

**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

*The Foreign Policy of Park Chunghee: 1968- 1979*

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is a history of South Korean policy towards North Korea and its general foreign policy at the time of fluctuation of relations between the allies, the Republic of Korea and USA, between 1968 and 1979. The thesis shows how American East Asian policy and South Korean people's aspiration for the reunification and democracy of Korea affected Park Chunghee's Cold War strategy. After Park Chunghee failed to find a common ideological foundation with the Americans, the South Korean leader started to re-consider the inter-Korean problem and ROK-US relations in realistic term. In the late-1960s and early 70s, Seoul shifted from antagonism toward Pyongyang to negotiation with the North Koreans in order to support American rapprochement with China. But simultaneously, the Park regime established the authoritarian state and resisted the American influence on its foreign policy. With regards to the ROK-US rift, the thesis points to their misperceptions between the South Korean and American leaders in their war in Vietnam and East-West reconciliation. In addition, this thesis also shows how South Korean nationalism and liberal movement affected Park Chunghee's policy. The aspiration of South Korean public for the reunification and democracy of Korea pushed policy makers over despotic rule and the aggressive policy toward North Korea.

# **The Foreign Policy of Park Chunghee: 1968- 1979**

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## INTRODUCTION

On the Korean peninsula, the southern and northern states – also known as the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) – have continued their conflict after end of the Cold War. A terrible fraternal war was fought in the 1950s, and the threat of war still exists. The border between the two Koreas is one of the most intensely militarized areas in the world and hence there is always the fear of war on the Korean peninsula. Nevertheless, the current perception of the threat does not seem as acute as it was during the Cold War. For historians who study the Cold War, it is important to identify the processes by which the political situation on the Korean peninsula has changed. The problem lies in which factors to emphasize in that analysis. One of the most significant indicators of change lies in the evolution of South Korea's Northern policy. Considering the hostility between the two Koreas in general, the term 'policy' here will have to encompass both diplomatic and military affairs. In the case of the global history of the Cold War, it is also necessary to review the South's policy changes towards the North in order to establish Korea's general place in the Cold War. Due to severely limited research possibilities in North Korea, however, my thesis focuses on South Korea alone.

South Korea's Cold War strategy is clearly distinguished from that of America's other allies or of Third World nations. Most of these countries could change their relations with Washington, Moscow, or Beijing because of their own economic and/or political interests. Throughout the East-West conflict, however, South Korea closely worked with the US and did not have diplomatic relations with Communist superpowers. While other American partners, such as Japan, opened up diplomatically toward the Communist states, especially during the Sino-Soviet split and the détente era in the 1970s, the ROK took no such initiatives. The reason for this is obvious. South Korea's archenemy, Pyongyang, was closely aligned with both the two major Communist states, the Soviet Union and China. Seoul continued to reject normalization with any Communist state up until the late 1980s. Because of Seoul's heavy reliance on Washington and its hostility toward Moscow and Beijing, South Korea was in many ways hostage to changes in American foreign policy. This study will analyse why South Korea was very late in breaking out of this diplomatic stranglehold.

My thesis will first discuss the ROK's policy towards the DPRK between 1968 and 1979 when, under the rule of President Park Chunghee, South Korea started to make changes in its policy towards the North, the other Communist states, and its own allies. These changes later

became the basis for ROK foreign policy today. I will also discuss the general aspects of the ROK's foreign policy that have affected its Northern policy. In this thesis, the South Korean general foreign policy encompasses its policy toward Communist countries other than the DPRK and towards its capitalist allies, mainly the US and Japan. Although the research starts from 1968, it is also necessary to briefly discuss the historical background from the pre-1968 period.

My first goal is to identify how South Korea's policy towards North Korea was created and what its aims were between 1968 and 1979. Then, by examining the ROK's foreign policy, the influences from the surrounding or allied major powers on Korea will be identified; namely, the USA, China, the USSR, and Japan, all of which continuously affected South Korea's Northern policy. Moreover, the political dealings between the two Koreas will be discussed. This study will therefore contribute not only to Korean historiography, but to the historiography of the Cold War, because it will help track the process through which South Korea's role in the later Cold War emerged.

