

FRS - KF KOREA PROGRAM ON SECURITY AND DIPLOMACY

“South Korea wants to play as initiator, mediator, and facilitator for establishing peace on the peninsula”

A conversation with Kim Ki-Jung, January 2019



Professor Kim Ki-Jung was one of the leading architects of President Moon Jae-in's foreign policy program and is often referenced as the President's advisor on foreign affairs. Former Dean of the School of Public Administration at Yonsei University (2014-2017), he advised to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, and the National Security Council under the administration of President Roh Moon-hyun (2004-2008). He was appointed as President Moon's Second Deputy Director of the National Security Office in 2017.

Q1: In his unprecedented address at May Day Stadium in Pyongyang last September, President Moon announced that the two Koreas “are now forging a new era of peace”. “Peace first” seems to be the motto of the current administration. Could you please further elaborate on President Moon's strategy in the Korean peninsula?

The Korean War (1950-53) was a truly tragic incident for Koreans. It resulted in 3.8 million casualties, including civilians as well as soldiers of both Koreas and UN troops. Many families were separated at the North-South border. Any war, no matter how it is justified, is devastating. And yet, the war has not ended for the two Koreas: by failing to find a peaceful solution, the legacy of the Korean War is palpable to this day. The Korean Armistice Agreement signed in 1953 still dictates the peninsula, and without a peace treaty, the last 65 years have been on shaky ground. People in both North and South Korea have constantly lived with, and faced the threat of war. Without any substantial attempts to halt or reduce this threat, they have lived in a perpetual state of fear for the last 65 years. This has resulted in a sense of normalization of the war and routinization of crisis.

During the 65 years under the armistice framework, military confrontation between North and South Korea has intensified for reasons attributable to intra-national and international conflicts. In the intra-national dimension, most of the regimes on both sides have needed each other as an enemy. Except for a

short period of pursuing reconciliation and cooperation, leadership in North and South Korea maintained the stubborn stance of antagonistic interdependence. A cause of more concern, however, has come from the international dimension. Surrounding powers did not show sincere intentions to solve the division and crisis on the Korean peninsula. This Cold War structure of Northeast Asia can be traced back to the Korean War, and has been prolonged because surrounding powers have tried to take advantage of the peninsula's division and hostility. During this time, war and crisis became a part of daily life for Koreans. Against this historical backdrop,

President Moon Jae-in envisaged solving the fundamental problem of war. The president himself is the son of a Korean War refugee, and he wants to reduce the possibility of an outbreak of war on the Korean Peninsula. In order to achieve this goal, he aims to construct a new road to peace, which precedes all other priorities. To start with, he hopes to reduce military tensions and set up a new way of peaceful coexistence on the Korean peninsula, prompting more economic exchange and development. Even with regard to the future of the Northeast Asian regional order, he strongly believes that peace and prosperity in the region cannot be achieved without peace on the Korean Peninsula. As a political leader, President Moon sees this matter as his responsibility.

Q2: Over the last few months, President Moon, Secretary General Xi Jinping, President Trump, and even Cuban President Diaz-Canel all met with Chairman Kim Jong-un. Why would “summit diplomacy”, and more broadly a top-down approach, be more effective than the previous approaches?

In 2018, we witnessed a dramatic shift on the Korean peninsula. It is indeed a surprising change of events if one appreciates the fact that a state of crisis had dominated the region, dating back to North Korea's initial attempt to develop nuclear weapons in the early 1990s; in fact, it reached the brink of war in 2017. Implementation of the so-called ‘bloody-nose strategy’ of the US would have provoked actual warfare. But the tide turned with the 2018 Pyongchang Winter Olympic games, followed by visits by diplomatic envoys and a series of summit meetings. President Moon's repeated calls to restore peace on the Korean Peninsula and his sincerity in those messages delivered in 2017 seemed to have an effect on the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. On April 27, 2018, President Moon Jae-in and Chairman Kim Jong-un met at Panmunjom. The political resolve of these leaders made the Singapore Summit between the US and the DPRK possible for the first time in history. Intra-national affairs had a profound impact on international relations. The shift in 2018 was indeed a beacon of light for Koreans, but merely the beginning and prelude for further change. Today, many people in South Korea are able to imagine a change in the deep-rooted Cold War paradigm.

