

# On the Likelihood of Peace and War on the Korean Peninsula: A Causal Loop Analysis

김강훈\*

Kim, Gang-Hoon\*

## Abstract

Since the end of the 1950–1953 Korean War, many scholars and policymakers have expressed concern about the possibility of another conflict on the peninsula. In certain respects, the post–1953 North-South Korea relationship resembles the Cold War that existed between the United States and the Soviet Union, 1945–1990. Although a “hot” never occurred, peace was never guaranteed. By looking at international theories (i.e., realism and liberal theory) and by utilizing casual-loop diagram analysis, the main purpose of this research is to explore on the likelihood of peace and war on the Korean peninsula. First, several factors (e.g., economic stagnation of North Korea, unstable political systems, and so on) emphasized by realism perspectives are significantly related to the likelihood of conflict between North and South Korea. Conversely, several determinants (e.g., economic assistance to North Korea, inter-dialogue between two Koreas, cultural and social exchange, and so on) emphasized by liberal approaches are significantly related to likelihood of peace on the Korean peninsula. Given the two different interpretations about the likelihood of conflict or peace, it can be argued that a second military action might occur on the Korean peninsula if realism theories are true. However, if practical factors exist on the Korean peninsula, the two Korean can optimistically expect a peaceful reunification in the future, without interference from other countries.

**KeyWords:** South Korea, North Korea, Realism, Liberalism, Causal Loop Analysis

\* 원광대학교 정치행정언론학부 교수 (제1저자, ironhoon113@hotmail.com)

## I . Introduction

Scholars and policymakers have been predicting and debating that a second Korean War will occur-started by an invasion from the North Korea. Arguments can be made for why the Korean War has not re-ignited on the Korean peninsular since 1953. With regard to this crucial question, different international relations theories have different perspectives and interpretations, although each international relations theory may not directly or clearly explain the re-ignition of the Korean War.

Realism has remained the dominant theory in the study of international relations. Realism makes several assumptions that are shared among its variants and are key to its treatment of power: 1) the international system is anarchic, 2)the system is characterized by a security dilemma, 3) states are the key units of action (Waltz, 1979), states seek power either as an end in itself or as a means to other ends, 4) states behave in a rational manner (Waltz, 1954; Waltz, 1979; Morrow, 1993; Jervis, 1987). Given the assumption of the realistic perspective of international relations especially international conflicts, Jervis argues that offensive advantages provide an additional incentive for nations to solve their security dilemma by attacking their opponents (Jervis, 1978). In terms of preventive war, Levy raises a crucial question regarding why declining states may choose preventive military action rather than alliances. By criticizing different perspectives of other scholars on preventive war, Levy insists that “preventive war is more concerned with minimizing one’s losses from future decline than with maximizing one’s gains by fighting now” (Levy, 1987. p. 88). Thus, he points out that a declining state may attack a rising power in order to avoid having to fight later on worse terms. For instance, when the offensive is advantaged, both aggression and preemptive strikes to prevent aggression become more attractive (Morrow, 1993, p. 210). However, it can be argued that realist theories focusing on military force as the principal source of security and insecurity provide little guidance for interpretation, at least on Korean peninsula (Kang, 2003).

Conversely, many liberal scholars argue that states be seen as rational egoists and interstate cooperation occurs when states have significant interests in common (Johan, 1968; Keohane and Nye, 1975; Keohane, 1987; Tsoukalis, 1991). With the notion of liberal peace, many studies show that interdependence will decrease the likelihood of conflict (Polachek et al. 1999; Gasiorowski and Polachek 1982; Oneal, et al. 1996; Oneal and Russett 1997; Russett and Oneal 1999, 2001). For instance, democracy, interdependence, and international

organizations serve to promote the absence of warfare and the creation of enduring peace (Russett and Oneal, 2001).

