Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to think about the benefits and gains which unification will bring about in our reality as divided nations, understand the legitimacy for unification, and devised a strategy for preparing for unification. The purpose is to establish values and a desirable attitude towards the state while preparing for unification and analyzing the stature and future of the Republic of Korea.

Method: In order to come up with the legitimacy of unification, strategy, and what we need to do to prepare for unification, references such as books, academic journals, and dissertations related to unification were examined, and in order to derive empirical data for the stature of South Korea and the future, empirical studies were conducted for news and government data, etc.

Results: The strategy to prepare for unification is to induce North Korea not to make unreasonable demands by maintaining a strong security arrangement, such as by securing regular and irregular warfare capabilities, strengthening the ROK-U.S. alliance and joint operational capabilities, and adhering to firm principles rather than a principle of less appeasement policy not to mislead the public’s perception of North Korea. Unification requires an agreement between the two Koreas, yet what is clear is that unification must be liberal and democratic based on a market economy, and it is also necessary to reach a national consensus. Furthermore, while expanding the breadth of mutual understanding between the two Koreas, close friendly and cooperative relations with neighboring countries must also be maintained.

Conclusion: Most of the people have a negative perception towards unification, and the MZ generation even demonstrate a cynical attitude towards North Korea. However, unification must be achieved in order to pursue development and prosperity while continuing the historical legitimacy of our people, and for stability in Northeast Asia and the world peace. In the process of pursuing unification, it should serve as an opportunity to properly establish the ‘view of state’ as well as the ‘view of unification’ or ‘view of security’ which have not been fully established in the consciousness of the people.

Keywords: North-South Korean Unification, Legitimacy of Unification, Stature of South Korea, Security Arrangement, View of State

1. Introduction

Today, Korean society is experiencing extreme polarization in the era of COVID-19 and the 4th industrial revolution. Polarization is taking place across all areas, including values, regions, generations, and classes. Amidst such situation, most people forget what to expect from the state and what the state to be developed in the future should look like. People perceive that the benefits of the state are obtained almost automatically in their daily life, and hence, it is easy to be indifferent towards the desirable and correct appearance of the state. However, in terms of devotion and expectations for the country, the issue of “from what point of view should
we look at the country?’ is crucial. Various positions have been continuously discussed as to what the desirable appearance of the state should be in terms of the times.

A desirable view of the state is that it may be claimed that, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, a liberal view of state was agreed upon. The liberal view of the state places more importance on the guarantee of the private area independent of the state than the public area. The reason why the state exists is to guarantee individual freedom and rights. The Neutrality of the state power to guarantee freedom and rights is an important issue, yet in our reality, given the 68th year of the armistice, not the end of the armistice, we need to know that voluntary sacrifice and dedication are required for the development of the national community even when a liberal view of the state has been agreed upon.

Considering the stature and future of the Republic of Korea which we dream of, we need to consider our values and attitudes toward the state.

2. Legitimacy of Unification and the Key Implementation Strategy

2.1. Legitimacy of unification

Unification ought to be achieved in the interest of the development and prosperity of our nation while continuing the historical legitimacy of our people, which have formed a single nation state for thousands of years. Furthermore, for the stability of Northeast Asia and world peace, it must be viewed and promoted positively[1]. Unification will be an opportunity for us to take a new leap forward and grow further, and if the power of economic development and democracy we have achieved to date in the state of division plays a role as a medium, it will lay the foundation for peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula and shape the economy, society and culture[2].

However, most people do not have a positive perception of unification. According to the results of an online survey of 1,000 men and women conducted from June 8, 2021 until June 12, 2021 through Global Research by Kookmin Ilbo (June 25, 2021), the country that the MZ generation hates the most is China (57.7%), and Japan is second (31.2%) and third is North Korea (12.6%). Many responses demonstrated an exclusive attitude towards outsiders, including refugees and immigrants, and a cynical attitude towards North Korea[3].

Table 1. MZ generation’s thoughts towards North Korea.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey contents</th>
<th>Thoughts (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They are Korean compatriots.</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are a neighboring country.</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are a separate country having no relevance to us.</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They don't interest us.</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are enemy to us.</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, as to the question of 'What do you think of North Korea?,' as illustrated in Table 1, 31% of the respondents said that they are 'the same country as the South,' 14.9% said 'not interested'. 17.3% of respondents answered ‘enemy country’ 19.7% answered ‘neighboring country,’ while only 17.1% considered ‘Korean ethnicity’. It is noteworthy that the younger the age group, the lower the response rate of ‘Korean ethnicity’. Only 10% of 18-24 year-olds think of North Koreans as 'Korean ethnicity', and they also said that 'North Korea and
South Korea are separate countries and do not feel the need for unification, and sometimes think of North Korea as a state subordinate to China.’