Various iterations of summit meetings have been working to discuss not only the future of the Korean peninsula, but that of Northeast Asia. Moreover, the politics of summity remind us of the importance of prudent leadership in international politics. We should acknowledge that international politics are not merely operated by power aspirations and sovereign interests. As observed in the history of the world, a political leader's vision, intention, and determination often worked as agents of change to steer a nation's course. It is important to remember that the vision and will of political leaders in Europe were significant factors to determine and drive cooperation, community-building and integration since 1945.

The politics of summit diplomacy, or the so-called top-down approach represents a political process in which a big picture is discussed and a big decision is agreed upon. The leaders' accord sometimes dictates the bigger framework to move history into the future. Meanwhile, a bottom-up approach describes a

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concrete negotiation process, detailing out and confirming the decisions of leaders. An unwanted side-effect of the bottom-up approach will sometimes surface in the form of a deadlock, as negotiating tactics can be employed by bureaucrats. The inertia that arises from long-sustained negotiations often generates deadlocks. For instance, in the case of bilateral negotiations between North Korea and the US, the key issues of the deadlock stem from a disagreement on the actual process: the US demands North Korea to take more initiative in proving their willingness to denuclearize, while North Korea wants to see stronger reassurances from the

US (i.e. an ‘end-of-war’ declaration) over the security of their regime. It boils down to preference for one-shot deals versus a more gradual, phased approach towards denuclearization. What's more, the complicated negotiation processes of bureaucrats are compounded by influences and demands from both inside and outside the government. Granted, there may be groups of people who wish to prolong the divided status and antagonism on the Korean peninsula, as doing so props up their own national interests. Therefore, when a bottom-up approach results in a deadlock, it becomes necessary for leaders to reaffirm the direction of course they agreed on.

It looks as though the current situation on the peninsula is a result of a combination of the two approaches. The core purpose of summity politics is for leaders to agree on a common goal for the future, which should also be shared with the people in their respective countries.

Q3: You used to present North Korea as a “stalker”, could you elaborate? A key analysis in Europe is that North Korean leaders repeatedly deceived the international community. What makes Kim Jong-un different from Kim Jong-il, and why should we trust him more than his father?

When the Cold War began to collapse in Europe, North Korea, whose economy and politics were closely connected with the former Socialist states in the Soviet bloc, must have sensed a threat to the survival of its regime. Survival as a state became imperative. For North Korea, hostility and pressures from the US have served as major threats. In the early 1990s, South Korea normalized diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and China (PRC) as an outcome of the Northern policy under the Roh Tae-woo administration. North Korea, however, was not able to follow the same path as the South: they could not reach diplomatic normalization with the US and Japan. ‘Cross-recognition’, which Henry Kissinger once suggested as

a diplomatic solution to the Cold War entanglement in Northeast Asia, remained unfulfilled. In the beginning of the post-Cold War, North Korea wanted to normalize its relations with the US in order to secure its survival via recognition, but its aspirations were not matched by the US. North Korea decided to get attention from the US by challenging the non-proliferation order and provoking what it saw to be the US's Achilles heel. North Korea's nuclear program originated from that context, and thus their 'stalking behaviors' began to appear.

The Geneva Agreed Framework in 1994 revealed that North Korea and the US decided to exchange vital interests with each other: namely, assurance of regime security for North Korea and maintaining the non-proliferation international order for the US. Kim Jong-il was also willing to abandon his nuclear program if the sovereignty of his regime was guaranteed. Their nuclear program was believed to work as the most effective bargaining chip against the US. Since then, North Korea and US relations have fluctuated with negotiations and confrontations, often crossing the boundaries of the Geneva Agreed Framework. Prior to negotiations with the US, North Korea frequently displayed preemptive aggression towards the US, which resulted in the buildup of mutual distrust. The public perception of North Korea as a demonized actor has been created and reinforced throughout such political games.