My own military experience has shaped my understanding of the interrelation between the ROK's Northern policy and the level of hostility between the two Koreas. During my time in the South Korean military, the level of hostility between the two Koreas was a matter of life and death to myself and my comrades, and the policy of my government towards the North was a principal indicator of that hostility. For two and half years, every morning, we recited our oath to protect South Korea against the threat posed by our countrymen to the North. It was only after developing my academic training that I was able to escape the psychological impositions of military service.

Before starting my MPhil/PhD course at the London School of Economics, I utilized archival sources and oral histories provided by Dr. Sergey Radchenko during his stay in Seoul in the summer of 2007. He required translation and interpretation assistance from Korean into English. While helping him, I also benefited from his research. After starting my degree at LSE, I further benefited from the tutelage of my supervisor, Prof. Odd Arne Westad, from other faculty members, and from the advice of my PhD cohort in the International History department. All of this background helped establish my own research methods for my thesis and my approach to my subject.

The most important primary archival sources in my research are government documents in South Korea. We are now in a position to gain access to hitherto unavailable documents from the Park Chunghee era thanks to recent declassification of government materials, especially from the Foreign Ministry, Reunification Ministry, and within the National Archives. The archive of the Foreign Ministry is administered by the IFANS (Institute of

Foreign Affairs and National Security), which also serves as the main training school for diplomatic officers. This year, the Foreign Ministry began a gradual opening of its archives for the period up to and including 1982.<sup>1</sup> Some of the documents on military and/or political conflicts or talks between the South and North, and on dialogue between South and North Korea and other states, i.e. the US, USSR, and/or China, are now available. Although the topic of inter-Korean relations remains an extremely sensitive one, the archive of the Foreign Ministry of South Korea is the most important source now available to provide information about the causes and results of any change in the Republic of Korea's policy toward the North and other nations.

The ROK National Archives provide materials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs regarding North Korea. They can help to track the policy-making process within the ROK government on reunification and national defence, both of which directly link to the ROK's foreign policy. The 1970 Cabinet meetings on the withdrawal of US troops from the ROK, for instance, provide useful information on the national defence policy-making process. Meanwhile, the changes to the ROK Constitution in 1972 (for inter-Korean dialogues) and the records of the establishment of the Ministry of Reunification in 1973 provide important information regarding reunification policy.

Other sources are the archives in the United States. There is limited research possibilities in South Korea for the decision making process within government for inter-Korean talks during this period as it is a sensitive issue. Therefore, it is necessary for scholars to refer to American sources in order to fill the gap in the Korean material. Moreover, the combination of South Korean and American viewpoints helps us to overcome the bias of a uniquely South Korean perspective. Given the United States' historical role as one of the most important diplomatic partners of the ROK and its concern with inter-Korean relations, US archival documents provide important information about diplomatic interaction between Washington and Seoul. It is also necessary to directly compare American viewpoints with Korean ones on specific issues and examine possible divergences in order to have more objective picture. Furthermore, some information, not declassified in South Korean side, is freely available from the American material. For example, the details of inter-Korean negotiations in 1972 were

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<sup>1</sup>외교통상부는 『외교문서공개에관한규칙』 (외교부령)에따라 30년이경과한 1982 년도문서를중심으로 총 1,200여권(16만여쪽)의외교문서를 2012.2.12(목)자로공개합니다.

“On 12 Feb. 2012, according to 『The regulation on declassification of diplomatic documents』 (The decree of Ministry of Foreign Affairs)Ministry of Foreign Affairs declassified about 1,200 documents (about 160 000 pages), including documents of 1982 and others written 30 years before.”

released within the US National Security Council files, while the ROK still classifies these documents. For this reason, it is vital to review the documents in American archives in order to locate any discrepancies or divergences between Seoul and Washington.