Considering these disparate views on a possibility of a second Korean War, the purpose of the research is not so much to find a particular solution to military tension between North and South Korea, but rather it is to explore how these theories can be applied to the Korean case, looking at an interesting phenomenon and attempting to better understand something of its nature. Thus, in this paper I will examine the realistic view of the likelihood of conflict or peace between North and South Korea with published data by looking at realist perspectives focusing on preventive theory. Second, with historical data and current data issued by the Ministry of Unification in South Korea, I will investigate the likelihood of military deployment or peace on the Korean peninsula by looking at liberal perspectives. Finally, based on the published data and events that have occurred between North and South Korea, I will develop a causal loop diagram to assess the likelihood of conflict or peace on the Korean peninsula.

## **II . The realistic approach to the likelihood of conflict between North and South Korea**

By generally assuming that nation-states are rational and the international system is generally anarchic (Waltz, 1954, 1979), the probability of victory is presumed to increase as the total military advantage dedicated to the war effort by one side grows relative to the other side. Therefore, the victor is likely to be the nation with the most total military capabilities dedicated to the war (Mesquita et al., 1999. p.795). However, in an anarchic system, nations cannot depend on a higher authority to ensure their security (Morrow, 1993). Under bipolarity, great powers ensure their own security through internal balancing (Waltz, 1954; Jervis, 1987; Morrow, 1993). Jervis argues that offensive advantages provide an additional incentive for nations to solve their security dilemma by attacking their opponents. As mentioned earlier, when expecting that the offensive is advantaged, both aggression and preemptive strikes to prevent aggression become more attractive (Morrow, 1993). And, at the domestic level, status quo powers act aggressively because they must, to preserve their own security. Thus, Morrow (1993) contends that “defensive advantages alleviate the security

dilemma because preparing to protect oneself does not threaten others” (Morrow, 1993, page, 211). Moreover, building arms can improve a nation’s ability to defend itself or can induce other nations to view the arming state as a threat (Morrow, page, 213).

In terms of preventive war, Levy raises a crucial question regarding why declining states may choose preventive military action rather than alliances. In comparison to the different perspectives of other scholars on preventive war, Levy insists that “preventive war is more concerned with minimizing one’s losses from future decline than with maximizing one’s gains by fighting now” (Levy, 1987. p. 88). Thus, he argues that a declining state may attack a rising power in order to avoid having to fight later on worse terms. For instance, when the offensive is advantaged, both aggression and preemptive strikes to prevent aggression become more attractive (Morrow, 1993, p. 210).

Conversely, in terms of preventive war, the general preventive situation may consist of a stronger power, the defender, and a weaker power, the challenger (Kang, 2003). Assuming that the challenger’s economic and military capabilities begin to match that of the defender, Kang, with diverse previous studies, argues that “there exists the possibility that the defender will decide to fight a preventive war to keep the challenger from catching up, or that the challenger will fight it catches up” (Kang, 2003. p. 304).

With regard to this point of view, some empirical studies attempted to define power as equal when the challenger is at least 80 percent of the defender in size as measured by GNP. In order to measure power, these empirical studies tested whether or not preventive wars occurred as challengers approached or passed the 80-percent value (Organski and Kugler, 1980; Lemke and Werner, 1996; De Soysa et al. 1997). Assuming that North Korea is so weak in terms of its military and economy compared to South Korea, how can so many people emphasizing preemptive, preventive, and relative power apply their hypotheses to the situation? By looking at published data, we explore whether the realist perspective can be applied at least on the Korean peninsula in terms of the likelihood of conflict or peace.

According to National Unification Board and CIA World Factbook on the average GNP between North and South Korea from 1953 to 2000, North Korea was never close to South Korea. Especially after 1960, North Korea rapidly began falling further and further behind South Korea. North Korea’s GNP in 1960 was \$ 1.52 billion, while South Korea’s GNP was \$1.95 billion. By 1970 North Korea’s GNP had grown to \$3.98 billion, while in the South, the GNP was \$7.99 billion.

In per capita income the North was never much further ahead of the South either. Both North and South Korea were roughly equivalent until the mid-1970s, but South Korea rapidly increased per capita GNP after the early 1980s. Moreover, by 1980, the North's income was \$758 per capita, while the South's was \$1,589, and by 1990 \$1,065 to \$5,569. Considering the series of changes in per capita income between North and South Korea, it can be argued that per capita income is not a significant factor causing military tension (National Unification Board, 1996).

