup> In the joint announcement, the two countries also reaffirmed their commitment to continue their "maximum pressure" strategy, a plan to push China, North Korea's largest trading partner, to isolate North Korea economically and diplomatically.<sup>199</sup>

Overall, the two leaders acknowledged the need for sanctions and dialogue as a means of resolving North Korea's nuclear issue, but the U.S. government seems to have

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<sup>194</sup> Mark E. Manyin et al., *U.S.-South Korea Relations*, CRS Report No. R41481 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2017), summary, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R41481.pdf>.

<sup>195</sup> "What Happened at President Moon Jae-in's First ROK-U.S. Summit."

<sup>196</sup> "06/30/17- Joint Statement between the United States and the Republic of Korea," The White House, June 30, 2017, <https://kr.usembassy.gov/063017-joint-statement-united-states-republic-korea/>.

<sup>197</sup> "[Hankyoreh Editorial] Based on the 'Four-No Principle' to Solve the North Korean Problem," *Hankyoreh*, July 2, 2017, <https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/opinion/editorial/801113.html>.

<sup>198</sup> "What Happened at President Moon Jae-in's First ROK-U.S. Summit."

<sup>199</sup> "June 30, 2017, Joint Statement between the United States and the Republic of Korea," U.S. Embassy & Consulate in the Republic of Korea, June 30, 2017, <https://kr.usembassy.gov/063017-joint-statement-united-states-republic-korea/>.



firmly insisted on including tough sanctions on the North. Trump also stressed that “we exceeded the limit of our patience with North Korea,” referring to the Otto Warmbier case.<sup>200</sup> Moon also spoke at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), calling for North Korea’s denuclearization and revealing four principles toward North Korea to which the ROK and the United States agreed. First, the two pledged they would not pursue hostile policies against the North; second, they would attack the North; third, did not seek the replacement or collapse of the regime, and fourth, would no “artificially accelerate” the unification of the Korean Peninsula.<sup>201</sup>

President Moon’s visit to Germany in early July, which announced the axis of peace in Neo-Nordpolitik, was due to the G20 summit. Surprisingly, North Korea launched an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) on July 5, a day before President Moon’s speech in Berlin, describing it as a “gift” to the United States.<sup>202</sup> The fact that North Korea had made tremendous progress in learning missile technologies and the North’s comments were a huge negative factor for South Korea’s Neo-Nordpolitik of promoting peace and engagement on the Korean Peninsula. Nevertheless, the ROK pushed ahead with its peace plan on the Korean Peninsula in President Moon’s speech, emphasizing peace and dialogue.

After the speech, some questions were raised about its appropriateness given the situation, where the possibility of a military response was allegedly mentioned within the international community.<sup>203</sup> In response, an official at the Blue House said, “We know that it is difficult to lead to any achievement right now. However, we thought we need to

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<sup>200</sup> “What Happened at President Moon Jae-in’s First ROK-U.S. Summit.”

<sup>201</sup> “Global Leaders Forum: His Excellency Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea,” CSIS, July 3, 2017, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/global-leaders-forum-his-excellency-moon-jae-president-republic-korea>.

<sup>202</sup> Martin Fritz, “Opinion: North Korea’s ‘Gift’ to the G20 Summit,” *Deutsche Welle*, March 7, 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/opinion-north-koreas-gift-to-the-g20-summit/a-39550936>.

<sup>203</sup> Woo-sang Jung and Min-seok Lee, “President Moon Reveals His Peace Plan... German Expert ‘Can We Have a Conversation in This Situation?’,” *Chosun Journal*, July 7, 2017, <http://nk.chosun.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=166356>.

reveal even abstractly what our goal is.”<sup>204</sup> Such a comment by a government official showed that a problem existed with the Korean government’s level of understanding of international politics and establishing foreign policy. If it had recognized that its goals were abstract, why did it not notice that it would be difficult for the international community to empathize with abstract policies? It is believed that the ROK government should have first acknowledged the level of North Korea’s nuclear development and presented practical measures to curb it based on accurate analysis.

Nevertheless, President Moon’s policy principle on North Korea, that is, a peaceful resolution through dialogue, was not only far from the rising tide of tension on the Korean Peninsula, but also an unrealistic solution for which it would be difficult to elicit international consensus. This can be seen from the discussions at the ROK-U.S.-Japan summit, which was held just before the G20 summit. The meeting is said to have been in-depth discussions on North Korea’s nuclear and missile issues, including a response to the North’s announcement of a successful ICBM test launch.<sup>205</sup> At the three-country meeting, President Moon’s idea of a peace axis was not considered at all. Rather, at the meeting, the leaders of the three countries agreed that it was important to quickly draw up a stronger UN Security Council resolution on sanctions and put much stronger pressure on North Korea than before.<sup>206</sup> The three countries also agreed that China should play a significant role in limiting North Korea’s actions. President Trump reportedly said that he was considering a severe response to North Korea at the time.<sup>207</sup> In contrast, James Mattis, U.S. Secretary of Defense, is said to have warned that the clash between the two countries

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<sup>204</sup> Jung and Lee.

<sup>205</sup> Dooseung Kim and Hye-jin Jang, “Main Contents and Security Implications of the G20 ROK-U.S.-Japan Summit,” *Northeast Asia Strategic Analysis*, July 11, 2017, 1–2, <https://www.kida.re.kr/frt/board/frtNormalBoardDetail.do?sidx=2184&idx=609&depth=2>.

<sup>206</sup> “G20: Donald Trump Meets with South Korea, Japan as North Korea Talks Start Early,” *Deutsche Welle*, June 7, 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/g20-donald-trump-meets-with-south-korea-japan-as-north-korea-talks-start-early/a-39588213>.

<sup>207</sup> “G20: Donald Trump Meets with South Korea, Japan as North Korea Talks Start Early.”

would be “a catastrophic war” in which Kim Jong Un retaliated with a long-range missile attack on South Korea.<sup>208</sup>

The plans for the axis of prosperity on the Korean Peninsula were announced in a speech in Vladivostok, Russia in September 2017. According to President Moon’s speech, the core of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy is to achieve multiple and simultaneous cooperation by establishing nine bridges between South Korea and Russia: shipbuilding, ports, the Arctic Sea Route, gas, railroad, electric power, jobs, agriculture, and fisheries.<sup>209</sup> Although the Neo-Nordpolitik policy officially includes fourteen countries, the nine bridges all focus on Russia. In other words, in the axis of prosperity of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy, Russia is the top priority and the main direction in terms of geopolitical importance and economic potential.<sup>210</sup>

However, it was unrealistic to expect support for this aspect of South Korea’s policy direction from the United States, whose relations with Russia have deteriorated rapidly since the Ukraine crisis in 2014.<sup>211</sup> From the ROK’s point of view, economic cooperation with Russia is part of an effort to find a new economic growth engine, but internationally, since 2014, Russia’s relations with the West have sharply deteriorated due to the Ukraine crisis and other incidents, and it increasingly was subject to higher sanctions. Accordingly, South Korea never asked the United States for help on the axis of prosperity of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy, nor did the United States pay any attention to it.

Instead, since the ROK is an ally of the United States, the ROK seemed to act cautiously out of concern about the United States. For example, although the speech in September 2017 declared that the ROK would focus on expanding economic cooperation with Russia, the Moon government adopted a cautious attitude in the Khasan-Rajin railway

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<sup>208</sup> “G20: Donald Trump Meets with South Korea, Japan as North Korea Talks Start Early.”

<sup>209</sup> Artyom Lukin, “Russia’s Perspective on Korea’s New Northern Policy and Tasks for Russia-Korea Cooperative Relations,” in *Evaluation and Tasks of New Southern and New Northern Policies from an Overseas Perspective*, ed. Yongwoo Na (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2020), 275.

<sup>210</sup> Lukin, 277.

<sup>211</sup> Lukin, 268.

and port project. The background to the start of this project in the 2000s expressed the strong will of the ROK to participate.<sup>212</sup> However, after North Korea's fifth nuclear test in January 2016, the Park Geun-hye administration, preceding the Moon administration, withdrew from the Khasan-Rajin project. Russia has since tried to attract the ROK companies to the project. Nevertheless, the Moon government refused to re-participate due to fear of U.S. hostility. This project clearly shows that South Korea was interested in South-North and South-North-Russia trilateral projects but was acting cautiously while keeping an eye on the United States.

## **2. Events during Policy Implementation**

The following section deals with three important events that occurred during the overall policy implementation of the Neo-Nordpolitik era.

### ***a. Three Rounds of Inter-Korean Summits (April 27, 2018; May 26, 2018; September 18–20, 2018)***

The three inter-Korean summits held in 2018 were to meet President Moon's high expectations for the Neo-Nordpolitik policy. For North Korea, the purpose of the meetings with South Korea, however, was not to improve dialogue and relations with the South, but to use them as leverage to ultimately achieve the U.S.-North Korea summits. To this end, North Korea relied on the intervention of the South Korean government, and South Korea played an active facilitator for the improvement of relations between North Korea and the United States and for the North's denuclearization. The South Korean government made efforts to win U.S. support for the direction of South's North Korea policy, but the United States did not change its North Korea strategy in line with South's Neo-Nordpolitik policy.

The inter-Korean summits were held three times over six months in 2018. Previously, there were only two inter-Korean summits since the division of the two Koreas: in 2000 and in 2007. However, after 2007, the dialogue between the two Koreas had been cut off during the two conservative ROK administrations of President Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye, who took a hard line on North Korea. For this reason, President Moon's

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<sup>212</sup> Lukin, 281.

Neo-Nordpolitik policy had quite high expectations for results just by resuming inter-Korean dialogue.

