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The Korean Peninsula Shall Seek Unification

After World War II, the Korean Peninsula was in chaos trying to format social order. South Korea endorsed democracy with capitalism, whereas North Korea advocated socialism with communism. The Korean Peninsula was politically polarized. Democratic countries such as the United States, and Socialist powers such as the Soviet Union and China focused with high interest on this circumstance of the Korean Peninsula. With each side encouraged by foreign supports to become a nation that is maintained by their own social order, South Korea and North Korea started their fatal internal war, each country trying to eliminate the other. The Korean War not only destroyed the Korean Peninsula physically, but also segregated the Korean Peninsula economically, politically, and culturally. It is a tragedy that people who have shared the same language, history, and customs have been divided because of social order. It is time for the Korean Peninsula to seek unification to recover these economic, political, and cultural gaps.

It is known that the young generation in South Korea is no longer passionate about unification. A recent article by BBC News, *Why is south Korea Plugging Unification*, “There's declining public support for unification overall, and the weakest level of support is amongst the younger generation” (Williamson). The younger generation is not hopeful about unification with South Korea. It is true that unification seems unfeasible and nonsense in terms of differentiated economic, political, and cultural factors between South Korea and North Korea. The economic gap between South and North Korea has been polarized and unification economically requires an unimaginable amount of expenses. South and North Korean politics

are extremely contrasting and have already experienced physical confrontations. Furthermore, because both nations have been lacking in cultural homogeneity, South and North Korea seem like two different countries.

Nevertheless, unification of the Korean Peninsula must be accomplished since it has the appropriate economic, political, and cultural bases and methods, and would benefit the Korean Peninsula. Economically, it is true that the systems of South and North Korea are incompatible with each other. According to Statistics Times, South Korea's GDP is ranked 12th in the world, whereas there is no information about North Korea's GDP. North Korea has not established main industries that they can utilize to spur their economy because expenses from their annual budget are constantly being used in militarizing the nation. Meanwhile, South Korea has developed international corporations that produce phones, automobiles, vessels, household appliances, and semiconductors, however, despite South Korea's developments, they are still facing an ongoing recession. Based on these facts, it is likely for North Korean to remain an economic burden after unification.

Even so, the economy of the unified Korean Peninsula is relatively optimistic. It would be inevitable to avoid the temporary drop of the GDP, but it is expected that the GDP of the unified Korean Peninsula will increase more than the current GDP of South Korea. The unified Korean Peninsula will be essential to improve North Korean undeveloped infrastructures from the South Korean capital and North Korean cheap labor systems. It would be an opportunity to expand the size of the domestic market that South Korea has suffered from to further its economy. Korea Focus from Columbia University said, "Unified Korea's GDP in 2060 is projected to reach \$5.5 trillion to bring its global ranking to 10th place from 12th in 2013 ... Unified Korea's per capita GDP will also swell from \$29,000 in 2013 to \$79,000 in 2060, rising from 19th to 7th in the world" (Korea Focus 8). The GDP of the unified Korean Peninsula

would spike with the expansion of the domestic market and the distribution of the capital between the South and the North.

In addition, the unified Korean Peninsula would not only further the economy by developing infrastructures, but also establish strong main industries of the North. North Korea has an economic potentiality to grow more than South Korea. Unlike South Korea, it is known that North Korea is a nation with a tremendous amount of rare mineral resources. China imports mineral resources from North Korea and retains a strong role in the world's mineral supplies. Improving mining industries of the North would bring a big transition to the high reliance of mineral supplies on China. A research from the University of Southern Indiana said, "SRE Minerals announced North Korea may have two-thirds of the world's rare earth minerals in the quantity of 216 million tons ... Overall, up to 10 trillion dollars in USD worth of mineral resources could be buried in North Korean soil" (Choe and Mahoney 3). Rare mineral resources of the North would be enough to make profits that would be necessary to decrease the economic gap between the South and the North. Immense mining industries of the North and international corporations in the South will create a different economic position of the unified Korean Peninsula.

Even more, a unified Korean Peninsula will efficiently strengthen the international market. The geographical location of North Korea has closed South Korea's trade routes through the land with main trade partners such as China and the EU. China is South Korea's first largest export market and the EU is South Korea's third largest export market. Unification will make it possible to connect roads and railroads from the unified Korean Peninsula through China to Europe. It will connect all the Eurasian countries where South Korea's important trade partners are and decrease the cost of trade. A researcher from the University of Southern Indiana said, "In short, this (connections of railways) will provide a new opportunity for the Eurasian

economy to expand; the railway connections would impact more than 2.5 billion people, producing on-quarter of the world GNP” (Choe and Mahoney 4). Unification will benefit all nations in Eurasia economically. Therefore, the unified Korean Peninsula will be able to reinforce international trade partnerships.

