

Politeja

No. 1(95), 2025, pp. 27-47

<https://doi.org/10.12797/Politeja.22.2025.95.02>

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THE POLITICS OF INTER-KOREAN DIALOGUE DURING THE MOON JAE-IN ADMINISTRATION

NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND OLD PATTERNS

ABSTRACT

The election of President Moon Jae-In in 2017 opened an opportunity to improve inter-Korean relations. North Korea's participation in the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, became a turning point in the warming of relations between the two Koreas. The aim of the article is to present selected problems related to inter-Korean dialogue during the administration of President Moon Jae-In, which consisted of many initiatives aimed at undertaking negotiations for dialogue, understanding and cooperation. The theoretical tool used to analyze the above issues is the historical method and the comparative method. The first part of the article presents an outline of the history of inter-Korean dialogue, presenting the positions of the South Korean presidential administrations from President Park Chung Hee to Park Geun Hye. This part is a retrospective evaluation of the previous South Korean policies that sought to engage and cooperate with the North, with special attention to Kim Dae Jung's 'Sunshine Policy,' and Roh Moo Hyun's 'Peace and Prosperity Policy,' with both administrations engaging in inter-Korean dialogue and cooperation to resolve the problem of North Korean nuclear weapons through diplomatic means. The last half of the article describes Moon Jae-In's Korean Peninsula Peace Initiative (KPPI) and Inter-Korean Summits in 2018. Diplomacy between North and South Korea continued at a brisk pace in 2018, and concluded with the Fifth Inter-Korean Summit in Pyeongyang. President Moon served as a direct mediator between the United States and North Korea. The similarities and differences between conservatives and progressives and their policies toward North Korea,

and the elements of the Inter-Korean Summits in 2000, 2007, and 2018, followed by subsequent successes and failures of each administration, reveals vulnerabilities in the policies of reconciliation and openness with the North, the internal debates in South Korea derived from a contestation between ideological elements of ethno-centric nationalism and state-centric nationalism, and the structural factors leading to North Korean belligerence.

Keywords: inter-Korean dialogue, Moon Jae-In, inter-Korean summits, the Korean Peninsula Peace Initiative (KPPI), nation-centric paradigm, state-centric paradigm

INTRODUCTION¹

In the history of inter-Korean relations, the year 2018 was full of exceptional events. North Korea's participation in the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, was a breakthrough event. It was a great diplomatic success for Seoul and Pyongyang. South Korea took the initiative and invited its neighbor from the North to take part in the sports competition. A 500-person North Korean team arrived in Pyeongchang. The North Korean team included athletes, coaches, fans, and a female artistic group (North Korean cheerleaders).² However, the most significant event was the presence of high-ranking state officials: Kim Yong Nam (Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK) and Kim Yo Jong (Kim Jong Un's sister). For the first time since the creation of the two Korean states (in 1948), a member of the ruling family in North Korea visited South Korea.³

In January 2018, in his New Year's address, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un solemnly declared that: *This year is a significant year for both the North and South Korea, as our people will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the DPRK, which is a great auspicious event, and the South will hold the Winter Olympics. In order to solemnly hold this great national event and demonstrate the dignity and strength of the nation, we should unfreeze the frozen relations and thus celebrate this significant year as a year that will be particularly memorable in the history of the nation.*⁴ In addition, North Korea announced that *Comrade Kim Jong Un, chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the*

¹ In this article, the transliteration follows conventions widely adopted in academic and journalistic discourse. Korean names appear in the traditional order (family name followed by given name), and this practice has also been applied consistently to Japanese names.

² In January 2018, the International Olympic Committee approved North Korea's participation in the Pyeongchang Olympics. It also approved the participation of 22 North Korean athletes in the Games, including one Korean women's hockey team. The Olympic Committee also approved the march of the North Korean athletes during the opening ceremony under one flag — the 'unification flag.'

³ G. Strnad, „Olimpijska dyplomacja na Półwyspie Koreańskim – Pjongczang 2018,” in: J. Marszałek-Kawa, J. Zajączkowski (eds.), *Współpraca i rywalizacja państw azjatyckich*, Toruń 2018, pp. 144-145.

⁴ W.J. Dziak, *Anatomia władzy totalnej, Przypadek Korei Północnej*, Warszawa 2018, p. 156.

*Democratic People's Republic of Korea, upon receiving the report that the South Korean Blue House officially supported and welcomed his position on participation in the Pyeongchang Olympics and improving relations between North and South Korea contained in the New Year's Message, and that at the first meeting of the State Council in January, President Moon Jae-In personally expressed his active support and instructed relevant bodies to take important measures for this purpose.*⁵

The meeting of the South and North Korean elites took place thanks to the diplomatic involvement of many parties. Moreover, for the first time in the history of the Winter and Summer Olympics, the two Koreas decided to field one sports team in women's hockey. It consisted of 35 players (23 South Koreans and 12 North Koreans).⁶ It is worth recalling here that exactly thirty-one years ago, in 1988, the Summer Olympics were held in Seoul. However, the multilateral talks with North Korea about its participation in organizing those Olympics ended in failure.

In 2018, another opportunity for a breakthrough in bilateral relations between North and South Korea appeared. In his New Year's address, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un declared a return to talks with Seoul. It is noteworthy that since 1953, the Korean states have been in a state of war.⁷ Over the years, relations between the two Koreas have been characterized by hostility and confrontation. However, the authorities in Pyongyang and Seoul have repeatedly conducted negotiations aimed at normalizing relations and reducing tension between the nation-states, while periodically taking steps to establish a peaceful dialogue on the Korean Peninsula. Three inter-Korean summits were held between April and September 2018: on April 27, May 26, and September 18-20.

Dialogue and actions leading to the signing of a peace treaty with North Korea was a major mission of South Korean President Moon Jae-In. Since the beginning of his presidency, he attempted to implement a policy of reconciliation with North Korea. He also declared his full readiness for talks and summit meetings with Washington, Beijing, Tokyo and Pyongyang. President Moon emphasized that resolving the political problems of the Korean Peninsula should take place under South Korean leadership in cooperation with other countries, primarily the United States, China, Russia and Japan.

