Remembering and Forgetting: A Contextual Approach to Korean Peninsula Developments

Gerrit W. Gong

Two mirrors facing each other will reflect back and forth, seemingly forever. It is an image of identity—individual and collective—forged at each instant while passing through time.

Such an image requires at least three generations. This is because generational or collective memory, as tradition, transfers experience from a first, through a second, to a third person or group.

In the transfer of generational or collective consciousness, the individuals involved may not know each other personally, though the identity and experience imparted in cases of national tradition frequently involve that which is most personal. Consciously or not, the transmission of such personal knowledge, as philosopher Michael Polanyi notes, involves that which one knows through experience without necessarily knowing how it is known or how to articulate its transmittal.[1]

For this reason, remembering and forgetting are the great acts of human consciousness, agency, and will. It is in remembering and forgetting that individuals and nations determine identity,

1 See Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

collective memory, and national will. It is in the social-psychological frameworks of remembering and forgetting that individuals and nations interpret past, set present priorities, and determine future identities. As such, these social-psychological frameworks of national will, identity, and memory reflect and shape elite perspectives, general public opinion, political decision-making, and thereby national policy.

Whether on the individual or the national policy level, especially when dealing with issues of political drama, historical trauma, or competitive nationalisms, a fundamental human dilemma remains how to determine the equilibrium between past and future—what and when to remember, what and when to forget.

Now is a time when earlier, Cold War–era issues remain to be resolved, even as post–Cold War regional configurations are being established. At this historical juncture when new international structures and new approaches are emerging, it may be useful to make explicit some of the values and assumptions underlying the structure and context of Korean peninsula developments, including their social-psychological aspects. Such analysis seems timely, since the chance for disjunction between the political and perceptual contours of the international system increases at a time of potential structural international adjustment.

From the perspective of Washington, three related challenges attend the shift from familiar Cold War patterns toward new regional and multilateral means of interaction in East Asia.

These include:

- transformation of the Marxist-Leninist countries (including the Russian Federation, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, People's Republic of China, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and Mongolia);
- readjustment of cooperation and competition among traditional US allies and friends (including the Republic of Korea and Japan) both bilaterally and multilaterally; and,
- redefinition of operational avenues and activities as regionalism and globalism affect economics (e.g., the APEC process) and

security (e.g., the exploration of regional multilateral fora through the ASEAN Post-Ministerial and other processes).

For US policy, issues of remembering and forgetting are important in each of these areas. As the historian reminds, it has been in Asia that the US has fought three wars in the last half century.

The passing of the 50th anniversary of Pearl Harbor without the anti-Japanese overtones (public or private) that many feared symbolized the reality that, while the balance of competition and cooperation between Washington and Tokyo remains fluid, their bilateral relationship remains comprehensive and solid. While not completely devoid of racial or historical overtones, US-Japan relations are not primarily determined by unforgotten grievances or concerns rooted in the past.

Such cannot yet be as easily said for US relations with the East Asian socialist countries which the US confronted after the Second World War. Unlike in Japan, the bipolar system, the existence of competitive systems symbolized by dominant communist parties, and the wars on the Korean peninsula and in Vietnam have slowed the process of political reconciliation between the US and the East Asian socialist countries.

Regarding Beijing, some partisan and ideological elements have reasserted themselves on both sides of the Pacific. Sino-US relations have yet to return fully to the status they enjoyed before the 4 June 1989 Tiananmen tragedy.

Regarding Hanoi, despite the easing of US objections to multilateral lending by international financial institutions, the POW-MIA issue continues to hinder the lifting of the US economic embargo and movement toward normalization of political and diplomatic relations with Vietnam.

And, though not immediately related but lagging behind relations with both the PRC and Vietnam, there is also the US relationship with North Korea.

A constructive approach toward bilateral and multilateral relations in each of these cases requires a careful balancing of past

concerns and future opportunities. This balance must be forged on the level of the individual decision-maker, on the department and governmental level, as well as on the level of general public opinion. With an eye toward making more explicit the underlying experiences, perceptions, and assumptions which form the context for US approaches to Korean peninsula developments, this short article will review two issue areas and their interplay, namely:

I. the current negotiations regarding the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) special inspections, and North-South inspections;
II. some mid- and longer-term issues relating to the structure of Northeast Asia, including relations among South and North Korea, Japan, and the United States.

This discussion begins with a description of the current negotiations.

