Inter-Korean Relations and Multilateral Organizations: Problems and Prospects*

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The extent of linkage between inter-Korean relations and North and South Korea's simultaneous membership in international organizations (including both inter-governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations) is examined. This research questions whether inter-Korean cooperation can be promoted and ultimately be attained via multilateral organizations. Empirical evidence shows three types and patterns of linkages: a) successful cases involving the inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), such as the UNDP, b) unsuccessful cases of engaging established UN specialized agencies, such as the UPU and the ITU, and c) cases with intermediary results, such as the KEDO and the ICAO. Simultaneous membership in multilateral organizations does not automatically translate into promoting inter-Korean relations. Other contextual factors, like the international system structure, changing strategic environment, and the opportunity cost estimation by decision-makers, are likely to intervene. The paper discusses political problems and prospects for internationalizing North-South Korean relations and concludes by drawing certain implications for the mixed results of linkages between inter-Korean relations and multilateral organizations.

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Promoting North-South Korean relations via multilateral organizations (like the United Nations) and diplomatic forums sounds positive and promising but, in order to be successful, the measure will require careful scrutiny and analysis as to its feasibility. The research question is whether inter-Korean cooperation can be attained through an instrumentality of multilateral organization. If the answer is yes, one has to figure out what the possibilities and problems might be, given the prevailing conditions of acute tensions prevailing on the Korean peninsula in the post-Cold War era.

The literature on the study of international organizations identifies three types of multilateral organizations: international inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and multinational corporations (MNCs).¹ In the present study, however, the term "multilateral organizations" is used more in the generic than conventional sense. The United Nations is, by definition, a type of IGO that serves a general purpose and an institution of multilateral diplomacy. In this essay, the primary focus will be on the inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) and secondarily on the non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In the post-Cold War world politics, the two Korean states' response and reaction to the changing external environment surrounding the Korean peninsula have been both positive and promotive in adaptation. The Republic of Korea (as ROK hereafter) pursued an active policy of *Nordpolitik* and northern policy when interacting with the communist bloc countries, which were former allies of North Korea. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (as DPRK hereafter), on the other hand, was aggressive in its adaptation to the changing strategic environment, which resulted from the demise of the communist states in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The DPRK's negotiation vis-a-vis the U.S. on the nuclear moratorium, for instance, is a classic case of North Korea acting as a normal state and rational actor in international diplomacy.

The following questions will guide the present study: what are the possibilities and limits of multilateral organizations, either the IGOs or NGOs, as a way of attaining peace and security on the Korean peninsula? Do they play an enhancing role toward the reunification of North and South Korea in the distant future? What problems are likely to arise from pursuing the political and functional approaches to the Korean problem-solving? What are the prospects for the success or failure of relying on multilateral organizations in order to assure peace and stability on the Korean peninsula?

To answer some of these questions the present paper will proceed in four steps: (1) identifying trends and patterns of North and South Korean participation in the multilateral organizations, (2) analyzing the linkages between inter-Korean relations and multilateral organizations, substantiated by several case studies of both successful and failed experiments, (3) undertaking in-depth discussions on (a) the provision in the December 13, 1991 North-South Korea Agreement on "Cooperation in the International Arena," (b) the

¹ IGOs are international organizations where members are states, while NGOs represent international organizations of private citizens, or simply internationally active groups in different states, jointly working together toward common interests. Many NGOs maintain consultative status with the United Nations. MNCs are business enterprises headquartered in one state that invest and operate extensively in other states. The term "transnational enterprises" (TNEs) is often employed to include MNCs and other nonprofit organizations, like the philanthropic foundations and church organizations.

limits and problems of internationalizing inter-Korean relations, and (c) difficulties in attaining Korean reunification in the foreseeable future, and (4) drawing some conclusions.²

NORTH AND SOUTH KOREAN PARTICIPATION IN MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS: TRENDS AND PATTERNS

Bilateralism and multilateralism are two varied approaches to diplomacy that often prove to be mutually exclusive and incompatible. Prudence in diplomacy will dictate, according to the realist tradition of international politics, that the nations give priority to the bilateral forum, in promoting national interests, over the multilateral forum. Whereas bilateralism leads, especially on security issues, multilateralism often follows, especially on non-security and functional issues as well as other issue areas.

However, in the age of complex interdependence among nations, pragmatism dictates that one must learn to harmonize divergent approaches of bilateralism and multilateralism in international diplomacy. The institution of multilateral organizations should not be written off as a diplomatic instrument, for they promote inter-Korean cooperation. The reason is that the institution of multilateral organizations can easily be either exploited or easily utilized by its member states as a means of providing an useful channel for establishing dialogue and promoting international cooperation (Keohane 1998). Multilateralism as a diplomatic forum, in short, should be considered as a valuable instrumental object in foreign policy (Keohane and Nye 1985). With the preceding caveat, it is useful to investigate trends and patterns of North-South Korean participation in the multilateral organizations.

The latest edition of the *Yearbook of International Organization* 1998-99, published by the Union of International Association in Brussels, indicates that the DPRK is a member in approximately 330 international organizations (including both IGOs and NGOs) and that the ROK is a member in about 1972 international organizations (including both IGOs and NGOs).

The trend over time seems to be upward in terms of the number of international organizations and agencies with which both the ROK and the DPRK have joined as members. Of the total of 1972 international organizations, with which the ROK is affiliated in 1998-99, eighty-one headquarters or secretariats of these organizations are located in South Korea. The comparable figure for North Korea is 330 international organizations, with membership, and two international organizations, with secretariat located in Pyongyang, which, in these cases, are the UNDP office and the Science and Technology

² The present study draws information from the 1998-99 edition of the *Yearbook of International Organization* published by the Union of International Association in Brussels. However, the data set in this edition is not necessarily updated to the year of its publication in 1998. Therefore, the findings of the present study do not apply to the era of the ROK President Kim Dae Jung. President Kim's administration has launched a new policy initiative toward the DPRK under the slogan of engagement policy or the "sunshine" policy. The analysis and interpretations of the participatory trends in the 1990s prior to President Kim's inauguration on February 25, 1998, however, still hold valid and will have important policy implications. These policy implications will predict the future patterns of inter-Korean relations by promoting cooperation in multilateral organizations.

