



Woodrow Wilson  
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**THE RISE AND FALL OF DÉTENTE ON  
THE KOREAN PENINSULA, 1970-1974**

Christian F. Ostermann / James F. Person, eds.

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History and Public Policy Program  
Critical Oral History Conference Series

# **THE RISE AND FALL OF DÉTENTE ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA, 1970-1974**

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Christian F. Ostermann / James F. Person, eds.



Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars  
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Cover image: Korean Central Intelligence Agency Director Lee Hurak (right) greets North Korean Second Vice-Premier Pak Seongcheol (left) during a meeting in South Korea on October 13, 1972

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# Acknowledgements

This transcript is the second in a series of critical oral history conferences jointly convened by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars' North Korea International Documentation Project and the University of North Korean Studies. The conference was held on 1-2 July 2010 in Washington.

The editors would like to thank the KOREA FOUNDATION, THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH KOREAN STUDIES, UNITED AIRLINES, and THE WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOLARS for their generous financial support for both the conference and this publication. We would also like to thank the eyewitnesses to this history – the veteran diplomatic and intelligence officials who traveled from Korea, Bulgaria, and all corners of the United States carrying a hefty 1,700-page collection of declassified archival documents. We are particularly grateful to the faculty and staff of the University of North Korean Studies, including Ambassador Jounyung Sun, Prof. Jongdae Shin, Prof. Kihljae Ryoo, Dean Oullette, and Heeseon Min for their support in organizing the conference and for collecting newly declassified South Korean documents from the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Seoul). We would also like to thank Bernd Schaefer and Eliza Gheorghe for sharing many (East) German and Romanian documents. For their efforts, the editors would also like to thank the staff of the History and Public Policy Program, including Kristina Terzieva and Piet Biersteker. Finally, for all of their hard work in assembling the massive collection of archival documents from around the world and in helping assemble this transcript and collection of documents, we would like to thank NKIDP interns Lauren Bae, Ria Chae, Hazel Han, Na Sil Heo, Wandu Hwang, Esther Im, Charles Kraus, Debbie Kye, Yong Kwon, Scott LaFoy, Robert Lauler, Chaeryung Lee, Taylor Sutton, and Will Treece.

**Christian F. Ostermann**

**James F. Person**



Korea Foundation



UNITED



## Preface

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With this publication, the Wilson Center presents the findings and transcripts of the international conference “The Rise and Fall of Detente on the Korean Peninsula, 1970-1974,” organized in July 2010 by the Centers’ History & Public Policy Program (North Korea International Documentation Project) and the University of North Korean Studies (Seoul). The conference is the second in an ongoing critical oral history conference on inter-Korean, U.S.-ROK, and DPRK-Socialist bloc relations during the Cold War. Begun in 2008 with support from the Korea Foundation (Seoul), the conference series brings together newly declassified documents, eyewitnesses, and scholars and engages them in discoveries and discussions of the “white spots” in our countries shared history.

The 2010 conference examined the fundamental shift that began to emerge in the major power alignments in East Asia in 1970. With relations between the USSR and China declining over the previous decade to the point of military skirmishes along their shared 2,700 mile border, Chinese leaders understood that they could not withstand the sustained enmity of two global powers and cautiously sought to improve relations with Washington as the lesser of the two threats. By 1971, the two Koreas likewise began to lessen the tensions that had beset the peninsula ever since the Korean War (1950-1953) and began an unprecedented series of face-to-face negotiations.

With the participation of veteran officials from the U.S., Korea and Europe who were part of these historic events, the conference explored the period beginning with the improvement of relations between the two Koreas that led to the historic North-South Joint Communiqué of July 4, 1972, through March 1974 when North Korea abandoned inter-Korean dialogue in order to seek a separate U.S.-DPRK treaty to replace the Korean War armistice. The conference also studied the reactions of the two Koreas to the Sino-U.S. opening, the abduction of dissident-turned-president of the Republic of Korea, Kim Dae-Jung, the “Korea question” in the United Nations, and a host of other issues affecting inter-Korean, U.S.-Korean, and Sino-DPRK relations during this period.

The conference was yet another co-production of an extraordinarily successful and close partnership between the Center and the University of North Korean Studies, one of Korea's leading academic institutions headed by President Park Jae-Kyu. We are tremendously grateful to President Park and his colleagues for their expertise, institutional support and cooperation. The conference would also not have been possible without the generous support of the Korea Foundation, led by President Kim Byung-kook.

The transcript of the discussions will in itself be a unique historical source for scholars and the public in both Korea and the United States. Though the discussions focused on events dating back nearly four decades, their legacies confront American and Korean policymakers today. We hope that the proceedings will contribute to an informed dialogue on U.S.-Korean and inter-Korean relations, past and future.

Jane Harman  
Director, President, and CEO  
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

## Executive Summary

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In July 2010, the Woodrow Wilson Center's History & Public Policy Program (North Korea International Documentation Project) and the University of North Korean Studies convened their second in a series of critical oral history conferences at the Wilson Center in Washington, DC. For the first and perhaps last time, a group of veteran diplomatic and intelligence officials from the Republic of Korea, the United States, and the former communist bloc, all active in Korean affairs in the early 1970s, assembled with a small group of scholars in an effort to provide context to, and fill gaps in the available documentary record. *The Rise and Fall of Détente on the Korean Peninsula, 1970-1974* is the result of that historic conference and features extended and probing discussions on the rise and demise of the inter-Korean dialogue, South Korea's changing relationship with the United States, and North Korea's position within the communist bloc during the era of détente.

*The Rise and Fall of Détente on the Korean Peninsula, 1970-1974* features the transcript of the conference discussions and a selection of primary source documents. The proceedings revealed the following findings:

South Korean leaders were concerned that after the United States-China rapprochement in the early 1970s, Washington might also unilaterally seek rapprochement with North Korea. These concerns factored prominently into Seoul's decision to engage Pyongyang directly.

After determining that the prosperity gap between the two Koreas was widening, in South Korea's favor, President Park Chung Hee suggested holding discussions on a rota-

tional basis in Seoul and Pyongyang, to make the North Korean leadership aware of the South's growing affluence;

North Korean leader Kim Il Sung entered into dialogue with Seoul believing that South Korea was ripe for revolution, and that, much like North Vietnam, the North would ultimately prevail over the South;

Korean Central Intelligence Agency Chief Lee Hurak played an influential role in the decision to strengthen presidential authority in South Korea under the *Yushin* system – possibly more so than President Park Chung Hee.

Twenty-two documents, obtained from archives in South Korea, Hungary, Romania, (East) Germany, Bulgaria, Albania, and the United States accompany the conference transcript and provide additional context and evidence on this period in inter-Korean, U.S.-Korean, and DPRK-Socialist bloc relations. Among the most noteworthy documents in the collection are newly obtained and translated conversation between Kim Il Sung and foreign heads of state, including Romania's Nicolae Ceaușescu and Bulgaria's Todor Zhivkov. In his 1971 conversation with Ceaușescu, Kim Il Sung described his new policy of peaceful reunification, premised on the belief that South Korea was on the verge of revolution. In his 1973 conversation with Zhivkov, the North Korean leader expressed his frustrations with Chinese foreign and domestic policies.

# Participants

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## EYEWITNESSES

**DANIEL A. O'DONOHUE** entered the U.S. Foreign Service in 1957 and spent much of his early career in Korean affairs. He was a political officer at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul from 1960 until 1964, handling both domestic and international issues including coordination with the United Nations Command. In the period 1964-66, Ambassador O'Donohue was assigned to the Korea desk in the State Department Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. From 1972 until 1974, he was political counselor in the United States Embassy in Seoul, followed by two years as office director for Korean affairs in the State Department (1974-76). In 1968, Ambassador O'Donohue was a member of the Vance party sent to Seoul immediately after the Pueblo/Blue House incidents. Ambassador O'Donohue's other assignments included Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (1981-83-dealing mainly with Southeast Asia); Ambassador to Burma (1983-87) and Thailand (1988-91), as well as principal deputy director of the State Department Policy Planning staff (1987-88).

**KIM DASOOL** was the person at the South Korean Red Cross in charge of the inter-Korean dialogues of the 1970s. He was the team supervisor when the North-South Red Cross Conference first took place at Panmunjeom in September of 1971. When the North and South Korean Red Cross Conference was going back and forth between Seoul and Pyongyang, he served as an overseer of the conference as a whole as the "Head of the Office of the South-North Dialogue" and the "Inter-Korean Red Cross Conference Representative."

**LEE DONGBOK** is a former member of the Republic of Korea's National Assembly (1996-2000) and a visiting professor at the College of Law and Political Science at Myongji University. Mr. Lee began his career as a political reporter

for *The Hankook Ilbo* (1958-1971), followed by a career of playing a key role in the formulation and execution of South Korea's policy toward North Korea and national unification in varying capacities. Dr. Lee served as a member of the North-South Red Cross Talks (1971-1972), spokesman for the North-South Coordinating Committee (1972-1982), Director-General for North-South Dialogue at the National Unification Board (1980-1982), Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (1991-1992) and Special Assistant to the Director of the National Security Planning Agency (1991-1993). Having participated in many of the past rounds of negotiations between the two Koreas as a key member of the Southern delegations, Mr. Lee was instrumental in producing a number of major inter-Korean agreements, including the *North-South Joint Communiqué of July 4, 1972*, and the *North-South Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, Exchange and Cooperation* as well as the *North-South Joint Declaration on Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula*, both of which went into effect as of February 19, 1992.

**GEORGI MITOV** is a retired Bulgarian foreign ministry officer with thirty years of diplomatic experience. During his tenure, Mr. Mitov occupied a number of positions within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His assignments abroad included missions to Pyongyang, Islamabad, Odessa, and Seoul. Mr. Mitov was appointed Third, and later Second Secretary at the Bulgarian Embassy in Pyongyang during 1966-1969 and 1973-1975 respectively, and in 1990 opened the Bulgarian Embassy in Seoul, serving as a Charge d'Affaires. He holds a degree in history from Kim Il Sung University in Pyongyang and has attended the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow.

**B. DONOVAN PICARD** is a partner with Picard Kentz & Rowe. His areas of practice include International Trade and Investment, International Arbitration, Litigation and Dispute Resolution, and Public and Private International Law. After service in Vietnam (1967-69) and Japan (1969-71), Mr. Picard was assigned



to cover Korea in the Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) and began that assignment with several months assignment temporary duty assignment (TDY) in Seoul during the Pak/Kim Dae-jung election campaign. In 1972, Picard moved from INR to the Office of Korean Affairs, with particular responsibility for North Korea. He spent the summer of 1973 again on TDY in Seoul during the initial North-South Red Cross discussions and the U.N. General Assembly Korea debate. Mr. Picard has been in private practice since leaving the US Department of State.

**WARD THOMPSON** is a U.S. Marine Corp Vietnam veteran and holds degrees from Brown University and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. His Foreign Service career specialty was the Nordic Countries, where he was political counselor at embassies in Helsinki and Copenhagen and consul general in Gothenburg. He also served at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul as political officer in 1972-75, following one year of Korean language training. He focused on ROK external relations, including the UN, on North-South contacts and on U.S. military concerns and, as a language officer, met with people throughout Korea to contribute to the Embassy's understanding of domestic developments. This experience served him well in his later assignment as Director of the State Department's Office of Human Rights Policy.

## SCHOLARS

**GREGG A. BRAZINSKY** is associate professor of history and international affairs at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C. Professor Brazinsky is pursuing research on various projects, including a study of Sino-U.S. competition in the Third World. His publications include *Nation Building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans, and the Making of a Democracy* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007). Brazinsky also serves as co-director of the George Washington University Cold War Group and as senior advisor to NKIDP.

**JAMES HERSHBERG** is associate professor of history and international affairs at The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs, and former director of the Cold War International History Project from 1991-1996. His expertise is in the international history of the Cold War, contemporary international relations, and nuclear history. Hershberg received the 1994 Stuart Bernath Prize from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations. His work has appeared in the following publications: the *Journal of Cold War Studies*, *Cold War History*, *Diplomatic History*, the *Journal of American History*, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, and the *CWIHP Bulletin*. Hershberg is the author of *James B. Conant: Harvard to Hiroshima and the Making of the Nuclear Age*. He holds a Ph.D. from Tufts University, an M.A. from Columbia, and a B.A. from Harvard.