Current Negotiations

At its core, the impasse that confronts the negotiations regarding North Korea's development of a potential nuclear weapons capability is rooted in the imperative of non-proliferation, itself accentuated by the legacy of Korean War distrust, terrorist incidents, the perceived clash of social systems and ideologies, and the reality that the peoples and especially the decision-makers of South Korea, North Korea, and the United States have had, until the last few years, essentially no direct contact.

The change in South Korea's strategic approach, which then-President Roh Tae-woo announced in his 7 July 1988 special Declaration (and expanded in the 11 September 1989 Korea National Community Unification formula), opened the way for North Korea to expand its international engagement. Nevertheless, both Seoul and Washington have insisted on resolution of the nuclear issue as a prerequisite to improved political and

economic relations with North Korea. With only one real bargaining chip and a realpolitik suspicion of finding itself isolated or with a known hand in self-defense, Pyongyang continues to walk the policy tight-rope. It tries to maintain the leverage and attention it enjoys by virtue of its potential nuclear threat; it also seeks to avoid serious sanctions that might complete its international isolation or further challenge its already beleaguered economy.

Pyongyang's eleventh-hour decision not to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) on 12 June 1993 was consistent with North Korea's basic interests and strategy given the current context of Korean peninsula developments. While all can take some comfort that the clock on the NPT issue has been at least temporarily stopped, the overall situation remains essentially unchanged from 12 March when Pyongyang first declared its intent to withdraw from the NPT.

Whether by design or accident, Pyongyang has taken two threats, one explicit and one implicit, and has woven them together into a strategy.

The explicit threat is one of North Korean "explosion," the possibility of setting off a paroxysm of violence, possibly suicidal in its outcome, but with devastating consequences for Seoul. The threat that Pyongyang, if provoked, could unleash a second Korean War is heightened by the nightmare possibility that it could develop even a primitive nuclear device, or the credible threat that it possessed one, and the means to deliver it.

In this regard, the discussion is academic as to whether Pyongyang's interest in a nuclear device is as a system guarantor, "poison-pill" defense against threats of military takeover, or international bargaining chip for prestige, profile, and potential economic and trade concessions. It is academic because Pyongyang has not been forced to choose between the economic survival of its system and the defense of that system through military means, possibly including nuclear ones.

In contrast to the explicit threat of explosion is the implicit one—of possible North Korea "implosion." The implicit threat, which has increased in credibility after Germany's difficult unification, is that North Korea, because of declining economic performance, could lose the ability to govern and collapse from within. Indeed, North Korea's GNP has shrunk for three consecutive years, i.e., -3.7 percent in 1990, -5.2 percent in 1991, -7.6 percent in 1992. Energy shortage, systemic stress, idle productive capacity, and many other leading indicators of economic activity suggest the strong possibility that Pyongyang could collapse from within.

Though the debates continue as to how similar or different North Korea is from Romania, East Germany, or China, a myriad of factors relating to economic difficulty, leadership transition, popular resentment, etc., have the clear potential to trigger such a collapse. The threat of implosion is implicit in the sense that no North Korean official ever raises the collapse or self- destruction of the North Korean system as a means to pressure Seoul.

These "explosion-implosion" possibilities play differently with Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul. The explicit explosion possibility weighs heavily on those in Seoul who remember the Korean War. But it is equally aimed at the some 35,000 US troops deployed in Korea and, in its nuclear content, against the United States, particularly toward a Clinton administration sensitive to global proliferation issues.

The implicit implosion possibility clearly poses a more direct challenge to Seoul than to Washington. This is understandable, given the potential disruption should millions of North Korean refugees begin streaming toward the DMZ; the economic burdens of stabilizing a country whose infrastructure and productive capacities may be as run down as those of the former East Germany or Soviet Union; and the longer-term implications for Korea's global competitiveness and regional position. For similar reasons and given its own geographical proximity, Tokyo also

has a direct, immediate interest in day-by-day peace and stability on the Korean peninsula.

The South Korean fear of North Korean implosion does not mean the potential nuclear threat is taken lightly. It does suggest the assumption by many South Koreans that North Korea, even a potentially nuclear capable one, will not attack south without unreasonable provocation. The underlying premise expressed in the Korean saying that the "wealthy man is always more cautious" is thus a fundamental social-psychological pillar in both South-North and North-South calculations.