AN OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF EARLIER INTER-KOREAN DIALOGUE

After the end of hostilities during the Korean War (1950–1953) until the early 1970s, inter-Korean relations were dominated by a state of mutual hostility and confrontation. Each Korean state considered itself the sole representative of the entire Korean

⁵ Ibid., p. 158.

⁶ S. Neuman, "North Korean Women's Hockey Players Arrive To Begin Olympic Training With South," *npr*, at <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetorch/2018/01/25/580564192/north-korean-womens-hockey-players-arrive-to-begin-olympic-training-with-south>, 5 XII 2024.

⁷ "Armistice Negotiations," *United Nations Command*, at unc.mil/History/1951-1953-Armistice-Negotiations/, 12 VI 2024.

nation. The dynamics of change that began in the early 1970s in the international arena and the ongoing process of détente in relations between the great powers caused both South and North Korea to greatly diminish the Cold War rhetoric and open up to dialogue. For the first time since the end of the Korean War, on August 15, 1970, during a speech to the nation on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japanese occupation, President Park Chung Hee (1963–1979) announced a policy of peaceful cooperation with North Korea, calling for the abandonment of the policy of armed confrontation and the pursuit of socio-economic competition. The thaw in Sino-American relations had an immediate and direct impact on relations between the two Koreas. Unofficial inter-Korean meetings began in the second half of 1971 in Panmunjeom. As a result of secret talks and contrary to what had been the international consensus on what was possible, the governments of South Korea and North Korea issued the Joint Communiqué of July 4, 1972. It contained declarations by both sides on the following: easing tensions in North-South relations, promoting peaceful national unification, creating an atmosphere of mutual trust, restoring broken national ties, promoting national unity, efficiently coordinating meetings under the auspices of the Red Cross Organizations of the South and the North, establishing a direct telephone line between Seoul and Pyongyang, and creating the North-South Coordinating Committee.⁸ The Joint Communiqué of the North and South of July 4 was a success of joint activities conducted in the forum of the Red Cross organizations and unofficial contacts between the two governments. It was an important political event, showing a turnaround in inter-Korean policy. It emphasized the Korean people's independent pursuit of peaceful reunification based on national unity that transcended differences in political systems and ideologies. The joint communiqué showed South Korea's openness to establishing direct relations with the North and adopting the principles of peaceful coexistence.⁹

The potential trajectory of inter-Korean dialogue, initiated by the July 4 Joint Communiqué in 1972, presented a new perspective on reunification, rejecting the principle of unification by force and, at least in declarations, committed both Pyongyang and Seoul to the principle of peaceful reconciliation. However, despite the numerous mutual peace proposals made by both Koreas, inter-Korean dialogue took place in the shadow of North Korean border provocations, which raised questions about the credibility of Pyongyang's stated peaceful intentions. The 1980s saw a revival of diplomatic activity in the inter-Korean competition for international support. The administration of President Chun Doo Hwan (1980–1988) believed that in order to promote peace between the two Koreas, South Korea must establish contacts with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. To this end, the Chun administration, driven by political and economic expediency, repealed the 1961 Anti-Communist Law in

⁸ C. Downs, "3 Discerning North Korea's Intentions," in: N. Eberstadt, R.J. Ellings (eds.), *Korea's Future and the Great Powers*, Seattle–London 2001, pp. 90–98; E. Halizak, *Regionalny kompleks bezpieczeństwa Azji*, Warszawa 2004, p. 37.

⁹ N.D. Levin, Yong-Sup Han, *Sunshine in Korea: The South Korean Debate over Policies Toward North Korea*, Santa Monica 2002, pp. 6–7.

December 1981, paving the way for establishing relations with the socialist bloc countries.¹⁰ The granting of the right to host the 1988 Olympic Games to Seoul in September 1981 also posed new challenges in inter-Korean relations for the Chun Doo Hwan administration.

In early October 1980, Kim Il Sung proposed to the Chun Doo Hwan administration the establishment of the Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryeo.¹¹ The proposal stipulated that the North and South should recognize each other's ideologies and systems in order to form a single nation state. In January 1982, Chun Doo Hwan proposed a new formula for unification in his New Year's speech, in which he called for *ending the unnatural relations between the Koreas* and replacing them with *normal contacts promoting national welfare*.¹² Chun Doo Hwan's administration was the first to publicly propose an inter-Korean summit. President Chun appealed to the North Korean leader with the words: *I invite President Kim Il Sung of North Korea to visit Seoul without any conditions [...] I would also like to make it clear that I am willing to visit North Korea if the president invites me*.¹³ Although both sides used unification proposals for propaganda purposes that had no real chance of success, they nevertheless contributed to a change in the perception of the issue of reconciliation and national unification, underscoring the notion that dialogue is a necessary condition for building mutual understanding.¹⁴

The Roh Tae Woo administration's (1988–1993) policy towards North Korea was both a continuation and a change from the policies of the previous two administrations. The three principles of national unification, set out in the July 4, 1972 Communiqué, adopted under President Park Chung Hee, remained the political guide in South Korea's attempts to establish dialogue with North Korea. President Roh Tae Woo, speaking to the National Assembly on July 7, 1988, issued a special statement known as the Special Presidential Statement *In the Interest of National Self-Respect, Reunification, and Prosperity*, also known as the July 7 Statement.¹⁵ Roh's speech to 60 million Koreans is considered a turning point in the ROK's policy towards North Korea. According to the declarations made, Kim Il Sung's state was no longer perceived as hostile, and the DPRK's entry into the international community did not pose a threat to the ROK. Roh's government, in opening a new chapter in North Korea policy, dubbed the 'Northern Policy' (*Nordpolitik*), in a practice sought to establish diplomatic, trade, and cultural contacts not only with its northern neighbor, but also with the Soviet Union, China, Mongolia,

¹⁰ It should be emphasized that some of the provisions of the repealed anti-communist law were included in the National Security Act in January 1981.