Secondly, a great deal of useful documentary material has become available in US presidential libraries. The libraries which have documents covering the period of my research are the Lyndon B. Johnson Library (1963- 1969), Richard M. Nixon Library (1969 - 1974), Gerald R. Ford Library (1974- 1976), and Jimmy Carter Library (1976 -1980). These libraries also provide oral history collections available online. For instance, an interview with Cyrus R. Vance, the former US special emissary from Washington to Seoul, is used in Chapter 1 of this thesis. The National Security Archives at the George Washington University and its Don Oberdorfer Collection also help track the ROK-US Foreign relations in this period. Recently published materials in *Foreign Relations of the United States* [FRUS] are another important source. Its documents are especially helpful to get an overview of diplomatic affairs between the ROK and the United States. It is especially useful on the summit talks that took place between the leaders of the two countries. In short, the US documents provide much general information about American influence on Park Chunghee's foreign policy

Along with archival sources, a number of books, newspapers, memoirs, documents with oral histories, and testimonies on modern Korean history contributed to my research. The first and probably most important one is Park's own books on Korean politics. In these books and articles, Park Chunghee presents his political philosophy and ideas on specific political events.<sup>2</sup> As a result of his assassination, Park Chunghee did not get to publish his own memoirs and autobiography. For this reason, these books might be one of the few sources directly outlining Park's ideas, and they should be taken seriously. Furthermore, some of his personal diaries are available. These documents will be helpful in identifying the American influence on the ROK's Foreign policies between 1968 and 1969. In addition, even though Park himself is dead, there are a number of people still alive who worked in his government and cabinet. Their testimonies help evaluate the Park regime's attitude towards North Korea and the political environments of South Korea at that time. For example, I have interviewed Kang Induk, the former head of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, whose main responsibility was to combat guerrilla operations launched from the North. He explained how the Park regime reacted to North Korean

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<sup>2</sup> Park wrote a number of articles about Korean politics. Recently, one publisher collected those articles and published them as books. Park Chunghee, *Korea Reborn: A Model for Development* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1979); Park Chunghee, *Nara'ga Wibum Hal Tae Uchi Mokseumeul Aggiri?* [*How Can I Spare My Life when My Nation is in Danger?*], (Seoul: Dongsuh Books, 2005); Park Chunghee, *Hanguk Gukmin'ege Go'ham* [*To Announce to My Dear Korean People*], Seoul: Dongsuh Books, 2005); Park Chunghee, *Ha'myun Doen'da! Teolcheo Il'eonaja* [*Just do it! Let's rise up!*], (Seoul: Dongsuh Books, 2005).



provocations in 1968 and described his experience in North Korea during the inter-Korean talks in 1972. He also published his book, *Inter-Korean talks: From 4 July to 15 June*, and provided an official position of South Korea in those negotiations between the two Koreas.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Kim Sungeun, the Minister of National Defence in Park's cabinet, detailed his experiences with and ideas about Park through his memoirs.<sup>4</sup> Thanks to Kim's memoir and other ROK elites' records, I am able to describe the political scenes in which Park and other ROK elites struggled against the DPRK and, sometimes, against their US allies.

Along with the testimonies of persons close to Park, I have also reviewed the memoirs and testimonies of his political enemies in the interest of a more balanced viewpoint towards the period. They provide the information about the influence of the domestic power game on Park's foreign policy. Moreover, they will also counter-balance any bias towards the Park regime. Since many politicians opposed and challenged Park's despotic rule and his confrontational policy toward communists, their significance and influence on Korean politics is worth examining. A specific example would be Kim Daejung, later ROK president from 1998 to 2002, who as an opposition politician in the 1970s advocated a more lenient approach toward North Korea. Indeed, popular support for his democratic and peaceful approach towards the North made him a serious threat to Park. Kim Daejung died in 2009, but his autobiography and memoirs describe his proposals for new Northern policy initiatives and his fierce competition with Park in the 1971 presidential election, which reflects much of the dynamics of the South Korean political scene. Next, mass media indicates the general perception/opinion of society and shows the political issues of the international affairs of South Korea. The analysis in the press of the ROK and other countries will show how international affairs affected domestic political discussion and vice versa. These sources show how political affairs worked in the period and help me explain the changes in international politics, détente, and the origin of the breach between South Korea and the United States, all of which affected South Korea's policy towards the North.