**HONG SEUKRYULE** is assistant professor in the history department at Sungshin Women's University in Seoul, and an advisor for the Republic of Korea's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Prof. Hong holds a Ph.D. in Korean History from Seoul National University, and has also spent time as a visiting researcher at the University of Maryland at College Park (1999-2000). He specializes in the modern history of Korea, and specifically, U.S.-ROK and inter-Korean relations during the Park Chung Hee administration. Prof. Hong's publications include *The Unification Issue and Socio-political Tension in South Korea: 1953-1961* (Seoul University Press, 2001), as well as "Pueblo Incident in 1968 and U.S.-ROK-DPRK Triangular Relations," *The Journal of Korean History* (2001), and "US-DPRK Relations in the early 1970s," *The Korean Journal of International Relations* (2004).

**CHRISTINE KIM** is an assistant professor in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service of Georgetown University, where she teaches courses on modern Korean and East Asian history. Her research focuses on the relationship between culture and politics in the formation of national identity. She is presently completing a manuscript about the significance of the Joseon (1392-1910) monarchy in twentieth century Korea entitled *The King Is Dead*, and has forthcoming articles in the *Journal of Asian Studies* and *Collective Memory in Northeast Asia* (Palgrave-Macmillan). Her next project looks at cultural properties (*munhwajae*) as an attribute of Koreanness. Kim received her Ph.D. from Harvard in 2004.

**KATHARINE H.S. MOON** is Professor in the Department of Political Science at Wellesley College. Moon is the author of *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations* (Columbia University, 1997; Korean edition by Sam-in Publishing Co., 2002) and other publications on the U.S.-Korea alliance and social movements in Korea and Asia (e.g., democratization, women's movements, migrant workers, human rights). They are available in edited volumes and academic journals such as *Asian Survey* and *The Journal of Asian Studies* and Korean publications such as *Changjak-gwa Bipyong*, and *Dangdae Bipyong*. Currently, Moon is completing a book manuscript *Protesting America, Pursuing Democracy: Korean Civil Society in Alliance Politics* (forthcoming, GAIA/University of California Press). Moon received her Ph.D. from Princeton University, Department of Politics.

**CHRISTIAN F. OSTERMANN** is the director of European Studies and the History and Public Policy Program at the Woodrow Wilson Center, as well as director of the Center's North Korea International Documentation Project (NKIDP) and Cold War International History Project (CWIHP). He is also co-editor, along with Christopher E. Goscha, of the recently published *Connecting Histories: Decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945-1962* (2010). Before joining the Wilson Center in January 1997 as associate director of CWIHP, he worked as a research fellow at the National Security Archive, a non-governmental research institute and repository based at the George Washington University. He is a co-editor of *Cold War History* (London), and a Senior Research Fellow, National Security Archive (George Washington University). He also served as a lecturer in history and international affairs at the George Washington University and professorial lecturer at Georgetown University. He has been a consultant on several historical documentaries. Prior to coming to Washington, he studied in Bonn, Cologne and Hamburg and was a research fellow at the Commission for the History of Parliament and Political Parties, Bonn (Germany).

**JAMES F. PERSON** is coordinator of the Wilson Center's NKIDP and a program associate with the Wilson Center's History and Public Policy Program. Person is currently completing a Ph.D. in history at the George Washington University, writing a dissertation on North Korea's relations with the Soviet Union and China from 1953-1967. His publications include "We Need Help from Outside: The North Korean Opposition Movement of 1956" (CWIHP Working Paper No. 52) and "New Evidence on North Korea in 1956" (CWIHP *Bulletin* 16).

**RYOO KIL-JAE** is an associate professor at the University of North Korean Studies (UNKS) in South Korea, and a former Woodrow Wilson Center public policy scholar. He is currently studying the domestic politics and foreign relations of the DPRK from 1965-1974. Now he is a member of the Policy Advisory Committee to the senior secretary of the President, and to the Ministry of Unification of the ROK government. Professor Ryoo is also the chair of the Committee of North Korea and Unification, Korean Association of International Studies.

**BERND SCHAEFER** is a senior scholar with the Woodrow Wilson International Center's Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) and a former public policy scholar at that Center. He is completing a book *East Asian Communism and the Superpowers, 1968-1976* for publication in the Center's Cold War Series with Stanford University Press. He was a Visiting Professor with the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, a Fellow at the Nobel Institute in Oslo, and a Research Fellow with the German Historical Institute in Washington D.C. and the Technical University of Dresden. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Halle in Germany and an MPA from the Harvard Kennedy School. His publications include *North Korean Unification Policy, 1971-1975* (CWIHP, Washington D.C. 2010); *North Korean 'Adventurism' and China's Long Shadow, 1966-1972* (CWIHP, Washington D.C. 2004); *Ostpolitik, 1969-1974: Global and European Responses* (Cambridge University Press, New York 2009; ed. with Carole Fink); and *The East German State and the Catholic Church, 1945-1989* (Berghahn Books, New York 2010).

**SHIN JONG-DAE** is a professor at the University of North Korean Studies, Seoul and a former Woodrow Wilson Center public policy scholar. Prof. Shin's current research focuses on North Korea's foreign relations and inter-Korean relations in the 1970s. His numerous publications include *Principal Issues of South Korean Society and State Control* (co-author) (Yonsei University, 2005); and *Theory of Inter-Korean Relations* (co-author) (Hanul, 2005).

**WILLIAM STUECK** received his Ph.D. in history from Brown University in 1977. He has written widely on U.S.-Korean relations and the early Cold War. Among his books are *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, 1995) and *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History* (Princeton, 2002). He is currently a distinguished research professor of history at the University of Georgia.

**SUN JOUNYUNG** is a professor at the University of North Korean Studies, Seoul, and is also currently the vice-president and CEO of the United Nations Association for the Republic of Korea. Ambassador Sun served as vice minister of foreign affairs and trade, deputy foreign minister for trade, and South Korea's ambassador to the United Nations, Switzerland, and Czechoslovakia.

**SAMUEL F. WELLS, JR.** is a senior scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. A specialist on international security affairs, he has published widely on U.S. strategy and transatlantic relations. He was a co-editor and a contributor to *The Strategic Triangle: France, Germany, and the Shaping of the New Europe* (2006). His latest publication is with Sherrill B. Wells, "Germany's Choice of Shared Sovereignty in the European Union" in Richard Rosecrance, Ernest R. May, and Zara Steiner (eds.), *History and Neorealism* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

**WOO SEONG-JI** is currently an associate professor at the College of International Studies, Kyung Hee University. He worked as an assistant professor at the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security, Ministry of

Foreign Affairs and Trade, Republic of Korea from March 2003 to February 2005. He also worked as a Research Fellow for the Center for International Studies, Seoul National University from August 2002 to August 2003. Dr. Woo received his Ph.D. from Indiana University, Bloomington. His English articles include “The Park Chung Hee Administration amid Inter-Korean Reconciliation in the Détente Period: Changes in the Threat Perception, Regime Characteristics, and the Distribution of Power” (*Korea Journal*, Summer 2009), “Triangle Research and Understanding Northeast Asian Politics” (*Asian Perspective*, Summer 2003), “South Korea’s Search for a Unification Strategy” (*Orbis*, Summer 2003), and “Adversarial Engagement and Alliance Relations: Triangular Politics on the Korean Peninsula, 1988-94” (*Issues & Studies*, March 2001). His research interests are North Korean politics, inter-Korean relations and international relations theory. Currently his research focuses on the dynamics of inter-Korean reconciliation processes in the early 1970s, 1990s, and 2000s.

**YAFENG XIA** is an associate professor of history at Long Island University in New York, a guest professor at the Center for Cold War International History Studies, East China Normal University in Shanghai, and Wilson Center Fellow. He is the author of *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949-72* (2006). His articles have appeared in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, *The International History Review*, *The Chinese Historical Review*, *Diplomatic History*, *Cold War History*, among others. He was a public policy scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in 2010.

# Chronology

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## 1970

9 **July** / The Nixon administration officially announces the withdrawal of 20,000 U.S. troops from the Republic of Korea.

15 **August** / ROK President Park Chung Hee proposes a new unification policy beginning with a discussion of humanitarian issues “peaceful competition” with North Korea in his Liberation Day Speech.

19 **December** /ROK President Park Chung Hee appoints Lee Hurak as the Director of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA).

## 1971

8-14 **April** / At the Fifth Session of the Fourth Supreme People’s Assembly, DPRK Foreign Minister Heo Dam announces the DPRK’s “Eight Points” on unification.

12 **August** / Choe Duseon, president of the South Korean Red Cross, proposes a meeting between North and South Korean representatives to discuss the reunification of divided families.

14 **August** /The North Korean Red Cross accepts Choe Duseon’s proposal.

20 **September** /The first round of preliminary Red Cross negotiations began between North and South Korea.

20 **November** /Jeong Hongjin of the KCIA met with Korean Workers' Party member Kim Deokhyeon, opening up a new line of communication between the governments of North and South Korea.

## 1972

10 **January** /Kim Il Sung proposes a peace treaty between North and South Korea.

10-22 **March** /A series of preliminary conferences are held in Panmunjeom between North and South Korean representatives to discuss high-level official visits.

2-5 **May** /KCIA Director Lee Hurak meets with Korean Workers' Party member Kim Deokhyn in Seoul to discuss unification.

21 **June** /Kim Il Sung reveals to *Washington Post* correspondent Selig S. Harrison that he is willing to sign a peace treaty with South Korea.

4 **July** /The DPRK and ROK issues a Joint Communiqué, paving the way for the formation of the North-South Coordinating Committee co-chaired by Kim Yeongju and Lee Hurak.



- 30 **August** / First Plenary Red Cross Talks involving representatives from North and South Korea open in Pyongyang.
- 13 **September** / Second Plenary Red Cross Talks involving representatives from North and South Korea open in Seoul.
- 22-26 **October** / North and South Korean representatives attend the Third Plenary Red Cross Talks.
- 3 **November** / Lee Hurak meets with Kim Il Sung to discuss reunification and other issues.
- 13 **November** / North and South Korean representatives attend the Fourth Plenary Red Cross Talks in Seoul.
- 30 **November** / Meeting of the North-South Coordinating Committee opens in Seoul.
- 27 **December** / A heavily rigged plebiscite approves ROK President Park Chung Hee's *Yushin* Constitution.
- 28 **December** / A new constitution is ratified in North Korea, making Kim Il Sung President of the DPRK.

## 1973

14-16 **March** /Second meeting of the North-South Coordinating Committee is held in Pyongyang. North Korea again proposes a peace treaty with South Korea, but South Korea rejects the proposal in favor of building trust between the Koreas.

12-14 **June** /Third meeting of the North-South Coordinating Committee is held in Seoul.

23 **June** /ROK President Park Chung Hee announces the Seven-Point Declaration for Peace and Unification. DPRK President Kim Il Sung shortly announces his own Five-Point Policy for National Reunification.

8 **August** /Opposition candidate Kim Dae-jung is abducted by the KCIA in Tokyo.

28 **August** /North Korea suspends meetings of the North-South Coordinating Committee allegedly in response to Kim Dae-jung's kidnapping.

23 **October** /A DPRK gunboat and torpedo boat crosses the Northern Limit Line (NLL). By the end of 1973, DPRK vessels cross the NLL on forty-three different occasions.

11 **December** /Three DPRK torpedo boats attempt to intimidate United Nations Command (UNC) vessels escorting a routine supply ship to Baengnyeong Island near the NLL. DPRK vessels continue to intrude upon the Northwest Islands over the next several days.



WARD THOMPSON

# Opening Remarks

by Christian F. Ostermann and  
Ambassador Sun Jounyung

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**SUN:** The Korean Peninsula has been a source of tension and instability since the Korean War began in 1950. The study of history and a re-examination of events on the Korean Peninsula, however, may help us to resolve some of the problems that Korea is facing today and even to establish peace between North and South Korea in the future.

Today, the Wilson Center is hosting the second Critical Oral History Conference on the Korean Peninsula. I am very happy to say that many of the key officials directly involved in the formulation and execution of policies during the 1970s have assembled here today to offer their testimonies, to fill in some of the missing pieces of the jigsaw puzzle, and to provide greater clarity as to what happened during the era of inter-Korean dialogue and détente. I am very grateful to the veterans for their participation in this conference.

**OSTERMANN:** Thank you very much, Ambassador Sun. Several years ago, Ambassador Sun, if I recall correctly, argued that we should complement our focus on collecting, translating, and publishing documents on North Korea with oral history. The documents, of course, only tell you part of the story. In the case of Korea specifically, historical documents are limited in quantity. Even in the United States, where we have a greater number of materials available because of more liberal declassification policies, there are still gaps and white pages in the historical record. It is through oral history, through interviews, and through critical oral history, however, that we can begin to fill in those gaps in the historical record.