¹¹ Rinn-Sup Shinn, "Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo: Motives, Contexts and Implications," *Korea and World Affairs*, vol. 14, no. 4 (1990), pp. 625-630.

¹² N.D. Levin, Yong-Sup Han, *Sunshine in Korea...*, p. 7.

¹³ Kim Choong Nam, *The Korean Presidents: Leadership for Nation Building*, Norwalk 2007, p. 194.

¹⁴ Kang Man-gil, *A History of Contemporary Korea*, Folkestone 2005, pp. 258-260.

¹⁵ Kang Sung-Nack, *Korea's Foreign Policy Dilemmas: Defining State Security and the Goal of Unification*, Folkestone 2011, p. 19.

and Eastern European countries.¹⁶ In September 1989, President Roh Tae Woo presented a plan for Korean national unification to the National Assembly. It included the gradual merging of the North and South political systems, ultimately leading to unification. Roh declared that *there is one Korean nation, and therefore a unified Korea must be one state. No system of uniting the two Koreas will lead to true unification if its goal is to maintain two states with different ideologies*.¹⁷ Between 1990 and 1992, South Korea passed a series of laws known as the South-North Economic Cooperation Acts, which provided a legal basis for inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation.

Inter-Korean talks led to the signing of two significant documents in December 1991, the Basic Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, Exchange and Cooperation of the South and the North, and the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. These agreements remain the basis for inter-Korean relations to this day. Moreover, the former is considered one of the most important documents in the history of inter-Korean relations. In August 1994, during a speech by South Korean President Kim Young Sam (1993–1998) on the occasion of the anniversary of Korea's liberation, announced a new unification formula. Predicated on the concept of the Korean National Community that had been introduced during the administration of President Roh Tae Woo. The Kim Young Sam administration, however, expanded on the existing formula by adding a three-stage plan, called the Three-Stage Unification Formula for the Establishment of the Korean National Community.¹⁸

Despite Kim Young Sam's proposed formula for the unification of the Korean National Community, tensions were mounting in inter-Korean politics due to the North Korean nuclear program. The first nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula was a particular challenge for Kim Young Sam's administration, which was resolved in 1994 thanks to former United States president Jimmy Carter's meeting with Kim Il Sung. Carter's mediation also led to Kim Il Sung agreeing to a summit meeting with President Kim Young Sam. However, due to the unexpected death of the North Korean leader in July 1994, the inter-Korean summit was canceled, and the negotiations being held in Geneva were suspended. The official reason for Pyeongyang's stance was the lack of official condolences from President Kim Young Sam's administration.¹⁹ Ultimately, negotiations held in Geneva by the United States and North Korea led to the signing of an agreement on

¹⁶ Kim Hak-joon, "The Republic of Korea's Northern Policy: Origin, Development and Prospects," in: J. Cotton (ed.), *Korea under Roh Tae-Woo: Democratization, Northern Policy, and Inter-Korean Relations*, Canberra 1993, pp. 245-246.

¹⁷ J.J. Metzler, *Divided Dynamism: The Diplomacy of Separate Nations. Germany, China, Korea*, New York 1996, p. 84.

¹⁸ Kim Young Sam, "Three-Phase Unification Formula for Building Korean National Community" (Speech of August 15, 1994), *Korea Focus*, vol. 2, no. 4 (1994), p. 174; S.S. Harrison, *Korean Endgame: A Strategy for Reunification and U.S. Disengagement*, Princeton 2002, p. 207.

¹⁹ J.S. Wit, D.B. Poneman, R.L. Gallucci, *Going Critical: The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, Washington, D.C. 2004, pp. 221-246; L.V. Sigal, *Disarming Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea*, Princeton 1998, pp. 150-161; M.V. Creekmore Jr., *A Moment of Crisis: Jimmy Carter, the Power of a Peacemaker, and North Korea's Nuclear Ambitions*, New York 2006, pp. 127-176.

nuclear matters on October 21, 1994, officially known as the United States-Democratic People's Republic of Korea Framework Agreement.

The Sunshine Policy initiated by the administration of President Kim Dae Jung (1998–2003) was a turning point in South Korean policy towards North Korea. President Kim Dae Jung officially introduced the Sunshine Policy in his inaugural speech on February 25, 1998, and proposed a summit meeting with the North Korean leader Kim Jong Il. The South Korean government's policy towards North Korea was primarily based on inter-Korean engagement, reconciliation, and cooperation.²⁰ The goal of Kim Dae Jung's Northern policy was not immediate reunification of Korea, but rather it sought peaceful coexistence between the two Korean states. At the time, many analysts wrongly expected that reunification would occur through the absorption of North Korea, which was in the throes of an economic and food crisis. However, Kim Dae Jung's administration believed that South Korea should play a significant role in dissolving the Cold War vestiges that remained and establish lasting peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. In order to implement his policy, Kim Dae Jung sought to change the negative attitude of South Korean society towards its northern neighbor, perpetuated by authoritarian military rule. The hostile perception of North Korea was to be replaced by the image of a 'North Korean brother,' a partner in negotiations and dialogue.²¹

The Kim Dae Jung administration also had a formula for national unification, the so-called 'Kim Dae Jung Three-Step Unification Formula,' based on the principles of independence, peace and democracy. This formula was also called the 'Three-Step Unification Plan' or the 'Three-Step Unification Doctrine.'²² The South Korean policy of engagement, reconciliation and cooperation was designed to engage North Korea through exchanges and cooperation and encourage further opening up and change. It was based on three assumptions: first, South Korea would not tolerate any military provocation by North Korea, maintaining a strong defensive stance towards North Korea to prevent war and would resolutely respond to any provocation; second, South Korea would not attempt to take over or absorb North Korea. Moreover, instead of promoting the collapse of North Korea, the South Korean government intended to work for peaceful coexistence with North Korea; third, inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation would be expanded to improve inter-Korean relations.²³

²⁰ Kim Dae Jung, "The Government of the People: Reconciliation and a New Leap Forward, Seoul, 25 February 1998," *Korea and World Affairs*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1998), p. pp. 93-99; Soonyoung Hong, "Thawing Korea's Cold War: The Path to Peace on the Korean Peninsula," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 78, no. 3 (1999), p. 10.