TABLE 1. MEMBERSHIP OF NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA
IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

	# of Headquarters	# of Total International Organizations
ROK	81	1972
DPRK	2	330

Source: *Yearbook of International Organizations* 1998-99, in 4 volumes (Brussels: Union of International Association), Volume 2 (Geographic Volume), pp. 883-898.

Advisory Committee for Southeast Asia (of the National Commission for Oceanography).³

Theoretically, there are three sets of multilateral organizations that require differentiation and analysis in the present study. These are: (1) the IGOs for which only North Korea is listed as a member, (2) the IGOs for which only South Korea is listed as a member, and (3) the IGOs for which both North and South Korea are listed as members. Of a total of several hundred IGOs which fall under the "conventional" type (i.e., categories from A through D) as listed in the *Yearbook of International Organizations*, published by the Union of International Associations in Brussels, South Korean membership in some fifty-five IGOs constitutes only about ten percent of the total population of IGOs, while North Korean membership in thirty-seven IGOs constitutes seven or eight percent of the total IGOs. Most of these international organizations in which both North and South Korea are listed as member states are, generally speaking, either insignificant or trivial as to bypass attention by the ordinary students of international organization.

According to an official account of the ROK National Unification Ministry, as of the end of November 1994, the DPRK retained membership in some twenty-three multilateral organizations, including thirteen UN agencies and ten IGOs, while maintaining diplomatic ties with a total of 133 countries. The ROK, in contrast, retained membership in fifty-five multilateral organizations, with eighteen UN agencies and thirty-seven IGOs, while maintaining diplomatic ties with a total of 174 countries.⁴ A 1992 study by the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs Institute of Diplomacy and National Security also published a list of sixteen UN Specialized Agencies and thirty-six other IGOs in which the ROK was a member, and a total of seventeen IGOs including twelve UN agencies in which both the ROK and the DPRK were listed as members.⁵ These figures of 1992-93 appear to be conservative, and underestimated as noted below.

For the purpose of the present study the third category and type of IGOs as listed above (i.e., the IGOs for which both North and South Korea are listed as members)

³ The UIA lists the latter two as the type of organizations (category E) which are not conventional as they "emanate from other places, persons, or bodies." "Conventional" organizations are either federations of international organizations (category A), universal membership organizations (category B), intercontinental membership organizations (category C), or regionally defined membership organizations (category D). *Yearbook of International Organizations* 1998-99, Vol. 4 (Bibliographic Volume), p. 585.

⁴ Tongil Paekso 1994, Seoul: Tongilwon, 1994, p. 252. South-North Dialogue in Korea. No. 56 (October 1992). Seoul: Office of the South-North Dialogue. 1992, p. 35.

⁵ As cited in Lee Seo-Hang, "Kukje Kiku Ch'anyorul Tonghan Nam-puk Sinrae Jeungjin Bang'an Yon'gu," Foreign Ministry Institute of Diplomacy and National Security, Policy Studies Series 91-20, 1992, pp. 15-18.

will be singled out for in-depth analysis and discussion. In order to simplify the task of analysis, the present study will rely exclusively on the official list of IGOs that the ROK government sources have provided.⁶ Table 2 shows a list of twenty-three IGOs for which both the ROK and the DPRK are listed as members.

TABLE 2. INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS WITH SIMULTANEOUS MEMBERSHIP OF BOTH NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA

No. Inter-Governmental Organizations	Year of Entry	
	ROK	DPRK
1. *The UN (United Nations)	1991	1991
2. *WHO (World Health Organization)	1949	1973
3. *UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development)	1965	1973
4. AALCC (Asia-Africa Legal Consultative Committee)	1974	1974
5. IOLR (International Organization of Legal Reform)	1978	1974
6. *UPU (Universal Postal Union)	1949	1974
7. WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization)	1979	1974
8. *IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency)	1957	1974
9. *UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization)	1950	1974
10. *WMO (World Meteorological Organization)	1956	1974
11. *ITU (International Telecommunications Union)	1952	1974
12. *ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization)	1952	1977
13. *FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization)	1949	1977
14. IOC (International Oceanography Committee)	1961	1979
15. *UNIDO (U.N. Industrial Development Organization)	1967	1980
16. CODEX (Alimentarius Commission)	1970	1981
17. IBWM (International Bureau of Weigh & Measurement)	1959	1981
18. *IMO (International Maritime Organization)	1961	1986
19. *IFAD (International Food & Agricultural Development)	1978	1986
20. ICCPR (International Center for Cultural Property Preservation and Restoration)	1968	1986
21. IHO (International Hydrographic Organization)	1972	1987
22. WTO (World Tourism Organization)	1974	1987
23. IBE (International Bureau of Education)	1962	1975

Source: ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs International Organization Bureau, as cited in Lee Seo-Hang, "Kukje Kigu Chamyorul Tonghan Nampukhan Sinrae Jeungjin Pang'an Yongu," ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs Institute of Diplomacy and Security Policy Research Series 91-20 (1992), pp. 15-18 and updated to 1999.

Of the total of twenty-three IGOs listed above, thirteen (with asterisks) are the United Nations Specialized Agencies or the UN-affiliated/sponsored organizations, while the remaining ten are IGOs not affiliated with or sponsored by the United Nations. All of these IGOs except the AALCC are universal organizations with open membership. The remaining categories and types of IGOs tend to be regional or functionally-specific IGOs, in which only either the ROK or the DPRK has single membership.

⁶ Ibid. Also, see Young Whan Kihl, "Kukje Kiguwa Nambukhan Kyoryu Hyupryok: Munjeomkwa Jonmang," Choeokunul Nampuk Kwankyuwa Tongil Hankukui Mosaek. Seoul: Korea University Asiatic Research Center, 1993, pp. 243-46.

