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From the 38th Parallel to a Border: Exploring Alternative Futures of Korea

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To date, despite the voluminous quantity, a survey of previous debates and studies on Korean unification has failed to discuss "alternative futures" for the Peninsula, and within these debates there is only one future: "unified Korea". All the discussions and debates premise unification with the result that there are virtually no "alternative futures" but only singular future, a "unified Korea" existing. In addition, previous unification debates took place mainly under governmental guidance, and overlooked an unfounded desire of people regarding the unification. This paper exploits three futuristic analytical tools - age-cohort analysis, emerging issue analysis, and four alternative futures - to open up a path for a new perspective on the unification debate and to explore alternative futures for the Peninsula. Through the implementation of the three futuristic methodologies and based on the survey results obtained, this paper explores four alternative futures of Korea. It is notable that the generation of divided families is rapidly dying off so that the reunion of divided families will no longer be a major justification for unification. Although it is still relatively tranquil and considered ineffable in Korea, there is an emerging voice in favor of the continued existence of two Koreas rather than one reunified Korea. Given the increasing interest of the public, government can no longer ignore public sentiment and should grasp the nature and inclination of current and future citizens to formulate its future unification policy. Therefore, it is crucial to begin to consider untapped desires of the public regarding unification, and to prepare for the possibility of nonunification as well as unification on the Peninsula: that is for envisioning alternative futures.

Keywords: Korea, Unification, Alternative Futures, Futures Research

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Introduction

My study begins with one very basic question. Do all Koreans wish for unification? The answer seemed like "yes" at least up until the mid-1990s. This has been an unchallenged question for the last five decades, and "still remains a sacred and paramount goal."2 However, do our next generations still wish for unification in the future? Is a unified Korea the only future for the Peninsula? The aim of this paper is to address these two basic questions. To date, despite the voluminous quantity, a survey of previous debates and studies on Korean unification has failed to discuss "alternative futures" for the Peninsula, and within these debates there is only one future: "unified Korea." All the discussions and debates premise unification with the result that there are virtually no "alternative futures" but only one future, a "unified Korea" existing on the Korean Peninsula. For the South Korean government during the last five decades, unification of North and South has been an endpoint and ultimate goal that must be achieved. To discuss or propose non-unification as the alternative for the future of Korea has been considered offensive.

In addition, previous unification debates took place mainly under governmental guidance and leadership. In particular, "leaders of authoritarian regimes in South Korea tend to preserve their own political control, thus solidifying the division, at the expense of the needs and demands of the people."3 Korea is now a fully democratic country, and with the high expectations and interest of the public, the Korean government can no longer ignore public sentiment regarding the unification issue. Needless to say, "compared with authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, a democratic system of government would more readily serve the interest of the people."4 Accordingly, grasping the nature and inclination of current and future citizens of Korea is crucial to formulate the future unification policy. However, many previous studies and debates on unification overlooked an unfound desire of current and future generations.5 In addition, most of the research tended merely to describe the unification proposal, or the various kinds of unification methods.6 Some of the research did analyze alternative scenarios of the unification process. However, even these studies have failed to suggest "alternative futures." These scenarios are all premised on unification, and "the entire unification discourse is very much about the present."7

Along with addressing the above two questions, the purpose of this study is to explore alternative futures for the Korean Peninsula and to provide a new perspective on the Korean unification debate. As an ana-

lytical framework, I exploited three futuristic methodologies: age-cohort analysis, emerging issue analysis and four alternative futures. Through the implementation of the analytical tools and the survey results that I have obtained, I attempt to develop my own preferred future along with three other alternative futures for the Korean Peninsula. I must note that this study is not intended to propose government policy regarding unification, rather it merely explores some alternative futures and their provisions by using the methodologies of future studies. Also, this study is restricted to South Korea as the accessibility of information on the character and proclivities of the present and next generations of North Koreans is more than scarce. Finally, while recognizing the well apparent yet seemingly forgetful "dark side" and the obvious hostility of the peninsular division, this study will not consider this important factor based on to be discussed suggestions and eventual conclusion.

Transformation of Unification Discourses and Their Emergence

Emerging issue analysis is an effective analytical tool that focuses on emerging trends and their impact on society. This analytical tool is designed to analyze an issue at its beginning stage before it becomes a distinct trend. An emerging issue analysis is based upon the assumption that all trends tend to follow an S-curve pattern.⁹

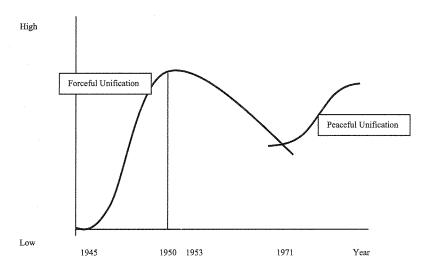
Two very important and major issues have emerged in modern Korean history. The first is the national independence, which emerged in the late 19th century and persisted up until 1945 when Korea achieved independence from Japanese colonial rule. The other issue is national unification since the division of Korea into two shortly after independence. Unification is still an ongoing issue, and can be segregated into two major processes in: "forceful unification" and "peaceful unification." While "forceful unification" rapidly submerged after the armistice treaty in 1953, the "peaceful unification" has been continuously emerging until today through several significant events: July 4th North-South Declaration in 1972, mass unification movement in 1989, and North-South Summit Meeting in 2000.¹⁰

Unification issue as a whole began to materialize when the Soviet Union occupied the area north of the 38th parallel and US troops were stationed in the southern part of the Korean peninsula. In the post-liberation period, United States and Soviet Union's policies, and the ideological confrontation among domestic political groups, produced envi-

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ronment of extreme ideological opposition and consolidated the division of the Korean Peninsula until the time of the Korean War. Massive eagerness toward unification eventually led to the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. North Korea initiated the war to unify the peninsula through forceful means, but the end consequence was disastrous and tragic for Korean history.¹¹ The year 1950 was indeed dramatic since both the Soviet and China aided North Korean forces and U.N./South Korean alliance almost achieved unification by force. The period after the war until the early 1970s was a stagnant period for unification. During this period, two Koreas had to devote their entire efforts to the post-war rehabilitation from the total ruins, and accordingly they did not have much room to pay attention on unification debate. Although sustained tensions and military threats have continued between two Koreas, a bitter experience of bloody war led "forceful unification" issue toward rapid downward trend in terms of the "S curve," and it never again emerged as a formal slogan or manner of unification by two Koreas.