In this view, Pyongyang may threaten brutal and seemingly irrational military or terrorist acts according to an underlying logic. Those on the outside are kept off balance to the extent they believe North Korea might, if unduly pushed, unleash a second Korean War. The possibility of "irrational" North Korean behavior (according to South Korean or US logic) is not to be discounted; but neither is the reality that Pyongyang has skillfully manipulated the perception of threat it presents, thereby increasing its negotiating leverage.[2]

What North Korea has carefully done is to balance and play the explicit and implicit threats in its attempt to manipulate its external environment in the way most favorable to itself: a small, in some ways weak, isolated country of twenty million which has been at the vortex of Great Power rivalry and which even today continues as part of a Korea separated or divided as a "shrimp among whales."

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2 The interplay involved in these issues is illustrated by the indirect exchange during President Clinton's Seoul visit in July 1993. In his address to the Korean National Assembly on July 10, 1993, President Clinton indicated that, should North Korea use nuclear weapons, "we would quickly and overwhelmingly retaliate. It would mean the end of their country as they know it." Two days later, a North Korean Central News Agency broadcast was monitored to state, "The United States must ponder over the fatal consequences that might arise from its rash act. If anyone dares to provoke us, we will immediately show him in practice what our bold decision is."

The combination of this explosion-implosion strategy of explicit and implicit threats can be seen in Pyongyang's four immediate objectives, as evidenced in its recent negotiating approach.

Two senior-level US-North Korean negotiations have now taken place in New York. On 22 January 1992 Under Secretary of State Arnold Kanter met with Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Korean Workers Party Kim Young-sun at the US United Nations mission in New York. This year, beginning on June 2, with sessions on 4 June, 10 June, and with a joint statement issued on 11 June 1993, Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs Robert Gallucci and North Korean First Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok-ju met in New York. Talks between the US and North Korea at the Gallucci-Kang level also took place the week of 14 July 1993 in Geneva.

Pyongyang's first objective is with the United States.

With limited direct official contact and thereby limited direct information regarding the specific intents and interests of the US government, Pyongyang wanted a clear statement at an authoritative level regarding Clinton administration policy, not only with respect to the nuclear issue but towards North Korea generally. Pyongyang's negotiating interest included assessing differences, major or subtle, in priority or emphasis, in conditions or linkages, etc., between the Bush and Clinton administrations. Further, Pyongyang sought not only to establish direct, high-level talks but to do so in a manner that established a dialogue channel with the Clinton administration which, while initially restricted in topic area, would allow interactive assessments of mutual interest and intent.

Some ask whether US positions were not already clear from the New York talks held during the Bush administration, authoritative discussions in which the United States, to be sure that no misunderstanding occurred, reportedly gave its main talking

points for reference to the North Koreans. Similarly, others ask whether US positions were not clear from press statements.

Yet, media statements are not always authoritative, as illustrated by a reported conversation between then-Vice President George Bush, in a private meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev: "Bush said, 'There's a good chance that I'm going to win the presidential election next year. Dole looks pretty dangerous right now, but I think I'll get the Republican nomination. If I'm elected—and I think I will be—you should understand that I want to improve our relations.'...Therefore, during the 1988 campaign, he [Bush] would have to do and say many things to get elected. Mr. Gorbachev should ignore them."[3]

Recognizing that the media and public persona do not always indicate private thoughts or approach, it is understandable that Pyongyang would want direct dialogue at an authoritative level with Washington to assess US policy. This need is no doubt reinforced by Pyongyang's manipulation for propaganda purposes of its own media, thereby suggesting a complex mirror imaging of what it suspects Washington of doing. Nor can nuance and intent be measured easily through exchanges in the media; and nuance and intent are crucial factors as decisions are made about issues inextricably tied with the destiny of Korea.

The symbolic factor of such direct contact cannot be overlooked; indeed, it was appropriate that the June 1993 New York meeting occur at the Assistant Secretary of State level, where the US official responsible for Political-Military Affairs was able to emphasize the focus on the nuclear issue. Nevertheless, the substantive interest Seoul and Washington have in clear, authoritative communication with Pyongyang should continue to temper the zero-sum concern that a perceived political gain in access for Pyongyang is a concession on the part of Washington and Seoul.

3 Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993, pp. 3–4.

From a contextual point of view, the question must be raised as to what extent multiple negotiation channels on related but distinct issues broaden or narrow Pyongyang's negotiating options. Specifically, does Pyongyang gain latitude for maneuver by being able to play the IAEA and North-South inspection regimes against each other? Did it take the process one step further by introducing the NPT element so there are now three issues at play? By making more subtle and variegated the approaches, issues, and options regarding various dimensions of the nuclear issue, Pyongyang may find itself with an enhanced ability to broaden political dialogue while lessening the chance of being confronted with a single-channel ultimatum. To the extent that confrontational ultimatums may be subject to miscalculation, multiple channels of discussion on the nuclear issue may lessen the risk of direct confrontation. In this sense, they are premised on the assumption that clandestine work on a possible North Korean nuclear device is less an immediate threat than that of overt explosion or implosion.