Following, as for the question of ‘What do you think about the North-South Korean unification?’, as illustrated in <Table 2>, ‘opposed’ (54.2%) surpassed ‘agreed’ (45.8%). However, there is a difference in terms of the answers between men and women for this question, with 54% of men in favor and 46% against the unification, while 63.2% of women opposed the unification. This difference between men and women is such that, men think that they will be able to seize opportunities if volatility increases in the process of unification, whereas women think that their situation or status in Korea may be threatened.

### Table 2. MZ Generation’s thoughts towards the North-South Korean unification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey contents</th>
<th>Men’s thoughts (%)</th>
<th>Women’s thoughts (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely in favor</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In favor</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>46.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely against</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As demonstrated by the survey results, the view on North Korea and the North-South Korean unification is very negative, yet unification is a mission of the times which we must achieve without exception, and it is necessary to establish a correct ‘view of state’ and ‘view of unification’ for the future of the Republic of Korea. The following factors will be crucial for establishing the legitimacy of unification.

#### 2.1.1. Legitimacy in terms of the national history

Our people have maintained a single state system in the geographical space of the Korean Peninsula for a long time and have continued a long historical tradition of five millennia as a single nation[4]. However, in the early 20th century, we lost sovereignty following the invasion of the Japanese imperialism, and in the process of the end of World War II, the artificial division was made according to the logic of the great powers, causing division as North and South for 70 some years thereafter. For us as a single nation, the division is an abnormal reality that separates the nation and promotes confrontation and conflict. Unification must be accomplished as soon as possible to restore the ‘authenticity’ of our nation.

#### 2.1.2. Legitimacy in terms of the socio-economic aspect

Resolving the pain and sufferings of separated families from a humanitarian point of view is the first issue to address and the realization of basic human rights[4][5]. For the reunification of separated families, unification must be achieved without exception. The division has significantly deepened the heterogeneity of the two Koreas across all areas, and is also confusing the national identity. Unification is urgent to restore the national homogeneity, and in order to prevent the waste of national capabilities, and take off globally in the 21st century, it is necessary to overcome division which causes the waste of national capabilities due to mutual distrust, conflict, antagonism and confrontation.

#### 2.1.3. Legitimacy in terms of security and politics

The dictionary meaning of national security is to protect national security from danger, crisis, invasion, and aggression[6].

The Korean Peninsula is not yet free from the fear of war since it is in a state of armistice where the war has not ended. If a war recurs on the Korean Peninsula, there will only be a result
of ‘annihilation of the nation.’ Unification will provide us with an opportunity to take another leap forward, prosperity and development along with peace. In particular, the unification of the two Koreas will eliminate the threat of war in Northeast Asia, relieve tensions of the region, and significantly contribute to world peace. It is considered that the unified Korea of the future and the peaceful unification may also be achieved by recognizing the existing political environment and utilizing the creative abilities of Koreans.

2.1.4. Legitimacy in terms of the future development

Unification will help expand the space for our people to be active throughout the Korean Peninsula, and will also serve as an opportunity to further accelerate our nation’s prosperity and development by consolidating national capabilities. In order for our nation to take a leap forward towards a world-class nation, we must end division and achieve a unified nation based on inter-Korean cooperation and reconciliation. Unification will bring about new growth engines for the entire Korean Peninsula and also enable greater economic growth to be expected by securing new markets[7].

2.2. Implementation strategy for the unification

Numerous countries and peoples have developed while repeating the history of riseing and fall, and some of them have faded away from the face of the planet earth forever, while others have been divided, separated, and reunified. Unification should be pursued under 3 basic premises based on the foundation of enhancing public interest and social dialogue[8].

2.2.1. Normalization of the Inter-Korean relations

For the unification of the Korean Peninsula, normalization of inter-Korean relations is important, and the inter-Korean relations must be managed stably through building mutual trust. The pure humanitarian aid for the vulnerable, such as infants and pregnant women, should be pursued independently of politics, while practically solving the problems of separated families, POWs, and abductees. Among the contents of the agreements of the 3rd and the 5th inter-Korean summit, it is necessary to first check on the areas which may be pursued and establish a culture of implementing the agreement between the South and the North. Furthermore, it is necessary to lay the foundation for building an economic community to ensure that North Korea can develop self-reliance, support international investment in the North Korean region, and expand cooperation in accordance with the inter-Korean trust and progress for denuclearization.