The list of IGOs in Table 2 seems to be conservative and underestimated by virtue of its exclusion of such important international organizations that belong to the borderline cases between governmental and non-governmental activities. The confusion arises from the fact that the DPRK is a communist state and, as such, is less likely than the ROK to promote private and non-governmental representation and affiliation with international bodies. The cases in point, with the official listing in Table 2, are: a host of international organizations like the IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union), IRC (International Red Cross), and the IOC (International Olympic Committee) with its official designation being the NGO. Substantive activities are clearly more IGO-oriented and quasi-governmental.⁷

THE LINKAGE BETWEEN INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS AND MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS: AN ANALYTICAL APPROACH

One possible role that the IGOs can play is to make itself available as a diplomatic forum for the member countries in an attempt to bring about dispute settlements. The literature on the third party intervention's intermediary role in conflict resolution is extensive. Depending on the nature and extent of third party intervention, the multilateral organizations can render the parties in conflict valuable service with minimal or maximal spillover effects. Their role can be one of either facilitation or dispute settlement, by virtue of providing good offices, mediation, and adjudication.

The research question of the present study is to ascertain *whether and how* promoting inter-Korean cooperation can be attained via the instrumentality of multilateral organizations. The research design of these questions will suggest that the dependent variable is inter-Korean cooperation (A), while its independent variable is multilateral organizations (B). What, then, is the nature of linkages between these two sets of variables and the patterns of their relationship?

The promotion of inter-Korean cooperation via multilateral institutions is admirable in intent but difficult to carry out in practice. The reason is that the dependent variable (promoting inter-Korean cooperation) is essentially a bilateral form of interaction and a type of cooperative endeavor between two sovereign actors. The independent variable (the instrumentality of multilateral organizations) is a third party intervention for facilitation or dispute settlement, which is open to the two Korean states for their services and decision-making. The dependent variable (A) is not contingent upon the independent variable (B) in the real world, because a host of other factors (such as the intervening variables (C)) exist between (A) and (B). These include, among others, the nature of the international system structure, the strategic environment in world politics, and considerations of opportunity costs and their estimation by the decision-makers.

For a set of preferred outcomes to come into being (i.e., the promotion of inter-Korean

⁷ Some of the NGOs in which North Korea is listed as a member include: Amnesty International, Asian Institute of Technology (Bangkok), Asian Table Tennis Union (Beijing), Inter-Parliamentary Union (Geneva), and International Association of Lighthouse Authorities (France) among others. For the listing of some NGOs and IGOs in which the DPRK is a member, see *Yearbook of International Organization, 1998-99*.

cooperation (A)), the independent variable of multilateral organizations (B) must be linked with other explanatory variables (C) (i.e., the post-Cold War security environment of moderating inter-state conflicts; lessening of tensions). After all, the independent variable of multilateral institutions is contingent upon the structure of the international system.

Empirical evidence on the Korean peninsula shows that the world has witnessed the following three types of linkages between the multilateral organizations and the inter-Korean cooperation: a) successful cases involving the IGOs, like the UNDP, b) unsuccessful cases of engaging UN specialized agencies, such as the UPU and the ITU, and c) cases with mixed results, defined to be somewhere in-between the successful and unsuccessful experiments, like the KEDO. The reasons for success and failure of these linkage experiments will be discussed in detail in the next section.

As a general consideration, the DPRK has lately come to rely more on the service of certain humanitarian IGOs, like the UN World Food Program (WFP), and other NGOs. Food assistance will alleviate dire economic difficulties in the country. This change in orientation of the North Korean authority has had positive spillover effects not only with other multilateral organizations, but also in facilitating inter-Korean cooperative endeavors to render humanitarian assistance to the North.

The famine and economic distress also forced North Korea into greater openness toward some multilateral organizations and, as a consequence, more information about the North Korean economy has become readily available. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), in fact, has been working with the North Korean government to construct standard national accounts, and some of the data were released to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1997.⁸ Other international bodies, such as the FAO and the UNWFP, have released data associated with their famine relief work.

Case Studies of Successful and Failed Linkages

Some case studies on IGOs, UN Specialized Agencies, may be cited to see whether and how the task of promoting inter-Korean cooperation in the international arena has been carried out. Greater promise and possibility exist in the areas of such functional and technical IGOs as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and the World Health Organization (WHO).⁹ Because of the technical and relatively non-controversial nature of the subject matter, there is a greater possibility that the North and South Korean participation in these functional and technical IGOs may offer opportunities for greater cooperation and understanding between the former adversaries.

For instance, the exchange of information includes air navigation safety, waterway

⁸ Noland, Marcus, Sherman Robinson, and Tao Wang, "Modeling Korean Unification" International Institute of Economics Working Paper, Washington, D.C.: IIE, August 1999.

⁹ Functionalism seeks to build "peace by pieces" through expanding transnational and multilateral organizations. On the classic plea for a functional approach to world peace, see David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System: Functional Development of International Organization*, London: The Royal Institute for International Affairs, 1943, Chicago: Quadrangle Press, 1966.

traffics (along the coast and in the high seas adjacent to the territorial waters), weather forecasts and reporting, the monitoring of crops during the growing season, and the reporting on the outbreak and spread of epidemics. Some areas on which IGOs focus deal with potential inter-Korean "cooperation in the international arena."

The establishment of air corridors over the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone), likewise, can be worked out between North and South Korea under the guidance and direction of the ICAO. This will facilitate the international airline navigation and overflight between the major cities in Northeast Asia, such as the flight to and from Tokyo and Beijing. North and South Korea certainly can get together and utilize the multilateral organization framework of the ICAO, in order to come up with a rational plan of air navigation and safety over the Korean peninsula airspace.¹⁰ Whether such a cooperative measure can be worked out, however, is not so much of functional and technical *raison d'être* as it is the presence of prior political and administrative decision-making at the respective government level in North and South Korea. A similar theory applies to other functional and technical areas of inter-Korean cooperation via multilateral organizations.