Table 1 Emergence of "Forceful Unification" Issue since 1945

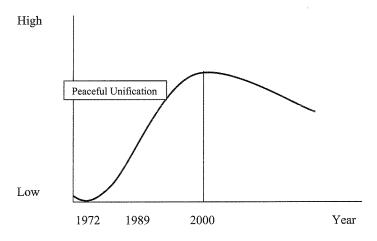


The "peaceful unification" emerged as an issue in the early 1970s when delegations from the North and South met for the first time - once in Seoul and once in Pyongyang. After several informal meetings, they declared the "July 4th North-South Declaration," where both North and South pledged to dedicate all sources toward unification based upon the

principles of autonomy, peace and national solidarity. Many South Koreans were excited by the declaration, and the suddenly created friendly environment made unification closer to reality. This event was important as both North and South agreed upon "peaceful unification." Prior to that, neither peaceful nor forceful means of unification were subject of significance as long as Korea became one.

The second important event for "peaceful unification" occurred in the late 1980s to early 90s. A number of texts have been published in South Korea on the subject of unification, and an extraordinary number of conferences on unification have been held in South Korea and abroad.¹³ During these times, the world also saw the beginning of the end of the Cold War and German unification. Public debate about unification increased during the Roh Tae Woo regime (1988-1991). After "the enunciation of the June 29 Declaration on Democratization in 1987 by President Roh, the unification issue has been a source of much debate within South Korea across the political spectrum, but particularly amongst the student movement and the more radical political organizations."14 Around the time of the Seoul Olympics in 1988, the unification movement was vigorous among college students, religious organizations, and some politicians out of office. They were also encouraged by the achievement of democracy in Korea at the time. Radical student organizations tried to march into North through the 38th parallel to meet students of the North. Many students at that time were full of passion toward unification, but their idea was too emotional and far from reality. These "series of developments, including the visit to North Korea by a number of promi-

Table 2 Emergence of "Peaceful Unification" Issue 1990s



nent South Korean dissidents in 1989, have resulted in growing demand for a more effective unification policy on the part of the South Korean government."¹⁵ These events were memorable as the movement for unification was for the first time led by the masses and not by the government. Rapid changes in the international and domestic environment led North Korea to focus more on survival as a last remaining totalitarian nation. In late 1980's, North Korea expressed fears of unification by South Korean absorption by clearly stating that national unification is not hinged upon who takes the flag first.

Dual Aspects of the June 2000 Summit Meeting

The third significant event to thrust "peaceful unification" as an emerging issue was on June 15, 2000 when South Korean President Kim Dae Jung met North Korean Defense Commission Chairman Kim Jung II. As president Kim Dae Jung expressed upon returning to Seoul, the meeting marked the "opening of a new chapter in our history, putting an end to 55 years of division and hostility." Many mass media in Korea also reported the event historic as the first summit meeting between the North and the South since Korea had divided. At this historic summit meeting, the two leaders agreed upon major framework to reduce tensions and eventually lead to national reunification.

Unlike the mass media reports and government propaganda, the people who watched this summit meeting on TV in South Korea expected unification, but at the same time they were skeptical. This skepticism was mainly due to many fruitless debates and policies, which could not overcome the wall of division of the last five decades. The peoples' reaction in Seoul was more or less cynical and they seemed more interested in the behaviors and ways of expression of the North Korean leader Kim Jung-II rather than the process and outcome of the agreement between two leaders. However, this event was critical enough to attract attention from the world as well as people in both the North and the South, and marked the peak of unification as an emerged issue. At the peak of June 2000 Summit, unification as an emerged issue draws downward in terms of "S curve."

It is important to note that while the June 2000 Summit signifies the peak of unification as an emerged issue, at the same time it is the beginning of non-unification as an emerging issue. According to Dr. Park Eungkyuk, "a salient feature of the inter-Korean summit agreement is de facto recognition of each government, characterized by capitalist and Communist polity."¹⁷ He analyzes that "the Kim-Kim agreement can be said to

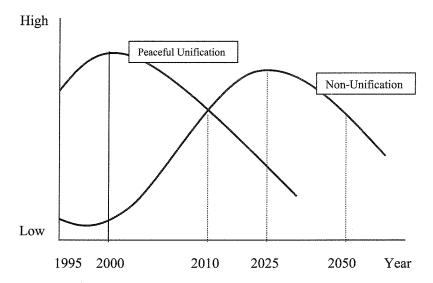
have got rid of misunderstandings of Southerners' scheming unification through absorbing or Northerners' plotting Communist unification."18 Here lies some crucial wisdom and I must give credit to Kim Dae Jung and his vision for the future of the Korean Peninsula. Some might argue that the summit meeting was merely a pre-arranged tactic between two leaders for their own political purposes, as they were well aware of the reality that each government will continue to pursue its own policy for its own purposes and that unification of the peninsula is nearly impossible. Indeed, it is tactic. But "tactics often become strategy and even goals, and, as we know too well in a negative sense, the means often become the ends. But this need not be negative in this case."19 It is tactical consent between two leaders to agree to the continuing existence of two Koreas on the peninsula. For the South Korean government, reconciliation, confidence building and reducing tension on the peninsula are three major principle of the Sunshine Policy, whereas Kim Jung Il's primary concern is securing his regime and South's economic aid for that project. Kim Jung II is not a reckless individual who believes North Korea has the capability to conquer South Korea by force. By recognizing each government, the two leaders implicitly agreed upon the reality and the future possibility of the continued existence of two Koreas. The only reason they mentioned unification (although they know it is nearly impossible) was that it was still too early to talk explicitly about the continued existence of two Koreas.