Critical oral history is a particular form of oral history. Oral history is usually conducted by interview between one scholar and one veteran policymaker or eyewitness.

**“This is very  
much a historical  
conference.**

It’s also a historic conference. It is highly unlikely that this group will come together ever again. So today we have a very unique opportunity to reconstruct history, history that will most likely be lost if it’s not captured here today,”

ness. But for critical oral history conferences, we bring as many eyewitnesses from as many sides as possible together with expert scholars and documents. The focus of critical oral history is the eyewitness: the policy, intelligence, and diplomatic veterans from all sides of the event. Obviously we can’t have North Korean eyewitnesses here today, but our dream is that someday we also will have them at the table.

The eyewitnesses are of crucial importance to this exercise. Sometimes our eyewitnesses are afraid that they will be criticized if they attend these events because this is a “critical” oral history conference. That is not what “critical” means in this context. This exercise is not about criticizing anybody. Critical in this case means having documents available; critical in the sense that we hope to really try to get back to the events now several decades past, put ourselves back in the shoes of those who had to live through those times, who had to make policy decisions at the time, and to try to understand the events through their eyes, through their recollections.

The documents are critical in that they will both stimulate memories among the eyewitnesses and also provide a check on recollections. This is a serious historical exercise. We will record and transcribe the discussion here and enlarge the historical record. And to make the transcript of this conference as valuable to future generations of historians as possible, it is important for the eyewitnesses to be as specific, as concrete as possible. The documents, I hope, will allow us to do just that.

And finally, we also have our scholars, our experts, scattered around the table here. Unlike at a normal scholarly conference, the scholars don’t take center stage. They are here largely to listen to the eyewitnesses and in-between pose some questions. The scholars, of course, know the gaps in the historical record and their questions will hopefully prompt, guide, and inspire us to talk about those gaps in the archival record.

This is very much a historical conference. It’s also a historic conference. It is highly unlikely that this group will come together ever again. So today we have a very unique opportunity to reconstruct history, history that will most likely be lost if it’s not captured here today, and so we very much appreciate your willingness to contribute to this event.

Let me just also say that to the veterans, to the eyewitnesses here today, what we hope you will be able to do is to really go back in time to the early 1970s and forget what you’ve learned about the events between then and now. We hope for

a lively conversation between the scholars and the veterans. Ideally even between the veterans without much input from the scholars. We are interested in really recapturing what it felt like, what your views were at the time, what decisions and actions were taken, fully realizing that at the time your knowledge of the future, and even your view of what was happening then, was incomplete, was only one piece of a larger puzzle.

We are not interested in a lot of prepared statements. Nobody here, not the scholars, not the eyewitnesses, we hope, will give long monologues. We really want to wrestle with a number of issues that have been so far unresolved in history. In order to focus our attention on some of these gaps, we will have two scholars at the beginning of each session. We call them provocateurs who will pose some of the questions that we would like to address during this conference. The eyewitnesses should not feel limited to just those questions, but any insightful information on the subject would be very helpful.

Let me in closing thank and acknowledge a number of institutions and people who worked really hard to make this event happen. Let me first thank the Korea Foundation, which has long supported the North Korea International Documentation Project. Let me also acknowledge the support from the Wilson Center's leadership in the lead-up to this conference. Let me thank again our partners at the University of North Korean Studies for what has become a really wonderful friendship and partnership over the years. The fact that we all are coming together around this table today, I think, is due to the fact that we have really developed this amazing partnership with the University of North Korea Studies.

Last but not least, let me thank my staff for the heroic effort in putting together this conference. At this end, first and foremost, James Person, who coordinates the North Korea International Documentation Project, but also Kristina Terzieva and Timothy McDonnell, and then a host of interns, including Scott LaFoy, Will Treece, Yong Kwon, and Wandi Huang. I would also like to thank Dean Oulett and Min Heeseon from the University of North Korean Studies. Thank you all for your efforts. Finally, I'd like to thank the interpreters for the translations they will provide us over the next day and a half. Thank you.





AMBASSADOR DANIEL O'DONOHUE

# Panel I

## Inter-Korean Dialogue in the Era of Détente

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**Chair:** *Christian Ostermann*

**Provocateurs:** *Bernd Schaefer, Hong Seukryule*

**SCHAEFER:** During the first panel, we are supposed to talk about “Inter-Korean Dialogue in the Era of Détente.” When we talk about the early 1970s, of course, the major global current was détente: talks and negotiations between the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, and, on the other hand, after 1971, the rapprochement between the United States and China.

The other major communist powers in Asia besides North Korea had a major impact on détente. Obviously, the Vietnam War made the United States more conducive to talks with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was less interested in talking to the United States in order to avoid an escalation in Vietnam. And then, of course, China had a major impact on détente for two reasons. First of all, China was perceived by the Soviet Union after 1969 increasingly as a major threat to Soviet interests, which made the Soviet Union more interested in talking to the U.S. and to contain China. China, which started a dialogue with the United States in 1971, also facilitated détente in a certain way.

Now in this global context, the two Korean states seem to be on the receiving end, and this is what we want to talk about. So I will try to lay out about five major issues we will want to talk about throughout the entire conference, but especially during this first panel. First, were the two Korean states, both the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), more reactive when it came to détente in the early 1970s? Did the Koreans react to outside currents, or were they proactive? Did the Koreans start some of these initiatives





ZHOU ENLAI AND RICHARD NIXON

on their own, independent of international events, or were they influenced by international events?

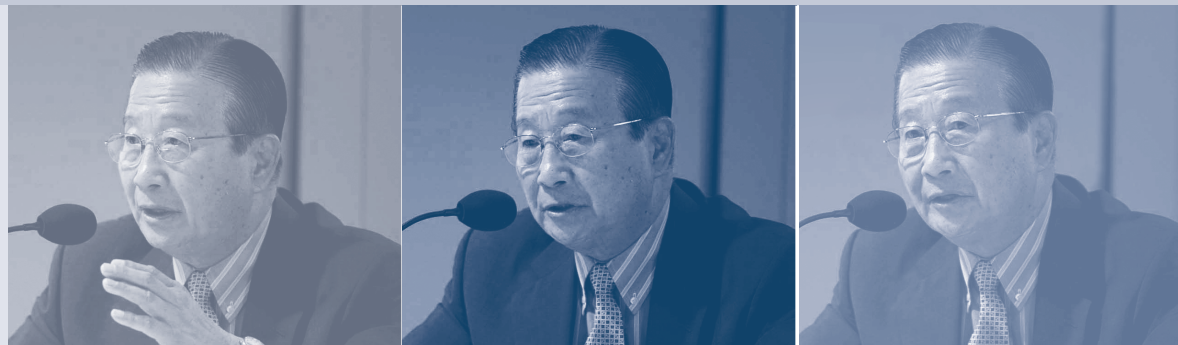
The second major question deals with the inter-Korean talks. Were the actions both in South Korea and North Korea related to each other? Initiatives from both North and South Korea started more or less simultaneously in 1971, but the question is who started first. Did they react to each other or did they act more independently of each other? Were the initiatives from the Koreas related, or were they unrelated?

The third interesting question is what motivated North and South Korea? Why were they interested in starting inter-Korean dialogue? Were they sincerely interested in Korean unification at that time? What were the motives of the North Korean side? What were the motives of the South Korean side? Was it mostly economic or was it mostly political, or were there maybe ulterior motives on both sides?

The fourth question concerns the roles of the allies. Were the allies encouraging their respective Korean partner to engage in inter-Korean dialogue? Were they rather discouraging them? Were the allies skeptical or were they optimistic?

Finally, I think it would be very helpful if all the eyewitnesses and speakers would try to address the role of China, because I think this is a crucial player throughout the entire period for two reasons. China, of course, was at that time the most important ally of North Korea. They were extremely close. But China also started rapprochement with the United States, which also had a major effect on South Korea. So the question would be whether the role of China, and particularly the rapprochement between the United States and China, had an impact on North Korea's decision to start to engage in inter-Korean dialogue and whether it had an impact also on South Korea's decision to actually conduct this dialogue.

I think the role of China comes together during the Nixon visit to Beijing in 1972. The questions to the South Korean side of course would be: were you very concerned that the West would strike a deal with China behind the Koreans' backs? With regard to North Korea, we know that a North Korean delegation was in Beijing during the Nixon visit and hoped to have a chance to talk to the U.S. If not, the North Koreans were interested in having China act as a mediator for North Korean interests and negotiate on North Korea's behalf. So the role of China, the impact of China, and the impact of rapprochement, I think, would



LEE DONGBOK

be something which I would like all of the eyewitnesses, whether from Korea, Bulgaria, or the United States, to address. Thank you.

**HONG:** Mr. Schaefer spoke rather broadly, so I would like to ask some more specific questions. First, when it comes to inter-Korean dialogue, were there any hardliners opposed to these talks? On August 12, 1972, the head of the Red Cross in South Korea, Mr. Choe Duseon, made a suggestion that there should be a meeting for the divided families in North and South Korea. This suggestion provided the impetus for dialogue between the two Koreas. Now, on August 6, six days prior to the announcement by the Red Cross, [Director of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency] Lee Hurak met with [U.S.] Ambassador Philip Habib and informed him that South Korea will not have dialogue with North Korea. Any type of contact with North Korea requires serious consideration from South Korea.

At the meeting with the ambassador, Mr. Lee had told him that the Ministry of the Judiciary as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been consulted on the matter. But it is apparent that Mr. Lee had not consulted with the Ministry of Defense, because the Ministry of Defense was opposed to idea of talks. This was the understanding that the U.S. side had at the time. So my question is, during inter-Korean dialogue, what position or stance was taken by the leaders of the defense sector?

My second question is what happened in North Korea? My understanding is that the North Korean military was also against the idea of dialogue. It appears from the documentation that Mr. Lee had spoken to Ambassador Habib, and that Ambassador Habib had indicated that there were hardliners as well as soft-liners in North Korea. Mr. Lee's comments gave the impression that that Kim Il Sung was a soft-liner and was under pressure from the hardliners in the military. So my

question is directed to the eyewitnesses, Lee Dongbok and Kim Dasool? How did you feel about the situation in North Korea at the time?

Another question I have is about the peace treaty. In March of 1974, North Korea suggested to the U.S. that there should be a peace treaty between the U.S. and North Korea. But the question remains, prior to that, was a peace treaty between South and North Korea ever discussed? Was a peace treaty supposed to be signed after the withdrawal of the U.S. troops from the peninsula? We know that there was an official venue in which the suggestion for a peace treaty was made in March of 1971, during the second meeting between North and South Korea. Was a peace treaty ever suggested prior to that? How did the eyewitnesses feel about a peace treaty with North Korea? Did you ever hear that North Korea did indeed want a peace Treaty?

What was the South Korean government's reaction to North Korea's suggestion for a peace treaty? We have veteran diplomats on the U.S. side as well, and what I would like to hear from them is how the U.S. reacted to the peace treaty offer by North Korea in the March of 1974?

**LEE:** I will have the honor to respond first, and I will try to be as succinct as possible while responding to these questions. First, Mr. Schaefer, you asked whether the ROK and the DPRK were reactive or proactive at the time dialogue was initiated. I think my answer is that the ROK was more reactive whereas the DPRK was more proactive. Secondly, were inter-Korean talks interactive or unrelated? Was that your question? I think South Korea and North Korea had different objectives at the start of the dialogue in early 1970, so I assume that inter-Korean dialogue was unrelated.

**STUECK:** The question was whether the two Korean states reacted to each other. Or were they two different streets, one going on in South Korea and one in North Korea and then meeting at some point, or whether one was starting and the other responding.

**LEE:** Yes, I understand your question. The two Koreas were singing two different tunes and dancing to two different tunes at the same time, so they were rather

unrelated rather than interactive. South Korea had a different objective than the North, so the initiatives were more unrelated than interactive. The two Koreas had different motives. South Korea had concerns about security because of the turn of events in the international theater, including the process of détente which had been launched by the United States, particularly after Richard Nixon's Guam Doctrine. And the concern grew very conspicuously on the part of South Korea about what the security situation was going to be like as the U.S. détente policy was taking shape.

North Korea was more motivated by optimism because of what they saw in the context of the PRC's takeover of the mainland China, followed by the success of military operations in Indochina. The United States seemed to be losing. And while Kim Il Sung had come to power ahead of both China and North Vietnam, now China and Vietnam seemed to be moving faster than Korea. Kim felt rather restive because North Korea was lagging behind. At the same time, Kim was more optimistic because the United States was viewed as being on the losing end of things. Kim was upbeat and trying to take advantage of this situation for North Korea's benefit. Kim Il Sung thought that this dialogue [with the South] would help North Korea to pursue unification, while South Korea was concerned about security. That is how I viewed the situation.