Examples of failed experiments and wasted opportunities are the unsuccessful postal exchanges and telecommunication linkages between North and South Korea. Clearly, the instrumentality of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) exists for North and South Korea which are both member countries of these IGOs. Yet, there has not been any mail or telephone call exchanges across the DMZ, other than for political and propaganda purposes. The reason for these failures is not difficult to fathom. It is not so much the availability of technical means as it is the political will and determination.

The more ambitious and challenging areas of possible inter-Korean cooperation via multilateral organizations are in functional and economic IGOs, such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). Actually, North Korea has actively solicited and utilized the instrumentality of the UNDP in order to carry out its own infrastructure-building and modernization of key industries, such as power plants and transportation.

The case of the Rajin-Sonbong area development project that North Korea has adopted as its development policy was initially launched with the support and surveillance of the UNDP team. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) was also instrumental in arranging a series of international conferences of experts and interested parties in various locations of Northeast Asia, including Ulan Bator and Seoul. Both North and South Korean delegates participated in these conferences along with representatives from Japan, China, Russia, and the U.S. Pyongyang sent representatives to the UNDP sponsored conference, "Thematic Roundtable Meeting on Agricultural Recovery and Environmental Protection in the DPRK," which was held in Geneva on May 28-29, 1998. It was attended by officials from twenty-five nations and IGOs, including the EU, the U.N. agencies, the IMF, and the World Bank, as well as the various NGOs donating humanitarian food assistance to North Korea.

¹⁰ The ICAO was instrumental in establishing air corridors over North Korea that will shorten the airline distance between Tokyo and Beijing as well as between the North American cities and Seoul.

In addition, the KEDO experiment seems to have broken new ground in promoting inter-Korean cooperation via the instrumentality of multilateral organizations. The KEDO was established in New York on March 9, 1995 as a multilateral institution to deal with the North Korean nuclear problem. It was launched by twenty nations, with the governments of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States acting as its founding members. North Korea's rise as a nuclear weapon state will pose as a serious security threat to the regional actors in Northeast Asia. North Korea was given an alternative incentive, under the KEDO arrangement, to pursue peaceful uses of nuclear energy instead of acquiring the nuclear weapon state status.

The KEDO's three-fold objectives, as stipulated in Article II of its Charter, are to: (1) provide financing and delivery of a Light Water Reactor (LWR) Project to the DPRK, (2) provide the DPRK with interim energy supplies in the form of heavy fuel oil for heating and electricity production (until the first of the light water reactors is completed), and (3) provide for the implementation of any other measures deemed necessary to accomplish the objectives of the Agreed Framework. In order to achieve this set of purposes, the KEDO has done a number of works since its founding in 1995.

The KEDO's initial task, to finance the shipment and delivery of heavy oils to North Korea, has been carried out on a regular basis despite some difficulties of raising the needed funds. However, with the launching of the LWR construction project in 1997, the KEDO workload and activities have steadily increased. The signing of the Supply Agreement with the DPRK, on December 15, 1995, was followed by the additional signing of eighteen documents and six related protocols regarding the implementation of the agreement on the LWR supply to North Korea.¹¹ Furthermore, since the groundbreaking ceremony, held on August 19, 1997, at the project site, the KEDO has established a liaison office in Kumho, South Hamgyong Province. As the workload increases, the KEDO's task performance and expansion are most likely to continue in the days ahead.¹²

Whether these KEDO's activities, which have been accomplished so far and to be undertaken in the days ahead, will result in a nuclear-free North Korea still remains to be seen. In the absence of official ties at the government level, the KEDO serves as a useful channel of communication between the two Koreas. However, whether the KEDO, as an implementation agency of the Geneva Agreed Framework of October 1994, can achieve the ultimate outcome of establishing a nuclear weapons-free Korean peninsula (as part of the larger question of nuclear nonproliferation in East Asia), remains to be seen as well. This will most likely cause a sensitive political and strategic issue over which the KEDO has limited control.

All in all, the conclusion is that (1) there exists empirical evidence of mixed results in so far as the linkages between inter-Korean cooperation and multilateral organizations are concerned, and that (2) a successful outcome is hard to come by in the area of

¹¹ The KEDO Press Release of July 1, 1997, "KEDO and North Korea to Hold Signing Ceremony." The list of protocols included a total of nine procedures, eight memorandum of understandings, and two records.

¹² Young Whan Kihl, "Functions of the KEDO." In BaeHo Hahn and Chae-Jin Lee, eds., *Patterns of Inter-Korean Relations* (Seoul: The Sejong Institute, 1999), pp. 115-36.

institution building via multilateral diplomacy. In order to explain further why the impact of multilateral organizations is so limited in promoting inter-Korean cooperation, we will need some discussions on the true nature of on-going inter-Korean relations with a view to finding the underlying causes and factors of maintaining peace and security in the region of Northeast Asia.

DISCUSSION

The preceding cases provide clear examples of what the IGOs can do to tailor to the needs and wishes of the member country, and reflect the priority of the political elites in their search for national and regional development projects. As long as there is political will and determination of the host government involved, the instrumentality of such IGOs as the UNDP can work out other difficulties. Hopefully, other IGO experiments similar to the UNDP involvement in the Rajin-Sonbong area with development can be enticed and encouraged in the days ahead to engage North Korea in the process of deepening the international network of cooperation in economic development on a regional basis.¹⁵

The Inter-Korean Agreement on Cooperation in the International Arena

As far as the mutual interaction between the two Korean states is concerned, North and South Korea negotiated and signed the historical "Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression, Exchanges, and Cooperation Between the South and the North" (to be referred hereafter as the basic agreement), on December 13, 1991. The basic agreement reaffirmed the "principles for unification of the fatherland" by proclaiming, in the preamble, that they were "determined to remove the state of political and military confrontation and achieve national reconciliation...to avoid armed aggression and hostilities, reduce tension, ensure the peace...realize multifaceted exchanges and cooperation (so as) to advance common national interests and prosperity."¹⁶

One noteworthy feature of the basic agreement is the reference to inter-Korean cooperation in the international arena, the provision that requires detailed exposition and analysis, as will be shown below. Ample evidence exists that the framers of the basic agreement struggled with the question of how to best define the nature and character of their mutual relations. The basic agreement in its preamble states, for instance, that "recognizing that their relations, not being a relationship between states, constitute a special interim relationship stemming from the process towards unification."