Kim Jong-un assumed the leader's position at a young age. The legacy inherited from his father was the so-called *Byungjin* strategy: simultaneous pursuit of nuclear and economic development. For Kim Jong-un, however, it was an unpleasant inheritance. Granted, he soon found out that any prospects for economic development would be blocked because of increasing sanctions. In this sense, it is highly possible that he decided to accelerate the pace of nuclear and missile development, at a rate so fast it surprised and surpassed expectations of outsiders. In November 2017, he declared that North Korea's nuclear capabilities were completed, although a couple of tests remained undone. The declaration had two-fold implications. Firstly, Kim Jong-un showed his willingness to change course and concentrate on the economy for his people. Secondly, this was North Korea signaling the US they were ready to talk. Kim Jong-un probably assumed that North Korea having nuclear capabilities and ICBMs that were able to reach US territory finally caught the attention of Washington. North Korea seemed to

believe they were now qualified to discuss a big deal for the sake of regime survival. By declaring an exit from the *Byungjin* strategy, Kim Jong-un also wanted to show his commitment to economic development. North Korea is a state with centralized control, but it does not necessarily mean public opinion or social mood does not matter.

There may be two disparate schools of thought in North Korea regarding nuclear weapons and economic development: one believes that without nuclear weapons, the state's survival cannot be secured, while the other believes economic development can only be attained by giving up nuclear weapons. Kim Jong-un is assumed to be playing a fraught political game between the two groups inside North Korea. We have witnessed his intentions to establish economic development as a top priority, and he has made this commitment known to his people, revealing his sincerity and sense of desperation.

Q4: President Moon's committed to "resolve internal disagreements regarding unification" and "create a national consensus". Yet, popular support seems to be fading over the last few weeks. How can the administration maintain an indispensable level of support to further implement its strategy? What are the main cleavages regarding the current inter-Korean policy?

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It is true that the domestic support for President Moon has recently declined in South Korea, compared to that of the first one and a half years after the beginning of his term. However, the decline is not directly related to people's dissatisfaction with inter-Korean relations. The main reason stems from disappointment in economic policies. It is worth noting South Koreans have become accustomed to rapid economic growth since the successful industrialization of their own country. However, like many countries, the South Korean economy is transitioning into one with a slower growth rate. A transition period is often accompanied with the pain of reluctantly accepting a new reality. This economic and political backdrop is further complicated by South Korea having yet to achieve the distinction of a welfare state. But it is a remarkable feat for the leader of any democratic country to sustain approval ratings of 60% or higher post inauguration. The majority of South Koreans still seem to have high expectations for the president.

In fact, many people, including even some conservatives, are welcoming the dramatic and historic events that have relieved military tensions in the DMZ area. It is no question that President Moon hopes his vision of Korea's future is widely shared by Koreans. For him, shaping social consensus is the foundation for pursuing this unprecedented policy. The formulation of an all-inclusive opinion, however, will be impossible. In South Korea, the ideological line that divides conservatives and progressives is usually drawn at the North Korean issue. It has been 70 years since the confrontation and division occurred. Unfortunately, South Koreans still harbors a sense of animosity and distrust towards North Korea, and efforts for reconciliation have seen little to no success. Some extreme conservatives will dismiss the relief in military tensions as a critical blunder, leading to the reduction of South Korea's security capabilities. Though understandable, it reflects the enduring rigid perspective that the way to security and peace can only be delineated by military security. Political persuasion of such critics will be a very important task for the president and his administration, in order to realize his vision for the Korean peninsula. At the same time, a political and social dialogue of reconciliation must be pursued.

Q5: During your latest visit to Paris, you mentioned the trichotomy between state-centric, nation-centric and market-centric approaches. Could you please explain it to us? Could economic integration via the creation of a single market on the Korean Peninsula become the main driver for South Korean public support to inter-Korean rapprochement?