Emerging Non-Unification Sentiment

Discussing the mere possibility of continued existence of two Koreas without unification has long been considered taboo in South Korea up until late 1980's. It was also very difficult to raise objections against government led unification policy, whether it was under a dictatorial or a non-dictatorial regime. Debate about non-unification is so sensitive that it is often hampered by the notorious "national security law." President Kim Dae Jung himself has been misapprehended as a communist as his unification view is considered to be similar to North Korea's "confederation approach." However, the process of democratization and the end of the Cold War have provided much-needed room for various debates regarding unification. In this context, President Kim's "Sunshine Policy" deserves much recognition. Kim provides much room for various approaches regarding unification and Korean Peninsula.

The issue of non-unification began to appear in the middle of 1990. A few people began to discuss the non-unification issue, and among them, Dr. Chi Man Won demonstrated his transformational view of unification in his book. There, he argues that there are only two unification methods so far: "forceful unification" and "peaceful unification," and proposed "continuation of division as a shortcut to unification." According to him, unifying a nation by destroying the other regime is no longer "peaceful unification," and this kind of absorb-unification approach will bring tremendous resistance and tension between the two entities, and will never be acceptable by the absorbed side. Thus, he is very skeptical about so-called "peaceful unification" and he sees it is one of the reasons for the difficulty in "peace keeping" on the Korean peninsula because it is linked to "unification." He insists on continued existence of two Koreas with a relatively open border as a short cut toward unification.²²

Table 3 Emerging Non-Unification Issue 1990s



Prior to Dr. Chi's argument, some raised questions about Korean homogeneity, which is a fundamental challenge to the justification of Korean unification. Their assumption is based on skepticism that Korea is not homogeneous and thus that recovery of homogeneity is not appropriate for North and South unification. According to them, "Koreans do not have a long and unified history, only that the concept of the Korean nation today as "minjok" (recognized race of people) is a contemporary

construction."²³ However, I do not want to go into as much detail as their argument because their evidence and logic are not sufficient enough to discuss. Apart from its credibility and feasibility, the above arguments have their significance as they presented Korean unification issues from a new perspective, and these kinds of discourses have been getting clearer since in the mid 90s.

Along with the above two arguments, another notable emerging phenomenon in relation to the non-unification issue is public apathy about unification. While they recognize the justification of unification, unification is not something that must be achieved. For them, unification is an option, rather than a sacred and ultimate object that must be achieved. Those who feel this way are mainly high school and university-aged young people in Korea. The younger generation in Korea is more concerned about material comfort and affluence rather than the burden sharing and social and economic chaos they might have to endure in the process of unification or after the unification. More significantly, they are not interested in people in North Korea or in unification itself. They are not against unification, but at the same time they do not have much eagerness for unification. The best way to describe this group regarding their perspective and attitude toward unification is "apathy."24 Unlike their parents and grandparents, they have lesser interest about divided families and their parents' relatives in North Korea. For them, North Korea and the people of North Korea are just another foreign country like Japan and China. Probably they feel more distant from North Korea than other foreign nations due to the lack of internal exchange and the isolation of North Korea over the last five decades. Their view toward North Korea and unification is quite different from previous generations and is unlikely to change even as they become old. When they enter the mainstream of society with the scope of the continued existence of two Koreas rather than seeking unification, this issue will become a powerful trend. This will most likely occur around year 2025 when they become prime age in terms of societal influence.25

Traits and Consciousness of Each Cohort Toward Unification

Age-Cohort Analysis is an excellent method to know the views and attitudes of each age-cohort in Korea regarding the unification issue. An age-cohort is a group of people (also sometimes called a "generation"), who have a common generational identity with shared common experi-

ences in their childhood and adolescence when they form their personal character. Thus, when an age cohort with one "worldview" retires and leaves the political and economic arena, and a new age cohort with a very different "worldview" comes in, the world may change because, holding different beliefs, the actions and policies of the newer cohort differ from those of the older cohorts.²⁶ I suggest the phrase "when one cohort leaves power and a new one comes in, the world changes."²⁷

Through my examination of the "traits and consciousness of each cohort and Korean generational character," the Korean media seems to have an aptitude for drawing up interesting names to classify people based on age group. I discovered that there are many labels about age-cohorts in Korea, such as the 386-generation, 28 the New generation and the April 19th generation etc. However, those generation assortments in Korea were simply designed by the media for their entertainment and for commercial purposes. The purpose of an age-cohort analysis of Korean people in this paper is mainly to anticipate change and continuity in the Korean reunification question in the future. For this analysis, I sorted Korean people into six age cohorts from the Korean independence in 1945 to the instant future. It should be stressed that this age-cohort analysis of Korea is rather subjective and based upon my personal experience and intuition. To supplement this limitation, I launched a web-based survey on the six different age cohorts. The web-based survey shows different perceptions and attitudes of each cohort in Korea toward reunification.29 However, it is not easy to figure out who belongs to which generation, and it may also vary depending on background and occupation. These six age cohorts are: Colonial, Veteran, Democracy, Baby Boomer, Silent and Network.