In terms of defense spending, North Korea quickly fell behind the South by the mid-1970s, while South Korea rapidly increased defense spending. Moreover, after the mid-1980s defense spending in South Korea was dramatically increased. In other words, North Korea has been suffering economic stagnation since the mid-1980s (Kang, 2003).

The most common measures of power in international relations-economic size and defense spending-show quite clearly that North Korea was never larger than South Korea, and has been smaller on both an absolute and a per capita basis than the South for at least thirty years, and continues to fall further behind. The onus is on preventive war theory to explain the theoretical reasons that lead to the prediction that North Korea would finally attack now that it is one-twentieth the size of the South (Kang, 2003).

After the Korean War, North and South Korea were roughly similar in terms of military capabilities at least by the 1970s. However, in the mid-1980s the North began to fall behind. In terms of the number of men in the armed forces from 1963 to 1998, the most important feature is that North Korea did not begin its massive expansion of its armed forces until well into the 1970s. This is most probably a response to its falling further behind the South. But for the past thirty years, North Korea's training, equipment, and overall military quality has steadily deteriorated relative to the South.

Finally, Table 1 indicates a comparison of weaponry in North and South Korea in 1998. Based on this data, it can be assumed that the South Korean military is better equipped, better trained, and more versatile with better logistics and support than the North Korean military. A more interesting feature of the comparison of weaponry in North and South Korea is that the bulk of North Korea's main battle tanks are of 1950s vintage, and most of its combat aircraft were introduced before 1956. Given the data, it can be assumed that North Korea has hardly improved in many sectors such as its national economy, military capabilities, and so on.

〈Table 1〉 A Comparison of North and South Korea's Hardware in 1998

Type of Hardware	North Korea	South Korea	Comments
Main battle Tanks	3,000: T-34, T-54/55, T-62, Type 59	2,130: 400 M-47 850 M-48 800 Type 88	T-34 are WWII vintage; T-55 introduced in 1957 M-47 are WWII vintage; M-48 from 1952
Fighter aircraft	107 MiG-17 159 Mig-19 130 Mig-21 46 Mig-23 30 Mig-29 18 Su-7 35 Su-25	130 F-4D/E 195 F-5 60 F-16	US has 72 F-16 in Korea and 36 in Japan; U.S. also has 54 F-15 in Japan MiG-17, -19, and -21 were all introduced before 1956; MiG-29 in 1983 F-4 introduced in 1963; F-5 in 1972; F-16 introduced in 1980
Bombers	82 Il-28	—	

Source: The Military Balance 1997-1998 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998); James F. Dunigan, *HowtoMakeWar*(NewYork:Quill,1983).

Overall, by looking at the economic and military comparison of North and South Korea, it is clear that North Korea never had a lead over South Korea, and after the 1960s quickly began falling behind South Korea in terms of national economic and military capabilities. With regard to realist perspective, especially as it pertains to preventive war, why did so many scholars apply the preventive war theory to the Korean peninsula when North Korea was so weak in comparison to its southern neighbor? Kang (2003) argues that “scholars smuggled a number of ancillary or ad hoc assumptions into the theory” (p. 310). Moreover, “because the scholarly literature has paid such scant attention to understanding the theoretical underpinnings of dissatisfied or revisionist states, this leaves ample room for poorly defined assumptions to be inserted into the argument” (Kang, 2003. p. 310). Thus, unless we are able to provide a positive criterion for identifying this case, this does not seem to be a satisfactory solution because it simply creates a residual category that lumps together some very heterogeneous cases (Kang, 2003).

### III. Liberal theoretical approaches to the likelihood of conflict or peace between North and South Korea

By arguing that the bipolar structure of military power that had characterized world politics for forty years had collapsed and by arguing that realism (i.e., international anarchy fosters competition and conflict among states and inhibits their willingness to cooperate even when they share common interests) has dominated international relations theory at least since World War II, Keohane and Nye (1989) emphasize that transnational actors (e.g., members of international organization, businessmen, student exchanges, migrant populations, etc.) are major players in the international system, regardless of state boundaries. As indicated earlier, many liberal scholars believe that interdependence will decrease the likelihood of conflict, but will increase the likelihood of peace (Polachek et al. 1999; Gasiorowski and Polachek 1982; Oneal, et al. 1996; Oneal and Russett 1997; Russett and Oneal 1999, 2001).