Pyongyang's second objective is with Seoul.

In an indirect sense, the June 1993 New York and July 1993 Geneva discussions also provided Pyongyang an important window to assess the policy approach of the new Kim Young-sam administration, particularly before North-South dialogue was reopened at Panmunjom. Self-consciously heading a civilian government, President Kim Young-sam could either be constrained or have greater latitude in dealing with the North.

President Kim has moved to assert control over the military though conservative elements, including in the military, may constrain his overall political flexibility regarding North Korea. He could be further constrained if he were perceived to be overreaching the bounds of caution, just as his predecessor Roh Tae-Woo was criticized by some, criticism President Roh was able to deflect in part because of his known military experience.

And yet, given above 90 percent popularity, his focus on clean government, and his efforts to shuffle the military in a way designed to inspire and enforce loyalty, President Kim Young-sam may also be willing to explore different options and approaches towards North Korea than might otherwise be expected. It is understandable that Pyongyang would focus on South Korean positions at a time of potential change.

In any case, Pyongyang's interest is to prolong the discussions with both Washington and Seoul in an effort to gain the maximum beneficial conditions from the process of discussion.[4] Regarding potential "implosion," Pyongyang will contribute to the debate in Seoul over possible economic approaches to the North, including the proper mix of indirect and direct trade, investment, humanitarian assistance, etc.

Pyongyang's third current diplomatic objective is to test similarities and differences between Washington and Seoul (and Tokyo) in the formation and determination of their negotiating positions.

Given its propensity towards united front politics, Pyongyang naturally looks to exploit areas of divergence within the Seoul-Washington-Tokyo relationship.

Ironically, by forcing the Kim Young-sam and Clinton administrations to focus early in their terms on the North Korean nuclear threat, Pyongyang in fact may have forged a tighter working relationship between them than might have been expected at this time. By presenting a common nuclear challenge on which Presidents Clinton and Kim had to focus, Pyongyang may have miscalculated and created networks and dialogue for coordination and cooperation among Seoul, Washington, and

4 The July 1993 U.S.-North Korea talks in Geneva further underscore the North's willingness to continue dialogue on "outstanding issues" with the IAEA and on the bilateral accord with Seoul in order to maintain political-level dialogue with the U.S. As the paper argues, such a process need not be seen in zero-sum terms politically—so long as there are credible thresholds to an otherwise infinite prolongation of the discussion process.

Tokyo, and strengthened them in a way that might not otherwise have been the case at this point for two new administrations.

Pyongyang's fourth immediate objective at New York and Geneva was to try to control the negotiating process, including its timing and scope.

In a sense, Pyongyang could take some satisfaction in its ability to command attention simply by threatening to leave the NPT. It tapped into a new area of negotiating leverage by creating an issue where none had existed before.

For this reason, to underscore the issue of urgency on the nuclear issue on the eve of President Clinton's post–G-7 summit visit to Seoul, President Kim Young-sam stressed that the U.S. should "not continue to be led on by North Korea."[5] This reflects the longstanding concern in Seoul that Pyongyang not drive a wedge between Washington and Seoul. It also reflects the continuing challenge for Seoul and Washington to remain confident in themselves and in each other when dealing with Pyongyang. In this way, the personal trust and commitment Presidents Clinton and Kim established during their July 1993 Seoul meeting will have direct implications for the future negotiating patterns between Seoul and Washington, as well as among Pyongyang, Seoul, and Washington.

There are two other structural elements in the current negotiation with North Korea. First is Pyongyang's likely understanding that US and South Korea military options are constrained by both technical and political factors. They are constrained by technical factors: important targets may be underground, in difficult-to-locate tunnels or other hardened sites, with no way of guaranteeing that fissionable materials have not been imported and hence beyond the calculation of what has been indigenously produced.

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5 David E. Sanger, "Seoul's Leader Says North Is Manipulating U.S. on Nuclear Issue," *New York Times*, 2 July 1993.

There may also be political constraints to truly coercive sanctions. Seoul, Tokyo, and Beijing are all sensitive, as the Korean saying warns, that "a trapped rat will fight the cat," or, as the Chinese expression puts it, a "cornered dog will jump the fence." No one wants a suicidal North Korean offensive against South Korea.

The other structural factor is that Pyongyang may have only limited immediate interest in large infusions of economic assistance.