2.2.2. Start small and grow big

It is important to start with anything small, such as by presenting a vision for the unification and promoting the pure humanitarian aid and economic and environmental communities, and also creating a foundation for unification. Through 3 summits in 2018, it was declared that “the need to end the long-standing division and confrontation as soon as possible, boldly usher in a new era of national reconciliation and peace and prosperity, and more actively improve and develop the inter-Korean relations”[9].

In particular, the two Koreas agreed to connect the Gyeongui Line and the East Sea Line, which are symbols of the inter-Korean exchanges[2][10]. However, ever since, nothing has materialized, and to the contrary, even the inter-Korean joint liaison office in Kaesong was destroyed by North Korea on June 16, 2020. Hence, rather than playing with words and declarations, they must reinstall the joint liaison office according to the progress of the inter-Korean relations, establish the cooperative governance between the state, local governments and the private sector[11], promote the national community events with participation from all strata of society, jointly advance into international competitions, while conditions should be created to ensure that the agenda discussed at the 3rd and the 5th inter-Korean summits, such as family
reunions, connection and modernization of railways and roads on the East Sea Line and Gyeonggui Line, may be promoted each individually.

2.2.3. Practical preparation for the unification

It is necessary to prepare various scenarios to cope with sudden changes in circumstances such as those in North Korea[12]. When the opportunity for unification comes, it is necessary to secure the national economy and financial foundation so that the cost of unification may be covered without difficulty, and accumulate separate financial resources for the unification. It is necessary to spread a consensus for the unification at home and abroad and also have the people’s capacity to prepare for the unification practically.

First, it is necessary to make practical preparations, such as by promoting the unification-related education which contributes to national unity, such as by developing content for the unification-related future generations and devising a comprehensive unification financing plan. Furthermore, it will be necessary to strengthen the cooperative system in preparation for the unification among the relevant ministries, establish and operate a consultative body among the 4 neighboring countries, and continue close communication and cooperation with the international community, including the United States, to ensure that the 'Process of Peace on the Korean Peninsula' can be promoted with the support of the international community[13].

3. Stature of South Korea and the Future of the Republic of Korea

3.1 Stature of South Korea

The Republic of Korea successfully hosted the 1988 Seoul Olympics, the 2002 World Cup, and the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. It also hosted the three major international events, the Summer Olympics, the World Cup, and the World Expo. The Republic of Korea became the 6th country to host four major sporting events (Olympic Games, World Cup, F-1 Auto Race, World Athletics Championships). In the case of Taekwondo, the national sport, as of 2018, as evidenced by 209 member states of the World Taekwondo Federation and 10,023,090 black belt holders, Taekwondo today is loved as a global sport beyond Korea’s traditional martial art[14].

In particular, in 2018, Korea joined the 30-50 clubs, which has only been achieved by 7 countries in the world. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) changed Korea's status from a developing country to a developed country on July 2, 2021, and it is the first time in 57 years since its establishment that a specific country’s status has been changed. Korea has the world’s 10th largest economy and has been invited to the G7 summit for the 2nd year in a row, reflecting its elevated status in the international community. Korea became the first country to become a developed country since UNCTAD was established in 1964.

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), which is an affiliate of the United Nations, announced in September 2021 that Korea ranked 5th in the Global Innovation Index (GII), as the highest level ever, and ranked 1st in Asia. Of the 81 detailed indicators, 9 indices, including design applications and high-tech exports, ranked 1st in the world.

Korea's economic rank rose to the 10th in the world in 2020, and its national income per capita (GNI) surpassed that of Italy (USD 32,200) among the G7 for the first time last year after exceeding USD 30,000 in 2017. Korea is a country which has developed rapidly from the bottom of the world to the highest, from the edge of the world to its center in just a few decades. This is a groundbreaking history which we have accomplished in a short period of half a century, which took 200 to 300 years in the western world.
Approximately 100 years ago, Korea, once known as a ‘country of hermits,’ has now become the world’s 7th largest exporter and the 5th largest trading power in the world in terms of total trade. Based on its elevated national status, the Republic of Korea demonstrated its diplomatic power by participating in the G7 Summit held in the United Kingdom in June 2021 despite the COVID-19 situation. In addition, it is actively contributing to world peace by dispatching 1,038 soldiers (as of November 2020) to 14 regions, including sending peacekeeping forces to conflict zones around the world, such as Lebanon, South Sudan, UAE, and Haiti [14].