By criticizing the realism perspective that interdependence and conflict is negatively related (Barbieri 1996 and 1999), many studies show that there are no relationships between trade and conflict (Beck et al. 1998). By focusing on three interrelated causal mechanisms: (1) commercial institutions increase the opportunity costs of war for state leaders, creating a motive to bargain for dispute resolution; (2) some commercial institutions provide information about member-states' military capabilities, helping regional leaders to reach an efficient bargain for peace as an alternative to costly war; and (3) many commercial institutions bring together high-level state leaders on a regular basis, creating trust necessary to overcome commitment problems in inter-state bargaining, Bearce (2003) suggests that we not only should encourage state leaders to pursue deep integration as a way to create and foster positive commercial expectation, but also the institutions should be structured with maximum opportunities for high-level state leaders to meet and interact on a regular basis (pp. 366–367).

Given the optimistic perspective of relationship between interdependence and the likelihood of peace, it can be argued that by developing dynamic interactions such as high-level inter-Korean meetings, enhancing inter-Korean visits for economic growth and for reuniting families broken up by the civil war, unification is not an ideal scenario for the Korea peninsula. By looking at numerous data related to the dynamic interactions between North and South Korea, I explore the likelihood of peace, emphasizing liberal perspectives. First, I

will look over historical inter-Korean dialogue since the 1970s. Second, I will look at civil interaction and economic trade between North and South Korea as well as charity assistance from South Korea to North Korean, given with the hope of peaceful unification on the Korean peninsula.

## **1. Historical inter-Korean dialogue (1970s-2000s)**

Although, it might be said that the reunification of the two Koreas is seen as a difficult goal due to different political ideologies, North and South Korea have expected that unification should be achieved peacefully and without foreign interference. With regard to this point of view, I will briefly look at a historical development of inter-Korean dialogue for unification on the Korean peninsula.

In the 1970s, the political environment began to change rapidly and peacefully on the Korean Peninsula, following President Park Jung-hee's announcement of the "Plan for Peaceful Reunification" of August 15, 1970. After that, the Red Cross meeting took place a year later on August 20, 1971 and subsequently, in 1972, through contact between North and South Korean authorities, the July 4 Joint Declaration was adopted and the Inter-Korean Coordination Committee was established. Despite the historical significance of opening the channel for inter-Korean dialogue, it was hard to say the two Koreas agreed to work for reunifying the country independently, overcoming differences in ideology and political systems.

From the beginning of the 1980s, the government of President Chun Doo-hwan proposed the two leaders' meeting on June 5, 1981, emphasizing an active policy towards North Korea and drawing measures for national reconciliation and democratic reunification. However, after the downing of a Korean Air passenger plane by a Soviet jet fighter on September 1, 1983 and the terrorist attack in Rangoon, Burma on October 9, inter-Korean dialogue became deadlocked. No significant dialogue between North and South Korea occurred again until the mid-1980s. But, being conscious of international isolation, North Korea proposed the inter-Korean sports meeting in March 1984 to discuss the possibility of a single inter-Korean delegation attending the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

Thanks to various contacts and talks between North and South Korea, the two Koreas continued dynamic interactions after 1984, including the inter-Korean Red Cross meeting to discuss the delivery of supplies to flood victims, the inter-Korean Red Cross meeting regarding



hometown visitations to separated families and the exchange of cultural performance groups, the inter-Korean economic meeting, the preparatory meeting concerning the inter-Korean parliamentary meeting, and a preliminary meeting concerning an inter-Korean meeting of high-ranking officials.