The relevant question in this regard is: "What is the basic nature of inter-Korean relations?" Is it a special case of international relations, or should it be treated as a

¹⁵ On the Rajin-Sonbong experiment, see James Cotton, "The Rajin Sonbong Free Trade Zone Experiment: North Korea in pursuit of new international linkages." In Samuel S. Kim, ed., *North Korean Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era*. New York and Hong Kong: Oxford University press, 1998, pp. 212-34. For the text of the Agreement, see *A White Paper on South-North Dialogue in Korea*. Seoul: ROK National Unification Board, 1993.

"normal" or "abnormal" business of inter-state diplomacy? The two Korean states have alternated their behavior toward one another, not surprisingly, by relying on the seemingly two conflicting definitions depending on the specific context and circumstances. The 1991 basic agreement has clearly defined inter-Korean relations as a kind of special (not normal) relationship. The fact that North Korea had to join the United Nations as a separate entity in 1991, despite its expression of reservation not to do so, is a confirmation "by deed," if not in rhetoric, of the fact that the two Koreas do coexist and that they must act as "normal" states in conducting business with the world organization.

Despite this espoused agreement on principle, the practical needs and exigencies dictated the two Korean states to behave toward each other as if they were normal sovereign states.¹⁵ However, the leaders of the two Korean states, in 1991-92, translated the respective concern and apprehension into the positive forum and framework for moving toward improved inter-Korean relations. The signing of the basic agreement, on December 13, 1991, was clearly a manifestation of the resolve by the two Korean regimes to internalize the newly emerging post-Cold War security order into the inter-Korean *détente* and *rapprochement*.

Since 1992, however, inter-Korean relations have gone through cooperation in theory but conflict in practice. North Korea's "suspected" nuclear weapon's program was the culprit that blocked the smooth transition of the Korean peninsula into the post-Cold War peace system. The unfolding of the nuclear controversy in 1993-94 thus quickly negated the promise of Korean peace in the post-Cold War.

Now that the October 1994 Geneva Agreed Framework between the U.S. and the DPRK is signed, to freeze North Korea's on-going nuclear program and dismantle it eventually, the possibility of reviving the momentum for inter-Korean peace and de-nuclearization has also improved.¹⁶ This is why we need to re-examine the terms of the basic agreement in regards to the cooperation in the international arena to see whether and under what conditions such an attempt may bear intended fruit.

North and South Korea agreed, in the preamble of the basic agreement, that "their relations, not being a relationship between states, constitute a special interim relationship stemming from the process towards unification" and, therefore, they "pledge to exert joint efforts to achieve peaceful unification." To achieve this objective, the two sides agreed on joint efforts to promote cooperation in the international arena.

The two sides went on to express their desire, according to the preamble of the agreement, to "reduce tension and ensure the peace" and to "realize multifaceted exchanges and cooperation to advance common national interests and prosperity." To realize this aim, two specific provisions were inserted into the basic agreement as Article 6 and Article 21. An ambitious, yet pietistic statement of principle was proclaimed in Article 6, which provides that "the two sides shall cease to compete with or confront each other in the international arena and shall cooperate and endeavor together to promote national prestige

¹⁵ B. C. Koh, "North Korea's Policy toward the United Nations," *Korea Journal*, Vol. 35, no. 1 (Spring 1995). Young Whan Kihl, "North Korea and the United Nations." In Samuel Kim, *North Korean Foreign Relations*, Op. Cit., pp. 249-79.

¹⁶ Young Whan Kihl, "The Mouse that Roared: North Korea's Nuclear Deal-Making with the United States." *Pacific Focus*, Vol. XIII, No. 2 (Fall 1998), pp. 5-26

and interests." A firm, yet matter-of-fact statement on the norms of action was also inserted in Article 21, which provides that "the two sides shall cooperate in the international arena in the economic, cultural, and various other fields and carry out joint undertakings abroad."

To realize these overall objectives of promoting inter-Korean cooperation in the international arena, the two sides also signed the protocols on the compliance with and implementation of each provision of the basic agreement during the eighth North-South high-level meeting in Pyongyang on September 17, 1992. They were successful in adopting separate protocols on three of the four components of the agreement: (a) reconciliation, (b) nonaggression, (c) exchanges and cooperation, leaving the protocol on and (d) military and security matters yet to be negotiated and worked out.

The protocol on the Article 6 provision of the basic agreement contains four additional statements in regards to the measures of promoting inter-Korean cooperation in the international arena, as follows:

One: "The South and the North shall not vilify and slander each other in the international arena, including at international meetings, and shall closely cooperate with each other in order to maintain the dignity of the Korean people." (Article 21)

Two: "The South and the North shall consult with each other on matters affecting national interests and take the necessary joint measures." (Article 22)

Three: "The South and the North, in order to promote the common interests of the Korean people, shall maintain close contacts between their diplomatic missions overseas in areas where both sides have diplomatic missions." (Article 23)

Four: "The South and the North shall champion and protect the ethnic rights of overseas Koreans and shall endeavor to promote reconciliation and unity among them." (Article 24)

The Protocol on the Compliance with and Implementation of the Provisions of Chapter III (South-North Exchanges and Cooperation), of the basic agreement, has the following main provision and two sub-provisions: "The South and the North shall cooperate with each other in various sectors of the international economy and shall promote their joint presence abroad" (Article 5). This is followed by two sub-provisions: (1) "The South and the North shall cooperate with each other in various international events and international organizations in the economic field" (Article 5.1), (2) "The South and the North shall discuss and carry out measures to promote their joint presence abroad in the economic field" (Article 5.2).