And you know, the fourth question, if I understand it correctly, I think that at that time, South Korea was more ill at ease working with allies, particularly with the United States. The United States was obviously trying to retreat from Asia. By contrast, North Korea was quite upbeat because of China's rise and also because of the situation in Indochina and what looked to be a victory for North Vietnam. So South Korea had more problems with its allies, at least when compared with North Korea.

The role of China at that time was reserved and passive. For example, Kim Il Sung made a visit to China in April 1975 right in the wake of the fall of Phnom Penh to the [Cambodian] communist army. Kim Il Sung was very upbeat and tried to trumpet the Korean Peninsula as the area next in line for communist conquest. So Kim Il Sung made a very provocative remark at a dinner hosted by the Chinese State Council one day in April of 1975 in which he spoke about his preparedness to go to war if necessary and achieve unification. But the Chinese

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were very reluctant to allow that. The Chinese were obviously seen as trying to play down Kim Il Sung's plans. At that time, China was busier mending its relationship with the United States than it was sympathetic to Kim Il Sung's wishes.

Related to Dr. Hong's points, I doubt if during the early 1970s, as South Korea began reaching out to North Korea for inter-Korean dialogue, there was any such schism between hardliners and soft-liners in the government. I think that was when President Park's control over all of the government was very secure and I don't think there was any room for that kind of a schism or differences to develop. And Lee Hurak was quite seriously taking things to the president, so much so that the president was able to prevail upon all sectors of the government, so much so that I don't believe there was that kind of a schism. I read in the documents of [Ambassador William J.] Porter having listened to what Lee Hurak had to tell him, but I think Lee Hurak was trying to, I mean he was, as I recall, he was handling his communication with the United States in such a way that he tried to make sure that he would secure maximum support from the United States. I remember him talking to Ambassador Porter and also [John H.] Richardson, who was the CIA station chief, and Lee Hurak was very careful in selecting his words and way of explaining things, but I don't think he was serious if he projected an image of the South Korean government in a state of division over how to handle North Korea. I really doubt that. And I doubt the MND [Ministry of National Defense] at the time was in a position to voice opposition to the South Korean government as it tried to open up dialogue.

In the same vein, I have very strong doubts about whether North Korea was that much of a divided house. North Korea more so than South Korea because of the fact that North Korea was under the Party's control. And when you talk about Party control, it was the control exercised personally by the Great Leader, so I doubt if there was any room for any element in the military to hold that kind of a different view on South Korea.

About the peace treaty, North Korea began talking about it long before 1973. It was terminology which began to surface at the extension of the Geneva Conference in 1954. North Korea at times talked about it in the context of a North-South peace treaty, but most other times North Korea kept on talking about it in the context of U.S.-North Korea peace treaty. When they spoke of the peace treaty,

however, it was not actually the peace treaty itself. They always tried to talk about preconditions leading to the peace treaty, so much so that we were unable to discuss the peace treaty because North Koreans were always coming up with preconditions. It was more the preconditions than the peace treaty itself that they [the North Koreans] insisted on talking about. So there was actually no way for us to talk about the peace treaty.

**SUN:** That is very helpful. I would like to give Mr. Kim the opportunity to comment as well, but, Bill Stueck, you had an immediate follow-up question for Professor Lee.

**STUECK:** One of your comments really struck me and that was Kim Il Sung's visit to China in April of 1975. Did you know at the time that Kim Il Sung made this comment at a dinner and if so how did you know? I have been told by a Chinese scholar, who I trust totally, that he has seen a document from that trip on the Chinese side in which Kim Il Sung actually proposed to Mao Zedong and even solicited support for a North Korean attack on South Korea. Did you know this at the time and if not how did you find out?

**LEE:** Somehow that portion of Kim Il Sung's remarks reached us almost immediately following his visit to China. I think it should have been through some third party context. And you are right, Kim Il Sung very specifically suggested that it was time for North Korea to pursue unification. But Zhou Enlai was very outspoken in trying to play him down, saying that this is something which you have to think very seriously about as long as the United States maintains its troops in South Korea. So China was very negative in contrast to Kim Il Sung's upbeat mood.

**OSTERMANN:** Thank you, now we've already jumped ahead quite a bit. In this session I'd really like us to think back to the beginnings of inter-Korean dialogue and set the stage for the events as they unfold.



KIM IL SUNG AND MAO ZEDONG

## “Kim Il Sung apologized for the January 21, 1968 incident.

This was the incident where the North Koreans actually attacked the Blue House, attempting to assassinate the president.”.

**D. KIM:** I will address the question from Professor Hong about hardliners first. First of all, I think there were hardliners and soft-liners in both North Korea and in South Korea. Now, the suggestion for the reunion of the divided families came during the Park regime. President Park had to think quite long and hard before he made the suggestion. I think the suggestion was made even in spite of the fact that he [Park] had enough knowledge to know that there would be hardliners who would be against such a proposal. Let’s talk about the people who make up the divided families. When you look into the composition of these people, you can see that most of these people are people who have migrated or were otherwise refugees from North Korea, so they do have their roots in North Korea and they held a lot of passion and hatred towards North Korea. You could say that these people are actually the hardliners themselves. So in my humble opinion, I think it was that there had been long and hard thoughts going into the decision to first suggest a reunion of the divided families. I think the resistance coming from the hardliners was anticipated ahead of time and was watered down by Park.

I also served in the Korean CIA and the biggest mission that we had at the time was to stop the infiltration of North Korean spies. Now, even within the KCIA we had different opinions. For example, I was personally in favor of dialogue. However, there were people who were serving in other sections, such as the Counter Intelligence Section. These people were hardliners and they were against the idea of having talks. I think it’s important for us to remember that the hardliners in South Korea did not exist only within the military, but they were also within the population, including the people who were refugees and migrants from North Korea. And of course there were hardliners in North Korea as well.

Director Lee [Hurak] had visited Pyongyang in May of 1972 and at the time he had met with Kim Il Sung. During the meeting, Kim Il Sung apologized for the January 21, 1968 incident. This was the incident where the North Koreans actually attacked the Blue House, attempting to assassinate the president. Kim Il Sung’s apology came with the explanation that there were certain leftist forces within North Korea who caused this incident to occur and that it was not his own intention. Of course, we didn’t buy that at all. We didn’t think that an attack on South Korea like that could have been carried out without the approval of Kim Il Sung. However, the very fact that he [Kim] was able to bring about this type of ex-



cuse shows that there was a certain conflict within North Korea, at least between those who were for a stronger military and those for a stronger economy.

Now when President Park initiated the dialogue between South and North Korea, the first official mention of such was on August 15, 1970. There was a presidential declaration in which he stated that we will start a dialogue with North Korea beginning with humanitarian issues first. Prior to the declaration, there had been on-going talks, and I think that the president had decided that, in light of the hardliner position against talks, it would be better to start with humanitarian issues first.

**OSTERMANN:** Professor Kim has a question, but could you just for the record let us know when you served at the KCIA?

**D. KIM:** Yes, I joined the KCIA when the KCIA was formed in 1961, and I served in it until 1979.

**C. KIM:** I'm wondering if I could ask you to elaborate on the humanitarian issue that was included in the 1970 declaration. You mentioned, for example, that the focus on divided families was specifically targeted to undermine the hardliner approach. Could you explain how exactly that occurred? Was the focus on divided families an attempt to perhaps win popular support? Was there a need to marshal up popular support for that initiative outside of the government? In addition, I would like to ask whether there were other issues which had been considered besides the divided families. You mentioned that indeed this was a very strategic issue on the part of Park for political reasons. Were there other issues that had been considered but ultimately fell out of favor?

**D. KIM:** There are three reasons why the divided family talks came first in our Red Cross attempts. The first one is really because there were the domestic hardliners who did not want to hold any talks at all between the Koreas. This was one way of sidestepping the hardliner position. The second part would be the Nixon Doctrine and the rapprochement between the U.S. and China. Korea was concerned at the time that perhaps Korea would become isolated as the U.S. became closer to

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it was important no one could actually refuse the proposed theme. It had to be something that the U.S. could not refuse, that the hardliners within South Korea could not refuse, and that North Korea could not refuse either. So the theme was reunions for the divided families.”



## “South Korea’s decision

to go forward with the offer for dialogue in 1971 had very much to do with a reduced confidence in the United States as a result of the Paris truce talks.”

China. I think this was actually the precise reason why the inter-Korean dialogue began, because South Korea wanted to show the U.S. that it was able to talk directly with North Korea.

The third factor considered by Park was that, when South Korea suggested that inter-Korean dialogue take place, it was important that North Korea could not refuse. We felt that the theme that would be most suitable was the divided families. As détente was being carried out through the Nixon Doctrine, it was important for Korea to find ways to ensure peace on the Korean Peninsula. Korea felt that once there was a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from the peninsula, there would not be any such guarantee for peace. So it was important that Korea, on its own, find a way to have an assurance of security.

So at the time when the Korean government was trying to find a theme for inter-Korean dialogue, it was important no one could actually refuse the proposed theme. It had to be something that the U.S. could not refuse, that the hardliners within South Korea could not refuse, and that North Korea could not refuse either. So the theme was reunions for the divided families. That’s how we decided on that. That’s how I believe that came about. This was not for popularity or popular reasons. That would be a mistaken understanding.

**OSTERMANN:** Thank you very much. Very helpful. Bill Stueck and Professor Lee both have follow-up questions.

**STUECK:** First, I think I know the answer to both of these questions, but just for reassurance. Number one, would you say that Park’s moving forward with the dialogue with North Korea was tactical in terms of his relationship with North Korea? That is to say, it was not based on any idea that reunification was going to occur soon. And secondly, did he assume that all American troops were likely to withdraw from South Korea, say from within the decade of the 1970s?

**LEE:** I think I should say that South Korea’s decision to go forward with the offer for dialogue in 1971 had very much to do with a reduced confidence in the United States as a result of the Paris truce talks.<sup>1</sup> On the basis of what had transpired in the Paris Peace Talks, South Korea began feeling very ill at ease about the security

commitment that the United States had to South Korea. Then there was President Nixon's Guam Doctrine, followed by Dr. Kissinger's secret visit to Beijing, and followed by President Nixon's trip to China. Now, many officials in the South Korean government, as well as in the private sector, became very worried about the possibility of some kind of political deal between Washington and Beijing about Korea, struck across our shoulders.

So what were we supposed to counter this with? That brought about the need for the South Koreans to think about opening up an independent sector in terms of dialogue with North Korea. And when the government began thinking about dialogue with North Korea, it was not actually the humanitarian talks through the Red Cross. It was more talks about the political context. And as these needs arose in the minds of people in the South Korean government, North Korea was also moving, you know, with some overtures of dialogue as early as November and December 1970. We began hearing about some North Korean elements based in Tokyo trying to approach South Koreans, among them Mr. Jang Giyeong, who used to be deputy prime minister and economic minister in President Park's government and a former publisher of the *Hankook Ilbo*, one of the leading newspapers in South Korea. In his capacity as an IOC [International Olympic Committee] member, Jang had chances to expose himself to North Koreans at the time of the Winter Olympics. In the winter of 1970, Jang Gihyeong came to the KCIA in Seoul and reported to Mr. Lee Hurak that he had been approached by North Koreans in Tokyo, suggesting that he accept Kim Il Sung's invitation to visit Pyongyang. Jang Gihyeong asked Director Lee Hurak what he was supposed to do, and people in Seoul began wondering about whether North Korea was really trying to find a conduit toward South Korea.

In 1971, as Mr. Kim observed, people in South Korea, particularly within the KCIA, began measuring different options for dialogue, but in the context that there had to be as little political risk as possible. So they came up with this idea of humanitarian talks, believing that it was going to be the least politically risky whether it was accepted by the North Koreans or not. And then in June, in the summer of that year, Prince Norodom Sihanouk [of Cambodia] paid a visit to Pyongyang and Kim Il Sung hosted a mass rally to welcome him. At the rally, Kim Il Sung spoke very extensively about the new developments between Washington

“In 1971 people in South Korea, particularly within the KCIA, began measuring different options for dialogue, but in the context that there had to be as little political risk as possible. So they came up with this idea of humanitarian talks, believing that it was going to be the least politically risky.”

and Beijing, in the context of viewing Washington as surrendering to Beijing. And at that time, Kim Il Sung inserted in his two-hour long speech that he was willing to sit down with all South Korean political parties and social organizations as well as individuals including the Democratic Republican Party, which was the ruling party of South Korea. North Korea had been limited to sitting down with the South Korean regime, but his mentioning of the Democratic Republican Party was picked up by us, people in South Korea, whereas in the case of South Korea most of the major overtures in North Korea were reserved for the president to be spoken in certain commemorative speeches like one on August 15.<sup>2</sup> August 15 was approaching and because of Kim Il Sung’s remark at that rally, South Korea felt the need to preempt because of the opinion that North Koreans might speak of something on the occasion of the August 15 commemoration, so South Korea chose August 12, three days prior to August 15 to ask the president of the Korean Red Cross, Choe Duseon to come up with the Red Cross proposal.