Immediately after taking office in April 2017, President Moon continued to propose dialogue to North Korea, but North Korea did not respond until the end of 2017.<sup>213</sup> Rather, the Korean Peninsula faced a crisis due to a series of North Korean nuclear tests and missile launches until the end of 2017. North Korea conducted the sixth nuclear test in September 2017 in addition to the five nuclear tests up to that point, and in July, August, and December 2017, a total of four mid- to long-range ballistic missiles and ICBMs were tested.<sup>214</sup>

In a New Year's address by Kim Jong-un on January 1, 2018, however, the atmosphere reversed.<sup>215</sup> As Kim first showed his intention to participate in the PyeongChang Olympics to which President Moon had invited him, a high-level inter-Korean talk was held on January 9, and North Korea participated in the PyeongChang Olympics on February 9–11.<sup>216</sup> Kim Yeo-jung, Kim Jong-un's younger sister and then a rising figure, visited South Korea as a North Korean envoy. Kim Yeo-jung reportedly delivered a personal letter from Kim Jong-un to President Moon at this time.<sup>217</sup> On February 25, President Moon met with Kim Young-chul, North Korea's head of the Unification Propagation Department, and Kim expressed the North's willingness to talk to

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<sup>213</sup> Emma Chanlett-Avery et al., *North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, and Internal Situation*, CRS Report No. R41259 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2018), 4, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R41259>.

<sup>214</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., *North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, and Internal Situation*, 2, 9; McInnis, et al., *The North Korean Nuclear Challenge: Military Options and Issues for Congress*, 1, 42, 44.

<sup>215</sup> Il-gi Kim, "Trends and Tasks for the Development of Inter-Korean Relations," in *Joint Academic Conference of Four National Research Institutes in the Second Half of 2018* (Seoul: KINU, 2018), 49, <https://kinu.or.kr/brd/board/606/L/CATEGORY/589/menu/404?brdType=R&thisPage=1&bbIdx=55009>.

<sup>216</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., *North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, and Internal Situation*, 4.

<sup>217</sup> Kiwan Lee and Hyunchul Yeo, "The Domestic Factors for the Changing Environment in the North Korean Nuclear Issues," *The Korean Journal of Area Studies* 36, no. 3 (2018): 195–196, <https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/ci/sereArticleSearch/ciSereArtiView.kci?sereArticleSearchBean.artiId=ART002387986>.

the United States.<sup>218</sup> With North Korea's participation in the PyeongChang Olympics, the possibility of an inter-Korean summit increased. Afterwards, the South Korean special delegation to North Korea visited North Korea on March 5–6, the North Korea-China summit was held on March 26, and a high-level inter-Korean talk was held once again on March 29.<sup>219</sup> Kim's earlier reversal contributed to all these events, which culminated in the inter-Korean summit on April 27.

The Panmunjom Declaration agreed upon by the two leaders after the meeting was no different from the previous declarations and agreements between the two Koreas. The Panmunjom Declaration contains the theoretical direction and principled will for the development of inter-Korean relations: an agreement on the improvement and development of inter-Korean relations, an agreement on mitigating military tensions and resolving the risk of war, and an agreement on establishing a lasting and robust peace mechanism.<sup>220</sup> The first of thirteen specific articles in the declaration is an agreement to thoroughly implement all the already adopted inter-Korean declarations and agreements. In addition, according to Hak-Sung Kim, all articles of the declaration covered major agreements between the two Koreas since the July 4 Inter-Korean Joint Statement in 1972.<sup>221</sup> Particularly, according to Kim, repeated promises in the Basic Inter-Korean Agreement in 1991, and the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in 1992; these two were explained as the results achieved while promoting the Nordpolitik policy,

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<sup>218</sup> Lee and Yeo, "The Domestic Factors for the Changing Environment in the North Korean Nuclear Issues," 196.

<sup>219</sup> Hochul Lee, "The Denuclearization and Peace Process of the Korean Peninsula: Comprehensive Agreement on Step-by-Step Implementation," *Korea and World Politics* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 230, <https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/ci/sereArticleSearch/ciSereArtiView.kci?sereArticleSearchBean.artiId=ART002449843>.

<sup>220</sup> Hak-Sung Kim, "Planning a Working Peace System on the Korean Peninsula after the Inter-Korean Summit & U.S.-North Korea Summit Meetings," *The Journal of Political Science & Communication* 21, no. 3 (October 2018): 48, <https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/ci/sereArticleSearch/ciSereArtiView.kci?sereArticleSearchBean.artiId=ART002397810>; The Inter-Korean Summit Preparation Committee, *Panmunjom Declaration and After* (Seoul: The Inter-Korean Summit Preparation Committee, 2018), <https://www.koreasummit.kr/Summit2018/Performance>.

<sup>221</sup> Kim, "Planning a Working Peace System on the Korean Peninsula after the Inter-Korean Summit & U.S.-North Korea Summit Meetings," 48.

June 15 Joint Declaration in 2007, and the October 4 Inter-Korean Joint Declaration in 2007, which were re-emphasized in the Panmunjom Declaration.<sup>222</sup> This means that there is no new agreement that differs from the preexisting agreement, even though implementing the preexisting agreement is understandably important enough. In light of this, the authenticity of Kim Jong-un's meeting with President Moon and whether he really wanted to develop relations with South Korea is questionable.

This thesis evaluates that Kim's meeting with President Moon in response to the Moon administration's signal of continued dialogue was aimed at the U.S.-North Korea summit. North Korea used the inter-Korean summit as leverage to ultimately accomplish the U.S.-North Korea summit. In fact, North Korea has long sought to normalize relations with the United States rather than improve relations with South Korea, a party to the division. On February 10, 2018, Kim Jong-un sent a personal letter to President Moon and requested a visit to North Korea, and on the 25th of the same month, Kim Young-chul expressed the North's intention to engage in a dialogue with the United States when Kim met President Moon. In other words, North Korea accepted South Korea's proposal for dialogue and proposed dialogue with the United States in reverse. President Moon made a political decision to accept both the inter-Korean summit and the U.S.-North Korea summit and delivered North Korea's message to the United States.

Before and after the first inter-Korean summit, there were continuous working-level contacts between South Korea and the United States. On April 25, two days before the inter-Korean summit, Chung Eui-yong, the ROK's head of the National Security Office, met with U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton to discuss ways to cooperate for denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.<sup>223</sup> On May 4, shortly after the inter-Korean summit, Chung discussed the denuclearization of North Korea with U.S. NSC officials again.<sup>224</sup> Additionally, on May 22, President Moon visited the United States to meet

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<sup>222</sup> Kim, 48.

<sup>223</sup> Yang, "The Results and Assignments of the Third Inter-Korean Summit: Focusing on '4.27 Panmunjom Declaration,'" 6.

<sup>224</sup> Yang, 6.

President Trump, and the two countries discussed many issues before the U.S.-North Korea meeting.

On May 26, the second inter-Korean summit was held at the suggestion of Kim Jong-un.<sup>225</sup> This was quickly held right after Kim Jong-un expressed his desire to meet President Moon without any formal procedures on the afternoon of May 25. Kim requested a meeting with the ROK side as soon as President Trump had announced that he would cancel the U.S.-North Korea summit planned for June on May 24, the previous day. Through this, North Korea seems to have been trying to convey its will for dialogue with the United States through South Korea in response to the sudden news of the cancellation of the North Korea-U.S. summit.

In September 2018, the third inter-Korean summit was held in Pyongyang. This was the result of South Korea's efforts to arbitrate in dialogue between the United States and North Korea, which had stalled since the first their summit in June 2018.<sup>226</sup> The third inter-Korean summit further materialized North Korea's willingness for and discussions on denuclearization, while providing a justification and necessity to formalize the U.S.-North Korea dialogue.<sup>227</sup> According to the Pyongyang Joint Declaration announced after the meeting, the two Koreas agreed on concrete measures to implement the Panmunjom Declaration agreed on in April and promised to turn the Korean Peninsula into an emblem of peace without nuclear weapons and nuclear threats.<sup>228</sup> To this end, North Korea decided to permanently dispose of the Tongchang-ri engine test site and missile launcher under the observation of experts from related countries, and expressed its willingness to take

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<sup>225</sup> The Inter-Korean Summit Preparation Committee, *The Second 2018 Inter-Korean Summit* (Seoul: The Inter-Korean Summit Preparation Committee, 2018), <https://www.koreasummit.kr/Summit2018/2nd>.

<sup>226</sup> Mark E. Manyin and Emma Chanlett-Avery, *The September 2018 Inter-Korean Summit*, CRS Report No. IN10974 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2018): 1, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN10974>.

<sup>227</sup> Min Hong, "Prospects and Tasks for Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula after the Pyongyang Inter-Korean Summit," Online Series CO 18-41 (1 October 2018): 2, <https://www.kinu.or.kr/www/jsp/prg/api/dlV.jsp?menuIdx=260&category=9&thisPage=1&biblioId=1500737>.

<sup>228</sup> The Inter-Korean Summit Preparation Committee, *The Third 2018 Inter-Korean Summit* (Seoul: The Inter-Korean Summit Preparation Committee, 2018), <https://www.koreasummit.kr/Summit2018/3rd>.



additional measures, such as the permanent dismantlement of the Yongbyon nuclear facility, if the United States were to take corresponding measures in accordance with the joint statement agreed upon in June.<sup>229</sup>

According to the CRS report, the third inter-Korean summit presented both opportunities and obstacles for the United States.<sup>230</sup> The opportunity was that this meeting provided “new momentum” for the denuclearization negotiations between the United States and North Korea.<sup>231</sup> President Trump, who met with Moon days after the third inter-Korean summit, said he would hold a second meeting with North Korea in the near future. If North Korea did not keep its promises, however, this could be an obstacle for the United States and the U.S. “freedom of action” could be restricted.<sup>232</sup>

Considering the ROK-U.S. interaction at the three inter-Korean summits held in 2018, South Korea, first, played an active facilitator for the improvement of relations between the United States and North Korea and for North’s denuclearization. President Moon embraced North Korea both with an open mind and with a strong will to achieve results on the axis of peace in the Neo-Nordpolitik policy, and actively communicated North Korea’s position to the United States and persuaded the United States. The United States maintained close communications with the ROK government. According to Hae Soo Yang, this was to prevent the Moon administration from accelerating excessively on the nuclear issue.<sup>233</sup> At the same time, the Trump administration maintained a hardline stance that, as to North Korea’s threat to the United States using nuclear weapons, the United States could never accept North Korea’s nuclear possession. South Korea also had the same opinion. Nonetheless, the United States did not accept South Korea’s wishes for bolder

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<sup>229</sup> Manyin and Chanlett-Avery, The September 2018 Inter-Korean Summit, 1.