Unfortunately, it turns out that neither the South-North Joint Reconciliation Commission nor the Joint Exchange and Cooperation Commission, an implementation mechanism established to carry out the Protocol on the Compliance with and Implementation of Chapter I and III of the North-South Agreement, was successfully implemented due to the political contingency and controversy over North Korea's "suspected" nuclear weapons

program. At least on paper, then, the two sides have come to full agreement on the specific measures of how to implement the terms of the North-South Agreement on all aspects of the relationship except the ones on the military.

The preceding discussion and textual analysis of the terms of agreement clearly suggest that in the absence of political will, the formal inter-Korean agreement amounts to nothing more than a piece of paper and that the implementation plans, however perfect and parsimonious they may look, are nothing more than a wasted effort and an exercise in futility.

Internationalizing Inter-Korean Relations: Limits and Problems

The need for cooperation in the international arena, in light of the growing trend of both Koreas to participate in multilateral organizations is greater today in the post-Cold War era than it was anytime in the past. Whether such a possibility of "cooperative" interaction can take place, however, is neither obvious nor to be taken for granted. To make the possibility come true, the prior agreement and consensus between the two regimes must be present, as well as the political will and determination to succeed.

It is clear that the proposal for cooperation in the international arena was politically motivated and influenced with which to begin. As early as 1973, the Seoul government took an official stance at promoting inter-Korean cooperation, when the "Special Foreign Policy Statement Regarding Peace and Unification" on June 23, 1973 stated that South Korea "shall not oppose North Korea's participation with us in international organizations, if it is conducive to the easing of tension and the furtherance of international cooperation."¹⁷ A similar policy stance was presented by the Seoul government in 1989, when the "Special Presidential Declaration for National Self-Esteem, Unification, and Prosperity" on July 7th (the pronouncement on Northern Policy) stated that South Korea hopes "to bring to an end wasteful diplomacy characterized by competition and confrontation between the South and North, and to cooperate in ensuring that North Korea makes a positive contribution to the international community" and that "representatives of South and North Korea will contact each other freely in international forums and will cooperate to pursue the common interest of the whole Korean nation."¹⁸

The Pyongyang government likewise followed the Seoul government lead in launching international campaigns for strengthening its ties with the Third World Non-Aligned Nations Movement. In May 1973, North Korea scored a major diplomatic victory by joining the World Health Organization (WHO), acquiring an observer status with the United Nations. North Korea campaigned for the United Nations General Assembly to adopt the pro-Pyongyang resolution endorsing its position on the Korean question.¹⁹ Kim Il Sung said in his new year address in 1994, that his government and party

¹⁷ Young Whan Kihl, "Democratization and Foreign Policy," In James Cotton, ed., *Politics and Policy in the New Korean State: From Roh Tae-Won to Kim Young-Sam*. NY: St. Martin's Press, 1995, pp. 109-30.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ B. C. Koh, "The United Nations and the Politics of Korean Reunification," *Journal of Korean Affairs*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (January 1974), pp. 43-46. Also, see B. C. Koh, "The Battle Without Victors: The Korean Question in the 80th Session of the UN General Assembly," *Journal of Korean Affairs*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (January 1976), p. 45.

"shall consistently adhere to the foreign policy of independence, peace, and friendship to meet the requirements of the present situation" and also "shall work hard to abolish the old international, political, and economic orders of domination and subordination, establish new ones on the basis of equality, justice, and impartiality and development of North-South cooperation on the principle of collective self-reliance."²⁰

Enhancing inter-Korean cooperation via multilateral organizations, as a result of having implemented cooperation in the international arena, sounds good in theory but it is unlikely to materialize under the prevailing conditions in the 1990s.²¹ An acute tension and mistrust continue to persist on the Korean peninsula due to an acrimonious and hostile attitude of North Korea toward South Korea following the death of Kim Il Sung in 1994.

Both the pro and the con views on the notion of inter-Korean cooperation in the international arena may be given. As for the pro view, it is true that the possibility is greater, now that the post-Cold War era and the post-Kim Il Sung era have dawned. The new era means that no longer will ideology reign but pragmatism in diplomacy, as well as in the economy where national interest considerations, rather than the political dogma and ideology, will dictate foreign policymaking and implementation in the respective Korean states of North and South Korea. At least, one can hope that this pragmatism will reign and prevail in inter-Korean relations.

The new post-Kim Il Sung era also means that North Korea under the Kim Jong Il regime will move toward the direction of a greater open door and a more pragmatic foreign economic policy that promotes joint ventures and special economic zones. North Korea, in fact, adopted a new policy line of "agriculture first, light industry first, and foreign trade first." This is a manifestation of the pragmatic thinking and action of the North Korean elite.²²

The Seoul government, under the newly adopted Sunshine policy toward North Korea, also continued to move along the path of greater interaction with the North by separating politics from economics in its trade relations with the North.²³ Hence, the possibility is wide open for both North and South Korea to interact positively in the international arena, via any one of the international agencies and multilateral organizations in which both Koreas choose to participate. The Seoul government has consistently pursued the Open Door policy and interaction with the outside world. The economic miracle of the Han River, in fact, was erected on the rock bed of an export-led strategy of industrialization of the economy. The economic miracle of the Taedong River may also be in the offing, depending on whether or not North Korea pursues the new Open Door policy and

²⁰ The *Pyongyang Times*, January 1, 1994, p. 5.

²¹ Despite the objective reality of North Korea's changing relations with the outside world in the post-Cold War era, in the direction of greater interaction, the ideological campaign to indoctrinate the population still goes on. See, for instance, Kim Jong Il, "The Historical Lesson in Building Socialism and the General Line of Our Party," January 3, 1992, as reported in *The Pyongyang Times*, February 8, 1992; "Let Us Accelerate Socialist Construction by Giving Definite Priority to the Ideological Revolution," *Rodong Shinmun* editorial, December 26, 1993.

²² This policy was abandoned and replaced by the new policy line of building Kangsong Taeguk with an amendment of the Socialist Constitution in September 1998 and Kim Jong Il's election to the position of General Secretary of the Korean Workers Party.