Many scholars from around the world have conducted research on the Korean War and on Korea during the Cold War period. Seldom, however, has Korean foreign policy itself been the focus of their research. Past emphasis has been on the researchers' home countries or on world politics. This is because Korea's place in the Cold War cannot be understood as just a matter between two Korean states. As a result, there are also many different approaches to how to interpret changes in South Korea's foreign policy.

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<sup>3</sup> Kang Induk and Song Jonghwan, *Inter-Korean talks: From 4 July to 15 June*, (Seoul: Institute of Far Eastern Studies, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Kim Sungeun, *Sungeun Hoegorok, Naeu'i Jan-i Numchi Naiad* [*Kim Sungeun Memoirs, You filled my cup to the brim*], (Seoul: Itempool Korea press, 2008).

Cho Kabje, a former journalist and incumbent member of the Korean National Assembly, in his analysis introduced the key figure, President Park Chunghee, and outlined the decision making processes of the ROK government under Park's rule. In his book, *Park Chunghee*, Cho explains Park's background, how he rose to power and how he later ruled the state.<sup>5</sup> This book also provides information about the formation and aims of Park's Northern policy and sheds light on the relationship between the ROK and other nations through the examination of various records, e.g. interviews with politicians, memoirs and newspaper articles, all of which provide a good starting point for my own research. Through this biographic work, Cho indicates that Park's dictatorship was a natural product of the instability which resulted from the competition between the two Koreas. He sympathized with Park, who in Cho's view sought to establish a stable society and defend his nation against the Communist threat.

Conversely, there are many scholars who take a critical view of Park's dictatorship. Yang Seongcheol is one of the most prominent critics. To support his criticisms of Park, Yang examined the structure of South Korean leadership as it compared to that found in North Korea. In his work, *Bun'dan'euui jung'chi- Park Chunghee'wa Kim Ilsung bi'gyo yeongu* (*The politics of division - A comparative study of Park Chunghee and Kim Ilsung*), he argues that Park used Korean insecurities to justify his lifetime tenure and despotic style of ruling, asserting that the aim of the Park regime was to maintain his leadership rather than to establish a stable nation.<sup>6</sup> In another work, *Han-mi anbo gwangyeui jaejomyeong: Pueblo ho sageoneui uigi mit dongmaeng gwanri saryerul jungsimeu ro* (*A renewed discussion of the security relationship between Korea and the United States: The "Pueblo" incident and crisis*), Yang also discusses the relationship between Park's Northern and foreign policy, both of which were designed to shore up Park's rule.<sup>7</sup> Shin Wookhee, another prominent scholar of Korean Studies, supports this assertion with his suggestion that the North Korean threat was utilized by Park for his authoritarian rule.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Ma Sangyun argued that Park's dictatorship based on anticommunism resulted in a split in South Korean public opinion and did not establish national security as he maintained.<sup>9</sup> This thesis generally concurs with the finding that Park

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<sup>5</sup> Cho Kabje, *Park Chunghee*, (Seoul: Chogabje.com, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Yang Seongcheol, *Bun'dan'euui jung'chi- Park Chunghee'wa Kim Ilsung Bi'gyo Yeongu* [*The Politics of Division- The Comparative Study between Park Chunghee and Kim Ilsung*], (Seoul: Hanwul, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> Yang Seongcheol, and Mun Jeongin, *Han-mi Anbo Gwangyeui Jaekomyeong: Pueblo ho sageoneui uigi mit dongmaeng gwanri saryerul jungsimeu ro* [*The Renewed Discussion on Security Relationship between Korea and US: "Pueblo" incident and crisis*], (Seoul: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, Kyongnam University, 1988).

<sup>8</sup> Shin Wookhee, "Giheo'eseo Gyochk Sangtae'ro [From Opportunity to Stalemate]," Korea politics and diplomatic history collection vol. 26 2<sup>nd</sup> issue; ShinWookhee and Kim Youngho, Jeonhwang'euui Dongmaeng: D  tente Siki'euui Hanmianbogwangye [Alliance in Transitional Period: ROK-US security relations in the d  tente era], Korea Political History Conference. 7 April, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Ma Sangyun, "Anbo'wa Minjujuyi, geurigo Bak Jeonghui'ui gil [Security, Democracy and Park Chung Hee's Road: The Origins of the Yushin System Revisited], International Politics Collection of Treatises 43 (2003).

exaggerated the North Korean threat in order to justify his rule.