So when South Korea proposed Red Cross talks, it was proposed as a stepping stone leading to political dialogue with North Korea, which was later followed-up by the North-South Korean Committee meetings. That is what I think I can tell you.

**D. KIM:** When the U.S. policy in Asia changed from the Truman Doctrine to the Nixon Doctrine, there were certain changes that were perceived by Asia. The first thing that had occurred was when the U.S. had rapprochement with China and the U.S. actually severed its relationship with Taiwan. And then, with the beginning of Nixon Doctrine, there was a withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Korean Peninsula, from the size of 60,000 strong to 40,000. So 20,000 troops had been withdrawn. And also, when it came to the Vietnam War, the termination talks, the talks were held with the Liberation Front of the Viet Cong. At the time, North Korea was attempting to bring about unification by force on the Korean Peninsula, and, in South Korea, North Korea had planted certain movements, including the “Liberation Front,” “Liberation through Revolution,” and “People’s Revolution” groups. So these groups were trying to subvert South Korea by force.

So what concerned the South Korean government the most at the time was that when North Korea had attempted to unify the Peninsula through the “Liberal Revolution War,” or through the “Liberation Front,” the Korean government was

concerned that these infiltrating groups could be recognized as legitimate, groups that could be an object for discussion or talks with the U.S. This was what concerned South Korea the most at the time; that these guerilla groups could be recognized potentially by the U.S. So the biggest concern, I would say, was when the U.S. entered into détente with China, and eventually if the U.S. were to normalize its relationship with China, then it was a definite possibility that the U.S. government could also enter into détente with North Korea and perhaps even normalize its relationship with North Korea. That was a concern.

What I have told you, I can be sure of because I actually witnessed this discussion taking place between the staff and the president. This was during the time when I was serving as a desk officer at the KCIA. I had gone to the Blue House to make a report and I saw them, the staff and the president [Park Chung Hee], holding this talk. So from the Korean government's perspective, a continued preservation of the regime was very important—that there is a direct communication route with North Korea, because by letting the Nixon Doctrine run wildly in Asia, it was actually hurting the chance of permanent peace, as the government saw it, on the Korean Peninsula.

And so I second Mr. Lee Dongbok's thoughts that the discussion held between the Red Cross was really for political and military resolutions to the issues that we were facing on the Korean Peninsula. This was a way for us to explore the possibility of having peace on the Korean Peninsula.

**OSTERMANN:** Bill Stueck again and then Dr. Hong and Ryoo Kihljae, three questions all immediately on the issues that we just discussed.

**STUECK:** I am impressed by the level of mistrust in Seoul of the United States. My sense from my research on the American side is that in fact there was serious consideration given in the United States to a withdrawal of all American troops in the early 1970s, looking forward, not immediately, but gradually, down to a point where there were only American Air Forces in Korea, which of course included atomic weapons and enough American troops to guard the bases. Were you aware of that as a possibility and if so how did you perceive it?

**“Beginning in  
the 1960s,  
President Park**

had his slogan  
'Economy First,  
Unification Second,'  
so the economy  
came first in his  
regime. But once  
the Nixon Doctrine  
was announced, it  
was necessary that  
South Korea change  
its slogan and its  
approach.”

**LEE:** The fact that the United States, in the context of a variety of contingency planning, was conducting considerations of those troop withdrawal possibilities, that was something which was known to many people in the South. However, during that timeframe, the South Korean government was very outspoken and opposed to the reduction of 20,000 troops out of the 60,000 troops. I don't think they were going as far as thinking about the possibility to have seen the bulk of U.S. troops withdrawn from South Korea. But that leads to the crisis in the U.S.-Korean relationship during the early years of the Carter administration, at which time President Carter was committed to the troop withdrawal which led to such a critical phase in the relationship between the two countries. But as early as the early 1970s, it was more in the context of what Mr. Kim observed, that in the Peace Talks, the Viet Cong was accepted by the United States as a legitimate counterpart in the negotiations. Although I had not considered this, I agree with Mr. Kim's suggestion that inside the South Korean government there were concerns that such underground ghost parties, phantom parties, phantom organizations like the “Unification Revolutionary Party” or other underground groups, might be, in due course, accepted by the United States as potential counterparts in negotiations. So Mr. Kim is now suggesting that inside the South Korean government there was the kind of need perceived to prevent this from happening by way of a possible opening-up a dialogue between the two Koreas.

**HONG:** Mr. Kim, I would like to ask you a few further questions. If I understand you correctly, you were saying that the North and South Korea dialogue had taken place because: one, South Korea was trying to prevent China and the United States from dictating the destiny of South Korea by their own choices or choosing, and second, this was one way for South Korea to preempt the U.S. from having direct contact with North Korea. Is that correct?

**D. KIM:** I don't believe prevention was the purpose because, beginning in the 1960s, we had a five-year economic plan that went into effect, and the economic plans into the 1970s were very successful. So in the 1970s I would say that South Korea finally had reached a point where South Korea was on par with North Korea as far as economic standing was concerned. And in order for South Korea

to actually achieve that status and come to that stage, it was vital that there was security and military protection coming from the U.S., so it was a precondition that there should be U.S. security provided in order for South Korea to be economically prosperous. If security was somehow shaky, then this would mean that South Korea had to find a way to survive on its own.

If you recall, beginning in the 1960s, President Park had his slogan “Economy First, Unification Second,” so the economy came first in his regime. But once the Nixon Doctrine was announced, it was necessary that South Korea change its slogan and its approach. So the new approach, I would say in a sum, was that there would be first a dialogue and economic construction and then other things to come after that. So what the Nixon Doctrine brought to and required of Korea and Asia was that there had to be independence and self-survival, basically meaning that the U.S. was no longer willing to be the police of the world and that each country was on its own. So for Korea, we had to find a way to be self-dependent.

So as to your question Professor Hong, it’s not that South Korea was trying to prevent the U.S. from having contact with North Korea, this was not something we were trying to do, although I admit it would have been good if that had occurred, but we knew that this would not have been possible either, so what we were trying to do was to have a channel of communication with North Korea where we could talk directly with one another. I hope that was sufficient.

**RYOO:** I would like Mr. Kim and Mr. Lee to confirm certain facts that actually seem to be a bit contradictory in their testimonies. Who really initiated the dialogue between the two Koreas?

From Mr. Kim’s testimony, I understand that it was South Korea that initiated the dialogue and that this was part of a grand strategy, that the South Koreans had that first there should be economy and then there should be a unification and that strategy had somehow changed to a certain degree and that this was requiring an initiation of dialogue by South Korea. From Mr. Lee’s testimony, however, I hear that the initiation may have been coming from the other side, in that South Korea was more of a reactive force rather than a proactive force and that the talks were initiated from certain contacts that were made in Tokyo during the winter of 1970. And so what really happened? Who was responsible for initiating the dialogue?



PAK SEONGCEHOL AND LEE HURAK



KIM DALSOOL

**LEE:** I will be very short. The initiatives at that time were from both sides for different reasons. North Korea had proactive reasons whereas South Korea had reactive reasons, so in a larger context the initiatives came from both sides almost at the same time. When we reduce it to a smaller context, when we confine it to the initiation of Red Cross talks, well there's no question that South Korea initiated it when Choe Duseon made the proposal, to which North Korea reacted over the radio several days later afterwards. However, when North Korea responded, it was not in the form of either accepting or rejecting this South Korean offer. North Korea produced its own offer and said that it was sending an emissary to Panmunjeom, at which time South Korea decided to send an emissary likewise to Panmunjeom and found that North Korea was not necessarily directly responding to Choe Duseon's proposal. They produced their own proposal and they began meeting in Panmunjeom based on this different proposal. That is how the preliminary rounds of the Red Cross talks began taking place.

**OSTERMANN:** Very good. Jim Hershberg, an immediate follow-up on that?

**HERSHBERG:** Yes, just one very small clarification. If I understand you correctly, you were saying that the process was a purely Korean-Korean dynamic with no important external influence from third parties or mediators or anything of the like.

**LEE:** With no mediation at all. Well, it had international sort of coding in the context that both Koreas to a large extent were responding to the changes in the international surroundings. So that was the kind of international influence,



but I don't think there was any outside parties either intervening or offering any good offices.

**HERSHBERG:** Purely context.

**LEE:** Purely inter-Korean context, yes.

**OSTERMANN:** Thank you very much. Dr. Kim, do you have anything else to add on this particular issue?

**D. KIM:** Actually, for me I don't think it's really all that important as to who initiated the talks; was it the South first or was it the North first? But what I can say is that both South and North felt a need that there had to be talks between the two. This was necessitated by what had happened outside of the Koreas. This was because the U.S. and China were entering into a rapprochement. It was felt that it would be necessary for South and North Korea to also somehow come to terms with one another.

**OSTERMANN:** Thank you very much. I think this was a very exciting and productive session. In the next session we will focus on the U.S. relationship with South Korea and I think our American colleagues will come into greater focus in that session. Obviously we will also hear later from Mr. Mitov on his view from Pyongyang and from Sofia. With that though let me thank all of you for a very good first start into this meeting, thanking in particular Mr. Kim and Dr. Lee for their contributions and patience with the probing by the scholars, but this is exactly what we like to do, give an opportunity to have a follow-up question and really have time to respond to some of these more subtle issues.

**“I don't think it's really**

all that important as to who initiated the talks; was it the South first or was it the North first? But what I can say is that both South and North felt a need that there had to be talks between the two.”





LEE DONGBOK

## Panel II

### Inter-Korean Dialogue and U.S.-ROK Relations

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**Chair:** *William Stueck*

**Provocateurs:** *Gregg Brazinsky, Woo Seong-ji*

**BILL STUECK:** That first session was wonderful. Our provocateurs for this panel are Gregg Brazinsky and Woo Seong-ji. Let me encourage both of you to respond to the first session in outlining your questions.

**BRAZINSKY:** I want to pick up with something that was mentioned during the last session. Mr. Kim, I believe, had mentioned that he had heard a Blue House discussion between Park Chung Hee and some of his aides in which there had been expressed a concern that the United States was interested in normalizing relations with the DPRK on its own. I wonder if you could talk in a little bit more detail about this discussion and the concerns that existed at the time. When exactly did this discussion take place? And what exactly were you afraid would be the course of American policy?

**STUECK:** If you want to respond to that directly, we'd be happy to have that.

**D. KIM:** As to the exact date when I was involved in this discussion, I do not recall. However, what I can tell you is that at the time the Director of the KCIA had been Kim Gyewon and I was serving as the Desk Officer for Asia. Director Lee Hurak came in after Kim Gyewon and the change took place around December 1970, so I think the meeting may have taken place around November 1970. Now, I had gone to the Blue House on this particular day because I had to give a briefing on

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undersecretary  
repeatedly**

about the  
normalization of  
relations between the  
U.S. and China and  
what would happen  
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the normalization,  
because he wanted to  
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was a possibility  
that the U.S. would  
sever its relationship  
with South Korea  
as a result of the  
normalization of  
relations with China.”

Jochongryeon, which is the alliance of North Koreans in Japan, and I was waiting to give my briefing but the president and his aides were talking and talking and the discussion was taking a long time. So I ended up actually listening in on the discussion. At the time, the undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yun Seokheon, was giving a briefing to the president.

After the briefing, President Park had asked the undersecretary repeatedly about the normalization of relations between the U.S. and China and what would happen to South Korea after the normalization, because he wanted to know whether there was a possibility that the U.S. would sever its relationship with South Korea as a result of the normalization of relations with China. At the time I recall Mr. Yun had to explain that the situation for Taiwan and that of South Korea were different. I was supposed to give my briefing but my briefing kept on getting delayed because the discussion was taking longer and longer. I would say the discussion had actually gone on for hours and the president was really concerned about the détente taking place between the U.S. and China, and he was seriously considering the impact and possible consequences of such détente.