After the end of Cold War, inter-Korean talks actively expanded. For instance, eight rounds of inter-Korean meetings with high-ranking officials were held in the 1990s and the Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-aggression, Exchanges and Cooperation between North and South Korea (Inter-Korean Basic Agreement) as well as the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula were declared in 1992. As far as athletic relations between North and South Korea, numerous inter-Korean teams participated in international sporting events. For instance, the inter-Korean team participated in the 41st World Table Tennis Tournament and the 6th World Youth Football Tournament.

By formulating a framework for the era of reconciliation and cooperation between North and South Korea, The Inter-Korean Basic Agreement that the inter-Korean high-ranking officials meeting will be held on eight different occasions between September 1990 and September 1992 was successfully adopted. Moreover, three subcommittees (politics, military, and exchanges & cooperation) were established, regarding the organization of five joint committees (reconciliation, military, economic exchanges & cooperation, social & cultural exchanges and cooperation, and nuclear issues).

Overall, although Inter-Korean relations sometimes had been faced with some difficulties such as the declaration of nuclear weapons in North Korea, the two Koreas attempted to improve Inter-Korean relations through three rounds of talks in Beijing regarding the provision of rice to North Korea in 1995 and five rounds of contacts among the delegates of the Red Cross for the delivery of relief supplies to North Korea in 1997 and 1998. Kim Dea-jung government especially viewed North Korea as a partner for reconciliation and cooperation, implementing a policy toward the north known as the Sunshine Policy.

Seeing the old millennium out and the new millennium in, both North and South Korea attempted to reduce military tension and promote new detente on the Korea peninsula. One significant event on the Korean peninsula was the inter-Korean summit June 13–15, 2000. Moreover, through this historic meeting, the two Koreas expected to cement the friendship that has long existed between the two countries. For instance, President Kim Dae-jung during the summit emphasized his new policies: (1) national reconciliation and reunification; (2) the

easing of tensions and the establishment of a lasting peace on the Korean peninsula; (3) the acceleration of exchanges and further cooperation between North and South Korea; and (4) the reunion of families separated.

The second inter-Korean summit was held in Pyongyang between Kim Jong-ill and Roh Moo-hyun October 2–4, 2007. One of the significant issues during the summit was that North Korea would cease nuclear weapon development. Other issues included discussing various issues related to realizing the advancement of North and South relations including peace, the common prosperity of the Korean people, the unification of Korea, and so on.

## **2. Forming an Inter-Korean Economic Community**

In the number of persons traveling between North and South Korea, The most interesting phenomenon is that in 1993 the number of inter-Korean visitors was 24; in 1995 number of inter-Korean visitors was 536. However, in 2005 the number of persons going back and forth across the countries' shared border reached 88,341. In comparison to the 60 years previous, it was a considerable change on Korean peninsula.

The total number of tourists visiting Mt. Geumgang since 1998 rapidly expanded their activities in North Korea. In 2005 the number of tourists visiting Mt. Geumgang was approximately 300,000. Thus, it has become a profitable tourist attraction. In total trade volume, South Korea has emerged as North Korea's second largest trading partner behind China (\$1.7 billion) (the Ministry of Unification, 2007). One quarter of North Korea's total trade volume (US\$4 billion) was with South Korea and trade with North Korea began in 1989 with \$20 million. By 1991 this annual figure had grown to \$100 million, \$300 million in 1998 and \$700 million in 2003 (the Ministry of Unification, 2007). Currently, according to the Ministry of Unification (2007), there are 110 inter-Korean economic cooperation business operators with approval given to 82 cooperative projects (the Ministry of Unification, 2007).

## **3. Expanding social and cultural exchange**

In social and cultural exchanges between North and South, 168,498 South Koreans visited the North between 1989 and 2005. Especially 25,566 (15%) South Koreans were involved in social/cultural exchanges. 5,243 North Koreans visited South Korea between 1989 and 2005.

And, the number of those involved in the social/cultural exchanges was 3,865 (74%). For instance, the Presbyterian Church of Korea established the Pyongyang Jeil Church in the Daedong River region of Pyongyang. The Korean Methodist Church also continues to support the Pyongyang Seminary and is involved in a project to foster Christian leaders in North Korea (the Ministry of Unification, 2007). Moreover, cooperative projects in the social and cultural sectors also grew steadily each year in addition to the number of visitors.