A number of texts examine the general political setting of the ROK during the Park era. Gregory Henderson's *Korea: The Politics of the Vortex* explains how the ROK had been ruled until the late 1960s.<sup>10</sup> The government under Park Chunghee are discussed in Hahn Honggoo, *Vietnam Pabydyeong'gwa Byeongyeong Gugga'eni gil [Dispatching. Troops to Vietnam and Militarization of South Korea]*<sup>11</sup>, David C. Cole and Princeton N. Lyman's *Korean Development: The Interplay of Politics and Economics*<sup>12</sup>, Kim Sejin's *The Politics of Military Revolution in Korea*<sup>13</sup>, Oh John Kiechiang's *Korea: Democracy on Trial*<sup>14</sup>, Kihl Young Whan's *Politics and Policies in Divided Korea*<sup>15</sup>, Don Oberdorfer's *The Two Koreas: Contemporary History*<sup>16</sup>, and *The Economic and Social Modernization of the Republic of Korea* by Edward S. Mason and others.<sup>17</sup> A recent publication by Kim Byung-kook and Ezra F. Vogel, *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, complements the existing literature but focuses mainly upon South Korea's "modernization."<sup>18</sup> Among these works, Don Oberdorfer's *The Two Koreas* has proven most useful for my research. It is a narrative history of the two Korean states between 1972 and 1997. In this book, Oberdorfer explains Korea's travails and triumphs and focuses on the tensions between North and South within a historical context. He puts special emphasis on the involvement of outside powers, such as the US, the USSR, and China. Oberdorfer's work is reflective of the view that foreigners adopt towards modern Korean history and, as such, is important for me in discussing Korea's place in Cold War history. Kang Induk and Song Jonghwan's volume, *Inter-Korean Talks: From 4 July to 15 June*, provides a systematic analysis of the negotiations between the two Koreas in the early and mid-1970s. Furthermore, Lee Chongsik's *Japan and Korea: The Political Dimension*, Victor Cha's *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The US-Korea-Japan Security Triangle*<sup>19</sup>, Gregg A. Brazinsky's *Nation Building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans, and the Making of a Democracy*, and Mark Clifford's *Troubled Tiger: Businessmen, Bureaucrats and Generals in South Korea* are also helpful in understanding the

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<sup>10</sup> Gregory Henderson, *Korea: The Politics of the Vortex*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

<sup>11</sup> Hahn Honggoo, *Vietnam Pabydyeong'gwa Byeongyeong Gugga'eni gil [Dispatching. Troops to Vietnam and Militarization of South Korea]*, (Seoul: Changbi, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> David C Cole. Princeton N. Lyman, *The Interplay of Politics and Economics*, (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1971)

<sup>13</sup> Kim Sejin, *The Politics of Military Revolution in Korea*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971).

<sup>14</sup> Oh John Kie-Chiang, *Korea: Democracy on Trial*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970).

<sup>15</sup> Kihl Young Whan, *Politics and Policies in Divided Korea*, (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1984).

<sup>16</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, (Washington: Basic Books, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> Edward S. Mason and et al, *The Economic and Social Modernization of the Republic of Korea*, (Cambridge: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 1980).

<sup>18</sup> Kim Byungkook and Ezra F. Vogel, *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Victor Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Lee Chongsik, *Japan and Korea: The Political Dimension*. (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1985); Gregg A., Brazinsky *Nation Building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans, and the Making of a Democracy*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Mark Clifford, *Troubled Tiger: Businessmen, Bureaucrats and Generals in South Korea*, (Armonk: M E Scharpe: 1998).

relationship between Korea and the US as well as between Korea and Japan during the period under review.