The core member of *Colonial Cohort* was born and grew up during the early Japanese colonial period (1900-1920). The leaders of the this cohort would be in their 90s or older if they were still alive. These are the people who rebuilt the Korea and led the reconstruction of post Korean War. They experienced the sadness of being second-class citizens as Japanese subjects but also enjoyed the delights of national independence. Throughout this process of nation-state building, they suffered from ideological confrontation between the right and the left, and experienced a tragic Civil War (1950-1953). They still carry with them the memory of reflective scarcity and the terror of war, and with the result, they are well aware of the importance of national security. They were anti-communist, advocated dictatorial development to some extent, and emphasized stability rather than transformation. This generation presented Korean re-

unification as an endpoint, a consecrated and vital goal that must be achieved. Many of the divided families notably belong to this cohort.

The Veteran Cohort (1921-1933) was born during the Japanese colonial period and educated in the Japanese language. In their young adulthood, they witnessed the destruction of Japanese empire and experienced the chaos of the newly built two Koreas. The core members of this cohort were foot soldiers during the Korean War, and many of them experienced the horror and ruin of the War and still have the memory of bitterness of the Korean War. The peer of this cohort still holds strong anti-communist sentiments and prefers conservation rather than transformation. For them, the unification of Korea is not a subject of compromise or alteration. This cohort dominated Korea until quite recently, but they are rapidly fading away from the arena.

The members of the *Democracy Cohort* (1934-1953) make up the first age cohort that was educated in the Korean language at school. In their childhood, they went through the Korean War with the result that they still carry with them vivid memories of profound scarcity and starvation. They played an important role in the 4.19 student movement,³⁰ but were soon frustrated by the 5.16 military coup.³¹ They spent most of their youth under the military dictatorship, and the Cold War was the crucial event which dominated their lives and lifestyle. This generation was responsible for the economic miracle in the 70s and the 80s, so they have a "can do" attitude and are full of confidence. It should be emphasized that this cohort believes democracy is an ideal institution and that they are the mainstream of present-day Korea. For them, unification is also something that should be achieved, but that sentiment is not as strong as with the previous generation.

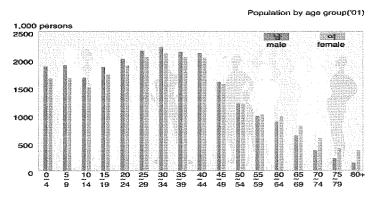
Baby Boomer (1954-1971) is the biggest Cohort in present-day Korea in terms of numbers. The older members of this cohort have played an essential role in the nation's development. When they entered the world after graduating from college in the 70s and early 80s, they had it made. Korea's booming economy gave them access to jobs and wealth their parents could only dream of. Still, they had to work very hard to achieve the "Korean dream" and in the process helped make Korea the economic power that it has become. The younger members of this cohort are often called in Korea the "386 generation" because of the technology-based terms put upon those currently in their 30s, who entered college in the 1980s and were born in the 1960s. I need to distinguish this younger group from the older baby boomer cohort because these "386 genera-

tion" politicians have portrayed themselves as forward-thinking, young, justified and reform-oriented leaders, representing a distinct contrast to their older colleagues. They have strong pride that they played a decisive role in the nation's democratization and are currently leading new political movements in Korea. Also, there is growing acknowledgment that the voting power of this cohort has considerable influence upon election results. This is the cohort that became actively involved in student-led reunification movement in the late 1980s. However, they do not show any specific difference in terms of views toward unification issue from the older members of the Boomer cohort. To them, the Korean reunification question also remains an important goal and it is imagined to open up eternal prosperity as well as the ability to compete with Korea's old nemesis and colonizer, Japan.

Silent Cohort (1972-1981) was mostly born in the 1970s (no more baby boomers), and grew up in the period of relative economic stability and material comfort without having to struggle for it. While the baby boomer generation spent their youth amid the student movement for democratization in the 1970s and 80s, the Silent cohort spent their campus life amid a maturing democracy. This cohort grew up in nuclear families and was raised freely and without restraint. This age cohort has no distinguishable character. They are a relatively spiritless generation, and just tend to stay the course of their desire. This is the first age-cohort that shows an air of indifference toward the unification issue.

) refers to the current group of high school Network³² Cohort (1982and university-age young people in Korea. While the Silent cohort grew up amid a maturing democracy and material comfort, the network generation is growing up in the networked world and the era of globalization in the 1990s. As children of the "Baby Boomer Generation," technology and networked communications are the norm to them. Computers, the Internet, mobile phones, these are the things that almost all the peer of this cohort are well versed and have greater influence. Unlike their parents and grandparents, they grew up in affluence and endured little hardship. They missed the years of war, the rigors of economic development and the passionate student movement toward democratization. By the time they were heading off to kindergarten, Korea showed off its economic miracle toward the world via the Seoul Olympic Games (1988) and took one step forward toward the nation's democratization. Like the other generations defined by their time, the network cohort will alter the feature of Korea as they enter society. As they substitute the older generation in the social stream, the new generation will generate conflict with previous generations that have different attitudes toward technology, national identity, globalization, and particularly reunification. It seems that the notion of nation-state, national identity and national unification are no longer important to this cohort. Rather, this cohort tends to share a global commonality and values with other same age-cohorts beyond the boundaries, and this is made more plausible through worldwide network communication. The peers of this cohort tend to get out from under the past burden that their elder generation couldn't, and hold out hope to make a better future for the Korean peninsula. They are indifferent to unification and even advocate a non-unified Korea.