<sup>230</sup> Manyin and Chanlett-Avery, 1.

<sup>231</sup> Manyin and Chanlett-Avery, 1.

<sup>232</sup> Manyin and Chanlett-Avery, 1.

<sup>233</sup> Hae Soo Yang, “The Results and Assignments of the Third Inter-Korean Summit: Focusing on ‘4.27 Panmunjom Declaration’,” *Journal of Social Science* 21, no. 2 (2018):9, <https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/ci/sereArticleSearch/ciSereArtiView.kci?sereArticleSearchBean.artiId=ART002406658>.

U.S. changes in perception and corresponding measures to lead North Korea to a system of denuclearization and peace agreements.

***b. Two Rounds of U.S.-North Korea Summits (June 12, 2018; February 27–28, 2019) and a Sudden Meeting of Trump and Kim Jong-un at the Korean Demilitarized Zone***

The historic U.S.-North Korea summit and the meeting of the three countries, in terms of the events themselves, were groundbreaking events that were possible due to the great determination and action of the leaders of these three countries. In retrospect, however, nothing of much value came from these meetings. Negotiations on the denuclearization of North Korea have not further progressed after the three meetings because of differences in viewpoints between the United States and North Korea regarding the order and scope of denuclearization. The approaches to resolving the North Korean issue by the ROK and the United States differed from each other, and the United States did nothing to develop relations between the two Koreas, which indirectly stymied the Neo-Nordpolitik policy.

President Moon proposed dialogue with North Korea at the beginning of his term in office, citing the topic of “peace and prosperity approach to North Korea.”<sup>234</sup> Through mediators from South Korea and China, Kim Jong-un expressed his desire to discuss denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula with President Trump, and he linked it to resolving the threats toward North Korea and ensuring the security of the North Korean regime.<sup>235</sup> President Moon delivered North Korea’s proposal, saying that the North was ready to discuss the abandonment of its nuclear weapons and missile programs.<sup>236</sup> Since then, the mood toward peace on the Korean Peninsula led to an agreement between President Trump and Kim Jong-un to hold a summit in March 2018, and two inter-Korean

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<sup>234</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., *A Peace Treaty with North Korea?* 6.

<sup>235</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., 1; Steven Lee Myers and Jane Perlez, “Kim Jong-un Met with Xi Jinping in Secret Beijing Visit,” *New York Times*, March 27, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/27/world/asia/kim-jong-un-china-north-korea.html>.

<sup>236</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., *A Peace Treaty with North Korea?* 1.

summits, described in the previous section, were held in April and May 2018 in preparation for the U.S.-North Korea summit.

The 2018 U.S.-North Korea summit was the first meeting between the leaders of the United States and North Korea in sixty-five years since the armistice agreement in 1953, and the first in almost ten years since the Six-Party Talks broke down in 2009.<sup>237</sup> In the past 30 years, various attempts have been made to denuclearize North Korea.<sup>238</sup> However, the emergence of the ROK's conservative administration, which lasted nearly a decade from December 2007, and the breakdown of the Six-Party Talks and Kim Jong-il's stroke in 2009, have left such talks fruitless.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited North Korea four times ahead of the two U.S.-North Korea summits and discussed major negotiation issues, but nothing came to fruition until the summit, except that the North's strong will for negotiations was confirmed. First, on March 31, Pompeo, then CIA Director and a nominee for the Secretary of State, visited North Korea for two days with the utmost secrecy and met Kim Jong-un.<sup>239</sup> Here, Kim Jong-un made it clear that he was willing to start dialogue between North Korea and the United States by conveying to Pompeo his intention to complete nuclear disarmament and release three detained Americans.<sup>240</sup> Pompeo visited North Korea again on May 8–10 to confirm the time and place of the U.S.-North Korea summit and returned

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<sup>237</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., 2; Mark E. Manyin et al., *North Korea: What 18 Months of Diplomacy Has and Has Not Achieved*, CRS Report, IN11153 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2019), 1, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN11153>.

<sup>238</sup> In 1992, the two Koreas adopted the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The United States and North Korea signed the Agreed Framework in 1994 and a total of six four-party talks (including the two Koreas, the United States, and China) were held from 1997 to 1999. In addition, six rounds of Six-Party Talks (including the two Koreas, the United States, Japan, China, and Russia) were held between 2003 and 2009, and two comprehensive agreements were adopted: the 2005 Joint Statement and the 2007 Denuclearization Action Plan.

Manyin, Nikitin, and Chanlett-Avery, *Nuclear Negotiations with North Korea*, 3; Chanlett-Avery et al., *A Peace Treaty with North Korea?* 4.

<sup>239</sup> Lee and Yeo, "The Domestic Factors for the Changing Environment in the North Korean Nuclear Issues," 197.

<sup>240</sup> Lee and Yeo, 197.

home together with the three detained Americans.<sup>241</sup> The U.S. National Security Council (NSC) informed the South Korean NSC of this fact in time for Secretary Pompeo's departure from the Korean Peninsula.<sup>242</sup> Pompeo visited North Korea on July 6–7 for follow-up discussions after the first summit in June and held high-level talks with Kim Young-chul, head of the Unification Propaganda Mission.<sup>243</sup> At the talks, the United States reportedly maintained its position that economic sanctions would continue “until complete denuclearization” and demanded 60 to 70 percent of North's nuclear warheads be taken out within six to eight months.<sup>244</sup> Pompeo also required the submission of a nuclear program list and timetable. In response to this, North Korea countered that it would be possible only if the U.S. side's measures to guarantee the North regime preceded and prioritized an end-of-war declaration.<sup>245</sup> The United States repeatedly delivered its previous position that the regime could be guaranteed only after North Korea's denuclearization was attained to some extent. On October 7, 2018, Pompeo visited North for the fourth time and continued discussions, but the difference between the positions of the United States and North Korea was not narrowed.<sup>246</sup>

The first of the two U.S.-North Korea summits was held in Singapore in June 2018. The plan for the June U.S.-North Korea summit seemed to go smoothly, but it faced difficulties on May 24, when President Trump announced the cancellation of the U.S.-

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<sup>241</sup> Lee, “The Denuclearization and Peace Process of the Korean Peninsula: Comprehensive Agreement on Step-by-Step Implementation,” 230.

<sup>242</sup> Hyeong-seop Lim, “Blue House, ‘White House Inform [ed] Pompeo's Visit to North Korea in Advance’,” *Yonhapnews*, May 9, 2018, <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20180509053200001>.

<sup>243</sup> Lee, “The Denuclearization and Peace Process of the Korean Peninsula: Comprehensive Agreement on Step-by-Step Implementation,” 230.

<sup>244</sup> Joseph Hincks, “Mike Pompeo Says Sanctions Will Remain on North Korea Until Complete Denuclearization,” *TIME*, June 14, 2018, <https://time.com/5310748/mike-pompeo-north-korea-denuclearization/>; Alex Ward, “Exclusive: Pompeo told North Korea to cut its nuclear arsenal by 60 to 70 percent,” *VOX*, August 8, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/2018/8/8/17663746/pompeo-north-korea-nuclear-60-70>.

<sup>245</sup> Lee and Yeo, “The Domestic Factors for the Changing Environment in the North Korean Nuclear Issues,” 198.

<sup>246</sup> Lee, “The Denuclearization and Peace Process of the Korean Peninsula: Comprehensive Agreement on Step-by-Step Implementation,” 230.

North Korea summit.<sup>247</sup> The incident started when Vice President Pence stated in an interview with Fox News that North Korea could end up like Libya if Chairman Kim Jong-un did not reach an agreement with the United States and implied that a military option against North Korea had never been ruled out, while the North had been threatening to cancel the summit.<sup>248</sup> North Korea strongly protested against this interview and criticized Vice President Pence's comments through a statement in the name of vice foreign minister Choe Son Hui.<sup>249</sup> The statement by North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui was followed by President Trump's announcement of the cancellation of the planned summit.

Here, as a mediator in U.S.-North Korea relations, the ROK sealed this struggle. Specifically, on May 25, the day after President Trump canceled the summit with North Korea, Kim Jong-un requested to meet with President Moon immediately, and this was intended to convey North Korea's firm will for dialogue with the United States to the United States through meeting with South Korea.<sup>250</sup> President Moon met with Kim Jong-un the day after the request to grasp the situation and had candid conversations with North Korea, which was the second inter-Korean summit held on May 26, described in the previous section.<sup>251</sup> At this meeting, Kim Jong-un once again clearly showed his will for denuclearization and expressed his opinion that he would end the history of confrontation with South Korea and cooperate with South Korea for peace and prosperity through a

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<sup>247</sup> Mark Landler, "Trump Pulls Out of North Korea Summit Meeting with Kim Jong-Un," *The New York Times*, May 24, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/24/world/asia/north-korea-trump-summit.html>.

<sup>248</sup> "VP Mike Pence on Russia Probe, Alleged Campaign Surveillance," May 21, 2018, Fox News, video, 11:20, <https://www.foxnews.com/transcript/vp-mike-pence-on-russia-probe-alleged-campaign-surveillance>; Sophie Tatum and James Griffiths, "Pence: North Korea Will End Like Libya Only If 'Kim Jong Un Doesn't Make a Deal,'" CNN, May 22, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/21/politics/mike-pence-fox-news-north-korea/index.html>.