²³ As for Seoul's new policy initiative toward the North, see Young Whan Kihl, "Seoul's Engagement Policy and U.S.-DPRK Relations," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 10 1 (Summer 1998), pp. 21-48.

export promotion like the ones Deng Xiaoping's China has accomplished since 1978.

As for the con view, one should not underestimate the difficulty in promoting inter-Korean cooperation in the international arena. Formidable obstructive barriers exist and continue to persist for reasons of national pride of "Juche" in North Korea and economic downturn due to a financial crisis and an IMF-managed economy in South Korea. Deep-seated distrust and animosity also prevail between North and South Korea that stem from the unfortunate past of the internecine Korean War. The claims of legitimacy and sovereignty also provide the shield with which to hide their raw political ambition and arrogance that the respective Korean ruling elite harbors toward the opponent regime.

Thus, it is not a question of "theoretical possibility" and "practical necessity" that will keep the two Koreas from actively pursuing cooperation in the international arena. Rather, it is the absence of the political will and determination by leadership to carry out the terms of agreement already put on paper in the form of historical "agreement on reconciliation, nonaggression, exchanges, and cooperation between the South and the North." Unless and until the psychological and attitudinal barriers are removed by restoration of mutual respect, confidence, and trust, no genuine cooperation and peace-building via multilateral organizations will hold and thrive on the Korean peninsula.

The record of inter-Korean rivalry and conflict reveals that there is a strong zero-sum game assumption that reigns rather than the brotherly and harmonious relations that are based on fraternal love and compassion. Inter-Korean relations have been acure, cutthroat, and antagonistic with sworn enemies. Under these circumstances, what can be desired realistically is to do damage control and minimum cooperation rather than to go all the way out for miracles and maximum cooperation. The time is not ripe or right for the two Korean states to aspire to maximize cooperation in the international arena in the post-Cold War environment. North and South Korea, in short, still suffer from the trauma of the war of years past and the lingering effects of Cold War rivalry between the two archenemies.

Finally, internationalization of inter-Korean relations, via multilateral organizations, is "theoretically flawed and conceptually incomplete." Whereas inter-Korean cooperation is bilateral in format and requires direct, face-to-face contact and interaction, multilateral organizations, like the United Nations forum by definition are plurilateral in relationship and multiple in membership. Since inter-Korean relations are basically forms of interaction between two sovereign entities called the ROK (South Korea) and the DPRK (North Korea), enticing them out of the way to promote cooperation in the international arena in the multilateral setting of IGOs is neither natural nor to be taken seriously. History shows that the ROK and the DPRK diplomats at the U.N., since they established an observer status with the United Nations in 1973, have not carried out the substantive or meaningful dialogue. This failure of meaningful interaction between the diplomats of the two sides is also the case since the two Koreas were admitted into the United Nations as regular members on September 17, 1991.²⁴

24. Young Whan Kihl, "North Korea and the United Nations," Samuel C. Kim, ed., *North Korean Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era*, New York and Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 249-79. Also, see Samuel C. Kim, "North Korea and the United Nations," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 77-110.

Achieving Korean Reunification in the Post-Cold War Era?

Since the Korean people suffered from the tragedy of territorial partition after World War II in 1945, they have aspired and struggled to bring about the reunification of their country by their own efforts. In response to this popular and nationalistic demand, the two Korean regimes have worked out basic principles on the reunification of Korea. The South-North Joint Communiqué of July 4, 1972, for instance, adopted the basic "principles for unification of the fatherland."

In the Joint Communiqué, North and South Korea not only agreed that national unification of the Korean people was "a just cause," but also their reunification should be achieved through an independent, peaceful, and national means. This threefold principle of national unification, as set forth in the North-South Joint Communiqué of July 4, 1972, stipulates that unification should be achieved through (1) independent Korean efforts "without being subject to external imposition or interference," (2) peaceful means, that is, "not through the use of force against each other," and seeking (3) a greater national unity, "transcending differences in ideas, ideologies, and systems."²⁵

Peace and *rapprochement* (as shown in the December 1991 "basic agreement") epitomize the Korean people's determination to internalize the value premise of the new post-Cold War era. Despite the language and rhetoric of *rapprochement*, both sides have not abandoned the old habits and the "hegemonic" reunification policy. Both Korean states are self-righteous and justifying on the unification issue (i.e., failing to display empathy and modicum of genuine reconciliation that are so essential to any successful negotiation and meaningful dialogue between the two former adversaries).

In the post-Cold War and post-Kim Il Sung era, North and South Korea must learn to live in peace and harmony as neighbors. Yet, they continue to practice "hegemony" rather than "coexistence" even if the solemn pledge is made and the signature is affixed on the document of the basic agreement to bring about reconciliation and peace in their mutual relations. The question of "hegemony" or "coexistence," in short, has not been settled as of yet between the two rival states and antagonistic regimes on the Korean peninsula.

Under those circumstances, the future prognosis and prospects do not look promising. In 1993, North Korea announced the so-called, "Ten-Point Proclamation" on the "greater national unity of Korean unification," which has now become a sacred creed in the post-Kim Il Sung era.²⁶ In 1998, North Korea reaffirmed this policy when Kim Jong Il presented his new Five-Point Guidelines on Greater National Unity on April 18th.²⁷ South Korea's successive governments continue to harbor the desire of inducing internal

²⁵ For an analysis of the three-point principle, and related issues of unification policies see Young Whan Kihl, *Politics and Policies in Divided Korea: Regimes in Contrast*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984, 55-59, 205-30.

²⁶ For the Ten-Point Proclamation, and its analysis, see Young Whan Kihl, "The Politics of Inter-Korean Relations: Coexistence or Reunification?" In Young Whan Kihl, *Korea and the World: Beyond the Cold War*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994, pp. 133-52, 148-49.