The formation of a nation-state on the Korean peninsula remains incomplete. One nation has been divided into two states: the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). Consequently, two perspectives have existed in South Korea since 1948, namely the state-centric and the nation-centric perspectives. Each perspective represents a distinct view and ideological orientation toward North Korea and inter-Korean relations. The state-centric perspective stresses the significance of the survival of South Korea as an independent state. This perspective argues that the North continues to pose the greatest threat to South Korea's security, which should be prevented by any means possible. The nation-centric perspective asserts that inter-Korean relations are not ordinary inter-state relations but should be regarded as internal problems

of Koreans or intra-national relations. The Basic Agreement of 1992 partly reflected this nation-centric perspective, stating that inter-Korean relations should be regarded as special interim relations on the way to achieving unification. This perspective emphasizes that providing humanitarian aid to North Koreans is necessary.

The Moon Jae-in administration recognizes that neither the militant, antagonistic, state-centric approach nor the conciliatory, nation-centric approach has achieved desired effects. In fact, the two perspectives have become a source of societal conflict and ideological polarization in South Korean society. In order to overcome the painful and unpleasant dichotomy of the over-politicized state-centric and nation-centric perspectives, the Moon administration has proposed a third way of dealing with inter-Korean relations, namely a "market-centric perspective". This paradigm escapes the political axis of state- and nation-centered perspectives entirely and instead regards North Korea as a market. This "One-Market Korea" strategy aspires to induce the economic interdependence of North Korea with the South and with international society. The market-centric perspective is based on a "win-win" logic for both Koreas and the hope that market interests can overpower security concerns not only on the Korean peninsula but also in Northeast Asia.

Above all, if the two Koreas share interests in one-market and if North Korea is further integrated into a market economy system, security sensitivity and hostility could be reduced. President Moon explained this idea to Chairman Kim Jong-un who reportedly showed great interest and strong intentions to see it through. The 'One-Market Korea' strategy will present new economic opportunities for the South Korean economy as well, helping it overcome its economic difficulties in recent years. If we see a situation where such hope can be realized, public support for President Moon would be strengthened as well.

Q6: The current administration intends to play a "driving role" in terms of not only inter-Korean relations but also international negotiations regarding the ongoing nuclear crisis. How can the South Korean administration contribute to solving the nuclear issue when the North Korean has historically refused to address this issue on the bilateral level?

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North Korea's nuclear issue is not a problem merely between North Korea and the US, although the two countries are the two key actors at the negotiating table. It is an issue of inter-Korean relations and regional politics in Northeast Asia. At the same time, it is also a global issue. European countries have a vested interest in this issue, because successful preservation of nuclear non-proliferation is an important matter of global politics. In addition, the dismantlement of the Cold War and making a peaceful regime on the Korean peninsula will have a historical significance in the history of world politics. As the Cold War began to disintegrate in Europe in the late 1980s, the final stages of it prevailed in the Korean Peninsula. Eliminating the last remnants of its legacy will allow us to close the chapter on the history of the Cold War once and for all.

President Moon Jae-in declared that South Korea should play a role of 'driver' for the process of finding a workable solution. The driver's role implies that South Korea wants to play as initiator, mediator, and facilitator for establishing peace on the Korean peninsula. The claim partly reflects Korea's long-endured agonies that the political decisions from foreign powers have determined the fate of Korea and Koreans. And the road toward a new future should be designed, if not decisively driven, by Koreans themselves. Hopefully, the alacrity of Koreans will encourage the support of major powers. In a similar vein, South Korea has demonstrated its role as initiator. It is an undeniable truth that mutual distrust has prevailed in the continuous bilateral talks between North Korea and the US during the last 25 years. It was South Korea, through envoy diplomacy, that made the two unfriendly countries sit at the negotiation table despite mutual distrust between the two. The Singapore summit in June was possible mainly due to the success of the inter-Korean summit at Panmunjom in April 2018, reinforcing South Korea's role as mediator.