<sup>249</sup> According to the Washington Post, Choe Son Hui said, "As a person involved in the U.S. affairs, I cannot suppress my surprise at such ignorant and stupid remarks gushing out from the mouth of the U.S. vice president;" Rick Noack, "How Kim-Trump Tensions Escalated: The More the U.S. Said 'Libya,' the Angrier North Korea Got," *The Washington Post*, May 24, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/world/wp/2018/05/24/the-more-pence-and-trump-say-libya-the-angrier-north-korea-gets/>.

<sup>250</sup> The Inter-Korean Summit Preparation Committee, *The Second 2018 Inter-Korean Summit*.

<sup>251</sup> The Inter-Korean Summit Preparation Committee.

successful occurrence of the U.S.-North Korea summit.<sup>252</sup> Then, from May 27 to early June, Sung Kim and Choe Son Hui met at Panmunjom to resume working-level talks for the U.S.-North Korea summit. On May 31, Pompeo and Kim Young-chul held high-level talks in New York, which eventually were followed by the first U.S.-North Korea summit on June 12.<sup>253</sup>

At the Singapore meeting on June 12, the United States and North Korea issued a joint agreement, but there was no accord on substantive denuclearization measures. The agreement contains four promises: a promise of new relations between the United States and North Korea, a cooperation to build a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, a confirmation of North Korea's efforts for complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and a promise to excavate and return U.S. military remains. The two leaders also pledged to shortly begin high-level follow-up talks to implement the agreement. As the agreement includes the term *complete denuclearization*, the summit can be evaluated positively in that it confirmed North's commitment to denuclearization. Nonetheless, the summit can be unfavorably evaluated in that the agreement did not include specific and feasible conditions and the content of complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization (CVID), a position that Pompeo maintained as an important goal until the Singapore summit.<sup>254</sup>

Meanwhile, the talks were at a stalemate for the next eight months. This was because the United States and North Korea had different perspectives on sequencing in the process of complete denuclearization and establishment of a peace mechanism. For the

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<sup>252</sup> The Inter-Korean Summit Preparation Committee.

<sup>253</sup> "Pompeo Meets with Top North Korean Official in Hopes of Reviving Singapore Summit," *NPR*, May 31, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/05/31/615691882/pompeo-meets-with-top-north-korean-official-in-hopes-of-reviving-singapore-summi>.

<sup>254</sup> According to the Reuters, Pompeo said, ahead of the Singapore summit, that "Trump would reject anything short of 'complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization'"; David Welna, "'Complete, Verifiable, Irreversible' A Tough Goal for North Korea Summit," *NPR*, June 6, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/06/06/617619192/complete-verifiable-irreversible-a-tough-goal-for-north-korea-summit>; David Brunnstrom, John Walcott, and Hyonhee Shin, "U.S. Softens North Korea Approach as Pompeo Prepares for More Nuclear Talks," *Reuters*, July 4, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-usa-idUSKBN1JU26E>.

United States, other processes could not progress without progress on denuclearization.<sup>255</sup> From the North's point of view, however, it was not possible to preemptively implement denuclearization measures without confidence in the peace process. Thus, although Secretary of State Pompeo visited North Korea in July and October to advance the talks, he returned without being able to meet with Kim Jong-un.

In this situation, North Korea announced on July 24 the closure of the West Sea Satellite Launching Site located in Tongchang-ri.<sup>256</sup> This was to resolve distrust related to denuclearization raised by the United States by expressing its willingness to stop developing any more ICBMs. In addition, on July 27, North Korea repatriated the remains of 55 U.S. military servicemembers in accordance with the agreement of the U.S.-North Korea summit to excavate the remains of the U.S. soldiers who died in the Korean War and return them to the United States.<sup>257</sup> Those two actions seem to have been based on political calculations to pressure the United States, which adhered to its existing position and showed a lukewarm attitude toward forward consultations with distrust of North Korea.<sup>258</sup> This was supported by the North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho's remarks on August 4 that the United States forced North Korea to implement a joint statement on denuclearization and repatriation of remains. Ri Yong-ho criticized the United States itself for possessing a passive attitude toward both the normalization of the U.S.-North Korea relationship and the implementation of a peace mechanism on the Korean Peninsula.

Nevertheless, as the lack of progress on discussions between North Korea and the United States continued, the ROK government stepped in again and tried to mediate to advance the U.S.-North Korea talks. This was the third meeting between President Moon

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<sup>255</sup> Lee, "The Denuclearization and Peace Process of the Korean Peninsula: Comprehensive Agreement on Step-by-Step Implementation," 228.

<sup>256</sup> Lee, "The Denuclearization and Peace Process of the Korean Peninsula: Comprehensive Agreement on Step-by-Step Implementation," 230.

<sup>257</sup> Lee, 230.

<sup>258</sup> Lee and Yeo, "The Domestic Factors for the Changing Environment in the North Korean Nuclear Issues," 198.

and Kim Jong-un in Pyongyang in September 2018. At this meeting, the two leaders announced the Pyongyang Joint Declaration, agreeing upon practical measures and practices for North Korea's denuclearization, and the declaration provided a clue to solving the problem.<sup>259</sup> Eventually, the atmosphere that had produced a deadlock in 2019 began to improve gradually. In January 2019, Kim Young-chul visited President Trump to revive the momentum of negotiations, and Stephen Biegun, the special representative to North Korea, visited North Korea in February for a preliminary working-level meeting for the second U.S.-North Korea summit.

In the end, the second U.S.-North Korea summit was held, but contrary to popular expectations, an agreement was not reached, and after that, South Korea and the United States continued to discuss the matter. The second U.S.-North Korea summit, which succeeded the partial achievements of the first U.S.-North Korea summit, was held in February 2019 in Hanoi, Vietnam. Nonetheless, the talks broke down, and on April 11, 2019, the two leaders of South Korea and the United States held a summit in Washington, DC. This meeting was held when South Korea visited the United States to mediate the conflict between the United States and North Korea.<sup>260</sup> Also, on June 30, eighty days after President Moon and Trump first met in April 2019, President Trump of the United States visited South Korea and held a summit meeting.<sup>261</sup>

President Trump posted a message on Twitter on the morning of June 29 when he visited the ROK for the ROK-U.S. summit, suggesting that he would like to meet Kim Jong-un at the DMZ and greet him. Kim Jong-un responded, and after the ROK-U.S. meeting, President Moon officially mentioned the Panmunjom meeting, saying that President Trump and Kim would shake hands at Panmunjom. On the afternoon of June 30, the three leaders met at Panmunjom. Trump and Kim held about an hour of talks, and after

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<sup>259</sup> Manyin and Chanlett-Avery, The September 2018 Inter-Korean Summit, 1

<sup>260</sup> Kab Woo Koo, "December 2019 Crisis and Peace Regime on the Korean Peninsula," *Journal of Korean Social Trend and Perspective* no. 108 (2020): 154, <https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/ci/sereArticleSearch/ciSereArtiView.kci?sereArticleSearchBean.artiId=ART002555755>.

<sup>261</sup> Koo, 152.



the talks, President Trump officially announced the resumption of working-level negotiations, saying that he would form a working-level team within two to three weeks, led by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. In October, working-level negotiations between the United States and North Korea were held in Stockholm, Sweden, a member of the Neutral State Supervisory Commission, but these negotiations also broke down.<sup>262</sup>

Cooperation between the ROK and the United States was closely maintained during the U.S.- North Korea summit and the Panmunjom meeting among the three leaders. After the first summit, President Moon visited the United States on May 22, held a summit, and conveyed North Korea's position. President Moon met with Kim Jong-un again after the planned U.S.-North Korea summit was abruptly canceled, which led to working-level talks between Choe Son Hui and Sung Kim in Panmunjom on May 27, high-level talks between Kim Young-chul and Pompeo in New York on May 31, and the first U.S.-North Korea summit on June 12. On June 19, the Pentagon and the ROK Ministry of National Defense announced the suspension of the ROK-U.S. joint exercise after mutual consultation. This was the third official suspension of the ROK-U.S. joint military exercise since the ROK-U.S. combined military exercise was formalized in 1976.<sup>263</sup> The second was discontinued in 1992, during the Roh Tae-woo administration.<sup>264</sup> The U.S. decision was a response and military countermeasure to the declaration of the suspension of nuclear and missile tests at the Seventh Plenary Session of the North Korean Worker's Party in April 2018.<sup>265</sup> After meeting with North Korea for the third time on September 19 and announcing the Pyongyang Joint Declaration, South Korea held another summit with the United States on September 24 in New York. At this meeting, South Korea again served as a mediator to narrow the gap between the United States and North Korea. On October 30, a special

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<sup>262</sup> Koo, "December 2019 Crisis and Peace Regime on the Korean Peninsula," 139.

<sup>263</sup> "Mission of the ROK/US Combined Forces Command," United States Force Korea, accessed November 25, 2021, <https://www.usfk.mil/About/Combined-Forces-Command/>.

<sup>264</sup> Gwi-geun Kim, "South Korea and the United States Decide to Temporarily Suspend UFG Joint Exercises in August...28 Years after 1990," *Yonhapnews*, June 19, 2018, <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20180619011351014>.

<sup>265</sup> Koo, 148.

representative to North Korea, Stephen Biegun, visited South Korea, and a Working Group was established for coordination between South Korea and the United States. On December 15, 2019, Biegun, as nominee for Deputy Secretary of State, visited South Korea to exchange practical opinions with the ROK side and publicly proposed meetings to North Korea. On January 19–21, 2019, there was a working-level meeting between Choe Son Hui and Biegun in Stockholm for the second U.S.-North Korea summit, which Lee Do-hoon, head of the Korean Peninsula Peace Negotiation Division, attended.