3.2 The future of Korea

Those who witnessed the devastating ruins of the Korean War never expected that the Republic of Korea would ever rise again. Foreign veterans of the Korean War who have visited Korea cannot help but marvel at the rapid development and growth of the Republic of Korea, which was turned into ashes, and are thrilled that the blood and sweat they shed were worthwhile[15].

If and where the North-South Korean unification was accomplished considering the potential of North Korea, according to the ‘World Economic Report 2019’ of the Center for Economics and Management Research (CBER) of the UK, in the 2030s, the GDP of a unified Korea would surpass the UK and France to become the 6th largest in the world. After unification, the production inducement effect which spreads to South Korea following the unification is estimated at KRW 81 trillion per year and KRW 37.4 trillion in terms of the added value per year, and the employment inducement effect is estimated to be approximately 656,000 people per year[16].

North Korea is rich in terms of natural resources, excellent labor, and mineral resources such as uranium, zinc, and lead, whose worth are 140 times the gross domestic product. While there are uncertainties and unification costs associated with the unification, the economic area will be expanded by accelerating the development of the North Korean border region based on the stability of South Korea and forming the economic area of the Korean people in Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia. The unified Korea is expected to form a huge economic area by integrating North Korea's rapid growth and South Korea’s synergies[15][17]. Moreover, when the unified Korea is achieved, the population will reach 77 million, thereby surpassing France (65 million), UK (67 million), and Italy (60 million). As a result, Korea will play a key role in the international community as a power close to Germany, France, and the UK.


Currently, there are negative thoughts about the unification in South Korea, and most North Koreans are not so knowledgeable about the external situation. Hence, South Korea's thinking must change, and efforts must be made to help resolve the hostility between North and South Korean residents and also prevent ethnic differences[18]. The main security strategies to be pursued for the unification are summarized as follows.

4.1. Maintain a firm security arrangement

For the peace and unification of the entire Korean Peninsula, it is important to maintain a strong security arrangement above everything. In order to prevent North Korea from posing a threat with nuclear weapons and missiles, it is necessary to prepare countermeasures such as by strengthening the nuclear deterrence in a clear division between enemies and allies, while simultaneously equipping regular and non-regular warfare capabilities, and strengthening the ROK-U.S. alliance and combined operational capabilities[13][19].

In particular, there is a possibility that North Korea will continue to engage in various provocative activities such as attack on the ROKS Cheonan, shelling of Yeonpyeong Island, and the
terrorism of major facilities. Hence, it is necessary to maintain a strong ROK-U.S. alliance system during the peacetimes and boldly punish North Korean provocations through the cooperation with the international community. The weak must be aware of the friendship of the victor's power on its own, then the peaceful coexistence and dialogue can take place.

4.2. Maintain the relations with North Korea with a firm principle

Meanwhile, we have made an excuse for North Korea to make unreasonable demands in its favor by losing consistency in terms of the policy against North Korea, by suggesting a change in its position on the issue of the Northern Limit Line (NLL), reducing military training at the request of North Korea, and providing aid to North Korea for domestic political purposes. thereby allowing North Korea to make excessive demands in their favor[20].

Rather than a principled appeasement policy, firm principles should be adhered to on issues such as humanitarian aid, North Korea's provocations, economic exchanges, and the ROK-U.S. We need to induce North Korea not to make unreasonable demands and not mislead the public's perception of North Korea. Immediately before the 1st inter-Korean summit in 2000, there were provided hundreds of millions of dollars in cash, tours of Mt. Kumgang, and huge cash support through the Kaesong Industrial Complex project.

There is no doubt that the money provided was used for North Korea's nuclear and missile development. In September 2021, the Ministry of Unification decided to provide KRW 10 billion for private organizations' North Korea projects. However, we should not expect that our kindness and support will bring about changes in North Korea. When providing aid to North Korea, except for pure humanitarian aid, it is necessary to check whether the military power is strengthened and whether it is used for the North Korean communist regime. A principled attitude toward North Korea is necessary, such as closely examining the effects of aid to North Korea and the appropriateness of the scale of aid.

4.3. Derive a national consensus on the future of unification

Last year, North Korea's economic growth rate was estimated to have declined the most in 23 years since the 'March of Hardship' in 1997, as their GDP fell by 4.5% and foreign trade fell steeply by 73%. At the closing ceremony of the 6th Secretariat Congress, Kim Jong-un declared that he would resume the March of Hardship to overcome sanctions against North Korea, and the situation in North Korea is such that he will strengthen resident control and internal crackdown.