Table 4 Population by age group



According to The Korean National Statistic Bureau, the biggest composition of Korean population by age (year 2000) is between 20 ~ 39, and this age group occupies 27.2 percent of the total population.³³ The "Younger Boomer", "Silent" and "Network" cohorts belong to this age group. In year 2025, the members of these cohorts will be between 45~64 years of age, which is the most influential age in any major realm: political, institutional, economic and social. Most of the colonial generation will have passed away, and even if some of them are still alive, they will not be influential in the society. As survey result indicates, the reunion of divided families is the major justification of unification for the colonial, veteran, and democracy cohorts. However, the generation of divided-families is rapidly dying off or retiring from the public arena, and no one who really cares about his or her relatives in North Korea will be living in the year 2025. On the contrary, younger generations, particularly the Silent and the Network are less or not interested in people in North Korea and

divided families, and probably this is quite natural for them. As time goes by, this phenomenon will be accelerated, and will reach its peak in year 2025.³⁴

Four Alternative Futures for the Korean Peninsula

As noted earlier, scenarios regarding the future of the Korean peninsula have concentrated on unification. These studies mainly emphasize how unification should be achieved, rather than envisioning alternative futures for the Peninsula. In other words, all the scenarios have been focused on unification, and the future possibility of non-unified Korea has been completely ignored. The futuristic methodology of four alternative futures enables us to break this fixed perception and provides us with various future possibilities for the Peninsula. By looking at the Korean Peninsula from the future, we may find a clue for the tangled situation on the Peninsula. Based on two previous analyses and survey results, I attempt to develop my own preferred future along with other three alternative futures for Korean Peninsula: collapse, conserved, continued growth, and transformation (preferred future). However, it must be noted that these four alternative futures do not compose a comprehensive set of possibilities, nor will provide predictions about specific outcomes that will likely occur. Rather it merely attempts to explore alternative future directions on the peninsula and on the unification debate.35

Table 5 Four Alternative Futures of Korean Peninsula

Alternative	Keyword	Relationship between
		South and North Korea
Collapse	War	Collapse of NK regime, NK
		invade SK, Absorption by
		either side
Conserved	Status quo	Coexistence of Two Koreas
		on the Peninsula with
		tension and the threat of
		war.
Continued Growth	Peaceful	Both Koreas continue to
	Unification	pursue peaceful unification,
		but without success
Transformation	Non-unification	Abandonment of unification
(Preferred Future)		efforts by both NK and SK.
· ·		Peaceful Coexistence of the
		Two Koreas on the
		Peninsula with an open
		border

The first scenario is Collapse. Some define collapse "as the inability of the regime in power to maintain effective political, economic, social, and military control, which ultimately leads to its dissolution and, in the extreme case, the formal end of the state."36 This paper, however, does not define collapse as simply the dissolution of the North Korean or South Korean regimes, but the failure of the three other alternatives. Some may have concerns about the North's full-scale military operation against the South, but the leader of North Korea is not that reckless. We are just too accustomed to the so-called "cliff edge diplomacy" of North Korea. Rather, a more plausible and dangerous scenario is the dissolution of current ruling regime in North Korea. It could occur in several ways, but no matter how it happens, military conflicts will be inevitable not only internally between the existing regime and anti-regime forces but also externally across the 38th parallel. The loss of military control by the central government in the North would naturally lead to partial or full-scale military operations against the South Korean army and US troops in South Korea and Japan (if necessary). If the military operation occurs on a large scale, it will not only devastate the entire peninsula but also be a shortcut to the co-perishing of the two Koreas.

The second scenario (maintain status quo) is what the two Koreas have experienced for approximately the last five decades. This alternative is the continued coexistence of two Koreas on the Peninsula with tension, the threat of war, and the futile zero-sum competition between each other. The two Koreas continue to waste their time and effort blaming each other, and engaging in the endless competition of military expenditure that consumes huge amounts of money and the energy of the whole nation. North Korea will still be reluctant to open her country to the outside of the world, and will struggle for her own survival. South Korea, meanwhile, prepares for a sudden collapse of the North Korean regime and for potential military conflict, while consolidating its alliances with the United Sates and Japan. Some argue that this is the most desirable scenario for the "Big Four (US, Russia, China and Japan)" surrounding the Korean peninsula.

In the third scenario (peaceful unification), both Koreas continue to pursue peaceful unification, but it is never achieved. For the South Korean government, "peaceful unification through gradual integration, implementation of confidence-building measures and major threat reduction activities, and comprehensive political and social reconciliation between the two Koreas" seem to be the preferred future of Korean peninsula.

However, it contains a trap and dilemma in itself. One reason for the difficulty in "peace keeping" in Korean peninsula is that it is linked to "unification." For many South Koreans, unification means political unification with both North and South Koreans electing one president for the Korean peninsula. The South Korean principle of unification is one political system within one nation that expels the communist regime in the North and establishes a capitalist democratic regime on the entire Korean peninsula. South Koreans have been instructed that "the nation and the state must be one, that a confederation is not unification, and that North Korea must be totally absorbed into the South, its state cracked, and its people assimilated."38 In other words, peaceful "unification is a euphemism for conquest, the annihilation of North Korea, and the total assimilation of North Koreans into South Korean capitalism."39 As Dr. Chi points out, unifying a nation by destroying the other regime is no longer "peaceful unification." Accordingly, this kind of absorb-unification approach will bring tremendous resistance and tension between the two entities, and it will never be acceptable by the absorbed side. 40

The final scenario (transformation) is my preferred future for the Korean Peninsula. 41 This transformational alternative future envisions the continued existence of two Koreas peacefully. The two Koreas abandon the unification policy and do away with the term "unification" completely from their mind. The superficially simple statement "Our sole wish in life is for unification" will no longer exist, and people will consider unification as an alternative rather than an ineluctable destiny that must be realized no matter how much it costs. If the two Koreas give up their "desire for unification," then there will be no need to be worried about tensions and the horror of war. The two Koreas recognize their respective political systems, and become independent sovereign states just like Germany and Austria. Without mentioning unification to each other, two Koreas prolong to coexist harmoniously along with internal exchanges, inter-Korean sports, joint-academic seminars and cultural interactions, just like between South Korea and Japan, North Korea and China. There are many borderlines among the nation states in Europe, but they are integrating into one entity economically, socially and politically to some extent. Citizens freely cross the border whenever they wish, and do business wherever they want within the frame of European Union. 42 If the "unification" issue involves Europe, it will be a totally different story. Probably they would have to live in a series of tension and threats of war just like the Korean Peninsula. A similar situation would occur between the United States and Canada, and Malaysia and Singapore. 43 In sum, the modern Western concept that one nation forms one nation-state disappears from the Korean peninsula.