²¹ Ministry of Unification, *Policy towards North Korea for Peace, Reconciliation, and Cooperation*, Seoul 1999, pp. 1-28.

²² Kim Dae Jung, *Kim Daejung's "Three-Stage" Approach to Korean Reunification, Focusing on the South-North Confederal Stage*, Los Angeles 1997, pp. 1-36.

²³ Kwak Tae-Hwan, Joo Seung-Ho, "North Korea's Changes and the Future of Inter-Korean Relations," in: Kwak Tae-Hwan, Joo Seung-Hoo (eds), *The Korean Peace Process and the Four Powers*, Aldershot-Hampshire-Burlington 2003, p. 41; Ministry of Unification, *Peace and Cooperation...*, pp. 24-26.

During the Kim Dae Jung administration, the historic first summit meeting between the leaders of the South and the North took place. On June 13–15, 2000, the attention of the international community turned to the Korean Peninsula. The most important achievement of the summit meeting was the Joint Declaration of the South and the North, which was concluded on June 15, 2000 by the leaders of the Korean states. Kim Dae Jung officially invited Kim Jong Il to Seoul. After returning to South Korea, he said: *a new era has come to our nation, we have reached a turning point and can put an end to the history of territorial division [...] I also discovered that Pyongyang is our country. The people of Pyongyang are the same as us, the same nation with the same blood [...] We lived as one nation for 1,300 years before we were divided against our will 55 years ago. It is impossible for us to continue living in physical and spiritual separation. I was confirmed in this belief during the visit. I returned convinced that sooner or later we will reconcile with each other, cooperate, and ultimately achieve unification.*²⁴ The warming of inter-Korean relations was noted by the Norwegian Nobel Committee. On October 13, 2000, it was announced that Kim Dae Jung had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. This was a recognition of President Kim's work for peace and reconciliation between the two Koreas, and for his contribution to the development of democratization in South Korea and his fight for human rights.²⁵

In October 2002, North Korea admitted to conducting a secret nuclear program, which started the second nuclear crisis. Kim Dae Jung's administration continued to advocate for inter-Korean dialogue and cooperation, despite the nuclear crisis and South Korean political divisions (disputes between conservatives and progressives). Nuclear crises on the Korean Peninsula have challenged international peace and security for years. The ethnic national identity of the Koreans was still a viable source of collective unity. The Six-Party Talks were an attempt to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue. Their goal was to convince the authorities in Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear program in exchange for international economic aid.²⁶ The 'conflict over South Korean policy toward North Korea' (Korean: Nam-Nam Galdeung) became increasingly evident during the implementation of the Sunshine Policy, generally delineated between progressives who supported open engagement and cooperation and conservatives who insisted on confidence building measures while being wary of North Korea. This divide had been present in some form since the 1980s, and can be characterized as a conflict between two expressions of Korean nationalism: an ethno (nation)-centric paradigm and a state-centric nationalism.²⁷

²⁴ *The Korea Herald*, 16 VI 2000; D. Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, New York 2001, pp. 433–434.

²⁵ D. Kirk, *Korea Betrayed: Kim Dae Jung and Sunshine*, New York 2009, pp. 173–174.

²⁶ Victor D. Cha, David C. Kang, *Nuclear Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies*, New York 2003, p. 128; C. Twomey, "Explaining Chinese Foreign Policy toward North Korea: Navigating Between the Scylla and Charybdis of Proliferation and Instability," *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol. 17, no. 56 (2008), pp. 417–418.

²⁷ Paik Haksoon, "Assessment of The Sunshine Policy: A Korean Perspective," in: Byung Chul Koh (ed.), *The Korean Peninsula in Transition: The Summit and Its Aftermath*, Seoul 2000, pp. 31–32.

The next president of South Korea, Roh Moo Hyun (2003–2008), continued the policy of engagement with North Korea initiated by President Kim Dae Jung. During the presidential campaign in 2002, Roh emphasized that reconciliation between Seoul and Pyeongyang was his priority. He said at the time: *I would not worry about failures in other political issues, as long as the policy towards North Korea ends in success.*²⁸ In his inaugural speech on February 25, 2003, President Roh presented the Peace and Prosperity Policy as a comprehensive, long-term national development strategy aimed at ensuring peace on the Korean Peninsula and culminating in the achievement of mutual prosperity for South and North Korea. He also stressed the need for dialogue to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis and establish lasting peace on the Peninsula as an important element of stability in the Northeast Asian region.²⁹

The Peace and Prosperity Policy was not just a continuation of the Sunshine Policy. Its assumptions included increasing inter-Korean exchange and cooperation, supporting peace on the Korean Peninsula, and striving for the common prosperity of both Koreas in order to lay the foundations for peaceful unification, which was also to make South Korea the economic center of Northeast Asia.³⁰ This meant that the Roh administration not only promoted peace and prosperity in the context of inter-Korean reconciliation, but was also open to cooperation in the field of economy and security with other countries in the Northeast Asian region, especially China and Russia. The Roh Moo Hyun administration also had a formula of national unification aimed at creating a single national community of Koreans. This formula assumed three gradualist stages and was invariably based on the principles of independence, peace and democracy.

The second summit meeting took place towards the end of President Roh Moo Hyun's term in October 2007. The most important achievement of the meeting of the Korean leaders was the adoption of the Declaration on the Development of South-North Relations, Peace and Prosperity. As a result of the leaders' meeting in Pyeongyang and the signing of the Declaration, the last months of 2007 were filled with numerous contacts between the two Koreas. Many observers considered it to be the period of the most intensive and significant relations between the South and the North in the history of inter-Korean dialogue. It seemed that a period had begun that would irreversibly lead to reconciliation between Seoul and Pyeongyang.³¹

South Korea's policy of engagement with North Korea during the Roh Moo Hyun administration consisted of various forms of inter-Korean cooperation and exchange, as well as humanitarian aid provided by South Korea. The flagship projects of inter-Korean

²⁸ Kim Choong Nam, "The Roh Moo Hyun Government's Policy toward North Korea," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2005), p. 14.