The Moon administration is also seeking to maintain the momentum to facilitate bilateral negotiations and peacemaking between North Korea and the US. President Moon has nurtured and intends continue to cultivate harmonious relationships among three actors: the US and two Koreas. For South Korea, improving inter-Korean relations is expected to contribute to facilitating bilateral relations between North Korea and the US. In the past, strained dialogue and exchange between the two Koreas only intensified distrust in the bilateral dialogue between North Korea and the US, as seen in the exertion of 'strategic

patience' under the Obama administration. A widespread sense of distrust and confrontation carried over from the past would only exacerbate the situation, making it all the more difficult to solve the North Korean nuclear issue. The bottom-line is finding a solution through dialogue, not through coercion, tension, confrontation, and ultimate collapse. If Pyongyang is walking on the desirable path of easing tensions and initiating economic development, acceleration of the denuclearization process is also plausible. This is what the Moon administration is anticipating. In order to achieve this goal, applying 'strategic generosity' should be considered by relevant countries. The road toward denuclearization is a complex and difficult process. It can never be achieved by South Korea's solitary efforts and exclusive vision. Many have stressed that employing a strategy of pressuring North Korea would succeed only through international collaboration. In the same vein, confirming North Korea's path toward denuclearization is only possible if the international community shares the values of strategic generosity.

Q7: The United States indeed play a central role in the Korean Peninsula. How would you analyze the impact of the shift from President Obama's "strategic patience" to President Trump's "strategy of maximum pressure"? Is President Trump's unpredictability a threat or an opportunity to the current dynamics?

The 'strategic patience' of the Obama administration failed. While they intentionally avoided dialogue and negotiations, North Korea's nuclear capabilities drastically improved. Despite the expression 'strategic patience,' patience was never combined with any kind of strategy. It was no more than an inactive posture. President Trump tried to alter the course, and thus the strategy of 'maximum pressure and engagement' was adopted. In the first two years under the Trump administration, US policy concerning North Korea relied only on maximizing pressure, which showed no visible differences from the Obama period. The strategy of maximizing pressure should be deliberately combined with engagement, overcoming inertia carried over from the past.

Diplomatically so far, the Moon Jae-in administration has followed the same path of 'maximum pressure and engagement.' South Korea is not in a position to modify sanctions on its own. However, there should be a strategy behind the timing and method on how to engage with North Korea while complying with sanction regulations. After all, the purpose of an engagement

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strategy is to induce North Korea into compliance and commitment to international standards. If North Korea can be prompted to accelerate the final stages of denuclearization through sanctions and engagement, there is no reason not to consider a strategic combination of the two. Relevant powers including European countries hopefully share this idea. Theoretically and practically, sanctions alone cannot guarantee desirable results. The goal is to cultivate conditions that make the process of 'peace through denuclearization' workable.

President Trump's unpredictability is a big concern for people in the rest of the world. Fortunately, unlike traditional leaders in American politics, he seems to be unfettered from domestic socio-economic influences, particularly from that of the military-industrial complex. He is seen to have strong political desires to prove himself as a skilled problem-solver, surpassing previous political leaders. In this sense, it is noteworthy that he showed strong intentions to solve the long-standing North Korean problem at the Singapore summit meeting. President Trump has proven to be a more decisive key player than his bureaucrat staff members where the Korean peninsula issue is concerned. Just as Ronald Reagan ended the first phase of the Cold War, President Trump may seek to end the last phase of the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula. As long as he does not deviate from such political aspirations, the two Koreas will continue to have opportunities for engagement in the future.

Q8: There seems to be a growing disconnect between a dynamic inter-Korea rapprochement and stalled denuclearization talks. The first one requires some sanctions lifting to keep going while the second necessitates strict implementation of current sanctions. Despite claims in both Washington and Seoul about "further strengthening their close coordination", is not there a risk of decoupling between the United States and South Korea's priorities, and a growing disagreement on sanctions?