In the dialogue between North Korea and the United States, cooperation between South Korea and the United States was smooth, but South Korea's role was as an arbitrator, not a party. South Korea did not have a great presence as a party to the Korean Peninsula issue and seems to have been just a “bridesmaid” for the meeting between the United States and North Korea. Once dialogue between the United States and North Korea began, South Korea could not get in between the two countries and stayed on the outskirts to protect the situation. Only once did the ROK solve the deadlock, which the South Korean government once mediated between the two sides as further dialogue did not progress since the first U.S.-North Korea meeting. The United States actively communicated with South Korea and discussed the agenda of the summit and the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, but all of this was for dialogue between the United States and North Korea, and South Korea did not join most of the dialogue between the United States and North Korea.

*c. The Promotion of Economic Cooperation in Various Fields*

President Moon has put a greater emphasis on the economy than on peace in the Neo-Nordpolitik era. According to the website of the Northern Economic Cooperation Committee, Neo-Nordpolitik is a policy that seeks economic cooperation with northern countries. The result of efforts for economic cooperation with northern countries can be evaluated as the expansion of economic and human resources exchanges with northern countries. The study on the achievements of Neo-Nordpolitik in economic cooperation summarized in the following paragraphs is mostly based on the research of Choi Youngmi

as described in his work, “Limits and Prospects of Northeast Asia Plus Community of Responsibility: Focusing on the New Northern Policy.”<sup>266</sup>

First, trade with all northern countries increased in 2019 compared to 2016, except for a slight decrease from \$10.5 billion to \$9.8 billion in China’s three northeast provinces.<sup>267</sup> The amount of trade with Russia, which is the priority for the ROK among the fourteen northern countries, increased significantly from US\$13.4 billion in 2016 to US\$22.3 billion in 2019.<sup>268</sup> To put it another way, trade with Russia increased by 41% in 2017 compared to 2016, when the Moon administration began, and 85% in 2018, when the effect of the Neo-Nordpolitik began to show in earnest.<sup>269</sup> Trade with the five Central Asian countries also increased by 44% in 2017 compared to 2016, and more than doubled by 115% in 2018.<sup>270</sup>

Another major economic indicator, foreign direct investment (FDI), showed a similar pattern. In 2017, the ROK’s investment in Russia nearly doubled compared to 2016, and in 2018, it increased by about 40%.<sup>271</sup> FDI showed a more dramatic increase in the five Central Asian countries, where it increased nearly nine times in 2017 compared to 2016, in part due to the concentration of investment in Uzbekistan following the visit of Uzbekistan President Mirziyoyev to the ROK in 2017. It then increased by 70% in 2018.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Youngmi Choi, “Limits and Prospects of Northeast Asia Plus Community of Responsibility: Focusing on the New Northern Policy,” *National Strategy* 27, no. 2 (2021), <https://www.kciportal.ci/sereArticleSearch/ciSereArtiView.kci?sereArticleSearchBean.artiId=ART002718141>.

<sup>267</sup> The Presidential Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation, *Neo-Nordpolitik Newsletter vol. 2 – Economic Map of Fourteen Target Countries* (Seoul: The Presidential Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation, 2021), [https://www.bukbang.go.kr/bukbang/news/0002/?boardId=bbs\\_000000000000010&mode=view&cntId=74&category=&pageIdx=](https://www.bukbang.go.kr/bukbang/news/0002/?boardId=bbs_000000000000010&mode=view&cntId=74&category=&pageIdx=).

<sup>268</sup> The Presidential Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation.

<sup>269</sup> Choi, “Limits and Prospects of Northeast Asia Plus Community of Responsibility: Focusing on the New Northern Policy,” 170–171.

<sup>270</sup> Choi, 171.

<sup>271</sup> Choi, 171.

<sup>272</sup> Choi, 171.

Mutual human resources exchanges have also been on the rise since the implementation of Neo-Nordpolitik. In 2017, the amount of human movement between the ROK and Russia increased by about 35% compared to 2016 and increased by about 50% in 2018.<sup>273</sup> Furthermore, human exchanges with all target countries have increased.<sup>274</sup> It is noteworthy that, in contrast to the trade and FDI just discussed, human exchanges with five Central Asian countries outpaced those with Russia. According to Youngmi Choi, these results suggest a new direction for the development of Neo-Nordpolitik, which had been concentrated in Russia, and indicate ways to link people-to-people exchanges to strengthening economic and diplomatic relations.<sup>275</sup>

It is granted that the ROK has made efforts to expand new economic space and opportunities through economic cooperation with fourteen countries with high growth potential due to their huge markets and abundant resources. However, the problem is that such cooperation in the economic and non-political fields has not been used or spread in the political field. The Moon government has made various efforts toward northern countries to increase understanding of and support for the Korean Peninsula issue and the Neo-Nordpolitik policy. For example, the ROK held a total of four ROK-Russia summits and the presidents of the two countries visited Uzbekistan sequentially by promoting summit diplomacy and high-level exchanges with northern countries including Russia and five Central Asian countries.<sup>276</sup> Through these summits and high-level talks, the ROK expanded economic exchanges with northern countries and emphasized the ROK's position on the principle of peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue and the non-toleration of North Korean nuclear weapons for regional peace. Nevertheless, the way to strengthen political relations with the northern countries is still far off due to various internal and external factors.

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<sup>273</sup> Choi, 172.

<sup>274</sup> The Presidential Committee on Northern Economic Cooperation, Neo-Nordpolitik Newsletter vol. 2 – Economic Map of Fourteen Target Countries.

<sup>275</sup> Choi, "Limits and Prospects of Northeast Asia Plus Community of Responsibility: Focusing on the New Northern Policy," 172.

<sup>276</sup> Choi, 173.

### 3. Outcomes of the Neo-Nordpolitik Policy

This section examines the results of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy that has been promoted so far. Since Neo-Nordpolitik is a policy still being pursued by the Moon administration, this thesis examines the results based on the policy progress until October 2021.

As mentioned earlier, there are two pillars underpinning the Neo-Nordpolitik: peace and prosperity. So far, Neo-Nordpolitik has not left practical results in both axes of peace and prosperity. This is because, despite the multiple inter-Korean and the U.S.-North Korea summits, the current inter-Korean and U.S.-North Korea relations have not achieved any improvement in trust or relationship development, and North Korea has been repeating threatening remarks and provocations. Additionally, although economic exchanges with northern countries have expanded, this has not led to direct diplomatic relations enhancement and support for peace on the Korean Peninsula.

In terms of the axis of peace, the Neo-Nordpolitik has produced seemingly good results. President Moon held three inter-Korean summits with Kim Jong-un, and the dialogue between the two Koreas led to direct dialogue between the United States and North Korea, which held two summits between them for the first time in history. Of these, the second inter-Korean summit was held exactly one month after the first inter-Korean summit, and at the urgent request of Kim Jong-un, complicated procedures and formalities were omitted and the two leaders met as easily as if it were a normal meeting.<sup>277</sup> Such an intimacy between the leaders of the two Koreas had not been shown in any previous period of division and at the inter-Korean summits held in 2000 and 2007. This kind of inter-Korean meeting was possible because President Moon's will for inter-Korean dialogue and continued friendly gestures and Kim Jong-un's earnestness for dialogue between the United States and North Korea coincided. Moreover, the ROK's promotion of Neo-Nordpolitik led to a momentous meeting between the leaders of the United States and North Korea.

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<sup>277</sup> The Inter-Korean Summit Preparation Committee, *The Second 2018 Inter-Korean Summit* (Seoul: The Inter-Korean Summit Preparation Committee, 2018), <https://www.koreasummit.kr/Summit2018/2nd>.

Despite several rounds of meetings and negotiations between the leaders of South Korea, the United States, and North Korea, as of October 2021, relations among the three appear to have reverted to their pre-2018 state. Regarding the relationship between the United States and North Korea, the two parties failed to negotiate at the Hanoi summit in February 2019, confirming that there was still a difference of stance between the United States and North Korea regarding the North Korean denuclearization process. Since then, a fierce war of nerves has developed between the United States and North Korea, and the confrontation has continued.<sup>278</sup> Regarding relations between South Korea and North Korea, North Korea has not properly implemented the Pyongyang Joint Declaration agreed to at the third inter-Korean summit, as evidenced, for example, by its refusal to participate in the inter-Korean joint military committee.<sup>279</sup> North Korea provoked the international community, including South Korea, by testing missiles several times in September 2021, claiming that it successfully launched a hypersonic missile.<sup>280</sup> Meanwhile, in January 2021, when the Joseph Biden was inaugurated as the U.S. president, relations among South Korea, the United States, and North Korea had to be adjusted anew. The incoming U.S. administration began to seek a new approach to the roadmap for North Korea's denuclearization, and President Moon had to discuss with the new U.S. government again about the North's denuclearization and a peace treaty.

In the axis of prosperity, the gist of Neo-Nordpolitik is, as explained earlier, “to create a responsible ‘Northeast Asia Plus Community,’” or Northeast Asia economic community in plain language, to induce North Korea's reform and opening through the development of relations with northern countries such as China and Russia, and further to

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<sup>278</sup> Jeonghun Min, “The Evaluation of Hanoi Summit and Prospect of NK-US Negotiations,” *The Korean Journal of Area Studies* 37, no. 1 (2019): 395, <https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/ci/sereArticleSearch/ciSereArtiView.kci?sereArticleSearchBean.artiId=ART002454371>.

<sup>279</sup> Hwanyong Kim, “South Korea's Vice Foreign Minister, ‘North Korea Should Come out and Talk to the Joint Military Committee Immediately,’” *VOA News*, October 6, 2021, <https://www.voakorea.com/a/6259190.html>.