The relationship between North and South Korea in general has evolved in terms of reconciliatory and cooperative developments and the two countries in particular have made remarkable accomplishments in terms of economic cooperation at the government and non-government levels. By 1996, financial and economic assistance to North Korea appeared to be small by non-government organizations. In 2004 both government and non-government levels' assistance to North Korea appeared to increase.

Overall, many with liberal perspectives expect that the efforts to substantially remove military threats and to stimulate cooperation for reconciliation and unification on the Korean peninsula will effectively alter the conditions of the cease-fire. With regard to the significant importance of peaceful unification on the Korean peninsula, I investigate whether or not efforts such as inter-Korean dialogue, constant assistance to North Korea, expanding social and cultural exchange and others projects emphasizing liberalism can lead to peaceful reconciliation and reunification on the Korean peninsula without outside interferences. By using a system dynamics model (i.e., causal loops diagram analysis and system dynamics modeling analysis), I look at the likelihood of peace on the Korean peninsula.

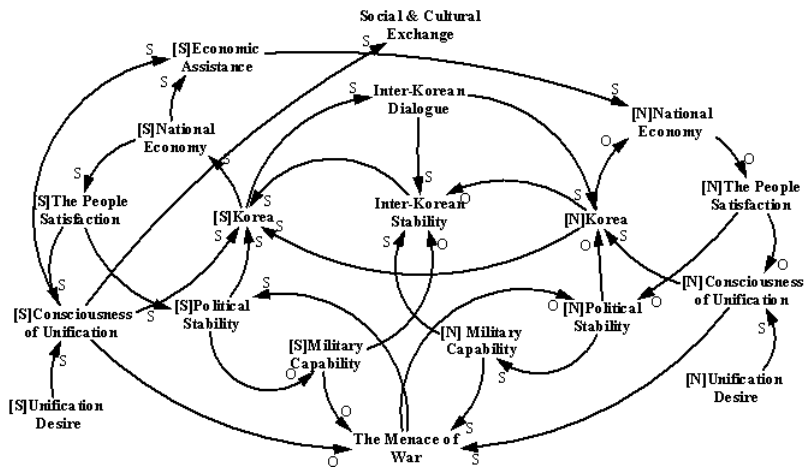
#### **IV. Causal loops analysis on the likelihood of conflict or peace on the Korean peninsula**

Although numerous policy analysts, political scientists, and officials have attempted to analyze policy making decisions (e.g., improvement of military tensions between North and South Korea) with diverse research tools such as statistical analysis, the decisions continue to be difficult. There is an old saying that “if the only tool you have is a hammer, everything begins to look like a nail.” If the political phenomenon or our behavior is linear and static,

we view those features as linear and static. But, real situations in our world are complex and dynamic. Thus, causal loop diagrams provide a way for understanding of the dynamic, interconnected nature of our world. By stringing together many loops, we can make a coherent story about a particular problem or issue. In order to explain and resolve the military tension and reunification, for example, we need feedback systems thinking, because numerous factors related to conflict and peace exist.

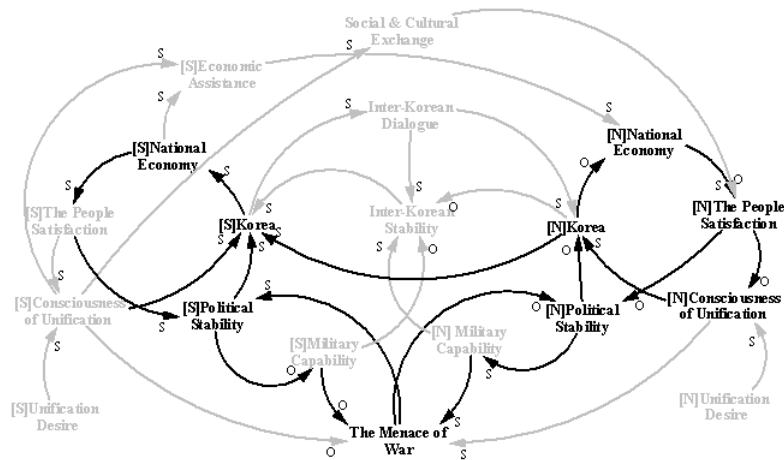
In order to explain the likelihood of conflict or the likelihood of unification between North and South Korea, I should be able to analyze: (1) how factors are related, and how one factor will change when another changes; (2) how factors may feed back in either balancing loops or reinforcing loops; (3) how external factors impact on the system; and (4) how gaps operate.