As for the unification, consultation between the two Koreas is inevitable and there is a target of North Korea, yet what is clear is that unification must be a liberal democratic unification based on a market economy. Some people are concerned about the huge cost which is often incurred in the process of unification, yet it should be recognized that the unification is more likely to create new opportunities than the costs[21]. In order to properly promote the unification, we need to reach a national consensus, and at the same time, make an effort to share the perception of unification as one, beyond the conflicts between generations, groups, and regions.

4.4. Expand the breadth of mutual understanding between the North and South Korea

In terms of socio-cultural aspect, it would be necessary to broaden the scope of mutual understanding between the two Koreas. In the case of Germany, social integration has proven to be difficult given economic factors, yet we must understand that, in preparations for the unification, efforts must first be made to establish and revitalize an inter-Korean economic community to establish a foundation for the mutual understanding. If we leave the current state of heterogeneity as it is, we cannot expect an inner integration or genuine harmony to take place. The sense of national community of the Korean people is the string which connects us, the greatest cause for unification, and the source of the driving force for the unification. Values
which can psychologically converge North and South Koreans and a sense of community such as fraternity and fateful bonds as a single nation ought to be cultivated.

4.5. Maintain close friendly and cooperative relations with neighboring countries

For unification, there must be no outside intervention or interference, and if relations with neighboring countries are not smooth, it may be hindered in financing unification costs and attracting investment. It should be noted that the unification process can be made much easier if neighboring countries support it. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain friendly and cooperative relations with neighboring countries, and the ROK-US alliance and friendly relations with China are important. A cautious approach is needed to utilize the multilateral security system in Northeast Asia for peace and unification on the Korean Peninsula. On the contrary, there is a possibility that neighboring countries will provide an excuse for official intervention in the unification of the Korean Peninsula. Rather than changing the current six-party talks system to a multilateral security system, it is expected that it would be desirable to maintain it as a loose dialogue mechanism as it is now.

5. Conclusion

As the song goes, “Unification is our wish, our wish in our dream is also the unification,” we have blindly believed that unification must come true and it will come true. However, Koreans are looking at the unification passively and sometimes from the standpoint of a bystander rather than an active awareness of what to do and how with the unification method. Until now, conflicts and ideological problems between the South and the North have been used as a means to maintain or acquire the regime, and the resulting heterogeneity and hostility between the North and South have significantly contributed to the dichotomous formation of the people's view of North Korea. For us, North Korea is a target of military confrontation, yet it is a partnership through which we must cooperate to form a national community.

Our strong sense of identity as a single nation causes us to dream of unification toward building a prosperous community. We have overcome countless crises to date to protect our state and people. Hence, in order to understand the crises and issues facing the state and people, and also build a country which the people dream of, all of the people must gather their wisdom and strength together. Unification is the task of the Republic of Korea and of ours living today.

At the 4th inter-Korean summit, President Moon Jae-in said, “This is the beginning, yet it will not be another beginning of the past, but a completely new beginning. Just as each step becomes more difficult from the moment the top of the mountain is visible, the road toward completing a complete denuclearization and a complete peace on the Korean Peninsula will never be smooth.” This is the beginning, and it will never proceed smoothly, yet it is the most important time to never give up and to take one step forward at a time.

Master Chaeho Shin said, “A people which forget history cannot be regenerated,” and as Winston Churchill said, “A nation that forgets its history has no future,” knowing our history is essential, and it should not be forgotten. Our history is a path we are proud of, while there have been painful moments in the history of the Korean people, and it also points us to the direction we need to mobilize in the future. Based on our interest in history, we need to properly develop the ‘view of unification’ and ‘view security,’ which have not yet been fully established in the consciousness of the people, as well as the ‘view of the state.’

As John F Kennedy famously said, 'Ask what you will do for your country before asking what your country will do for you', it is important to have a mindset that you can do something for your country. We need the right values and attitudes for the country.
6. References

6.1. Journal articles


6.2. Thesis degree


6.3. Books


6.4. Additional references


7. Appendix

7.1. Authors contribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial name</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Set of concepts ✓</td>
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<td>- Design ✓</td>
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<td><em><em>Corresponding Author</em> YJ</em>*</td>
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<td>- Significant contributions to concepts, designs, practices, analysis and interpretation of data ✓</td>
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