²⁹ Roh Moo Hyun, "President Roh Moo Hyun's Inaugural Address," *Korean and World Affairs*, vol. 27, no. 1 (2003), pp. 115-116; In-duk Kang, "Toward Peace and Prosperity: The New Government's North Korea Policy," *East Asian Review*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2003), pp. 3-4.

³⁰ Jeong Se-Hyun, "Inter-Korean Relations under the Policy for Peace and Prosperity," *Korea and World Affairs*, vol. 28, no. 1 (2004), p. 7.

³¹ A. Foster-Carter, "North Korea–South Korea Relations: Sunshine Deepened, only to Dim?," *Comparative Connections*, vol. 9, no. 4 (2008), p. 12.

cooperation implemented during the Roh administration were the Gaeseong Industrial Complex and the Diamond Mountains Tourist Region.³² The Gaeseong Industrial Complex is located inside North Korea just across the demilitarized zone from South Korea. The project was launched in 2004, largely financed by the South Korea to increase inter-Korean co-operation. It was a symbol of peaceful engagement between North and South Korea, and was seen as an indicator of improving relations between two Koreas. The Peace and Prosperity Policy was intended to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula and overcome mutual distrust. The end of the Roh Moo Hyun administration also meant the end of the progressive North Korea policy in the South, which was based on unconditional support for North Korea and the separation of political and economic matters.

The position toward North Korea taken by President Lee Myung Bak (2008–2013), who assumed office in February 2008, was diametrically opposed to the two previous progressive administrations. As a result of the new government's conservative policies, there was a move away from unconditional economic cooperation and aid, and political dialogue between the South and the North was again in question. Lee declared that economic aid from South Korea would be contingent on progress in the process of denuclearization of North Korea.³³ He also emphasized the need to de-ideologize inter-Korean relations and give them a pragmatic dimension, as well as to introduce the principle of reciprocity between Seoul and Pyeongyang. In addition, President Lee Myung Bak's statement that the efforts of his predecessors was a lost decade caused a sharp cooling in inter-Korean relations. This was reflected in the decrease in the number of meetings between representatives of the South and the North, and inter-Korean dialogue once again became confrontational. In mid-2010, President Lee proposed introducing a unification tax in South Korea, the proceeds of which would go to a special fund that would allow South Korea to cover the costs of unification with North Korea.³⁴ This proposal did not garner public support. Lee made the improvement of relations between Seoul and Pyeongyang dependent on the return of the Kim Jong Il regime to the Six-Party Talks and the abandonment of its nuclear weapons. However, the sinking of a South Korean warship, *Cheonan*, by a North Korean mini submarine on March 26, 2010, and the North Korean artillery bombardment of a South Korea's Yeonpyeong Island, which resulted in the death of four South Korean citizens³⁵ causing

³² During the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392), the city of Gaeseong (formerly Songak) was the capital of the Korean state. The Gaeseong Economic Zone was located about 58 kilometers north of Seoul, about 137 kilometers from Pyeongyang, and about 8 kilometers from the Demilitarized Zone in Panmunjeom, about 60 kilometers from Incheon.

³³ G. Strnad, *Korea. Polityka Południa wobec Północy w latach 1948-2008. Zmiana i kontynuacja*, Poznań 2014, p. 482.

³⁴ Moon Chung-in, "Between Principle and Pragmatism: What Went Wrong with the Lee Myung-bak Government's North Korean Policy?," *Journal of International and Area Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2 (2011), pp. 6-7.

³⁵ Zhiquan Zhu, "The Sinking of the Cheonan, the Shelling of Yeonpyeong and China-North Korea Relations," *East Asia Policy*, vol. 2, no. 4 (2010), pp. 12-20.

a further cooling of inter-Korean relations. In 2011, despite Northern aggression and mutual hostilities, the Lee Myung Bak administration did engage in limited talks with the North.³⁶

North Korea was also the biggest political challenge of the administration of President Park Geun Hye (2013–2017). In contrast to the progressive administrations, which had emphasized the unconditionality of their policy towards North Korea and were open to dialogue and normalization of relations with Pyeongyang, Park announced a moderate approach and set conditions for establishing dialogue.³⁷ In her inaugural speech, Park emphasized the problem of the threat to South Korea's security from the North Korean regime and stated that the authorities in Pyeongyang should stop the policy of nuclear blackmail. Despite the tensions on the Korean Peninsula at that time, Park expressed her readiness to build mutual trust between the two Koreas, which should lay the foundation for the harmonious unification of the Korean nation. The new president observed that while there were many problems in the way to normalization of inter-Korean relations, the most challenging of them was the North Korean nuclear program, which attracted the attention of not only neighboring countries, but also the international community. A nuclear North Korea had long been considered a threat to the security of not only the countries of the East Asian region but also a challenge to maintaining peace in the world. Despite many declarations, North Korea did not give up its nuclear ambitions. North Korea's public admission of possessing nuclear weapons and then conducting nuclear tests demonstrated that nuclear blackmail was a method of coercion that allowed the North Korean regime to function.³⁸

MOON JAE-IN'S KOREAN PENINSULA PEACE INITIATIVE (KPPI)

President Moon Jae-In's inter-Korean policy harkened back to the progressive approaches of Presidents Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun. The Sunshine Policy initiated by Kim Dae Jung had been a turning point in South Korean policy toward North Korea.³⁹ When Moon assumed the presidency in May 2017, tension on the Korean Peninsula was heightened because the North had conducted two nuclear tests in 2016, combined with long-range missile test firings. This led the United States, in coordination with the other members of the UN Security Council, to impose the strongest

³⁶ Kim Tae-Hwan, *The Future of Inter-Korean Relations in 2012 Under Kim Jong Un*, paper contributed to the IFES Forum, 2012, pp. 1-6.