Politically, it is obvious that South and North Korea have different social orders. South Korea sustains democracy with capitalism, whereas North Korea maintains socialism with communism. In fact, North Korea’s political system has been transformed to dictatorship by being consistently ruled by the Kim family. Therefore, South and North Korea have experienced ideological and political tensions even after the Korean war. Furthermore, the United Nations has issued separated UN memberships to South and North Korea in 1991, which means the world started to acknowledge the two countries as different political subjects. The Korean Peninsula is not only domestically but also internationally recognized as a politically divided and polarized place. Since the Korean Peninsula has been politically unstable, it is possible to be concerned about the ideological and political confrontations of unification.

Even though the ideological and political differences of the South and the North made both sides separate, the South Korean Constitution clarifies unification as a national goal. According to Chapter 1 of the South Korean Constitution, “The territory of the Republic of Korea shall consist of the Korean peninsula and its adjacent islands ... The Republic of Korea shall seek unification and shall formulate and carry out a policy of peaceful unification” (The Constitution of The Republic of Korea 2). South Korea does not only recognize its land and adjacent islands as its territory, but also recognizes the whole Korean Peninsula as its official territory, which incorporates the current territory of North Korea. In other words, South Korea does not define North Korea as a separate nation. Also, South Korea states peaceful unification

as one of their values on the constitution, and has organized a Ministry of Unification in the executive branch to pursue it. Based on these facts, any thoughts of renouncing or disrupting unification with North Korea are unconstitutional and against Korean values.

Additionally, the Korean Peninsula will not have any conflicts if it embraces another way of unification. The reason of conflict is because each side has tried to absorb the other. The South and the North have experienced many times the ineffectiveness of trying to unify according to their own social orders. However, establishing Korean confederation where two separate states co-exist under the name of one nation would prevent ideological and political conflicts. According to Asian Politics & Policy, “Confederal approaches to unification require serious negotiations between two regimes, as they would leave basic elements of the two regimes intact after unification” (Jung and Rector 490). Prudent and accurate negotiations about Korean confederation between the South and the North would be a key for political unification. Both sides must examine and discuss Korean confederation thoroughly.

In fact, there have been already several examinations and discussions between the South and the North. According to researchers from George Washington University, the Ministry of Unification in South Korea said, “For the achievement of reunification, we have agreed that there is a common element in the South's concept of a confederation and the North's formula for a loose form of federation ... The South and the North agreed to promote reunification in that direction (Ministry of Unification 2005, 143)” (Jung and Rector 19). It shows that both Koreas have already acknowledged a need for Korean confederation and have started to grant it partially. Processing and consulting this confederation would establish an ideologically and politically stable Korean Peninsula, which would result in the two states no longer having conflicts.

Culturally, it is known that the cultural homogeneity has lacked between South and North Korea. The most important factor that contributes to the building of cultural homogeneity is the same language. However, the languages of South and the North Korea have been differentiated. Decades of division between the South and the North have caused a severe transformation of the Korean language. South Koreans often use vocabulary from foreign languages as it is, whereas North Koreans refuse to take foreign words and speak in the traditional or pure Korean way. Also, the meaning of some words in the vocabulary between the South and the North have been changed. For example, *Crash Landing on You*, a South Korean drama on Netflix, the background of which is based in North Korea, provides a number of subtitles for South Korean audiences to understand. It demonstrates that the South and the North have a hard time understanding each other. The difficulty and discomfort of communication between South and North Koreans could lead to a lack of cultural homogeneity. It could possibly be a major cultural obstacle which hinders unification.

However, South Korea and North Korea are constantly trying to overcome their language differences. While South Korean elementary schools teach basic levels of North Korean vocabulary, linguists from the South and the North have created the Gyeo-Re-Mal Dictionary which provides definitions of words and dialects for the South and the North. It is known that three hundred thirty thousand words and dialects have been analyzed in the dictionary. The Harvard International Review said, “Korean linguists based in the South have attempted to catalogue the differences between the two strains of the Korean language ... For the past thirty years, they have compiled a dictionary in order to bridge the growing linguistic divide” (Hamad 24). South and North Korea have been preparing for potential language difficulties that unification may bring about. Language differences between the South and the North will be resolved immediately with this effort. An attempt and will to overcome a differentiated form of Korean would even rebuild the cultural homogeneity that encourages people to bond.

All things considered, unification of the Korean Peninsula has economic, political, and cultural concerns. However, unification contains proper bases and methods and would benefit the Korean peninsula economically, politically and culturally. Economically, the unified Korean Peninsula will not only expand the domestic market, but also strengthen the international market. These will lead to economic prosperity of the unified Korean Peninsula. Politically, the Korean confederation will establish an ideologically and politically stable unified Korean Peninsula, which will result in the two states preventing confrontations by co-existing. Culturally, the South and the North will reclaim the cultural homogeneity by collaborating with each other.

Being divided has cost South and North Korea a great deal. Since the Korean war, people from the South and the North have not been able to share language, history, and customs for seventy years, even though they had shared it for five thousand years. The South and the North unfortunately have been drafting college students and sending them to the border while forcing them to sacrifice their youth in danger. Separated families between the South and the North have not been able to see each other for decades. The Korean Peninsula shall seek unification to stop the unnecessary costs of separation and attain economic, political, and cultural advantages.

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