The outside world's offer of the "carrot" of potential economic assistance and the "stick" of economic or military sanctions may appear to be reverse sides of the same threat. Isolated with a rigid command economy, North Korea's economic infrastructure, like Russia and in some ways like China before reform, has been buffeted by its inability to adapt easily to the competitive factors of the information age. This has led to some limited economic policy options for North Korea, including foreign investment law, the development of some special economic zones, including in the Tumen River area with UNDP funding, and some interest in joint ventures. Nevertheless, poor infrastructure and chronic shortages lead to the dilemma that North Korea must incorporate foreign capital and technology without inducing unbearable outside shock.

Some experienced South Korean observers argue that the post–Kim Il-Sung transition will center on a de-mystification, de-ideologicalization of the Great Leader and the Beloved Leader as anti–Kim Il-sung and anti–Kim Jong-il movements give rise to a new military-technocratic government. Just as China underwent a process of de-Maoification to preserve party legitimacy by criticizing past excesses, so North Korea by this argument will try to maintain legitimacy and governability by turning toward a more open economy while maintaining dominant party control.

North Korea's may turn out to be a more brittle economic and political system than China's. It may thereby be less immediately

amenable to Chinese-style reform. However, Pyongyang may still be able to undertake a North Korean–style economic reform that moves more quickly than the current mix of possible special zones, investment laws, and North-South trade. In these scenarios, by focusing on elements of continuity despite some possible change in emphasis, it may even be possible for Kim Jong-il to be kept in place as a kind of figurehead or as a system legitimizer.

Mid- and Longer-Term Issues

In terms of remembering and forgetting, it is difficult to discuss the context of Korean peninsula developments without considering the interplay among domestic trends in North and South Korea; inter-Korean relations; and the structure of Northeast Asian relations (particularly the Koreas and the great powers) as influenced by overarching regional and global trends. Each of these three areas involves core personal and national issues of identity, equity and justice, reconciliation, as well as the establishment of an equilibrium between past and future. Each also involves elements of international politics and economics, national modernization, and the definition and distribution of political power.

In terms of remembering and forgetting, this section will thus briefly consider the following: (1) transition to the Kim Young-sam presidency, (2) Seoul-Tokyo relations, and (3) the future of inter-Korean relations. Each remains an important political influence on the individual and collective Korean identity.

Transition to the Kim Young-sam presidency

The inauguration on 25 February 1993 of South Korea's first fully civilian president, Kim Young-sam, opened a new chapter in the Republic of Korea's continuing story of establishing a democratic polity and an open, market-oriented economy.

An experienced politician sensitive to popular concerns, President Kim Young-sam moved early to have his administra-

tion reflect open, clean, and responsive government. He opened the grounds around the Blue House for public access; he asserted the need for clean government, starting with its cabinet ministers; on the 18 May 1993 anniversary memorial, he designated official representation (e.g., attendance by the Mayor of Kwangju) and personally sent a wreath to honor those who lost their lives.

At the same time, seeking to establish a forward-looking equilibrium between past and future, President Kim Young-sam called on the country to "never forget but to forgive." The rejoinder, "tell us who to forgive," underscores the political and emotional volatility of the issue. Enjoying high personal popularity and public approval, the President nevertheless sought in the early months of his administration to maintain the necessary balance between uncovering and prosecuting issues of the past and moving forward particularly on the economic part of his agenda.

Of course, even time and expressions of national sympathy are not always enough to assuage the sense of personal grief and loss experienced in personal tragedy. Reconciliation on the personal level is also required, with the difficult individual decisions of what to hold onto and what to let go. In addition to loss and tragedy on the individual level, sensitivities rooted in the Korean sense of history and justice and in the realities of regional politics and competition within Korea complicate the search for complete and final reconciliation and harmonization among all sectors of Korea's government and the full cross-section of Korea's people.

This is not to judge the justice or injustice, equity or inequity, of any position or approach regarding the events surrounding the 18 May anniversary. However, it is worth reminding those viewing South Korea from the outside of the dominating role, still rooted in recent experience and memory, that local, domestic politics play in the transition of republics and administrations, and thereby in shaping Seoul's approaches to issues beyond itself.

Relations with Japan

Seoul's relations with all its neighbors are deeply-rooted in history, in the shared flows of culture and common experience brought by geographic propinquity. Of these relations with neighbors, none is more expressive of the complex issues related to remembering and forgetting than those with Japan.