Figure 1 show a comprehensive causal loops analysis with realism and liberal approaches about the likelihood of a second Korean War or relatively constant peace on the Korean peninsula. There are significant factors emphasized by realists: national economy, military capability, political stability, and the menace of war. Many factors focused on in liberal perspective are also indicated: inter-Korean dialogue, consciousness of unification, unification desire, inter-Korean stability, social and cultural exchange and so on. Based on the dynamic causal loops interactions, we explore a comparison between realism and liberal perspectives with regard to likelihood of conflict or peace on the Korean peninsula.



[Figure 1] Causal loops analysis with realistic and liberal approaches about on the Korean peninsula

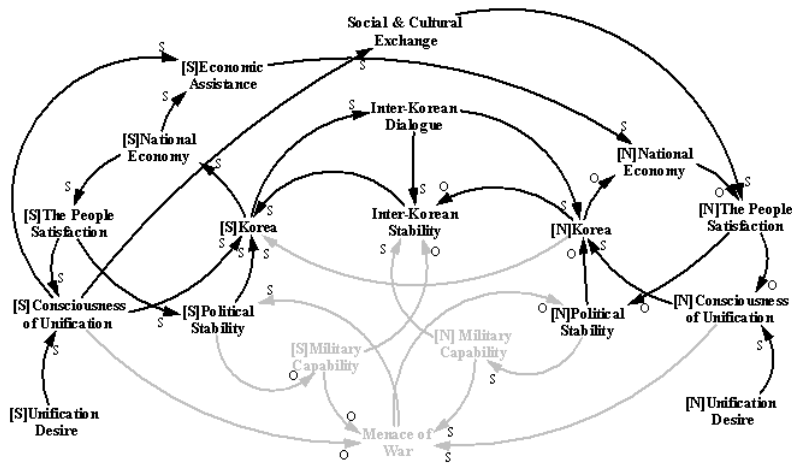
Figure 2 shows a causal loops analysis with the realism approach about the likelihood of conflict on the Korean peninsula. Based on realism perspectives of South Korea, the causal loops in Figure 2 indicate: 1) the peoples' satisfaction in South Korea can be increased by enhancement of the national economy, 2) the development of the national economy can lead to an increase of national political stability as well as an increase of military capability in South Korea, and 3) if South Korea has more stable military capabilities toward North Korea, the menace of war on the Korean peninsula will be decreased. Conversely, based on realism perspectives of North Korea the causal loops in Figure 2 indicate: 1) the peoples' satisfaction in North Korea can be decreased by economic stagnation and an unstable political system, 2) economic stagnation and an unstable political system can lead to an increase of military capabilities and the increase of military capabilities in North Korea will increase the menace of war on the Korean peninsula.



[Figure 2] Causal loops analysis with realism approach on the Korean peninsula

Figure 3 shows causal loops analysis from the liberal approach on the likelihood of peace on the Korean peninsula. Based on liberal perspectives in Figure 3 indicates: 1) if the national economy increases, the peoples' satisfaction toward the government in South Korea will increase, 2) if the peoples' satisfaction increases due to enhancement of the national economy, consciousness of unification will increase, 3) if consciousness of unification on the Korean peninsula increases, social and cultural exchange can increase and the menace of war will be

decreased, 4) by increasing the national economy in South Korea, economic assistance to North Korea will actively increase, 5) by increasing the national economy in North Korea due to economic assistance from South Korea, it can be expected that the peoples' satisfaction toward the government in North Korea will increase and consciousness of unification will increase, 6) based on the achievements to date inter-Korean dialogue for reconciliation and cooperation, the two Koreas can promote the establishment of a peace system on the Korean peninsula in hopes of achieving a permanent state of peace between the two nations without outside interference from countries such as the US, China, Japan, and so on.