Toward a Preferred Future for the Peninsula

As noted previously, one reason for the difficulty in "peace keeping" on the Korean peninsula is that it is linked to "unification." Many politicians and political leaders in both South and North Korea had velled "peaceful unification" even before the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. However, the Korean War clearly shows that these two terms "peace" and "unification" will never become compatible partners, rather it is rhetoric made by irresponsible politicians in both Koreas. Although the German unification model presents a positive historical analogy, there are two significant dissimilarities between Germany and Korea. Firstly, unlike the two Germanys, the two Koreas waged a wretched and bloody war that shaped a harsh and persistent confrontation on the peninsula. Secondly, before unification, the two Germanys had maintained full diplomatic and quasi-normal political relations throughout the nearly two decades since they established concurrent recognition in 1972. On the other hand, the two Koreas have hardly had even the appearance of regular contact in any major realm for the last five decades.44 In this context, it is very hard to apply the German model to the Korean Peninsula. German unification brought nothing but some of the more positive illusion about unification. One of the serious misconceptions left behind by previous unification studies and policies is a rosy blueprint of a unified Korea. Some previous literature is eager to demonstrate the negative effects of unification such as the danger of war in the process of unification and the whole social and economic chaos that unification would bring. Even an economic superpower like Germany has suffered from above matters for the last 10 years. It would be even more difficult for South Korea.

Still, many people in Korea shout "unification", but only a few people mention "peace." Korean people overlook the important wisdom that if they pursue "peace" first, then "unification" will automatically follow. However, if they pursue "unification," then tension and threat of war between two Koreas will be inevitable. In reality, South Korea had always been in tension and faced the threat of war whenever North Korea cried out "unification" whether by peace or force, and vice versa. We are also witnessing a similar phenomenon in Taiwan Strait. This phenomenon shows that reckless and fruitless assertions of "unification" inhibit "peace." Thus, we come to conclusion that "unification" is in inverse proportion to "peace" and that the two are incompatible with each other.

For this reason, the presumably simple statement "Our sole wish in life is for unification" should be carefully re-examined and transformed into other alternatives. If the two Koreas give up their "desire for unification," then there will not be any need for concerns about the tension and the horror of war. The major justification for Korean unification is often glossed as the "reunion of divided-families." However, the generation of divided-families is gradually but rapidly dying off, and no one who really cares about his or her relatives in North Korea will be alive in the year 2025. Although this "uncaring" generation is still relatively silent and considered to be unspeakable, new age-cohorts who have less or no interest in unification are emerging in South Korea, and they will be dominant figures in Korean society in the not too distant future. Accordingly, the view and attitude toward unification will change whether we like it or

President Kim Dae Jung created a favorable environment toward the preferred future of Korean Peninsula, and his "Sunshine Policy" should not be assessed with shortsighted thinking. Maintaining the appearement policy (Sunshine Policy) toward North Korea and furthering transformational policy are preferable in order to open up an avenue for the preferred future. The future governments and leaders of South Korea may consider the following five steps for the preferred future of the Korean Peninsula. South Korea can initiate these steps first and actively lead North Korea as they are in a more preferable position economically, politically and socially. It will not be easy to follow in an immediate future as it contains political risks. As we have experienced for a half-century, the situation on the Korean Peninsula will remain the same as long as they adhere to "dark side" and the obvious hostility of the peninsular division. However, the transformation of view and attitude toward unification along with generational change of South Koreans will eventually lead the five steps to reality.

Five Steps Toward the Preferred Future of the Korean Peninsula

- 1. Recognition of the North Korea: the South Korean Government formally declares that it recognizes the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and openly shows its willingness to establish normal political relationship and to exchange diplomatic representatives with North Korea.
- 2. Declaration of an end to seek unification: South Korean Government declares formally that it abandons all forms of unification policy (both forceful or peaceful).

- 3. Gradual reduction of armament: the South Korean government "initiates a unilateral freeze on the acquisition, production, and deployment of new military capabilities, announcing that it would continue the freeze so long as there was no indication of any large-scale expansion of the North's military capabilities."⁴⁶
- 4. Withdrawal of US troop from Korean soil: The South Korean government should call for complete withdrawal of US troop on Korean soil, while securing international security in the case of a contingency.
- 5. From the 38 parallel to a border: Cooperate with the North Korean government, get rid of the DMZ, and build a normal border. In this case, just maintain minimum border guards along the border.⁴⁷

Conclusion

For the last five decades, Korea has made efforts and prepared only for unification. The two Koreas have paid no attention to the possibility of the continued existence of two Koreas as an alternative for the peninsula. However, the desire and justification of unification is getting weaker and weaker as the pre-Korean War generations die off and retire from the public arena. Indeed, the generation of divided-families is rapidly dying off, and the reunion of divided family will no longer be a major justification for unification. Since in the mid 1990s, there is an emerging voice on the horizon for the continued existence of two Koreas rather than simply wanting to unify the two Koreas. This is particularly obvious among the younger generation, and they are more prone to non-unification than their parents and grandparents. As time goes by and as consequence of generational shift, this phenomenon will be accelerated and will reach its peak in year 2025. Given the increasing interest of the public, government can no longer ignore public sentiment and should grasp the nature and inclination of current and future citizens to formulate its future unification policy. It is crucial to begin to consider untapped desires of the public regarding unification, and to prepare for the possibility of nonunification as well as unification on the Peninsula: that is for exploring the plural futures rather than singular provision. The future is ours to create in a desirable way.