The other party in the inter-Korean relationship and the object of the ROK's Northern policy is the DPRK. Suh Daesuk's work, *Kim Il Sung: North Korean Leader*, is particularly valuable in understanding this relationship because of its treatment of modern and contemporary history of North Korea. This book investigates and analyzes the life of Kim Il-sung (1912-1988), with particular attention given to Kim's revolutionary history, his rise to and consolidation of power, his policy toward South Korea, his relationship with both Soviet Union and China, and his self-reliance ideology, *Chuch'e*. In his biography of North Korea's leader, Suh illustrates how the confrontational policy of DPRK leaders with military backgrounds affected the development of the ROK's Northern policy from its inception. He also suggests that DPRK leaders utilized threats from South Korea and the US to justify their political persecution of rivals.<sup>20</sup> Wada Haruki supports Suh's position in his analysis of the political structure and philosophy of North Korea; he argues that internal power conflicts within the DPRK ultimately contributed to the hostile relationship between the two Koreas since 1945, the year Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial rule.<sup>21</sup> It is also noteworthy that both scholars discuss the influence of the Sino-Soviet split on the DPRK's aggressive Southern policy. They argue that this conflict resulted in a lack of checks on the DPRK, who had played the two Communist giants against each other. Together with the military background of the DPRK leadership, the decline of the political influence of both Moscow and Beijing on Pyongyang allowed Kim Il-sung to assume a more assertive role towards the US and South Korea. Using Russian archival sources, Sergey Radchenko indicates that the North Korean elites acted on their own without prior consultation with Moscow or Beijing when planning the raid on the Blue House, South Korea's presidential residence, and the attack on the USS *Pueblo* in January 1968.<sup>22</sup> In short, these works outline the policy making process of the DPRK leadership and highlight the influence of the Sino-Soviet split. Although their works are generally based on Russian and/or Chinese sources, they provide a context through which to clarify the modern history and political structure of North Korea. Additionally, Andrei Lankov's *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: The Formation of North Korea, 1945-1960*<sup>23</sup> and *Crisis in North Korea: The Failure of De-Stalinization, 1956*<sup>24</sup> and Charles K.

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<sup>20</sup> Suh Daesuk, *Kim Il Sung: North Korean Leader*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995).

<sup>21</sup> Wada Haruki, *Buk joseon [North Korea- The Present Stage of Guerrilla State]*, (Seoul: Dolbegae, 2002).

<sup>22</sup> Sergey S. Radchenko, "The Soviet Union and the North Korean seizure of the USS *Pueblo*, Evidence from Russian Archives," Cold War International History Project Working Paper 47 (2005): 20.

<sup>23</sup> Andrei Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: The Formation of North Korea, 1945-1960*. (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

<sup>24</sup> Andrei Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea: The Failure of De-Stalinization, 1956*, (Hawaii: University of Hawaii, 2007).

Armstrong's *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950*<sup>25</sup> are also helpful to understand the establishment and nature of North Korea and Kim's regime.

All of the works cited above provide general ideas of modern and contemporary Korean politics. However, a number of works focus on specific determinants of Korean politics and the relationship between the two Koreas. In the book *A History of Contemporary Korea*, Kang Mangil explains how the national democratic movement contributed to the changes in South Korea's policy towards North Korea between the 1960s and 1970s. The military government of Park Chunghee promoted economic development as well as anticommunism. Kang suggests that the promotion of economic development resulted in the growth of education, and hence an eventual increase in the number of highly educated people. The educated championed their democratic rights and wanted more liberal foreign policies including those towards North Korea. As a result, he argues, the national democratic movement strongly pushed for a policy with a more liberal perspective and invoked change.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to domestic democratic movement, one of the most important factors affecting South Korean foreign policy is the ROK-US relationship. In his article, "The US and ROK Alliance: An Asymmetric Alliance over Time", James D. Morrow explains the model of an alliance in asymmetric form and applies it to the ROK-US case to explain the limit of the US influence on ROK politics.<sup>27</sup> An asymmetric alliance is one that joins a major and minor power. Clearly, the ROK-US alliance does not represent the conventional form of an alliance: facing an external threat, countries seek out their alliance partner(s) based on their military power.<sup>28</sup> Morrow argues that these countries formed an alliance for their own strategic interests and in spite of their differences in national power.<sup>29</sup> While South Korea received protection from the US, Washington oriented the policy of Seoul. The problem in this unusual form of alliance is the level of 'protection' provided by the major power, the US.<sup>30</sup> The ROK-US conflicts over the Nixon Doctrine and Jimmy Carter's pullout pledge show South Korea's fear of abandonment as well as America's fear of entrapment with ROK.