[Figure 3] Causal loops analysis with the liberal approach on the Korean peninsular

Overall, by utilizing casual-loop diagrams on the likelihood of conflict or peace on the Korean peninsula, we can deduce several interesting outcomes. First, several factors (e.g., economic stagnation of North Korea, unstable political systems, and so on) emphasized by realism perspectives are significantly related to the likelihood of conflict between North and South Korea. Conversely, several determinants (e.g., economic assistance to North Korea, inter-dialogue between two Koreas, cultural and social exchange, and so on) emphasized by liberal approaches are significantly related to likelihood of peace on the Korean peninsula. Given the two different interpretations about the likelihood of conflict or peace, it can be argued that a second military action might occur on the Korean peninsula if realism theories are true. However, if practical factors exist on the Korean peninsula, the two Korean can

optimistically expect a peaceful reunification in the future, without interference from other countries.

## V. Conclusion and Implications

No single explanation or actor adequately explains the international relations in general and the possible causes of war or peace in particular. For instance, a realism interpretation is only part of the explanation of the likelihood of conflict or peace on the Korean peninsula. Moreover, for most of the history of military tension between North and South Korea, the entire field of International Relations (IR) has largely ignored the military or political tension on the Korean Peninsula. In other words, the emergence of realistic theories can only be understood as a tool that the strong states can dominate the weak. Liberal approach has attempted to establish a peace system in international relations. With regard to this point of view, the liberal approach that the participation and cooperation of neighboring nations will reinforce the stability and effectiveness of the peace system is very applicable to two Koreas issue.

The two nations should be at the center of as both are directly concerned with establishing and safeguarding peace on the Korean peninsula. With regard to establishing and safeguarding peace on the Korean peninsula, the main purpose of this work is to investigate the factors hindering and supporting a reunification on the Korean peninsula based on two international theories. Moreover, because we are interested in endogenous factors (except the nuclear weapons issue in North Korea) affecting the likelihood of conflict or peace, external factors (e.g., military alliances between South Korea and the US, North Korea and China, the US's intervention in unification on the Korean peninsula, etc) are far from our main interest, at least in this work.

However, as indicated above, numerous questionable arguments exist. First, many people have worried that the building of nuclear weapons in North Korea is a crucial issue jeopardizing unification on the Korean peninsula . In terms of national security, many scholars argue that when facing a significant military threat to a nation's security, the state is willing to seek to develop nuclear weapons (Deutsch, 1992; Shultz, 1984; May, 1994). With regard to this point of view, Sagan (1996) argues that "nuclear weapons are more than tools of

national security; they are political objects of considerable importance in domestic debates and internal bureaucratic struggles and can also serve as international normative symbols of modernity and identity” (p. 55). Given the different perspectives on the nuclear weapon issues on the Korean peninsula, since the theories provide somewhat different and often contradictory lessons for North Korea’s nuclear issue, nuclear weapons issue is a significant task as a case study for understanding the likelihood of conflict on the Korean peninsula.

The second argument is that it is hard to deny that the US has been a dominant actor as a political and military partner with South Korea as well as an overpowering presence in North Korea’s political and military actions. Rising the question “why has North Korea not attacked on South Korea since the Korean War”, Kang (2003) insists that “the U.S. deterrent made a North Korean attack useless” (p. 319). Is it true that thanks to the interference of the U.S., military action has not happened on the Korean peninsula? With regard to his argument about the U.S. deterrent theory, it can be said that he gives room for reconsideration of the issue as a future study.

In a nutshell, without ceaseless endeavors of North and South Korea for unification, it is hard to expect a peaceful reunification on the Korean peninsula. Moreover, the two Koreans should slough off their prejudices; without economic, political, and military intervention from the US or other actors such as China or Japan, unification on the Korea peninsula is an impossible story.



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