**BRAZINSKY:** I’m curious if I can ask the former American diplomats in the audience if they could talk about the context of American foreign policies surrounding this. What I find so interesting here is that he’s talking about this early period, a meeting during this early period in 1970-1971. Kissinger I believe first makes his secret trip to China in the fall of 1971 and then Nixon visits Shanghai in February of 1972. But it’s interesting that there’s this intense fear in South Korea about U.S.-DPRK normalization before the U.S. hadn’t really done anything official with China. So I’m curious if any of the participants on the American side might weigh in here a little bit in interactions with South Koreans. Were there any concerns expressed? About when did South Koreans start to express concerns or anxieties about the changing U.S. relationship with the Peoples Republic of China?

**O’DONOHUE:** I think that as our Korean interlocutors mentioned originally, the basic things driving concerns as we saw them on the Korean side, were the Nixon Doctrine and China. What did it mean for Korea? From our perspective, the whole period was one of reassurance, although in that period we withdrew one

division. So I think that I would say from our perspective at that point in time there was no concrete basis for a concern that we were going to normalize relations with North Korea, but that was from our perspective, it is something that they would have been concerned about.

Now there's something else going on that was peripheral to that, which was the unification and the UN, and also internationally, where there was increasing difficulty on the part of South Korea and ourselves in maintaining the isolation of North Korea. Other countries wanted to move there. We for our part, and I say "we," the U.S. government entities, did feel that the South should be more flexible. Both of us wanted to get out of the UN debate, so that aspect had in it this question of international recognition of the North, but it was far more tactical rather than a substantive.

**HERSHBERG:** Just for the American participants, I'd be curious if you might comment even briefly on the question on the locus of generating U.S. policy. This is of course a very special period in U.S. foreign policy when we have Nixon and Kissinger operating in some cases behind the State Department's back. Is the general feeling that policy is really being generated out of the embassy in Seoul, or that the White House is operating behind its back to a substantial measure when it comes to policy towards Seoul?

**O'DONOHUE:** In that context, the embassy played a larger role than most embassies. However, there were two aspects. One of course, the China aspect, in which at best we were only occasionally told what was going on. [Ambassador] Habib, more than most, would have been aware because of his relationship with Kissinger. And secondly, you had the whole military issue emanating from the Nixon Doctrine; that change was being driven, obviously, in Washington. Our job was not only to convey that, but to convey back the problems, weighing in on the kinds of things that would be considered. But very obviously, this was [the Department of] State and [the Department of] Defense setting the parameters.

**PICARD:** Let me just comment from the standpoint of the position of a very junior officer in the Office of Korean Affairs in Washington during this period. The

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one thing that seems to be constant was the very strong U.S. relationship with South Korea. That simply was not questioned. The question really on our minds was how do we reassure the South Korean government that these changes that were taking place could be helpful and not harmful to them and how this continuing strong relationship could best take its place in what was clearly an international scene that was shifting. So there was certainly no interest—in fact there was a clear policy that there would not be—any U.S.-North Korean direct talks, certainly none without South Korean approval and participation.

**STUECK:** Can we have our second provocateur? Dr. Woo.

**WOO:** My understanding is that, when the South and North Korean dialogues were taking place, unification was also on the agenda. If there were indeed talks regarding unification, were there certain methods or formulas that were suggested? And if so, by whom were they suggested? And if there were any discussions that had taken place, at what depth was the topic discussed? If there had been progress in these discussions, what was the progress? Additionally, I would like to know how much access to information from the unification talks the U.S. had. As the dialogue between the two Koreas progressed, was the speed of the progress too fast for the U.S., or perhaps was there a point when the U.S. felt that there was a loss of control? As to South Korea’s initiative, when it came to talks with North Korea, there were some talks that perhaps South Korea was not as proactive and perhaps there was some prodding, maybe some encouragement from the U.S. before South Korea became more active. So if there was any type of persuading or encouragement provided by the U.S., what was it? I also have a question about the economic differences between South Korea and North Korea. When we look at the economies of South and North Korea during the early 1970s, we can see that the South Korean economy was on the rise and for North Korea, perhaps you could say it was on the decline. So as South Korea was experiencing a boom in its economy, I think it’s fair to say that the South Korean officials felt somewhat more confident in approaching North Korea and perhaps the reverse could be said of North Koreans. But what really took place? Was it a factor that helped us

when we approached North Korea, when the economy of South Korea was doing so much better?

The following question is directed to Mr. Mitov. Mr. Mitov, if I may ask since you were in North Korea during that period when the economy of North Korea was facing more difficulties and was perhaps even in decline, did you hear from the North Korean officials or did you sense from their activities that perhaps they were a little bit nervous, maybe even quite concerned about what was taking place in North Korea as far as their economy was concerned?

And the last question goes to the diplomats and officials who had worked in the U.S. Embassy. How did you feel about the differences between North and South Korea as far as the economy was concerned? Since the economies were developing at a different pace, was this a factor that was important enough for you to weigh or be thinking about?

**LEE:** Regarding whether at the time of the initial rounds of the North-South dialogue if there were serious discussions about the unification formula or unification per se, my reply is that there were no such serious discussions on unification per se, nor a unification formula because in the early 1970s, neither side had comprehensive unification policies. North Korea had kept on talking about a political negotiation conference in a variety of different expressions, but it was in 1980 at the time of the Sixth Party Congress where North Korea finally came up with the scheme for configuring a Korean Republic, which thereafter become North Korea's official unification formula. And South Korea responded to that unification formula at the time of the early years of President Chun Doo-hwan's presidency, in February 1982. I was involved in the drafting of that unification formula personally, the unification formula on democratic unification through national reconciliation, something like that, so that was in 1982.

So previous to these two developments, neither of the two Koreas had come up with any comprehensive unification policies, so there had been no room for the two sides to talk about unification per se. Instead, the North Koreans kept on being aggressive and proactive, talking about certain conditions for unification in the context of political negotiations and things like that, or certain conditions that North Korea imposed on South Korea allegedly for the purpose of creating condi-



PAK SEONGCHEOL AND PARK CHUNG HEE



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Korean Committee  
in early November  
1972, Kim Il Sung  
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tions favorable for unification. So in the early 1970s, this dialogue did not spend much time on unification per se.

Secondly, the question about whether there was influence from the United States, whereas South Korea was relatively reluctant. I think as I understood it, the question was whether the United States was prodding South Korea to become more active in pursuing dialogue. I don’t think that was the case. As Ambassador O’Donohue observed, the United States at that time was more interested in avoiding diplomatic confrontations in the United Nations over the Korean question, things like that. But the United States was more busily engaged in the Chinese theater so much so that I don’t think Washington was very interested in seeing the two Koreas talking between themselves. So it was very much an inter-Korean initiative rather than initiative having come from outside forces when the dialogue began in the early 1970s.

Third, this is a very interesting question that you raised regarding the comparison of the national strengths of the two Koreas at the time when this dialogue began unfolding in the early 1970s. At that time, North Korea seriously believed that it was ahead of South Korea in terms of economic advancement. But North Korea had to realize the fact that South Korea’s economy was actually ahead of North Korea’s during the course of dialogue, as North Koreans came to South Korea and South Korean delegations went to North Korea. I vividly remember that in his conversation with Director Lee Hurak and other South Korean members of the North-South Korean Committee in early November 1972, Kim Il Sung spoke very proudly of North Korea’s economic progress, to the point that he was talking about his refusal to accept a proposal from Nikita Khrushchev [Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1953-1964] for North Korea to join COMECON [the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance]. And Kim Il Sung told us that when Khrushchev made the proposal, he declined that proposal because there was such a discrepancy between the Soviet Union and North Korea in the context of economic capability and he was likening North Korea in terms of kindergarten as against the Soviet Union in a graduate university. So if he joined COMECON, then the discrepancy would expand and North Korea’s participation in COMECON would leave North Korea with a lot of empty holes, where the Russians would be digging all the natural resources in exchange for finished



WARD THOMPSON

products that the Soviet Union would be providing North Korea. So he declined to Khrushchev, by saying that we are going to remain kindergarten kids and you may go and you may advance as graduate students. That is the way we will feel safe. That was what Kim Il Sung told us. And in exchange, Lee Hurak was talking about Ulsan Industrial Complex and Pohang Steel Mill, and Kim Il Sung was unable to understand what Lee Hurak was telling him, so he was asking Kim Il, who was alongside, what was this Mr. Lee saying. So Kim Il was providing some explanations so much so that in the course of this exchange of visits, North Korean visitors to South Korea were literally astounded in the context of economic development, so much so that when they were taken on an expressway and saw the traffic, they complained that South Koreans had amassed all the vehicles in order to impress them. So we told them that we did not have much trouble assembling all the cars, but we did have difficulty amassing all the buildings in Seoul. That was the joke that we cracked. And because of this observation of economic differences, that was one of the reasons why North Koreans began feeling negative about the continuation of the dialogue.

**STUECK:** Do you have a date on cracking that joke? I've heard that joke before.

**LEE:** We made that joke to the extent that it was picked up by the press and put into print by certain media.

**O'DONOHUE:** As Mr. Lee pointed out, the initiative was solely a South Korean one. In the period prior to that, the United States officials had an interest one in more flexibility because, as he notes, the UN question was becoming so difficult. Secondly, there was, you could say, a generalized feeling that everyone else is try-



## “North Korean visitors to South Korea

were literally astounded in the context of economic development, so much so that when they were taken on an expressway and saw the traffic, they complained that South Koreans had amassed all the vehicles in order to impress them. So we told them that we did not have much trouble assembling all the cars, but we did have difficulty amassing all the buildings in Seoul.”

ing détente, so shouldn't the South Koreans look at it? This was very secondary—the initiative on the part of the South was taken by President Park. Lee Hurak was his agent. Once the initial step was taken, they then were very careful to brief us. Lee Hurak would meet regularly, certainly within the context of any of the formal meetings, and brief the ambassador and others on the Red Cross talks. So we had a conscious South Korean effort to keep the Americans in step. From our perspective this fit everything else going on, and so we were very supportive. They really, particularly in that context, didn't need our advice. They were doing nothing that caused any problems in our relationship. The general American perspective was détente should break out everywhere.

In terms of unification we never saw that unification was a near-term possibility. I think the South Korean side was always very realistic and never misled us that they didn't see unification on the table. I think the Americans tended to have a more optimistic view with no basis really in terms of out of this might come some long-term channels of communication and context, but not unification.

**OSTERMANN:** Just a quick follow-up. I still think there's a disconnect here in the room or in the narrative between the concerns by the president that Mr. Kim talked about and your perceptions at the time. I also want to push further on the issue that Professor Woo raised in terms of American concerns about losing control of the process at some point. If you look at the European dimension of this, there were, of course, in due course a number of concerns on the part of Kissinger about Willy Brandt and Ostpolitik and ulterior. So your sense was that this was not at all the case, certainly not in this early phase, with regard to Korea?

**O'DONOHUE:** I'm not completely sure about a disconnect between President Park, or South Korean concerns about normalization, and that if somebody looked at all of this while we never saw it as a major issue at the time, you could see that a prudent South Korean government would identify this, however you want to say it, threat. So I think there was not any particular disconnect.

**OSTERMANN:** You were aware of those concerns?

**O'DONOHUE:** Not the specific ones he mentioned, but that the South Korean government and President Park had very much on his mind the American relationship which was central in security terms, and that the situation in East Asia was in a dynamic period of change, but that was driven by the Nixon Doctrine, China, and the fact that we did withdraw a division. This was an era in which the South Korean government could see that over time the Americans, at least their ground presence, might disappear. And indeed, a couple of years later we actually recommended something close to that.

**SCHAEFER:** Another question for the American participants just to spin this a bit further. The DPRK considered the American presence in South Korea the main obstacle to reunification of the peninsula on Northern terms. If there was any way to get the Americans out of the South, one should pursue that by whatever means. Now, there was a huge elation among the North Korean leadership after the Kissinger visit to Beijing, the first secret visit. Was the United States at the time aware that North Korea and China were very close? Everything Kissinger, or any other American official, said about Korea was conveyed by the Chinese to the North Koreans, perhaps with a certain interpretation, a certain spin, which led the North Koreans particularly in the second half of 1971 to really believe that the U.S. at some point would almost completely withdraw from Korea. And were you aware that actually Kissinger made some statements to Zhou Enlai in this regard which really indicated that the West sooner or later would completely withdraw from Korea? Were you aware that the North Koreans had the impression from the Chinese that the U.S. withdrawal from Korea might be impending?