For the purposes of this thesis, the most important point is that we can measure the support from Washington and its influence on South Korean politics. Clearly, the American commitment to South Korea's security cannot be determined only from US spending for Seoul,

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<sup>25</sup> Charles K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945- 1950*, (New York, Cornell University, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> Kang Mangil, *A History of Contemporary Korea* (Honolulu:University of Hawaii Press,2006).

<sup>27</sup> James D. Morrow, "The United States and ROK alliance: An Asymmetric Alliance over Time", *The Korean Journal of Security Affairs*, 11-1 (2006): 103-121.

<sup>28</sup> For instance, Stephen M. Walt, *The Origin of Alliances*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987).

<sup>29</sup> James D. Morrow, *op. cit.*, 105.

<sup>30</sup> James D. Morrow, *op. cit.*, 108.

but also through the presence of US forces. Although Nixon reduced the US troops in South Korea, he provided aid to Park Chunghee for the modernization of South Korean armed forces. Moreover, Jimmy Carter promised enormous compensation for the total withdrawal of US land forces from South Korea. Nonetheless, Park did not want Washington to pull out its forces from South Korea and used a number of political and diplomatic measures to prevent the withdrawal plans. That is, for Seoul, the level of US support was determined by the number and quality of US forces and its willingness to intervene in inter-Korean conflicts rather than the amount of funding from Washington. South Korea had an empirical reason for its criteria: the situation resulting from the American pullout from Vietnam made Seoul require a more tangible form of American support. In 1975, once South Vietnam collapsed, Park consistently requested an American guarantee for South Korean security and tried to build nuclear missiles, which Gerald Ford did not allow. The South Korean nuclear weapons programme was stopped only after Washington announced the Ford Doctrine.<sup>31</sup> This confirmed an American commitment to the security of its East Asian allies and helped Seoul conduct a reprisal attack on Pyongyang that attacked the US and South Korean soldiers in the DMZ.

Some scholars contend that Korean nationalism in South Korea also affected the American influence on South Korean politics. In his work on Korean history, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, Bruce Cumings examines pre-modern, modern, and contemporary history before 1997 and places a special emphasis on the nationalism that Korea developed from its traditions. He considers Korea's inherent nationalism, rather than simply the international environment, to be an important independent determinant of modern Korean history. Cumings emphasizes that Korea has a strong national identity and thus resists external influences. This nationalist idea was established due to its colonial history. In the same vein, he argues that South Korea's policy towards North Korea did not necessarily reflect major changes in world politics, such as détente.<sup>32</sup> His suggestion is helpful in explaining the origin of South Korea's "Korean style democracy of Park Chunghee"<sup>33</sup>, which rejected international pressure on the Park regime's undemocratic policy making process. Regarding this, in the pragmatic sense, he suggests that the traditional concept of democracy is not efficient for South Korea, which faces a Communist threat. Consequently, he claims that some degree of democracy had to be sacrificed for the sake

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<sup>31</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 72- 83.

<sup>32</sup> Bruce Cumings, *Korea's place in the Sun* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005).

<sup>33</sup> Park Chunghee, *Nara'ga Wibum Hal Tae Uchi Mokseumeul Aggiri?* [*How Can I Spare My Life when My Nation is in Danger?*], (Seoul: Dongsuh Books, 2005), 249. Park Chunghee justified his authoritarian rule, criticized by parts of the Korean public and foreign governments, with Cold War rhetoric. He thought that South Korea needed strong leadership in order to prevent war and develop the economy, and hence its democracy can be limited in this context. He labelled such a system 'Korean-style democracy.'

of national security. Cumings argues that the Park regime “sought to draw upon the Korean old virtues of obedience and loyalty, family values and filial piety, and the leader as father of the nation.”<sup>34</sup> In Cumings’ view, the Korean tradition was useful for Park to limit the potential international influence on Korean politics although he benefited from American economic and military aid.