If decoupling is a top priority for Kim Jong-un, it will end in vain. Kim Jong-un knows that the ROK-US alliance has worked solidly for a long time, and that both sides need each other as allies for the near future. China, too, should be aware of the fact.

It is known that Washington worried about the seemingly rapid pace of progress in inter-Korean relations, especially when compared to bilateral

dialogues between North Korea and the US. Seoul and Washington recently agreed to form a vision group for coordination vis-à-vis North Korea, which makes sense for the allies. Yet because of its inherent reservations, if Washington assumes South Korea intends to ruin the sanctions regime, it would be a misunderstanding. As

allies, the two governments can discuss coordinating strategies regarding North Korea. But, if Washington harbors suspicions that President Moon wants to develop inter-Korean relations because he is pro-North Korean leader, it will strain the process of policy coordination. As mentioned, the top priority of President Moon is making the peace process work on the peninsula by reducing military tension. By that same token, denuclearization and peace are

inseparable goals, and President Moon is continuously persuading North Korea and other relevant parties to push towards them. If the US demanded South Korea revert to old patterns of Cold War confrontation, it would be unmanageable for the Moon administration.

Allies share many security interests with each other. But not every aspect of them is identical. Seoul and Washington should continue to coordinate policies regarding North Korea. The Moon administration has assumed that cultivating harmonious relationships will enhance the likelihood of establishing a peaceful regime on the peninsula, after restoring and developing inter-Korean relations. The US, as a global power, is facing many issues around the world, and diversified concerns are unavoidable. As far as the Korean peninsula issue is concerned, Washington will benefit from taking suggestions from Seoul into account. This is precisely what allies are for. Of course, sanctions should be kept in place until North Korea shows indications of real change. The key lies in judging and responding to this critical juncture. The continuation of sanctions without appropriate strategies sounds illogical at this moment. Therefore, continuing to maximize pressure through sanctions alone will never be a wise strategy. Strategically designed engagement and its implementation would be a proper incentive as well as an undeniable excuse for North Korea to accelerate the final stages of denuclearization. For North Korea, strategic engagement enhances confidence and predictability in assuring regime security.

Q9: The establishment of Permanent Peace is one of President Moon's main objectives. What would be the role of external actors, including the United States, China and Japan? 65 years after the Panmunjom armistice, do you think the current

South Korean administration could reach some irreversible steps towards that peace mechanism?

The division has lasted a long time. But it is not a fixed, unchangeable reality. It is important to assume and believe that that reality is fluid. And it should change. Yes, the establishment of a permanent peaceful regime on the Korean peninsula is the main goal for the Moon administration. This must be achieved. It is not impossible, and there is a will and hope to make it a reality. Now, the two Koreas have chosen 'a road less travelled by,' while the last 70-years of history have forced a 'status quo' of military confrontation. The new road ahead of us is full of hope but also riddled with anxiety. However, taking the first step, followed by the next, makes progress plausible and achievable. The political determination of the two Koreas alone, however, is not sufficient. It is worth noting that the German unification was possible because the determination of both German sides was combined with the cooperation and agreement of other powers, such as France, the US, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom. The balancing of intra-national and international elements can become a prerequisite for reunification.

The Korean Peninsula has served as a litmus test for shaping regional politics of Northeast Asia. It is due to the geo-strategic importance of the position of the peninsula. The war and confrontation on the peninsula became a ground for a broader regional conflict in Northeast Asia. In this vein, peace in the Northeast Asia would be unthinkable without peace on the Korean peninsula. Provided that peaceful order in Northeast Asia is a shared aspiration, neighboring countries have a joint responsibility for establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula. The two leaders in both Koreas agreed on a fundamental transformation of the Cold War structure on the peninsula by reducing military tensions and any possibility of accidental collision. Soldiers on both sides constructed 11 pathways to connect the Gourd Posts (GPs) on each side of the DMZ, where the tension could once be cut with a knife. In actuality, these protocols should have been carried out 65 years ago. Considering the fact that the Korean peninsula is located in a strategically sensitive area for neighboring countries, such historic and dramatic protocols should be endorsed internationally to facilitate the establishment of a peaceful regime. The roles of the US and China, two directly concerned parties in the Korean War, are particularly significant. Provided these two countries participate as signing members in a peace treaty, a four-party peace treaty will be reached. If necessary,