²⁷ These are: (1) upholding the principle of national independence, (2) seeking unity based on patriotism, (3) improving North-South relations, (4) opposition to foreign domination and anti-unification forces, and (5) stepping up national contacts, dialogue, solidarity, and unity.

change in North Korea. In 1998, the ROK government of President Kim Dae Jung has adopted a new initiative toward North Korea called the "Sunshine" policy in the attempt to engage the North in inter-Korean dialogue and cooperation. Yet, the Seoul government has typically pursued the strategy of engaging North Korea in inter-Korean dialogue and exchanges, in the hope that the radical change and reform, similar to what transpired in the former socialist camp of East Europe and the Soviet Union, might repeat itself in the post-Kim Il Sung North Korea. Transformation of rhetoric to action, however, still seems to be far off.

The problem of Korea's future and reunification, under those circumstances, is most likely to be settled by political means, instead of relying exclusively on the non-political methods. The promotion of inter-Korean cooperation in the international arena exemplifies the functional approach to Korean problem-solving. The political settlement of the Korean question could be arranged primarily between the two Korean states, and secondarily between the two Koreas and among the external powers surrounding Korea that actively maintain interests in Korea.

CONCLUSION

The question of "how" and "why" certain types of multilateral organizations succeed in promoting inter-Korean cooperation, while other types either fail or end up with mixed results, can be answered by examining the factors of (a) domestic interests, (b) international pressures, and (c) the context of interaction between the two Korean states. Understanding domestic political economy, for instance, requires not only the examination of domestic interests within each Korea, but also needs to take into consideration the nature of interaction between domestic politics and international institutions, as well as the changing structure of world politics and economy.

The best case to illustrate the above points is the remarkable history of long-drawn battles on the UN membership, which was played out by Seoul and Pyongyang during the Cold War years. However, with the Cold War's sudden ending, the ROK and the DPRK changed their respective hardened positions almost overnight and applied for simultaneous membership in the United Nations in May 1991, despite the continuous display of mutual animosity and rivalry. Domestic political interests and the new international environment have combined to exert strong pressures on each Korea to reassess its respective and time-honored stance on the question of UN membership, either as a single or separate entry into the world organization. This interplay of domestic and international interests seemed to underlie and propel, in varying degrees, the dynamics of linkage between multilateral organizations and promotion of inter-Korean relations.

Finally, to give a comparative assessment on the impact of three cases of the UNDP, the UPU, and the KEDO on the DPRK's diplomacy, it can be stated that each of these IGOs represents a prototype of the multilateral organizations exerting varied influences upon promoting inter-Korean relations. North Korea's receptivity to some multilateral organizations, like the UNDP, is a positive sign of the socialist hermit-kingdom getting

ready to overcome the state of self-imposed isolation and to join the international community. As for the second category of certain UN specialized agency experiments with the DPRK, like the UPU and the ITU, the results of the record are not positive in terms of these organizations enhancing inter-Korean cooperation. Other UN specialized agencies, like the ICAO, the FAO, and the WHO, have been given greater receptivity by the DPRK, the agencies that have produced a limited but positive impact on inter-Korean cooperation. The overriding criterion for the DPRK's decision on whether to participate in the IGO activities is the interest consideration given by the government.

This is also the case with on-going experiments and with the third type of multilateral organizations, most conspicuously the KEDO and certain other NGOs, which are primarily engaged with the humanitarian and food assistance program. These international bodies have been given limited access to the local personnel as well as to the needy population. What this entails in the long run, in terms of positive or negative impacts on the DPRK's diplomacy, is unclear and difficult to say. Yet, if the KEDO's task is fully completed at the end, it will exert potentially significant payoffs not only to the DPRK itself, but also to the other interested parties concerned about Korea's future. In this sense, the on-going experiments of the DPRK linkage with all types of multilateral organizations must be viewed as encouraging from the standpoint of assuring peace and security on the Korean peninsula via institution-building in multilateral diplomacy.

Because of the failure of certain IGOs, like the UPU, the ITU, and perhaps the IAEA, to promote inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation, the NGOs have largely come to fill in the gap. The outstanding examples are International Red Cross (IRC) and U.S.-based PVOs (Private Voluntary Organizations). The latter body is planning to send 1,000 tons of seed potatoes to North Korea in 1999.²⁸ About thirty NGOs are said to have sent food and emergency aid to North Korea. Actually, sixty representatives of some forty NGOs have met in Beijing in May 1999 to discuss large-scale assistance to the DPRK.²⁹ "Necessity is the mother of invention," as the popular saying goes, and it is so true in the case of the DPRK opening it to some multilateral organizations. The ROK benefited from it indirectly, at least, as a spillover effect across the DMZ. The Rajin-Sonbong FTEZ, which received the initial boost from the UNDP in its inception, and the Hyundai-DPRK joint venture of Mt. Kumgang tourism, launched in November 1998, are two examples of new institutional experiments that require further scrutiny.

Whether North Korea's opening to selected IGOs, like the UNDP, the WFP, the FAO, and indirectly to the IMF and the World Bank, will amount to anything substantive and enduring is not clear and difficult to say at the moment. This remains to be seen in the future. During 1998, some 120 DPRK officials are said to have received overseas¹ training on such subject-matters as economics, management, and international law, according to Seoul's newspaper quoting a high-ranking ROK official.³⁰ In a way, these multilateral organizations are now filling the gap that the two Koreas left behind because of their

²⁸ "NGOs To Provide \$25 Million Aid To North Korea," *The Korean Herald*, May 4, 1999.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ The attributed official is Lun Dong-Won, the ROK National Security and Diplomacy Advisor. *The Saegye Ilbo*, March 1, 1999.

inability to cooperate face-to-face. At any rate, we are reminded that "it is conventional wisdom now that interdependence has implications for power as well as for wealth," and that international institutions have come to constitute a valuable set of instruments for promoting the interests of states through cooperation.⁵¹ Enhancing "inter-Korean cooperation via multilateral organizations," however flawed and inadequate it may look, makes eminent good common sense in the post-Cold War era and, therefore, it must be encouraged and put to practical use.

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⁵¹ Katzenstein, Peter J., Robert O. Keohane, and Stephen D. Krasner, "International Organization and the Study of World Politics," *International Organization*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (Autumn 1998), pp. 681-85.

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