³⁷ Park Geun Hye, "A New Kind of Korea: Building Trust Between Seoul and Pyongyang," *Foreign Affairs*, at <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/68136/park-geun-hye/a-new-kind-of-korea?page=show>, 15 VIII 2013.

³⁸ G. Strnad, „Kryzysy nuklearne na Półwyspie Koreańskim. Fenomen sporów, impasów i negocjacji dyplomatycznych,” *Atheneum. Polskie Studia Politologiczne*, vol. 82, no. 2 (2024), p. 94.

³⁹ B.W.D. Sinuraya, F. Munabari, "The Moonshine Policy: The Idiosyncrasy Factors of President Moon Jae In in Improving Inter-Korean Relations," *Intermestic: Journal of International Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2023), p. 238.

sanctions ever on North Korea. Washington pressured Beijing to be in full compliance with the UN sanctions.

Recognizing the cooling relations between the two Koreas over the previous decade, Moon Jae-In developed his strategy to improve inter-Korean relations—while highlighting the role of South Korean leadership in the denuclearization of North Korea. The Northern policy of the administration of President Moon Jae-In (2017–2022) was based on the idea that peace was the value that South Korea should be upheld with the highest priority, and that this value-centered assumption was also the basis for economic prosperity. The KPPI had three principles, which included three goals, four strategies and five implementation guidelines. The three principles of Moon's KPPI were (1) 'peace first' by opposing any military action, whether pre-emption and/or preventative war; (2) 'no nukes' either for the North or the South; and (3) 'no regime change' meaning the South would neither seek regime change in the North. The three goals were (1) resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue and establishment of permanent peace; (2) development of sustainable inter-Korean relations; and (3) realization of a new economic community on the Korean Peninsula. The four strategies were (1) taking a step-by-step and comprehensive approach; (2) tackling the issues of inter-Korean relations and the North Korean nuclear threat simultaneously, (3) ensuring sustainability through institutionalization, and (4) laying the foundation for peaceful unification through mutually beneficial co-operation. Lastly, the five implementation guidelines of Moon's KPPI were (1) Korea-led initiative, (2) strong defense, (3) mutual respect, (4) interaction with the people, and (5) international co-operation.⁴⁰

Aware of inherent limits to dialogue and negotiation and the lessons of the failed Six-Party Talks as well as bilateral talks between North Korea and the US, Moon proposed a two-track approach in which Pyeongyang and Washington engage in bilateral dialogue to resolve the nuclear problem, while Seoul and Pyeongyang resume talks on inter-Korean relations.

INTER-KOREAN SUMMITS IN 2018

In May 2017, Moon Jae-In won the presidential election, and a progressive policy was resumed, aimed at resuming dialogue with North Korea. Moon had been the Chief of Staff and Secretary of State in Roh Moo Hyun's government. The meeting in Pyeongyang of the North Korean delegation with representatives from South Korea became a significant event in 2018 and was perceived as another step towards warming inter-Korean relations.⁴¹ Moreover, during the Olympics, the North Korean leader's sister extended an invitation to President Moon to visit the DPRK capital Pyeongyang. After

⁴⁰ Moon Chung In, "President Moon Jae In and the Korea Peace Initiative," *Global Asia*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2019), pp. 10-13.

⁴¹ D. Rowe, "The Worlds That Are Watching: Media, Politics, Diplomacy and the 2018 Pyeongyang Winter Olympics," *Communication & Sport*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2019), p. 22.

the end of the Olympics, in March, the South Korean delegation met with Kim Jong Un. Kim then received a personal letter from President Moon. The North Korean side considered this meeting to be an expression of improved relations between the North and South. It should also be emphasized that during the meeting with the South Korean delegation, Kim Jong Un declared his willingness to resolve the nuclear issue peacefully. The North Korean leader expressed his willingness to start talks on this subject provided he received security guarantees.⁴² After returning to Seoul, the South Korean delegation, headed by its chief emissary Chung Eui Yong, conveyed the information that the North Korean authorities intended to freeze nuclear and missile tests, thus signaling their readiness to talk about denuclearization, and agreed after years to organize another inter-Korean summit.

The inter-Korean summit held on April 27, 2018 restored contacts between the Korean states at the highest level. It was the third consecutive summit between the South and North Korean leaders – Moon Jae In and Kim Jong Un. The meeting took place in the southern part of the demilitarized zone in Panmunjeom. Kim Jong Un was the first North Korean leader to pay a diplomatic visit to South Korea, albeit within the DMZ. In the Peace House at Panmunjeom, he wrote in the guest book that with this meeting a new history began, an era of peace. In addition, news reports on the summits provided a rare source of information directing people's attention to the idea of the peaceful coexistence of the two Koreas.⁴³

The Korean leaders declared that there would be no more war on the Korean Peninsula. The Panmunjeom Declaration, the Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula, signed by the Korean leaders included three joint initiatives. First, the parties announced the improvement of mutual relations, emphasizing that the national reunification of the Korean people was an inter-Korean matter. It was decided that a liaison office would be established in the North Korean city of Gaeseong in order to reestablish mutual contacts. It was declared that cultural cooperation and meetings of separated family members would be resumed. To this end, it was also announced that road and rail connections between the two countries would be modernized. Secondly, it was declared that the parties would cease hostile propaganda activities and would start regular dialogue between the military. Third, the leaders of the two Korean states declared that they would take steps to establish lasting peace, sign a peace treaty ending the Korean War, and achieve full denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula in cooperation with the international community.⁴⁴

The parties scheduled another meeting for the fall, a visit by President Moon to Pyeongyang. Another summit for inter-Korean relations was also announced in

⁴² M. Tokola, "North Korea's Diplomatic Strategies, 2018," *Joint U.S.-Korea Academic Studies*, vol. 29 (2018), p. 309.

⁴³ Park Jin Hee, "Discourse Construction of Inter-Korean Summits in South Korean Newspapers: A Diachronic Study," *Language & Communication*, vol. 78, no. 3, (2021), pp. 19-34.