**O'DONOHUE:** The answer to that is that Kissinger always saw the troop presence as being something in the China context. I don't think he looked at it in terms of the Korean context particularly. But I think that in that period you did have a certain sense that the U.S. ground presence was going to be there for a finite period, and that wasn't tremendously controversial. One division had gone, another division might be going in a few years. I don't know of any American who ever conceived of a complete U.S. military withdrawal, and I can't imagine that because Korea was so important in a variety of ways, not the least Japan. But the

## “I think the South Korean side

was always very realistic and never misled us that they didn't see unification on the table. I think the Americans tended to have a more optimistic view with no basis really in terms of out of this might come some long-term channels of communication and context, but not unification.”

troop presence was an element in Kissinger's dialogues with the Chinese, I would say to that level a few of us know. I only knew it because of [Ambassador] Habib.

**LEE:** Well, let me tell you this observation: until the Guam Doctrine and the normalization of relations between Washington and Beijing, North Korea's traditional commitment to the U.S. troop withdrawal was to keep the U.S. out of South Korea, I mean a hard-line approach, attacking the U.S. in a harsh manner. But in the aftermath of the rapprochement between Washington and Beijing, North Korea made a quick change by trying to pat the U.S. out of South Korea. North Korea came up with the idea of inter-Korean dialogue as a means to soothe Washington to the effect that the U.S. conceded favorably the idea of troop withdrawal. So for some time, North Korea was observed resorting to that approach, but it did not take long for North Korea to change again back to the harsher stance.

I'd like to add that it was more the peace process in Paris over the Vietnam War than the Guam Doctrine that made people in South Korea very restive and concerned about the credibility of the U.S. security commitment. Because it was in this peace process in Paris that, as Mr. Kim pointed out earlier, the Viet Cong were accepted by the United States as a legitimate counterpart in a dialogue. As Mr. Kim learned from the conversation he overheard at the Blue House, they were wondering about the possibility of the underground organizations like “Unification Revolutionary Party” being picked up by the United States as a legitimate counterpart for negotiation. So that was the kind of concern which was building up in the minds of many South Koreans at the time which led them to think about opening up a dialogue sort of things between the two Koreas.

**PICARD:** I do think one of the things that American participants have omitted is the fact that this was a time when the Vietnam situation was one that would have caused our allies in the region a good deal of concern. Things clearly were not going well and talks were going on. I think it would have been a great stretch, though, beyond that to have the idea that the Americans would ever think of any of the groups in South Korea as appropriate parties to talk with. But certainly the atmosphere in general of U.S. weakness, the Vietnam situation had on everyone's mind would have been a reasonable factor for Koreans to have in mind.

**THOMPSON:** Yes, I certainly agree. I think that Dr. Woo asked about how we reviewed the economic differences, and I think from our perspective South Korea was already a tiger moving forward. From what we knew of the Korean populace, they were interested in securing what they had achieved economically and building. And you had these big signs about the export campaign and all that, rather than a lot of concern about security. The security was I think of great concern because the Koreans did not want to lose the economic gains and it would have been so nice to keep the security situation static so that the Koreans could work on their economic progress.

Dr. Lee mentioned Ulsan. I had the great fortune of going to Ulsan with our visiting Ambassador to Japan, Mr. [Robert] Ingersoll, and my connection was that the vice president of the shipyard down there was Danish with his crew and my wife and I spoke Danish, so Mr. Chung Ju-yung came to arrange the visit and we had a very nice visit down there. It was very impressive what was happening with using the steel from Pohang and building an empire which we still have today of course. So in short, I think that's how we regarded it, that the security concerns, as I think Dr. Lee said, were secondary to the economic concerns, and the idea that there would be so much discontent politically or security-wise didn't really strike us as central because it was all dependent on the economic situation.

**LEE:** That said, however at the time when we began the dialogue with North Korea, the North Korean economy was really at its peak and the North Korean economy began to decline only thereafter. At the outset North Korea appeared to really believe that the North Korean economy was way ahead of us, but in the course of the dialogue, they realized that that situation was already upside down, and that's one thing. And for another, although an official from the United States never came to South Korea with any influence with regard to inter-Korean dialogue, by the early 1970s there already were people like Selig Harrison [a *Washington Post* reporter] and Jerome Cohen [an American academic] who began performing the role of spokespersons for North Korea and coming to Washington with suggestions that the United States pressure South Korea to be more responsive to North Korea's peace offensives and things like that.

So in due course, these people began raising their voices to the extent that, by the time when President Carter was inaugurated president, Jerome Cohen was figuring in as an information person to an extent, right or wrong, he was the person behind Carter's withdrawal platform. So outside of the government, there were quite a few people who were literally exercising some measure of influence in U.S. policy toward South Korea and the Korean Peninsula.

**D. KIM:** Earlier Professor Woo had raised questions regarding economic disparity, the differences between South and North Korea, so I would like to address that. There were certain seismic changes that occurred in the inter-Korea dialogue mechanism. This was due to the following. We had initially held the talks in Panmunjeom and later we had decided to hold talks in the different cities of Seoul and Pyongyang, and that's when the shift started. The suggestion that we should hold talks in Seoul and Pyongyang came from us. This was the order that came down from President Park directly. The first preliminary meeting for the Red Cross was held on September 20 at Panmunjeom and the second preliminary meeting had occurred on September 29, also at Panmunjeom.

At the second preliminary meeting at Panmunjeom on September 29, we had suggested that we should hold talks on a rotational basis between Seoul and Pyongyang. There was something called Joint Break that was suggested by North Korea at Panmunjeom during this second preliminary meeting. So during this Joint Break we actually brought our goods from the respective sides, so for South Korea we brought radios and other consumer electronics that we had produced and from North Korea they brought silk and blankets and some rice wines. So when this Joint Break activity was taking place, President Park actually drove to Panmunjeom right outside of where the meetings were being held. I went to President Park with the gifts from North Korea and I had explained to him that these were the activities that were taking place and this is how much progress we were making. When I presented the president with the gifts, he actually thoroughly inspected the gifts. For example, as to the silk blanket, the president actually tore the blanket to see what's inside and also put light towards part of it and also smelled the blanket. And as to the wines, he opened the wines and tasted some of them for himself.

At the time the president had quite a few people with him and his entourage had included Chung Ju-yung of Hyundai Construction, and also the president of Sambu Construction, and the mayor of Seoul, and he had asked around to see how they felt and how these North Korean items compared with South Korean items. After inspecting the items, the group came to a conclusion that the items produced in North Korea were inferior to those of South Korea, so the Republic of Korea was making better products we concluded. So President Park was very satisfied with the conclusion and he had mandated that it would be our priority to make sure that the future meetings would be held on a rotational basis between Seoul and Pyongyang. And he had mentioned at the time that water flows from higher ground to lower ground and in the process of flowing there might be some disturbance of the water, but the fact that it flows from high to low does not change.

So at the time there was the president of Hyundai Construction, and this was the time period when we did not have highways between Panmunjeom and Seoul, there were only country roads. So we decided that we would build a highway that runs all the way from Panmunjeom right into the heart of Seoul. We built a road first and as we had built a road between Panmunjeom and Seoul, North Korea also decided that they would build the same between Panmunjeom and Pyongyang. The construction took one year. And so the initial stage of the talks between the Red Cross took a little longer because of the road, but that's the preliminary meeting had resulted in the rotational visits.

So as we did rotational visits between South and North Korea, as we saw one another in economic terms, the focus shifted from military to economics. What we saw was that there were highways being built and there were high-rises being built also and both the Daedong River and Han River were being cleaned out and being reconditioned. So we were trying to show off to one another and this was an economic competition in a sense, and I think that's where the disparities started becoming much clearer. I think that's how we came to this point that the economic disparity started back then and now it's much clearer.

**Shin:** This question will be directed to U.S. diplomats. In 1971, North Korea tried to deliver a message to the U.S. through Romania. Did you know that this had taken place? And a follow-up question on that would be, what message was it and

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what was the U.S.’s reaction if there was one? In 1972, perhaps in April or May, [North Korean Foreign Minister] Pak Seongcheol went to Seoul and suggested that there should be a South-North Korean Joint Communiqué and then at the time KCIA Director Lee Hurak responded that our situation in South Korea was fairly complicated, and also our meetings were being held in the dark and the U.S. was not in the know so we would prefer that we do not let the U.S. know. So the questions are really directed at Mr. Lee and Mr. Kim from Korea. Now at some point the Korean government talks with the U.S. CIA and in particular with Mr. [John] Richardson, who was the director in Korea [1971-1973], at the time, and there seems to have been a certain close working relationship that had developed between the two. So what were your impressions, Mr. Lee and Mr. Kim, as far as the North Korean agents are concerned? Did they really think that South Korea was not consulting the U.S. or how did they feel about the relationship that South Korea had with the U.S. as far as the Inter-Korean dialogue was concerned?

**LEE:** I will respond to that regarding the second part of your question. I was involved in that portion of the dialogue of the time, and I don’t know where you obtained the information from the meeting between Lee Hurak and Pak Seongcheol. Lee Hurak said exactly that. It was May 29 through June 3 when Pak Seongcheol visited Seoul secretly on behalf of [Kim Il Sung’s brother] Kim Yeongju who could not make it to Seoul in spite of the invitation from the Southern side, because Kim Il Sung at that time was already beginning to give a hard time to Kim Yeongju in favor of Kim Jong Il. In the meeting which took place in Seoul, Lee Hurak kept saying that South Korea was independent of the United States. Obviously in response to North Korea’s continuous charge that South Korea was a crony of the United States, Lee Hurak kept telling the North Koreans that Park Chung Hee and the South Korean government were independent of the United States. So beyond that, it was merely a kind of rhetoric. And so I don’t think he told Pak Seongcheol that he was keeping this dialogue a secret from the United States. I don’t think that that was the way he said that, although he kept on saying that we are independent, we do not rely upon the United States, things like that.

In the 1970s, North Korea was trying to employ such countries as Romania and other Eastern European countries to convey the North Korean message to

Washington, saying that the international situation is running in favor of North Korea, that the United States should consider favorably the idea of withdrawing troops from South Korea, things like that. These Eastern European countries were taken advantage of as the conduits of such messages which North Korea wanted to continue to convey to Washington, DC.

**KIM:** I was involved mostly with inter-Korean dialogue and so I do not really know too much about U.S.-Korean relations at the time.

**O'DONOHUE:** Until I read the telegrams, I had not noticed the Romanian effort, but I think as Mr. Lee summed it up, over time in a variety of ways North Korea has tried seriously or less seriously to establish a direct link to the United States to the exclusion of South Korea. And in reading that, it looked to me like that was just another one of the myriad approaches that were made.

**HONG:** As far as the U.S. government was concerned, after having reviewed the documents, I can tell that the U.S. government also wanted a channel, a dialogue to be established with North Korea. I think this started sometime towards the end of the 1960s. This happened on August 27, 1973, in China. North Korean diplomats visited the U.S. Liaison Office in China. Contact between the diplomats is very important and a sensitive topic, so my understanding is that the White House had approved of the contact as well as the Blue House. North Korea had expended quite a bit of effort in establishing communication with the U.S. in various ways, so my question would be, what did you think in the U.S. of the reason, impetus or motivation, as to why North Korea was trying to so hard to establish a channel of communication with the U.S.? And what did the U.S. government think they were trying to communicate?

**O'DONOHUE:** First of all, our view had been that North Korea, as part of its basic policy, was constantly working to establish a direct channel to the United States without the South Koreans, and that was a constant theme, up until even now, that we saw as their major effort. In that period for a lot of reasons, we were changing our UN policies, and we were trying to bring them in for a variety of tactical reasons that you would want to talk to them. But in essence, none of these



SIGNING CEREMONY FOR JULY 4  
DECLARATION



really ever amounted to much. I think there was a later period when there were more serious efforts that again didn't amount to anything, but were more serious than the one you described. But essentially, our view was that we would not be caught at a negotiating table without the South in that period. And on the other hand as part of this whole dynamic in which you had the UN, and the South and the North were talking, these things meant there was probably a more relaxed view, and it wasn't a period in which we would be aggressively turning off North Korean contacts and policy. We just had no interest, our policy was supportive of the South and I think over the years President Park probably was mildly surprised at how resolute we were in support.

**LEE:** A very short comment. I think North Korea made no bones about the fact that, when they talked about the direct dialogue between Pyongyang and Washington, the objective was two-fold, a peace treaty between the two sides in addition to troop withdrawal. And on these two themes, I had been of the understanding that the United States administration had continued to hold fast to the position that the issue of a peace treaty was something between the two Koreas as against troop withdrawal is something between the United States and South Korea. So because of these two declared positions, there was no room for direct contact between North Korea and the United States.