The ROK's magnificent Hall of Independence is a vivid reminder of the many factors shaping the structure of Korean-Japanese relations. On the historical level, the colonial past—and those who testify from living memory of its excesses, including those forced to serve as "comfort women"— is sufficiently close as to make unanswerable the questions of whether there has been continuity or discontinuity in Korean-Japanese relations since 1910.[6] There are also the ex post facto arguments of how much Japan's colonial domination is now responsible for any differences in economic progress or standards between Korea and Japan.[7] On the personal level, the very closeness of language and appearance between Koreans and Japanese, which can give a sense of commonality, can easily be mistaken for brusqueness or imperiousness if subtle linguistic and cultural cues are missed or not mastered.

How to not overlook the past without making it the framework for the future requires the difficult balance between the need to recognize—and as appropriate, compensate—personal trauma and individual suffering and the often natural tendency to make historical compensation issues into a grievance that becomes part of the political agenda.

Certainly there are no more sensitive questions than linkage between colonial suffering and past or future reparations. And yet, especially on the personal level, ways must be found to end

6 See, for example, Mikiyo Kano, "The Problem with the Comfort Women Problem," *AMPO Japan-Asia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 1993, pp. 40–43.

7 See, for example, Kilsung Choe, "The Dilemma of Japanese Studies in Korea," *The Japan Foundation Newsletter*, Vol. 20, No. 4, pp. 9–11.

the cycle of feeling victim or of being victimized. It is too cynical, as some suggest, to say that historical issues are raised simply as a matter of political manipulation and expediency, a means of generating political leverage to extract greater concessions. At the same time, it has sometimes appeared that Japan's neighbors have sought to employ elements of a strategy of containment by guilt. This strategy of containment by guilt includes suggesting to Tokyo a moral obligation to consider compensation as a means to rectify the unfortunate historical past by moving toward a more level economic, political, and security playing field today.

Competitive Nationalisms. In this regard, competitive nationalisms among Korea and its neighbors, particularly Japan, may become an issue as the balance of common interests shifts toward a common Korean position, instead of the current equilibrium where neither North nor South Korea sees unification on terms currently available in its immediate interest. These issues must be explored in the framework of responsible, anticipatory analysis, but without judgment or criticism.

It overstates the case (though some Koreans and some Japanese so suggest) that competitive nationalism is a deliberate South Korean policy to facilitate Korean unity at a time of domestic political transition and regional realignment. In such a view, the Korean successor generation is a special potential audience for a unifying commitment to sacrifice in a greater national effort. Some senior Japanese officials see Korean nationalism as a convenient possibility for the military bureaucracies of North and South Korea to develop important common ground and a role in an eventually united Korea.

Korean-Japanese economic relations do remain contentious. Korea's trade deficit with Japan ballooned from $3.8 billion in 1989 to $6 billion in 1990, to $8.7 billion in 1991. In 1992, it was $7.86 billion.[8] Korea's industrial upgrading through machinery imports has contributed to the widening trade deficit, an issue

8 See Bank of Korea "Monthly Statistics Bulletin," May 1993.

made more difficult by Korea's perception of Tokyo's unwillingness to transfer state-of-the-art technology. (Tokyo's perceived reluctance to give current technology to a potential competitor only fuels the Korean perception of being a Japanese export platform, a situation Japanese observers say the Koreans have invited.)

At the same time, Japanese direct investment in Korea, influenced by opening opportunities in Mexico, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere and by won appreciation, higher Korean wages, and labor tensions, has dropped. From a high of $696.2 million in 1988, Tokyo's direct investment has fallen to $226.0 million in 1991.[9] While US firms have also considered pursuing other investment possibilities, bringing some disinvestment, the US is now Korea's largest investor.

Some Koreans have worried that, with the end of the Cold War, Northeast Asia may be returning to a period of unbridled power politics, not unlike the period around 1905 when Korea was pulled into the colonial vortex and lost its independence. In this view, Tokyo is perceived by some to be deliberately underplaying issues of the past in order to reassert a dominating influence in East Asia.[10]

Not unexpectedly, competitive nationalism becomes more volatile as emotional and historical, political and economic issues intertwine. And, needless to say, with variations in the different dimensions of the trilateral US-Korea-Japan relation, trade balances, technology transfers, investment flows, perceived

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9 See "Korea Economic Update," Washington, DC: Korea Economic Institute of America, Vol. 3, No. 2, Summer 1992, p.3.