⁴⁴ C. Knight, *The Inter-Korean Summit Declaration of April 27, 2018: A Review in Detail*, at <http://www.comw.org/pda/fulltext/180427%20Panmunjeom%20Summit%20Declaration%20-%20review.pdf>, 12 IX 2019.

Singapore in 2018. A meeting between American President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was planned. However, Trump unexpectedly canceled the meeting with Kim, explaining his decision was based on Pyeongyang's hostile statement towards Washington. It was under such circumstances that another meeting of the Korean leaders took place. The diplomatic intervention of President Moon Jae-In, which took place in Panmunjeom on May 26, 2018, led to the resumption of American-North Korean talks. This allowed for the United States-North Korea summit on June 12. During the meeting in Singapore, representatives of South Korea, the United States, and Japan met to discuss the principles of cooperation to resolve the North Korean arms problem. Defense Ministers Jeong Kyeong Doo of South Korea, Patrick Shanahan of the United States, and Iwaya Takeshi of Japan expressed their willingness to cooperate to achieve complete and verifiable denuclearization of the DPRK and establish lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula.⁴⁵

The meeting in Singapore between the leaders of the United States and North Korea resulted in the signing of a joint statement. Kim Jong Un pledged to work towards the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, while President Donald Trump announced that he would provide security guarantees to North Korea. However, the statement did not specify what guarantees were meant, nor did it establish a specific timetable for the elimination of North Korea's nuclear arsenal. President Trump called the document *very important* and *comprehensive*, while the North Korean leader announced that the world would *see a major change*.⁴⁶

The next inter-Korean summit was held in Pyeongyang on 18–20 September, which for the Korean leaders, Kim Jong Un and Moon Jae-In, was their third meeting in 2018. Since the leaders' summit in April, there had been an intensification of contacts between the two Koreas. The parties immediately took steps to implement their public declarations: inter-Korean cultural exchanges took place, families separated by the Korean War met, and talks were held between delegations of the armed forces. A few days before the September summit, a liaison office was opened in Gaeseong to establish contacts between representatives of both Koreas. The most important achievement of the September summit was the adoption of the Pyeongyang Joint Declaration of September 2018, and the conclusion of an agreement at the defense ministry-level to build confidence and security.⁴⁷ In the signed documents, the parties announced a reduction in military tensions along the border.

The subject of the talks between the Korean leaders was the gradual implementation of the Panmunjeom Declaration. The parties decided to work towards disarmament cooperation, the development of railways, economic cooperation, the transformation of the demilitarized zone into a peace zone, and expressed interest in continuing

⁴⁵ N. Pkhaladze, "The 2018 Singapore Summit: A Milestone towards Solution to the Korean Crisis," *Policy Brief* (2018), p. 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴⁷ "Pyongyang Joint Declaration of September," 19 IX 2018, at [kls.law.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/docs/Panmunjom%20Monitor/3.%20Pyongyang%20Joint%20Declaration_Blue%20House%20\(2018.09.19\).pdf](https://kls.law.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/docs/Panmunjom%20Monitor/3.%20Pyongyang%20Joint%20Declaration_Blue%20House%20(2018.09.19).pdf), 15 VIII 2024.

to reunite separated families. Both Pyeongyang and Seoul focused on continuing the dialogue. Inter-Korean economic cooperation had remained a particularly important element in the foundation of any rapprochement between the two Koreas. For many years, the symbol of this had been the special economic zone in Gaeseong, North Korea, which was closed in February 2016 due to the cooling of relations between Seoul and Pyeongyang.⁴⁸ The reopening of the tourist zone in the Diamond Mountains was also symbolically important. These two locations had been the sites of the most spectacular achievements of inter-Korean cooperation.

In a joint declaration from Pyeongyang, Moon Jae-In and Kim Jong Un reaffirmed their commitments to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The North Korean leader expressed his willingness to dismantle the missile research and testing center, as well as the missile launch site in Dongchang-ri. He also proposed the final dismantling of nuclear facilities at the most notorious North Korean nuclear facility in Yeongbyeon in exchange for 'some concessions' from the United States. The leaders of both Koreas also agreed to take steps to become hosts of the 2032 Summer Olympics. The North Korean leader's announced visit to Seoul was intended to maintain inter-Korean dialogue at the highest level.

Table 1. List of Inter-Korean Summits (2000, 2007, 2018).

Summit Date(s)	Venue	Korean Leaders	Outcome
13–15 June 2000	Pyeongyang (NK)	Kim Dae Jung (SK) Kim Jong Il (NK)	The June 15 Inter-Korean Joint Declaration
2–4 October 2007	Pyeongyang (NK)	Roh Moo Hyun (SK) Kim Jong Il (NK)	The October 4 Inter-Korean Joint Declaration
27 April 2018	The Peace House (SK) in Panmunjeom	Moon Jae In (SK) Kim Jong Un (NK)	The Panmunjeom Declaration
26 May 2018	Tongilguk (NK) in Panmunjeom	Moon Jae In (SK) Kim Jong Un (NK)	Re-affirmation of the Panmunjeom Declaration
18–20 September 2018	Pyeongyang (NK)	Moon Jae In (SK) Kim Jong Un (NK)	The September 19 Comprehensive Military Agreement signed on September 19, 2018, in Pyeongyang

Note: Author's own compilation based on various sources.

The second meeting between leader of North Korea, Kim Jong Un, and US President Donald Trump was on February 27–28, 2019 in Hanoi, Vietnam. The first meeting in Singapore in 2018 ended with unclear declarations about the willingness of both parties, the US and North Korea, to improve bilateral relations, and build a 'lasting peace regime' by achieving denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula. The Hanoi

⁴⁸ R. Frank, T. Clément, "Closing the Kaesŏng Industrial Zone: An Assessment," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, vol. 14, Issue 6, no. 7 (2016), pp. 1-2.

summit between the United States and North Korea showed no progress in negotiations and ended in failure.⁴⁹ This outcome had a direct impact on the inter-Korean dialogue. Even though Trump had given assurances about opening further dialogue and negotiations with Kim Jong Un, the administration of South Korean President Moon Jae-In would be challenged in any attempts at advancing the KPPI. The existence of a security threat from North Korea's nuclear program and South Korea's relations with the United States had also been the subject of inter-party debates and political disputes. Diplomatic efforts to convince Pyongyang to give up its atomic arsenal failed, and North Korea remained a nuclear weapons state. Once again in the history of the Koreans, external factors proved decisive in inter-Korean dialogue.