<sup>280</sup> Brad Lendon, “North Korea says it tested a hypersonic missile. If true, it could change the military equation in east Asia,” *CNN*, September 29, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/29/asia/north-korea-hypersonic-missile-intl-hnk-ml/index.html>.

serve as a cornerstone of economic cooperation in the Eurasian region.<sup>281</sup> This goal, however, has not been reached due to structural problems in Eurasia.<sup>282</sup> The Moon government designated 2020 as the year of neo-northern cooperation and actively promoted cooperation with northern countries to secure a new growth engine for the South Korean economy and expand diplomatic relations. Yet it has been difficult to balance economic and political cooperation in the northern region, where geopolitical risks are high due to the remnants of the Cold War, and this remains a challenge for the Moon government.<sup>283</sup> According to Choi Youngmi, the previous South Korean governments have been pursuing similar northern policies for a long time, but have failed to deliver results that meet expectations, for much the same reasons.<sup>284</sup>

#### **D. CONCLUSION: WHAT WAS THE OVERALL U.S. EFFECT ON THE NEO-NORDPOLITIK POLICY?**

The United States has indirectly taken an obstructive position on Neo-Nordpolitik. Several cases studied previously support this claim.

First, after May 2017, when President Moon first introduced the strategy on the axis of peace from the two axes of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy, North Korea conducted its sixth nuclear test as well as a tests on a total of four medium- and long-range ballistic missiles and intercontinental ballistic missiles, provoking the international community. The United States did not respond to the ROK's North Korea policy proposing dialogue with North Korea because the United States was implementing a strategy of maximum pressure to isolate North Korea economically and diplomatically. President Moon announced his plan for peace on the Korean Peninsula on the eve of the G20 summit, but at the meeting of the leaders of the ROK, the United States, and Japan on the same night, the three countries

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<sup>281</sup> Blue House, "100 Policy Tasks Five-year Plan of the Moon Jae-in Administration," 26.

<sup>282</sup> Choi, "Limits and Prospects of Northeast Asia Plus Community of Responsibility: Focusing on the New Northern Policy," 164.

<sup>283</sup> Choi, "Limits and Prospects of Northeast Asia Plus Community of Responsibility: Focusing on the New Northern Policy," 164-165.

<sup>284</sup> Choi, 165.

agreed that they should put much stronger pressure on North Korea. This was contrary to President Moon's tolerant stance toward North Korea, and it can be inferred that the United States was not interested in the vision of the ROK's Neo-Nordpolitik, or at least had a somewhat negative view of it.

Next, in early 2018, North Korea changed its posture and accepted the ROK's suggestion of dialogue, starting with its participation in the Pyeongchang Olympics held in the ROK, and requested dialogue with the United States. President Moon accepted the North's request, acting as a messenger between the United States and North Korea and helping to bridge the gap between the two sides.<sup>285</sup> President Trump made a huge decision to agree to a historic meeting between the leaders of the United States and North Korea. This thesis concludes that the United States faced North Korea directly for its own strategic interests; that is, because the United States saw a shift in North Korea's posture as an opportunity to resolve the long-standing U.S. challenge of North Korea's denuclearization. In other words, the United States did not meet and negotiate with North Korea in support of the ROK's Neo-Nordpolitik. The reason for this finding is that while South Korea was trying to bring North Korea to the dialogue table, there was no discussion between the ROK and the United States to come up with helpful measures, such as easing of sanctions. The United States was only interested in the denuclearization of North Korea related to U.S. interests, not in the Neo-Nordpolitik.

The announcement that the ROK and the United States would suspend joint exercises after mutual consultation was also based on unexpected remarks by President Trump at a press conference after the U.S.-DPRK summit in June 2018. These remarks reportedly surprised the commanders of both the United States and South Korean militaries. As it seemed to astonish everyone, it is highly likely that the suspension was not discussed in advance with South Korea.

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<sup>285</sup> Mark E. Manyin et al., *The February 2019 Trump-Kim Hanoi Summit*, CRS Report No. IN11067 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2019), 1, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN11067>.



Lastly, in terms of economic cooperation with northern countries, the ROK distinctly increased exchanges in economic and non-political realms after executing the Neo-Nordpolitik policy, but this was separate from promoting relations in the political realm. When establishing the policy, economic cooperation might be expected to serve as a basis for political consensus, but economic cooperation in the implementation of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy did not lead to the support from northern countries toward a mechanism for peace on the Korean Peninsula.

All of this is, in large part, due to the United States' current outlook toward the Northeast Asian region. The United States has recognized "a persistent power," Russia, along with a rising China as challenges that threaten U.S. interests in this region as much as anywhere in the world.<sup>286</sup> This geopolitical state appears to indirectly act as a negative factor in the U.S. attitude toward the Neo-Nordpolitik policy.

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<sup>286</sup> Michael Kofman and Andrea Kendall-Taylor, "The Myth of Russian Decline: Why Moscow Will Be a Persistent Power," *Foreign Affairs* 100, no. 6 (November/December 2021), ProQuest.

## IV. CONCLUSION

### A. A COMPARISON OF THE FINDINGS FROM PRIOR CHAPTERS

As a result of examining specific examples of how the United States influenced South Korea's Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies, the research for this thesis has found that the United States treated the ROK largely with consistency and consideration over the period spanning these two policies but behaved quite differently toward the two policies themselves.

First, as demonstrated in Chapter II, the United States directly and indirectly took a supportive position regarding South Korea's Nordpolitik policy. The following examples support this argument. The United States acted in accordance with South Korea's request to deliver the contents of the policy to the Soviet Union and China just before South Korea officially unveiled its Nordpolitik policy to the ROK people and the world in July 1988. The United States also shifted its stance on its North Korean policy to align with South Korea's policy toward North Korea. Specifically, the United States established a new U.S. initiative toward North Korea called the "modest initiative" that allowed civilian, commercial, and humanitarian exchanges and bureaucratic engagement in dialogues with North Korea.<sup>287</sup> With this opportunity, North Korea proposed a dialogue with the United States, and the United States led North Korea to the dialogue table by holding working-level talks with North Korea for the first time since the Korean War. These two cases correspond to direct U.S. assistance for the Nordpolitik policy.

There are other examples as well. The historic first South Korea-Soviet summit held in San Francisco on June 5, 1990, with the establishment of diplomatic ties between the ROK and the Soviet Union in mind, required active diplomatic work behind the scenes between the two countries, and these diplomatic activities provided the main impetus for this event. In other words, the United States was not deeply involved in this meeting. President Roh Tae-woo, who was looking for a suitable opportunity to hold a summit with

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<sup>287</sup> Wit, "The United States and North Korea," 1.

the Soviet Union in 1990, heard the news that Soviet President Gorbachev would arrive in Washington at the end of May for a summit with the United States, and he saw it as a golden opportunity.<sup>288</sup> The Roh administration repeatedly proposed a summit in a third country to the Soviet Union through a behind-the-scenes channel, and the Soviet side finally agreed to it.<sup>289</sup> That is, the U.S.-Soviet summit and the location in the United States at that time were most appropriate for the summit for both South Korea and the Soviet Union, and this thesis considers this to be the basis for the United States' indirect assistance in South Korea's Nordpolitik policy. South Korea wanted to hold a ROK-U.S. summit in the United States immediately after the July 5 summit with the Soviets, hoping to show off its strong ROK-U.S. relationship and dispel any concerns about the ROK-U.S. relationship, and the United States accepted it, which was a direct help. In addition, President Bush's speech supporting South Korea's accession to the UN at the 1990 UN General Assembly and the subsequent consent for South Korea to join the UN by most UN-member countries contributed to the creation of an environment that made it inevitable that North Korea would join the UN as a separate country at the same time as South Korea, a diplomatic maneuver which South Korea hoped to bring about. This is an example of both direct and indirect U.S. assistance to the Nordpolitik policy. In September 1991, the United States announced the withdrawal of nuclear weapons that had been deployed on the Korean Peninsula since 1958, which could be accepted as a gesture of concession to North Korea.<sup>290</sup> As a result of the inter-Korean high-level talks, this U.S. decision facilitated the Basic Inter-Korean Agreement in December 1991 and the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in January 1992. This case confirms that the U.S. policy in Northeast Asia had a decisive and significant influence on the progress of inter-Korean relations and ultimately served as an indirect help to the Nordpolitik policy

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<sup>288</sup> Han, "[Diplomatic Document] Code Name 'Taebaeksan'...The First South Korea-Soviet Summit Proceeded in Top Secret under the Threat of Kim Il-sung."

<sup>289</sup> Han.

<sup>290</sup> Woolf and Chanlett-Avery. Redeploying U.S. Nuclear Weapons to South Korea: Background and Implications in Brief, 3.

As demonstrated in Chapter III, in an indirect manner, the United States has effectively taken a divergent position with respect to South Korea's Neo-Nordpolitik policy. The United States, however, has not explicitly revealed this position. The following episodes support this claim. President Moon tried to explain to the United States the direction of South Korea's policy toward North Korea after taking office in 2017 and tried to elicit support for this policy. To date, the United States has not changed its position that it must strongly pressure North Korea to denuclearize and that the denuclearization of North Korea is a prerequisite for its dialogue with North Korea. Nevertheless, North Korea first proposed a dialogue to the United States in 2018, as happened in 1988, through the mediators of South Korea and China, although the United States did not turn its policy toward the North at first as it did in 1988. Since then, dialogue between the two sides took place in June 2018, when the first U.S.-North Korea summit meeting was held, and the United States and North Korea provoked each other to gain an edge in the interim negotiations. Meanwhile, South Korea played a role in mitigating these differences by constantly supporting a dialogue between the two sides. In the end, two U.S.-North Korea summits were held, and for this purpose, an unprecedented three inter-Korean summits were held between 2018 and 2019. The United States demanded the dismantlement of additional nuclear facilities for the purpose of complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization (CVID) in addition to the dismantlement of the Yongbyon nuclear facility, which North Korea offered the United States as a condition during negotiations. Consequently, the summit broke down without reaching any agreement. Even after the two U.S.-North Korea summits, the two parties attempted to negotiate, but neither narrowed its position, which prevented South Korea's Neo-Nordpolitik policy from moving forward any further. The United States' hostile perception of North Korea indirectly affected South Korea's relations with the target countries of the policy. To support the axis of prosperity of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy, South Korea has increased both human exchanges and the number of goods traded through economic cooperation with target countries as planned. These achievements, however, remain limited to economics and have not led to support or cooperation in the political realm.