10 In terms of competitive nationalisms, it is thus striking that so much was made not only of the magnificent achievement of a Korean marathoner winning the marathon gold medal, but also that, in the steep uphill climb toward the finish line, the silver medal finalist was Japanese. It is similarly striking that such pride was taken in the fact that then-President-elect Bill Clinton spoke from Little Rock with President Roh Tae-woo for 15 minutes, but that the President-elect's conversation with Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa lasted only five minutes.

treatment of foreign nationals, etc., affect not only Japan-ROK relations, but US-Japan and US-ROK relations as well.

Comparisons are natural and to be expected with Korean and Japanese neighbors whose identities are so much forged in competition and cooperation. Nevertheless, the relationship must be —will be—worked through by the immediate parties involved.

Inter-Korean relations

To an outside observer of South Korean mood and perception, it is difficult to overestimate the cautionary impact the recognized difficulties of German unification continue to have on Korean interest in unification. With less economic absorptive capacity and with less firmly entrenched democratic institutions than the former West Germany, Seoul has seemingly overlearned the lessons of German unification.

Korea is not Germany—politically, historically, or culturally. Still, a central lesson of German unification is that an anticipatory effort to channel Korean peninsula developments, someday including Korean unification, in the most constructive and positive channels must look beyond the immediate economic and political factors and deal much more with the social and psychological.

Neither monetary nor political union is synonymous with social harmonization, even less so with moral or psychological reconciliation. For this reason, social-psychological factors integral to remembering and forgetting must be highlighted in a discussion of inter-Korean relations within the current context of Korean peninsula developments. Two areas are worth recalling here: the legacy of continuing hostility and the issue of different patterns of attitudes and habits.

First is the legacy of continuing hostility and civil war.

In the United States, more than a hundred years after its 1860–1865 civil war, there are still (a few) reported cases of individuals in the American South unable to forgive the "Yankees." And Americans are not known for holding historical

grudges. In contrast, it is clear that memories of the Korean War are still felt on a very direct and personal basis by many South Koreans. This is especially true of elites who lost family members to the North Korean secret police in the early days of the war. It is also true for many others generally who suffered the deprivation of a devastating civil war which ranged across the entire peninsula.

The legacy of hostility extends to the Rangoon bombing, where current Korean officials lost close colleagues, and to the destruction of KAL flight #858, which increased the sense of vulnerability of everyone flying on Korea's national flag-carrier.

Private, personal discussions with South Korea about how to deal with Kim Il-sung or Kim Jong-il, should the opportunity arise, also underscore the deep, potentially divisive differences in South Korean opinion about equity, justice, and establishing an equilibrium between past and future. Student groups on South Korean university campuses, as well as Korean foreign policy elites and others, are all sharply divided in their responses to the question, "If you had the opportunity to judge Mr. Kim Il- sung, would you forgive the past as past in order to move into the future of a united Korea, or would you require some specific justice for past actions?"

The analogy to Germany's handling of Erich Honecker's recent trial is illustrative. In both the former East Germany and West Germany, few decisions in modern German history have engendered such disapproval and disagreement as that to allow Mr. Honecker to spend his final days in Chile. Allowing the "big fish" to go free also reduces the grounds for legally prosecuting the "little fish," e.g., the German border guards down the chain-of-command, for the deaths of German citizens whose only crime was to seek freedom. Efforts to construct universal norms of conscience as a legal basis for prosecution are understandable and to be encouraged, but they must maintain a balance of equity for all those living in a totalitarian system.

The emotional and legal conclusions to which South Koreans come regarding how to deal with Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and other North Korean elites (should such circumstances present themselves) in terms either of immediate treatment or in subsequent historical terms are in fact an important element in the current context of Korean peninsula developments. Experience with past national leaders facing systemic transition, e.g., Ferdinand Marcos, highlights the natural tendency for those leaders to consider their situation in highly personal terms. To the extent that unification can take place within the lifetime of Kim Il-sung, how he and those around him will be treated remains a key part of any North-South negotiating framework. Not to deal with the question of how Kim Il-sung will be remembered or forgotten is to diminish the immediate incentives of North Korea's leadership toward peaceful reconciliation.

It has been suggested that "to forgive is not Korean" and that "victors in Korea always make losers pay for their failure." Whatever the cultural tradition, national unity will eventually require internal reconciliation—reconciliation with the past; reconciliation between victims and aggressors; reconciliation of the nation with itself.

Second are the issues of different patterns of attitudes and habits between North and South.

Again, the German case is instructive. All in Germany credit Helmut Kohl for recognizing, and seizing, the historical moment when German unification became possible. Most understand the decision as a political one. In a sense, in Korea as in Germany, the more carefully one looks at economic cost-benefit analyses of Korean unification the more (and larger) the costs appear.