Table 6 Survey on Consciousness of Korean Age-Cohorts Regarding Unification

- 1. Purpose of the survey: to understand the views and attitudes of each age-cohort in Korea regarding the unification issue.
- 2. Design of Survey and Poll
 - 1) Population: residents of South Korea over 20 years old
 - 2) Number and Composition of Survey Participants:

Total Numbers (359)	Percentage
Colonial (2)	0.6%
Veteran (4)	1.1%
Democracy (10)	2.8%
Boomer (27)	7.5%
Silent (99)	27.7%
Network (217)	60.6%

3. *Sampling*: Web-based survey poll (Colonial and Veteran were surveyed by telephone)

4. Survey Dates: Feb 2-16, 2002

Q1. How much you want Korea to be unified? (What does unification mean to you?)

Result	Colonial	Veteran	Democracy	Boomer	Silent	Network
Must be achieved	100	100	40	37	28	22
Achieved if possible			30	26	25	13
Status Ouo			20	18.5	18	32
I don't know			10	18.5	29	33
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Q2. Why does Korea need to be unified?

Result	Colonial	Veteran	Democracy	Boomer	Silent	Network
Reunion of Divided Family	100	75	40	26	26	7
Recovery of Homogeneity			20	19	6	5
Peace on the Peninsula and in East Asia		25	40	22	24	22
Promise of economic and political prosperity				33	17	10
I don't know					27	56
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Q3. How interested are you in North Korea and its people?

Result	Colonial	Veteran	Democracy	Boomer	Silent	Network
Very much	100	100	60	45	30	12
Interested to some			30	26	35	40
degree						
Not really			10	22	20	33
Not interested at all				7	15	15
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Q4. How much do you know about North Korea?

Result	Colonial	Veteran	Democracy	Boomer	Silent	Network
Very much	50	50	30	26	8	5
Some knowledge	50	50	50	45	56	7
Not really			20	14.5	28	63
Do not know at all				14.5	8	25
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Q5. What is the major obstacle for unification?

Result	Colonial	Veteran	Democracy	Boomer	Silent	Network
Attitude of North Korean Government	100	75	50	18	41	44
Attitude of South Korean Government			10	7.5	5	8
Attitude of "Big 4" surrounding Korean Peninsula		25	40	67	44	30
I don't know				7.5	9	18
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Q6. Do you believe Korea can be unified? If so, how fast?

Result	Colonial	Veteran	Democracy	Boomer	Silent	Network
Within 5 years			10	7.5	6	8
Within 10 years	100	50	60	33.5	35	32
Within 20 years		50	20	44	42	39
Impossible			10	15	16	21
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Q7. Do you believe "peaceful unification" or "German style unification" is possible in the Korean Peninsula?

Result	Colonial	Veteran	Democracy	Boomer	Silent	Network
Possible if we try	100	50	50	18.5	17	13
Possible to some degree		25	30	30	24	27
Impossible		25	10	33	24	12
I don't know			10	18.5	34	48
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Q8. If you had to choose between "unification" and "peace" for the peninsula, what would you choose?

Result	Colonial	Veteran	Democracy	Boomer	Silent	Network
Peace		25	40	30	32	25
Unification	100	50	30	33	13	12
I don't know		25	30	37	55	63
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Notes

- 1. Our Wish is for Unification is, in fact, the title of one of the most famous songs that is widely sung in both South and North Korea. It was composed in 1947 when the division of Korean Peninsula began to consolidate. During the closing ceremony of the June 2000 Summit Meeting, participants both from the North and the South (including two leaders) sang this song together.
- 2. Roy Richard Grinder, *Korea and its futures: Unification and the unfinished war.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998, p20.
- 3. Dae-Sook Suh, "The political Feasibility Approach to Korea Reunification," Hass Michael eds, *Korean Reunification: Alternative Pathways* (New York: Praeger, 1989), p120.
- 4. Ibid.
- 5. It is very important to know public trends, especially trends among younger generations to formulate future policy regarding unification. As Sohail Inayatullah notes, however, many future related "papers in South Korea in general focus on economic trends, pointing to growth in its economy, its rise from underdeveloped nation to industrialized nation, all in one generation, with Japan's present as South Korea's likely future." Inayatullah Sohail, "Alternative Futures of Korea: Beyond the Litany," Speech Prepared for the Conference on Understanding Korea society and Culture: Korea Studies Center, University of Auckland, November 18-19, 1997.
- 6. Jinwook Choi and Sun-Song Park, *Making of a unified Korea: policies, positions and proposals.* Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 1997, p1.
- Sohail Inayatullah, "Alternative Futures of Korea: Beyond the Litany," Speech Prepared for the Conference: Understanding Korean society and Culture, Korea Studies Center, University of Auckland, November 18-19, 1997.
- 8. This implies the reality of divided Peninsula on the subject of the brutality of war, sustained confrontation and bitterness faced by a divided Korea.
- 9. Graham T. T. Molitor, "How to Anticipate Public Policy Change," S.A.M. Advanced Management Journal (Summer 1977): 6.
- 10. See Table 2.
- 11. The origins of the Korean War vary depending on perspective. Aside from ideology and among many others things, the Korean War was clearly a "war of unification."