The reason why the United States has shown such contradictory responses to these two policies is simple and clear from an American standpoint: the determining factor being whether the ROK's policy direction is in line with the U.S. interests and U.S. perceptions of the overall circumstances in the Northeast Asia region. In the early 1990s, South Korea's friendly policies toward North Korea and the communist countries were in line with the U.S. strategy for the world at the time and served U.S. interests as well as the ROK's interests. The U.S. strategy was to develop relations with the Soviet Union and China, to open the Soviet Union, and to further open China. The U.S. decision to withdraw its nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula was part of a change in the U.S. attitude toward nuclear weapons in response to "changes in the international security environment."<sup>291</sup> As an important ally of the United States, the ROK's foreign strategy of establishing diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union and China coincided with the U.S. global strategy of establishing a new international order. Therefore, from the U.S. point of view, South Korea's Nordpolitik policy must have been well received.

By contrast, the U.S. strategy since 2017 is markedly different from that of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since 2010, China has emerged as a new threat to the United States. Additionally, North Korea declared the completion of its nuclear force in 2017, and China, as one of the few friendly countries to the internationally isolated North Korea, differs from the United States on the North Korean issue. Under these circumstances, South Korea's efforts to engage North Korea despite North Korea's nuclear weapons are an act that infringes on U.S. strategic interests. The change in status of North Korea and China compared to the 1990s—namely a more out-of-control North Korea *and* China, both of which were rapidly emerging in opposition to the world order pursued by the United States—shifted the stance of the United States in Northeast Asia in since 2010. The Neo-Nordpolitik Policy, which functioned in the opposite direction to the U.S. stance, did not receive any helpful aid from the United States.

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<sup>291</sup> Woolf and Chanlett-Avery, *Redeploying U.S. Nuclear Weapons to South Korea: Background and Implications in Brief*, 3.

Through the comparison of the U.S. role in the two policies, this study shows that when the ROK pursues a foreign policy and a North Korea policy in a direction that harmonizes with the interests of the United States, the ROK's ally and regional power, the ROK is able to directly or indirectly receive help from the United States in policy implementation, which ultimately increases the likelihood of success for the policy. When the ROK pursues policies in a direction that diverges from the interests of the United States, the ROK cannot expect help from the United States in policy implementation, although it can expect that the alliance relationship will remain strong provided the ROK policies do not directly infringe on U.S. interests.

## **B. OVERALL LESSONS**

This study has sought to determine which of the five categories presented in the potential explanations of Chapter I best describe the degree of influence the United States had on the ROK's Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies. The research has entailed an in-depth study on the reality of the role the United States played in the process of implementing the ROK's Nordpolitik policy, mentioned in the literature review and pointed out by Yong-chul Ha.<sup>292</sup>

As a result, this thesis has found that the United States respects the ROK's foreign policy as an independent diplomatic act, does not interfere in any way in its implementation, and is willing to help when requested if it is in a direction consistent with the interests and strategy of the United States. At the same time, this study has demonstrated that if the ROK's policy direction is inconsistent with the interests and strategies of the United States, it is difficult for South Korea to benefit from this situation, since the United States understandably prioritizes its own interests. This is an obvious reality of international politics where the United States cannot sacrifice its interests for South Korea. That being said, the United States did not openly criticize or interfere with the ROK's foreign policy. As a sovereign country, the ROK autonomously established, executed, and made decisions on both policies. Most importantly, the seemingly non-

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<sup>292</sup> Ha et al., Nordpolitik: Origin, Development, Impact, preface.

negative or neutral response of the United States should not be misjudged as approval. For instance, while the United States publicly expressed its support for dialogue and exchanges between South and North Korea, this did not mean that it would support the Neo-Nordpolitik policy itself and would be willing to help South Korea if necessary.

In addition to the main conclusions about the influence of the United States on the Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies described previously, this study made several important findings as follows.

1) The relationship between South Korea and the United States thirty years ago and today has had its ups and downs at times, but these variations have been overall within a stable boundary. Divergences between the ROK and the United States, especially regarding the Neo-Nordpolitik policies, were managed while maintaining a good political relationship and a strong alliance.

During the Roh Tae-woo and Moon Jae-in administrations, South Korea and the United States maintained close relations while pursuing foreign, security, and North Korean policies, and interplayed based on mutual understanding and respect. The South Korean government maintained smooth communication with the United States in the policy implementation process, which resulted in the ROK's rapid economic growth since the 1970s and led to its increased international status during its development. The ROK requested aid and support from the United States if necessary. The ROK also struggled to demonstrate a confident attitude and active role in diplomatic interactions with the United States in the process of promoting both policies. The United States consistently respected South Korea's intentions in the process of implementing the two policies and took care not to exclude South Korea from the resolution of the Korean Peninsula issue. Moreover, the United States has always consulted with South Korea when it is needed to make decisions on the Korean Peninsula and has expressed mutual understanding and respect toward South Korea in public statements.

2) The international political environment in which the Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies were promoted were very different. These differences had a decisive impact on U.S. attitudes toward these policies.

When comparing the Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies, it is difficult to fully understand many causal relationships when explained simply by an analysis of the relationship between the policies themselves and the United States. For example, the U.S. decision to withdraw nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula in September 1991 was not simply to quell North Korea's backlashes, but part of a major change in the strategic nuclear force posture in the post-Cold War international context.<sup>293</sup> This means that when studying ROK's domestic policy, it is essential to consider the international structure that influences it.

Although the Nordpolitik policy is being promoted again after thirty years as a similar policy, but it has a new name, the Neo-Nordpolitik policy. The international political environment, however, has completely changed during that time. In the 1990s, after the Cold War, the United States was increasingly forming friendly relations with communist countries, but since the 2010s, the United States has been keeping China in check, and tensions between the two nations have been intensifying. The changed international structural factors brought about a change in the U.S. strategy, which is clearly a factor that greatly influences the ROK's policy. In this sense, the timing of the implementation of the ROK's foreign policy is significant if it is to achieve successful results.

3) Over the past thirty years, the U.S. perception of North Korea has considerably deteriorated. This change is mainly the result of the progress of North Korea's nuclear weapons programs, and it was a major factor in the differences in the U.S. attitudes toward the Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies.

Not long after South Korea's Nordpolitik policy began, the United States also began to promote a new North Korea policy, *the modest initiative*, in response. At this time, the United States eased its hostile policy toward North Korea. It allowed private sector exchanges and reciprocal visits to North Korea, as well as allowed U.S. diplomats to engage in dialogue with North Korea in a neutral place. In other words, the United States

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<sup>293</sup> Amy F. Woolf, *Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons*, CRS Report No. RL32572 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2021): 14, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL32572>.



did not officially recognize North Korea as a state nor engage with it on a country-to-country basis, but the United State began to informally acknowledge contact with North Korea. With the achievement of the Agreed Framework in 1994, the United States sought to apply such an engagement posture to resolve North Korea's nuclear weapons ambitions, and through negotiations to achieve the denuclearization of North Korea.

On the other hand, in the case of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy, the United States made no attempt or effort to support its implementation as was made as in the case of the Nordpolitik policy. Negotiations have been halted since the six-party talks broke down in 2009.<sup>294</sup> Meanwhile, in 2002, U.S. President George W. Bush declared North Korea an axis of evil, and since then, the United States has applied its own sanctions on North Korea, apart from the economic sanctions of the United Nations Security Council, so as to put great pressure on North Korea.<sup>295</sup> Presidents Bush, Obama, and Trump have issued a string of administrative orders “targeting North Korea and North Korean entities.”<sup>296</sup> Even after South Korea began to pursue the Neo-Nordpolitik policy in 2017, the United States not only did not lift sanctions, but instead increased its pressure on North Korea rather than keep pace with South Korea's policy as the United States had with Nordpolitik policy. In 2018 and 2019, President Trump held summits with North Korea, and the tensions briefly de-escalated into a dialogue phase, but the United States never changed its position that North Korea must make progress to denuclearize first before the United States would ease economic sanctions accordingly.

This U.S. response is undoubtedly the result of North Korea's lies and treachery. The North regime has lost the trust of the United States through numerous deceptions. First, despite joining the NPT in 1988, North Korea violated its obligation to implement the treaty and secretly continued developing nuclear weapons. In the early 1990s, after North Korea finally was inspected by the IAEA to complete its entry into the NPT, concerns over the North's development of nuclear weapons spread widely to the world. Under the 1994

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<sup>294</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., *A Peace Treaty with North Korea?* 4–6.

<sup>295</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., *North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, and Internal Situation*, 8.

<sup>296</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., 8.

Agreed Framework, the known elements of North Korea's nuclear programs were contained, but when other hidden nuclear facilities were revealed in 2002, North Korea restarted its nuclear weapons program and unilaterally announced its withdrawal from the NPT in 2003.<sup>297</sup>

From 1998 to 2008, the South Korean government implemented a policy of appeasement toward North Korea through the Kim Dae-jung government's Sunshine Policy and the subsequent Roh Moo-hyun administration's Peace and Prosperity Policy. With these policies as an opportunity, two inter-Korean summits were held in 2000 and 2007, and the leaders promised to strengthen trust between the two Koreas. Contrary to its promise, however, North Korea continued to develop and test nuclear weapons despite the dialogue, taking advantage of the ten years of South Korea's policy of easing tensions. North Korea also signed the September 19 Joint Statement at the Six-Party Talks in 2005, which contained six clauses, including the abandonment of all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs. Nevertheless, North Korea, which launched its first nuclear test in 2006, reached its sixth nuclear test in 2017, breaking its promise in front of the international community. Today, North Korea's nuclear capability is quite high.