And these are increasingly being understood in non-economic terms. For example:

- only 22 percent of western Germans and 11 percent of easterners say they feel a common German identity, a sharp drop from previous surveys;

- for the first time since unification, a majority of easterners now say they consider themselves "former citizens of East Germany" rather than part of a united Germany;
- two in five western Germans have yet to meet an easterner; 55 percent of those in western Germany aged 14-27 years have yet to travel east, while 94 percent of eastern youths have traveled west;
- since 1989, the birth rate in eastern Germany has dropped by half; the number of marriages in eastern Germany is down 38 percent;
- 7 of 10 eastern German women are now jobless, in a society where women used to account for 50 percent of the work force; only 35,000 of the estimated 155,000 eastern German youths who will seek apprenticeships in the fall will be successful.[11]

In this sense, each new study of the social-psychological adjustments in Germany underscores the potential challenges not of *ossis* (easterners) and *wessis* (westerners) but of the *nords* (northerners) and the *süds* (southerners) in a united Korea. To reconcile daily habits, work ethics, and other core values in the systemic dislocation that may confront the Korean people if they are allowed to vote freely with their feet will not be easy.

Nor is it easily prepared for in advance. This will be especially true if North Koreans are prevented, by mechanical or artificial regulations, requirements, or means, from being full participants in Korean peninsula developments. As in Germany, Korean unification will likely be a political decision based on human realities, not economic cost benefit analyses or plans, as optimistic or sobering as those analyses or plans may be.

11 "East and West Grow Apart as They Come Together," *The Washington Post*, 27 June 1993.

Conclusion

The dilemmas of political and economic justice, of knowing when to let go of the past, of deciding how to overcome deep-rooted differences in building a common future, and of passing through the purging process of remembering and forgetting each affect the ROK's domestic transition; its relations with neighbors, especially Japan; and the myriad potentially contentious and divisive issues surrounding inter-Korean reconciliation.

In this process, wisdom will be required to know when to let words and when to let silence speak; to determine what not to forget and when to allow forgiveness to encompass forgetting; and to decide when and what to remember. Each day is thus a new opportunity to write the future of Korea, a challenge that speaks to the core issues of individual and national identity, of collective memory, and the wellsprings of national will. These are the decisions, conscious and not, which determine what children are taught and what older generations remember and transfer as national tradition. Like Korean unification and evolving alignments in Northeast Asia, this is a dynamic process, not a predetermined final state.

Tremendous circumspection has arisen in South Korea towards the possibility of a premature or sudden precipitous collapse in North Korea. This has established a delicate equilibrium of interests across the Demilitarized Zone where North Korea does not want to be absorbed and South Korea does not feel that it can early afford politically, economically, or psychologically to have North Korea unified with it.

In terms of the structural context of Korean peninsula developments, this means the nuclear question, the destiny of North Korea, the future development possibilities of South Korea, and Korean unification are all inextricably tied. One must deal with implicit and explicit threats and implicit and explicit opportunities to resolve the North Korean impasse. This argues, as current policy has been more willing than in the past to explore, for

detailed discussions of appropriate direct and indirect linkages of all factors (economic, military, nuclear, humanitarian) that can contribute constructively to a peaceful Korean peninsula future.

Such an approach may not require the completion of whole cycles of agreement and compliance (e.g., complete North Korean compliance with IAEA special inspections, North-South inspections, and NPT membership) before calibrated and linked movements can take place on other fronts. In this integrated structure of "carrots and sticks," each with appropriate and reciprocated actions and guarantees, a tight timeframe can be maintained through coordination of bilateral and multilateral actions. Such coordination preserves both the flexibility to pursue common, positive developments and to enact quiet (likely unannounced) but meaningful sanctions, e.g., limitation of North Korean oil imports and external arms sales.

The human dynamics associated with remembering and forgetting are appreciated by those involved and yet, unless these assumptions are made explicit, unless these values can be articulated and discussed, they influence the direction of policy without ever being made explicit factors in that policy calculus.

Particularly at this time when post–Cold War regional configurations are being established, when new international structures and new approaches are emerging, it is essential that the political and perceptual contours of the international system not diverge. To keep them together means reconsideration of the core issues of remembering and forgetting, the great acts of human consciousness, agency, and will, which determine individual identity and national policy. Each generation (political or actuarial) must earn anew its own memories and its own traditions—not for their own sake—but as ways of perceiving and acting liberated in their taking of history and future carefully into account.