Although the Moon administration used numerous channels to restart the inter-Korean dialogue, the global spread of COVID-19 in February 2020 made limited opportunities for talks. Lacking the ability to implement public health measures, North Korea instead chose to shut down its country from the outside world.⁵⁰ It turns out that the challenge of taking international diplomatic action to peacefully resolve the North Korean nuclear program is still relevant in order to establish peace on the Korean Peninsula and security in the Northeast Asian region. Despite the fact that the inter-Korean summits in 2018 were a new opportunity to create peaceful and a nuclear weapons-free Korean Peninsula, it appears that the level of complexity of the inter-Korean politics cannot be solved within the old patterns of contested legitimacy on the part of both Korean nation-states, and in the case of North Korea, the regime's strategy for survival.

CONCLUSIONS

Inter-Korean relations, an unresolved dispute from the Cold War period of great-power rivalry, reveal the identity dilemmas of the Korean nation and the South Korean state. Since the division of the Korean Peninsula, inter-Korean relations have been mostly antagonistic, characterized by confrontation and hostility. The fact that the two Korean states were members of opposing Cold War political blocs (South Korea belonged to the capitalist camp, while North Korea was a member of the community of socialist states) imposed restrictions on inter-Korean contacts and resulted in the dominant paradigm of authoritarian rule in South Korea, that is, the state-centric paradigm. The Korean War was not only an expression of a divided world, but also perpetuated the artificial division of the Korean nation. The end of the Cold War created a real chance to change the inter-Korean policy of confrontation into a policy of reconciliation, dialogue and cooperation, where the leading paradigm became the nation-centric paradigm.

⁴⁹ M. Richey, "Hanoi Hubris," *IPS*, at <https://www.ips-journal.eu/regions/global/hanoi-hubris-3292/>, 12 VII 2024.

⁵⁰ M. Lundström, "Inter-Korean Relations Amid COVID-19," *The Diplomat*, 14 IV 2020.

The two Korean states have periodically pursued cooperation to promote dialogue, reconciliation and reunification as exemplified by the formulas of both Koreas. Analyzing inter-Korean relations during the Moon Jae-In government, it should be emphasized that Moon's policy was a continuation of the inter-Korean policies of the Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun administrations. Inter-Korean relations have spiraled downward since 2020 when North Korea blew up a joint liaison office with South Korea at the Gaeseong Industrial Complex. On January 24, 2022, presidential candidate Yoon Suk Yeol promised to normalize joint military exercises with the US if elected. He added: *North Korea has been upgrading its nuclear capabilities and is making blatant provocations [...] the [Moon] administration's Korean Peninsula peace process has completely failed.*⁵¹ Actions taken by North Korea in recent years including a military satellite launch, an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test, artillery fire along the Northern Limit Line (NLL), the testing of an underwater nuclear drone, and the disavowal of reunification with South Korea, have pointed to even more provocations in 2024, especially as the United States prepared for a presidential election.

In 2024 the very significant action made by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was his decision to end his country's long-stated goal of reunification with South Korea. In a speech to the Supreme People's Assembly on January 15, the North Korean leader called for a revision to the DPRK constitution to refer to South Korea as Pyeongyang's 'principal enemy.' This was followed by the statement that North Korea would no longer treat South Korea as a *partner of reconciliation and reunification*.⁵² Inter-Korean relations appear a distant prospect as North Korea races to advance its nuclear and missile capabilities and takes steps to cut ties with the South Korea, redefining the ROK as a separate, hostile enemy state. Kim Dae Jung's and Roh Moo Hyun's policies toward Pyeongyang's were not successful. President Moon endeavored to allay the North's fears of regime survival and understood that denuclearization would not be possible without US support. The Moon administration's emphasis on inter-Korean dialogue and negotiation did yield some temporary positive outcomes, such as the 2018 summits. Despite these fleeting policy achievements, North Korea's six nuclear tests reflect the failure of engagement and the associated negotiations. North Korea's nuclear policy continues to pose a challenge not only regionally, but globally as well, and raises the potential for military conflict.⁵³ The establishment of a peace regime and the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula will require Kim Jong Un to surrender his nuclear weapons, which is not likely since nuclear threat is the one remaining thing which the DPRK can use as leverage.

Lastly, the unfolding of regional and global security into two camps in competition with one another imperfectly articulates Cold War antagonism. In recent years

⁵¹ A. Foster-Carter, "North Korea–South Korea Relations: From Moon to Yoon: End of an Era," *Comparative Connections*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2022), pp. 101-116.

⁵² Kim Chun Sig, "Decoding North Korea's Changing Policies: A South Korean Perspective," 38 *North*, 28 II 2024.

⁵³ G. Strnad, *Kryzysy nuklearne na Półwyspie Koreańskim...*, pp. 94-95.

the non-democratic states of Russia, China, Iran and North Korea have continued to foster an alignment, deepening diplomatic, economic and military ties, which has been highlighted by the Ukrainian War and China's foreign-policy posture countering the West known as 'wolf warrior' diplomacy, which has been aggressively manifesting in East Asia.⁵⁴ The response to the aforementioned alignment is the Quad, or the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue consisting of Australia, India, Japan and the United States. Talk of South Korea joining the Quad has been ongoing since 2023. These security developments will likely strengthen the South Korean inclination to adopt a state-centric paradigm in its dialogue with North Korea.

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⁵⁴ K. Liu, "China's Wolf Warrior Diplomacy (Narrative): Development, Causes, and Political Effects," *Diplomatica*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2024), pp. 34-35.

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