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bilateral agreements like the DPRK-US agreement, can also be considered in tandem with a multilateral peace treaty. Japan, though not a participant of the peace treaty, will have to deal with North Korea for diplomatic normalization. Then, a peaceful regime on the Korean peninsula will become more tangible, working as the cornerstone of a peaceful order in Northeast Asia. Needless to say, this is predicated on a political agreement that the two Koreas are to co-exist in peace.

Q10: On one side, Korean nationalism is well alive. On the other side, two distinct identities seem to emerge in the North and in the South. In that context, what is your thought on the reunification policy of the President Moon? Do you still believe a de jure unification is reachable in the long term?

President Moon Jae-in addressed the North Korean people at May Day Stadium, on Sep. 19, 2018. In the historic speech, he said, 'We lived together for five thousand years, but apart for just seventy.' This statement clearly shows the president's view on the history of a nation that was united for much longer than it was divided. One cannot deny that during this period of division, different political identities were formed. Koreans, however, have used the same language and shared a culture for a long time. Now, the two Koreas have begun to move beyond military confrontation. It is just a start, but we need many more years to achieve unification. Following the military confidence-building measures, other efforts in the socio-cultural dimension will appear as important political projects for both Koreas. A good example is family reunion events. Or forming a single sports team that represents Korea as a unit. If the international community decides on partial sanction reliefs on North Korea, confidence-building measures in the economic sector will follow and be expanded. Then, mutual exchange of other resources and people will naturally become more common. The restoration of a divided nation will gradually take place through such processes, and ideological differences will eventually recede from view.

With regard to unification, President Moon pursues a strategy of *de facto* unification at present. This means that the two Koreas are divided politically but integrated economically in a market. Advocating 'unification by absorption' of North Korea is no longer realistically valid. If the two Koreas suddenly become unified with widened gaps in economic capabilities, the situation will incur great economic costs for South Korea. Instead, an incremental approach toward unification through the *de facto* unification strategy will

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be more effective and less costly. In the long run, political leaders of the next generation will be able to determine *de jure* unification to complete the process. It will take time, but it is not impossible.

Q11: The European Union and France are geographically distant partners, yet with direct interests in the Korean peninsula, including a top priority for non-proliferation. The Korean issue is then considered as neither a local issue nor a regional one, but as a global one. In that context, what can be the role of Brussels and Paris, and how to address their concerns?

As mentioned, issues surrounding the Korean peninsula are not regional. Ending the Cold War-like state of the Korean Peninsula has a global significance. It will mark the final chapter of a long history of confrontation and animosity. Koreans are trying to start a new chapter of history. Starting from the Korean Peninsula, we hope to pave a new road toward a peaceful future. This is a road that European countries have pursued since the end of World War II. It is the path toward co-existence, cooperation, and community-building. Having been survivors of unimaginable tragedy in modern Northeast Asian history, Koreans desire to send out a message of new hope to the world. Though located in the corner of the world, the beginning of peace on the Korean Peninsula is the beginning of global peace. Peace is a precious universal value that we want to champion.

Our efforts desperately need robust support from the European people. If North Korea is to be isolated in an antagonistic way, South Korea will also be adversely affected due to its geographic location. We want to start our work for establishing peace by connecting the two Koreas. Today, the people of South Korea have begun to imagine a railroad running through the Korean Peninsula. The prospect of traveling from Seoul and Pusan to Europe by train has become more real than ever. It is our hope that not only will we be connected by railroads, but also by the spirit of peace and community.

***This interview was conducted in December 2018
by Antoine Bondaz, Ph.D.***

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