North Korea also continued its military provocations and horrific human rights violations against South Korea. In March 2010, North Korea sank a South Korean naval patrol ship, the Cheonan, that was performing a mission in the West Sea, causing 46 casualties. Also, in November 2010, North Korea fired coastal artillery near Yeonpyeong Island, where South Koreans live, and it was the first time since the Korean War that shells were fired on South Korean territory and a private house was bombed. More recently, Otto Warmbier, an American college student, was detained in North Korea for seventeen months and died six days after his return to the United States in 2017. In September 2020, the incident in which a South Korean official was shot and killed by North Korean soldiers in North Korea after leaving a ship on duty in the West Sea also caused outrage around the world. North Korea has been hiding the truth about these incidents and covering up its

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<sup>297</sup> "The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) at a Glance," Arms Control Association, March 2020, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/nptfact>.

wrongdoings with lies. Numerous incidents like these have made the United States no longer trust North Korea and establish a hostile policy toward North Korea.

The facts just described lead to a lesson that South Korea's future policy toward North Korea should reflect countermeasures against the North's lies and non-compliance and should take into consideration the negative U.S. perception of North Korea. Previously, this thesis argued that direct and indirect help from the United States is a very important factor in the ROK's foreign policy, and it can bring about synergy. In addition, this thesis has confirmed that the Neo-Nordpolitik policy did not produce any significant results when it did not receive assistance from the United States. Clearly, it is not enough for South Korea to pursue an independent foreign policy on its own without the help of its ally and regional power, the United States. Therefore, in order to win the consent and support of the United States and successfully pursue North Korea policy, the ROK government should consider the U.S. perception of North Korea and find out what South Korea should do in the interim to improve it.

4) South Korea's foreign and North Korean policy has the potential to influence U.S. policy. While the focus of this thesis has been on the U.S. impact on South Korea's policies, the research has shown that this influence can also flow in the other direction.

South Korea's Nordpolitik policy in 1988 led to the establishment of the United States' modest initiative, a new mitigation policy toward North Korea, and led to the withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula. In addition, South Korea's Neo-Nordpolitik policy in 2017 led to Trump's three meetings with Kim Jong-un, although the results were not good. Through these examples, this thesis has confirmed the causal relationship by which the ROK influenced the U.S. policy toward North Korea in the reverse direction of U.S. aid to South Korea's foreign policy. This shows the possibility of success for the ROK's autonomous foreign policy. In particular, the current Moon Jae-in administration has confirmed the possibility that South Korea could play a mediator role between the United States and North Korea, reconciling differing opinions between the two sides. South Korea could even play a role as a guide while emphasizing the fact that it is the country in charge of the Korean Peninsula issue. This has broadened the horizon of

the role and function that the ROK can play in the future on the Korean Peninsula issue, and the ROK will be able to utilize it when establishing a policy for Korean unification.

Although South Korea has the potential to influence U.S. policy, this potential is likely strongest when South Korea recognizes its limits. This is a kind of a paradox. As long as South Korea understands the main U.S. interests and concerns, it can create new opportunities for the United States to pursue its interests that better support South Korea's ambitions. But if South Korea pushes for U.S. policies that pull away from U.S. interests and concerns, South Korea could find its influence reduced instead.

### **C. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

While examining the diplomatic interactions between the ROK and the United States regarding South Korea's Nordpolitik and Neo-Nordpolitik policies, this thesis has found that the following two factors have significantly changed over the past thirty years: North Korea's tremendously growing nuclear capabilities and the advent of an era of global strategic competition represented by the United States, China, and Russia. Each of these factors severely affects the ROK's policy on foreign affairs and unification, as well as the U.S. policy on Northeast Asia. Based on these findings, this study suggests three policy implications:

- 1) It is inevitable for the ROK to adopt a policy that takes into account North Korea's changed nuclear capabilities when South Korea pursues its North Korea policy. North Korea is now considered a de facto nuclear power, and the level of threat posed by North Korea has dramatically increased compared to thirty years ago. During the Roh Tae-woo administration, North Korea's nuclear capabilities were not as worrisome as they are now. At that time, North Korea's nuclear development had just been detected by the United States and was in its early stages, so it was more controllable than it is now. Since then, however, North Korea's nuclear potential has grown exponentially. North Korea has conducted a total of six nuclear tests, starting with the first in 2006 and ending with the sixth in September 2017, which has increasingly troubled South Korea and the United States. Even though North Korea has clearly changed compared to thirty years ago in strategic terms, President Moon, just like President Roh Tae-woo, proposed dialogue with

North Korea immediately after he took office and also proposed a peace treaty. Yet, it is reasonable to expect that South Korea's approach to North Korea must also change in response to North Korea's changed nuclear capabilities.

2) South Korea should design its North Korea policy carefully considering the structural variables of the U.S.-China relationship as well as North Korea's nuclear capabilities. South Korea's Neo-Nordpolitik policy does not seem to reflect a serious understanding of the era of U.S.-China competition, as well as the aforementioned increased nuclear capabilities of North Korea. Considering the relations among Russia and China, which are neighboring countries that border North Korea and possess interests on the Korean Peninsula, and the United States, which is South Korea's military ally, it is important to recognize that international relations and international politics of neighboring countries are not the same as they were thirty years ago. At that time, the Soviet Union and China were able to exert more influence over North Korea, and the Soviet Union, China, and the United States were easing tensions. By contrast, the United States now perceives the rise and expansion of China as a threat and is worried about holding it in check. According to Koo Gab-woo, the conflict between the United States and China is a factor that makes it difficult for the Moon administration to pursue both the establishment of a peace regime and the simultaneous progress of denuclearization.<sup>298</sup> Many international political scientists, including John Mearsheimer, debate the current situation in the era of the U.S.-China hegemonic competition and predict the future of the international system that will result from the U.S.-China competition. This is clearly an issue that has a great influence on South Korea's North Korea policy. It seems, however, that the Moon administration's Neo-Nordpolitik policy lacks concerns about these challenges. The Neo-Nordpolitik policy also seems to lack realistic analysis, as if it was established simply for the unification of the Korean Peninsula without deep reflection.

3) As far as the Korean Peninsula issue is concerned, this thesis recommends the United States increase sensitive information sharing with the South Korean government for the purpose of determining the risk level of North Korea's nuclear assets and the

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<sup>298</sup> Koo, "December 2019 Crisis and Peace Regime on the Korean Peninsula," 148.

corresponding matter of ROK-U.S. military cooperation. Regarding both the past Roh administration and the current Moon administration, this thesis has proved that the United States has always been closely communicating and discussing necessary issues with South Korea. This is evident. It is, however, questionable whether the United States has really shared important information with South Korea. The United States has always included South Korea in the Korean Peninsula issue, but the United States alone has made the actual important decisions. This is supported by the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from South Korea in December 1992 and South Korea's failure to participate in most working-level negotiations between North Korea and the United States in 2018–2019.

The U.S. contribution to the stability of the Korean Peninsula and South Korea's defense so far is definitely something that South Korea should be grateful for, and the U.S. contribution is truly commendable. But the Korean Peninsula issue is clearly a problem between the two Koreas, and the United States cannot replace the South Korean government. Thus, it is a shame that the United States has not given South Korea more leadership in the inter-Korean issues. It is understandable that it is not easy to simply give South Korea responsibility and authority since inter-Korean issues are directly related to U.S. security. However, closer sensitive information sharing would be a good first step. Such information sharing would help South Korean leaders better understand the sources of U.S. attitudes, and it would help build U.S. trust that empowerment of their South Korean partners would serve long-term U.S. interests.

#### **D. FUTURE RESEARCH**

While this study deals with South Korea's foreign policy and its relevance to the United States, this thesis aids in clarifying the essence of the relationship between the ROK and the United States and providing a better understanding of the U.S. perspective and position on the ROK's foreign policy. This thesis additionally presents another perspective on ROK-U.S. relations in that the study deals in depth with those relations focused on one of the ROK's foreign policies. Nevertheless, some questions raised during this study require further complementary research.

First, since the Neo-Nordpolitik policy is an ongoing policy, additional research is needed about the impact of the United States on the overall Neo-Nordpolitik policy, along with an evaluation of policy performance after the policy is completely implemented and ended. Currently, the ROK adopts the single five-year presidential term, and the mandate of the Moon government ends in May 2022. As of now, October 2021, relations between the two Koreas and between the United States and North Korea have returned to their original tensions after the U.S.-North Korea summit in Hanoi in February 2019. Considering the fact that international politics and international relations repeat themselves, but also constantly fluctuate, no one knows how inter-Korean and U.S.-North Korea relations will progress until the end of the Moon administration's term or thereafter. No one can predict the future. Thus, the outcomes of the Neo-Nordpolitik policy and the role of the United States in it can only be properly and accurately analyzed after the end of the policy.

Second, a study on why President Moon Jae-in reverted to the Nordpolitik policy of thirty years ago despite the changed international environment is a necessary field of research for South Korea's future North Korea policy, or any foreign policy. Although the international situation has changed completely compared to thirty years ago and the U.S. perception of Northeast Asia has changed along with it, the Moon administration is again pursuing the quite successful Nordpolitik policy of thirty years ago. Even he appears to be desperately trying to hold onto the Neo-Nordpolitik policy, especially the axis of peace, until the end of his presidency. He does so even though the economic axis of the policy—that is, economic cooperation with North Korea—has not been properly promoted due to the continued international sanctions on North Korea. On September 21, 2021, for example, in his last keynote address to the UN General Assembly before the end of his term, President Moon again proposed an end-of-war declaration in which the two Koreas and the United States, or additionally, China, would gather to declare the end of the war on the Korean Peninsula.

This research has raised several questions about President Moon's obsession with the Neo-Nordpolitik policy: Did he pursue the policy because he was confident that South Korea could sufficiently change the U.S. perception and neighboring countries' perception

of North Korea? Or did he foolishly pursue the policy due to his lack of understanding of international politics? Was he misjudging the benefits that the United States would gain through the policy? If he pushed ahead with this policy despite the challenges, what was he ultimately trying to achieve through this policy? A future study that resolves these various questions will contribute to the establishment of the ROK's advanced unification policy.



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