**O'DONOHUE:** We also believed that it was part of the constant North Korean effort to marginalize the South. In other words, deal with the Americans, they really run the country; the South doesn't count. So we saw that as another element in what they were proposing.

**PERSON:** You mentioned that the U.S. would not be caught at the negotiating table without South Korea.

**O'DONOHUE:** At that time, yes.

**PERSON:** Was this a lesson learned from the direct talks held over the return of the crew of the U.S.S. Pueblo?

**O'DONOHUE:** No. Pueblo negotiations were done up in Panmunjeom as a military exercise to get the troops back. That didn't have that connotation. That was a period of intense strain because of the Blue House incident, in which President Park, as he often did, took a situation and used it to press for greater U.S. support. At the time of the Pueblo, we had immense concerns. At the time of the Blue House, our first reaction, unfortunately, had been to urge no response. Well, that the South would accept, but we forgot to express our concerns about President Park's survival. So coming from that, he had the American side on the defensive. Out of that, strategically, it was a watershed in that the United States, after that process, adopted a policy of modernization of the ROK's forces. Before that you had essentially a World War II static force. Because of that, and the North Korean tensions over the previous years, we really moved to a much more active program in support of strengthening this out.

**LEE:** By the time of the Pueblo incident, South Korea was very seriously pushing to retaliate against North Korea, but Washington was trying to restrain South Korea. So that, I think, was bearing upon the way Washington was reacting to Pueblo incident. So much so that Washington kept the Pueblo incident as an issue within the context of the armistice agreement. That was the way I recall that.

**O'DONOHUE:** The only thing I would slightly differ on is that the South Korean side took a very strong stance, but first of all, without our agreement, we didn't think they would take any military action, and secondly we thought to a degree that it was tactical to keep the pressure on us to respond to their needs.

**THOMPSON:** I just wanted to make a comment that in general there's a distinction between a technical contact and a policy contact, and there were occasions, I was involved in one of them, where if there happened to be a North Korean overture we would be interested in gaining some intelligence about the other side, but that didn't mean that we were inaugurating any kind of relationship. So quite often I would say that if there were one of these many approaches that Ambassador



HONG SEUKRYULE

O'Donohue mentioned, that yes, we literally did not turn our backs in every case, but there was no policy directive there at all. I just wanted to make that distinction.

I did have one instance at a subsequent post where in a public observance I did have a conversation with a North Korean about non-substantive issues and Washington was interested in my pursuing that just for intelligence purposes, but not to suggest to the other side that we were having a dialogue, so I'm sure that took place elsewhere.

**RYOO:** In light of the Nixon Doctrine, in the 1970s perhaps there was a shift in U.S. policy, but it's not really clear to us whether there was an intentional shift. But I think beginning towards the end of the 1960s, there was somewhat of a shift in the U.S. policy towards North Korea as far as the U.S.-North Korean relationship was concerned, and I think that may have been somehow reflected by the Nixon Doctrine and the follow-up events that had occurred. The Blue House raid and also the Pueblo incident of 1968 showed there were strategic differences between the U.S. and Korea. Also, we can see from the documents, which we have in front of us, that the U.S. had requested the South Korean government to be more flexible in its approach towards North Korea. We have the transcripts from the subcommittee at which time [Stuart] Symington was the Chair. This was the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. This is a transcript from September 13, 1970, and at the Subcommittee Meeting, the transcript shows that the U.S. had suggested that South Korea have talks with North Korea. And also in this Subcommittee hearing we could see that there was a possibility, in the minds of the U.S., that it was actually South Korea rather than North Korea that would create some sort of a military conflict on the peninsula.

Now when it comes to the South and North Korean dialogue that took place, there had been some talks and questions as to who initiated that dialogue, and in a bigger picture perhaps it's not as important who initiated such, but I think it's

important for us to shed some light on the flow of events that had occurred and that led up to the actual dialogue taking place. The U.S. perhaps was not actively involved in the talks being held; however, I think the U.S. had provided a certain framework in which the talk had to be held and this would include the rapprochement between the U.S. and China as well as the Nixon Doctrine. So there was a role that was definitely played by the U.S. in the inter-Korean dialogue and this is something that we need to shed more lights on.

So my question would be to the U.S. diplomats who had worked in the field. Not just what was shown on the surface as the result of certain talks that were held within, but I really want to hear about what took place internally, what went on and who were the people who were involved in the decision-making, what were the discussions about and what were your impressions of things to come about as you made these decisions?

**O'DONOHUE:** Well first of all, in terms of the period, say 1967 through 1969, that was a period in which the military tensions were at their highest at any point since the end of the Korean War. It was not a period when the United States looked at détente. You had had numerous incidents across the DMZ. You had the Pueblo, the attack on President Park. In 1969 you had the U.S. reconnaissance plane EC-121 shot down. From 1968, the United States embarked on a major modernization program of the ROK armed forces, so this is a context we're talking about. As I had mentioned earlier, throughout this period, partially because of the UN and the tremendous diplomatic drain that was going on each year for what was eventually going to be a losing cause of isolating the North, and this general sense of détente, among officials there was a general sense that the South should participate in it. In the concrete sense, this showed up in discussions and planning for the UN sessions. However, in looking at it, and our Korean friends can talk it much more authoritatively, our view was that President Park saw East Asia as in a period of significant change that posed real threats to South Korea. Because of the Nixon Doctrine, China, and South Vietnam, from our perception, President Park responded essentially to be sure he had control of this issue. It was hardly us telling him; it was rather he himself, the case throughout our relationship with him being sure that he was not boxed in or simply became a pawn in the process.

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So as far as that’s concerned our role, as far as the South was concerned, was in a secondary sense very important; the United States had to support them and that was in our terms a given. In our various discussions in Seoul with Lee Hurak, with President Park and others, it was really them telling us what they were doing. Nothing they were doing caused us any problems. From our point of view, it was very easy to be supportive. In terms of possible outcomes, the South side was always very realistic with us about what they were doing and what was likely to be accomplished, i.e., except for a few of the humanitarian things, not much. We probably were slightly more optimistic with no basis in the sense that we saw out of it not unification, but maybe there would be some of these long-term links that over time would be useful. But in terms of sitting down and planning tactics, the South was running that show. We were completely supportive.

**HERSHBERG:** Just one very brief inquiry primarily to the Americans but also to the Korean side. The Ambassador just mentioned in passing South Vietnam. I’d just be curious if any of you had any comment on the broader relevance of the waning of the Vietnam War during this period. And the reason I raise it is that the impression had been given in some accounts that during the Johnson Administration in particular, the South Korean participation in the war in Vietnam gave Seoul a great deal of leverage on relations with Washington because they could always hint at withdrawing those troops which the Johnson Administration highly valued. As the U.S. role in Vietnam diminished during this period, does that lead to a lessening of South Korean leverage on Washington and in general, how important is the Vietnam War in the broader relationship? Is it peripheral or is it evolving from very important to far less important?

**PICARD:** Let me just return to the question before about the talks and the American role or concern or guidance that might have been given in this period of 1971 to 1973. I would certainly second what Ambassador O’Donohue said. This was a Korean show from start to finish and they kept us informed as the cable traffic shows. We had very little in trying to guide it, and one of the reasons for that was we did not look at it in terms of Korean unification. What we thought was going on here was at best some humanitarian alleviation of the situation by the

families and so forth. That conceivably would be a good thing if it could come out of it, otherwise it did not loom very large in the overall set of issues that the desk in Washington and the embassy were concerned about. There were a lot of other things going on during that period, everything from what later came to be called Koreagate, a concern about what the Korean CIA was doing in Washington, the Kim Dae-jung kidnapping, the Declaration of Martial Law, and the reorganization of the Korean government thereafter. These were things that the U.S. government was focusing on and was concerned about. The North-South talks were interesting and encouraging and fit into the overall merging pattern of détente, but this wasn't a central driving force in U.S.-Korean relations at the time.

On Vietnam I am probably speaking more out of ignorance than information, but while we certainly wanted the Korean troops to stay, it didn't seem to me that it gave the Koreans a great deal of leverage.

**O'DONOHUE:** Well, there was leverage, but it was all economic. When we first negotiated with the Koreans in 1963 or 1964, or whenever it was, the Korean economic role in Vietnam was viewed as a very modest one. Over time it became one of the driving elements in the modernization of the Korean economy. You had Korean companies that, I think one of them packed furniture, then went out and found out that they could compete in an international environment. So it has the economic leverage, certainly, trying to get more each time was an aspect, and at the very end of course it was sort of keeping them there so that they didn't get out prematurely from our point of view. But somehow or another, the Korean domestic situation in this whole period bubbled, and that had a significant role. But somehow or another the Korean forces in Vietnam didn't ever seem to be part of our equation in how we dealt with the Park government outside of keeping them there.

**LEE:** Regarding the question raised by Professor Ryoo, I think that particular passage that Professor Ryoo quotes from the Symington Subcommittee record should be evaluated against the backdrop and also in the context of the time during which there were such major outbursts of military provocations from the North Korean side. I mean the commando raid against the Blue House and also the massive landing of North Korean commando troops in the fall of 1968, and the seizure



WILLIAM STUECK

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of the Pueblo, and also the downing of the EC-121 the following year. Because of this, the South Korean government was trying to pursue a very hard-line stance against North Korea, even preparing certain military capabilities to put to use in a retaliatory attack. So Washington was trying very hard to restrain the Park government, to dissuade the Park government from resorting to any drastic military actions. And that reference to encouraging South Korea to think about engaging in a direct dialogue to North Korea should be evaluated as part of the U.S. effort to restrain the South Korean government in that particular timeframe.

Around that time, the Vietnam situation figured very prominently in bearing upon South Korea’s response to North Korea, as well as South Korea’s response to the development of the relationship between the United States and China. South Korea was really concerned about the implications of this new development, particularly for one reason. At that time, South Korea was maintaining 50,000 troops in Vietnam, and depending on the outcome of the negotiations, South Korea too had to create in the troop withdrawal process, in which case it had to involve tens of thousands of troops which were going to create a hell of a problem to the South Korean government to make accommodations for this troop withdrawal. The fact that Washington was proceeding without the sufficient amount of prior consultation was creating so much of a concern on the part of South Korea.

**C. KIM:** I wanted to just raise one question referring to the regional context that sort of dovetails with this conversation. In our discussion so far there’s been very little reference to Japan. I’m wondering based on some of the documents in the reader that allude to real fears on the part of the South Korean government in the wake of the Nixon Doctrine of some of the security burdens being shifted to Japan, the fears that this would be recommended by the United States and that Japan would then assume a larger role in Asia Pacific. I’d like to ask whether this was a real concern, whether there were grounds for such fears, and to see if any on the Korean or American side could shed light on the way in which Japan’s role was perceived in this shifting geopolitical context.

**O’DONOHUE:** Again, this isn’t speaking in terms of any particular knowledge of anything. However, overall in that period, the Japanese tended to view the United





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States as responsible for security. They didn't want headaches connected with it. So it would have been very unrealistic on our part to have expected much. Japan already, in a sense, had allowed the UN command to exercise access in that, so there was no likelihood in that period of the Japanese playing a role. Now, what was interesting indeed in that period and before, when you talk to the Japanese about Korean security, from their perspective you would have thought you were talking about a peninsula off Antarctica. It was that was our responsibility. This changed dramatically, perhaps before, but certainly in the Carter period with the second division announcement. That really bothered them. They saw this as impacting their security. Essentially from that time, we showed a much more active interest. Now it was not troops or that sort of thing, which they couldn't do, but in the sense that it highlighted that the American presence was not the given that they had thought, and it led to a much more active Japanese involvement in security dialogue.

**PICARD:** I was in the embassy in Tokyo for the two years or so before coming to work on Korean affairs, and I would just second the view that insofar as anyone who was following Japan at that time was concerned, the idea that anything having to do with Korea could be turned over to Japan was not in anybody's thinking, and certainly was not in the Japanese. If you were following the Japanese view you couldn't even have talked to them about this.

**THOMPSON:** You've seen in the documents that Washington wanted a study of what the possible reactions would be regarding a change in the UN command and they wanted to know what Japan's reaction might be. I was in a discussion with our ambassador, and I'm pretty sure Ambassador O'Donohue and Ambassador Habib said that you know Japan might have some concern about eventual Korean unification because they might think that a united Korea could get the best of them.





AMBASSADOR DANIEL O'DONOHUE