- 12. Seoul and Pyongyang announced the historic South-North Joint Communique, in which the two sides vowed to cease slander and defamation of each other and to promote exchanges. They also agree to create a South-North Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and to open a direct Seoul-Pyongyang telephone line.
- 13. Roy Richard Grinder, Korea and its Futures: Unification and the Unfinished War. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998, Preface pXI.
- 14. Hakjoon Kim, "Korean Reunification: A Seoul Perspective," Yun Kim and Eui Hang Shin eds., *Toward A Unified Korea*, 1995, p202.
- 15. Ibid.
- 16. For entire speech, see "Remarks by President Kim Dae Jung on Returning Home from the Inter-Korean Summit in Pyongyang," http://www.korea.net/issue/sn/snsummit/snsummit_01-32.html
- 17. Eung-kyuk Park, "EU as Korean Unification Model," http://www.korea.net/issue/sn/snsummit_01-56.html.>
- 18. Ibid.
- 19. David I. Steinberg, "Euphoria After the Summit," http://www.korea.net/issue/sn/snsummit_01-59.html.>
- 20. The National Security Law was legislated fifty-one years ago in 1948. After getting out of the colonial rule by the Japanese imperialism, separate governments were set up in the south and north of the Korean peninsula in 1948. Although the government of the Republic of Korea in the south made the leftist movement illegal, there existed substantially strong underground leftist forces and there had been large-scale involvement of the left wing in uprisings of great scale nationwide. While the National Security Law was promulgated with a view to regulate the activities of these leftist forces, it was bound to assume the character of violating the freedoms of thought, expression, assembly, association and peaceful demonstrations of all nationals as well as the leftist forces from the beginning. Source:http://myhome.netsgo.com/jinyong007/nslen.htm.
- 21. Under the authoritarian regime, "it was impossible for anyone to express interest in the unification issue without assuming enormous risk." In fact, "Cho Bong Am's peaceful unification theory resulted in his execution." Also "in the criminal case against Kim Dae Jung, his "three-stage unification theory" was cited as one reason why he received a death sentence in 1980." Similarly, "Kim Young Sam, chairman of the leading opposition party, the New Democratic Party, was denounced as a communist sympathizer for his 1979 statement that "as the head of the opposition party, for unification." See Jinwook Choi and Sun-Song Park, Making of a unified Korea: policies, positions and proposals. Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 1997, 123-124.
- 22. For more reference, see Chi, Man-won, T'ongil ui chirumkil un yonggu pundan ida (Continuation of division as a shortcut to unification), Soul-si: Chajak Namu, 1996.

- 23. See Roy Richard Grinder, *Korea and its futures: Unification and the unfinished war.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998, p21-22.
- 24. See Table 6.
- 25. See Table 3.
- 26. For more detail, see James Dator, Age Cohort Analysis, http://www.Hawaii.edu/polsc171/
- 27. Ibid.
- 28. The technology-based terms "386-generation tagged upon those currently in their 30s, who entered college in the 1980s and were born in the 1960s-seems to be playing an ever-increasing role in Korean politics.
- 29. See Table 6 for detail.
- 30. A massive student demonstration which eventually caused Rhee Sungman to step down from the presidency in 1960.
- 31. A military coup led by Major General Park Chung Hee in May 15, 1961, who later became president.
- 32. This term is not of my original creation, but often being used in the Korean mass media.
- 33. See Table 4, Korea National Statistic Office. http://www.nso.go.kr/graph/k-graph.htm.
- 34. See Table 3, 4 & 6.
- 35. According to Amae, "preferred futures are different from "possible" and "probable" future, and they are what you want, not what you think might happen." Dator also asserts that all futures are personal. See Yoshi Amae, "Bridging the Gap from the Future: In search of a Solution to the Taiwan-PRC Rivalry," *Journal of Futures Studies*, August 2001, 6(1): 10. See also James Dator, "The Future Lies Behind! Thirty Years of Teaching Future Studies." *American Behavioral Scientist* 42(3): 304.
- 36. Jonathan D. Pollack and Chung Min Lee, *Preparing for Korean Unification: Scenarios & Implication*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1999, p59.
- 37. Ibid. p49.
- 38. Roy Richard Grinder, Korea and its Futures: Unification and the Unfinished War. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998, p23.
- 39. Ibid., pXIV.
- 40. Man-won Chi, *T'ongil ui chirumkil un yonggu pundan* ida (Continuation of division as a shortcut to unification), Soul-si: Chajak Namu, 1996.
- 41. According to Amae, "preferred futures are different from "possible" and "probable" future, and they are what you want, not what you think might happen." Dator also asserts that all futures are personal. See Yoshi Amae, "Bridging the Gap from the Future: In search of a Solution to the Taiwan-PRC Rivalry," *Journal of Futures Studies*, August 2001, 6(1): 10. See also James Dator, "The Futures Lies Behind! Thirty Years of Teaching Future Studies." *American Behavioral Scientist* 42(3): 304.
- 42. In fact, "Kim Dae Jung's unification formula can find similarities with the

- European Union (EU), which seeks common interests in the form of joint economic community, while maintaining independent lines in foreign and defense affairs."
- 43. See Man-won Chi, *T'ongil ui chirumkil un yonggu pundan* ida (Continuation of division as a shortcut to unification), Soul-si: Chajak Namu, 1996, p39.
- 44. Jonathan D. Pollack and Chung Min Lee, *Preparing for Korean Unification:* Scenarios & Implications. Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1999, p57.
- 45. Man-won Chi, T'ongil ui chirumkil un yonggu pundan ida (Continuation of division as a shortcut to unification), Soul-si: Chajak Namu, 1996, p295-96.
- 46. Step 3 refers to Oran Young's series of unilateral step for Korean reunification. See Oran R.Young, "The Negotiation Approach to Korean Unification," Hass Michael eds, *Korean Reunification: Alternative Pathways* (New York: Praeger, 1989), p110.
- 47. Man won Chi also suggests 38th parallel as the border in his book *T'ongil ui chirumkil un yonggu pundan* ida (Continuation of division as a shortcut to unification), Soul-si: Chajak.

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