Suh Daesuk has challenged Cumings’ perspective on the role of inherent Korean nationalism in the policy making process. In his two works, *Kim Il-sung, the North Korean Leader* and *Korea and the United States: A Century of Cooperation*, he criticized Kim Il-sung’s “*Chu’che* ideology”<sup>35</sup>, in that it was not developed for inherent nationalism, but for political struggle. He asserts that the ideology was mainly used for persecuting Kim’s political rivals in North Korea.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, he argues that Park Chunghee’s “Korean style democracy” was merely a political tool, used for oppressing democratic movements. Moreover, he explains that Park Chunghee and Kim Il-sung did not hesitate to accept foreign support while at the same time placing an emphasis on national independence.<sup>37</sup> In Suh’s view, inherent nationalism cannot explain the policy aims of South and North Korea towards each other. Suh does not deny that North Korea kept its sovereignty even during the Sino-Soviet conflicts, but he points out that North Korea has never been independent, particularly with regards to economics.<sup>38</sup> The same can be said of South Korea; its economy and military were heavily dependent on the US until the late 1970s. Therefore, South Korea’s policy towards North Korea was more shaped by American foreign policy and interventionism than by its own nationalistic conceptions. In this point, Suh considers that international factors, i.e. American influence, were the most important driving forces of South Korea’s politics towards North Korea.<sup>39</sup> Donald S. Macdonald’s work, *U.S.–Korean Relations from Liberation to Self-Reliance*, supports Suh’s arguments on American influence on the ROK’s politics. Based on a comprehensive examination of documents regarding Korea from the US Department of State archives, this book summarizes and interprets the record of US relations with Korea during the crucial two decades following World War II. In his work, Macdonald illustrates Seoul’s heavy reliance on Washington in the 1950s and 1960s. He argues that, under the circumstances, it was in fact American power that directed the ROK’s policy. Although he admits that the ROK established a self-sufficient economy in the 1970s, he concludes that US support was still

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<sup>34</sup> Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s place in the Sun* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 313.

<sup>35</sup> In Korean, *Chu’che* means self-determined.

<sup>36</sup> Suh Daesuk, *op. cit.*, 303- 304.

<sup>37</sup> Suh Daesuk and Koo Youngnok, *Korea and the United States: A century of Cooperation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984).

<sup>38</sup> Suh Daesuk, *Kim Il Sung: North Korean Leader*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995).

<sup>39</sup> Suh Daesuk and Koo Youngnok, *Korea and the United States: A century of Cooperation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984).

indispensable for the ROK's national defence.<sup>40</sup> In their analysis of Korean politics, Suh and Macdonald generally put more emphasis on international factors than on domestic factors.

The secondary sources reviewed above suggest various interpretations of Korean history during the Cold War era. Kang pointed out the internal dynamics of South Korean politics and the role of the national democratic movement in South Korea's policy towards North Korea. This idea may have contributed to the discussion in the 1970s when the democratic movements became active. The contrasting ideas suggested by Cumings and Suh allow for further discussion on the major driving forces in the South Korean policy making process regarding Northern policy. There is no definite answer for this topic; I think that both points are valid. The ROK could successfully pursue "economic development" thanks to substantial US aid, which in turn allowed American foreign policy to guide South Korea's policy in many cases. On the other hand, the ROK had and still has a strong tendency to reject foreign intervention. In my thesis, both perspectives will be discussed on equal terms. Nonetheless, it is important for me to identify when and how those factors influenced Korean politics.

Following Yang Seongcheol and Shin Wookhee, I assert that South Korean foreign policy at the beginning of the period covered in my research was created by the Park regime in order to justify its despotic style of governance and secure the safety of South Korea, but then steadily changed in response to domestic and international pressures. Even though Park could have usurped the prime power of the ROK through his coup in 1961, the United States used frequent threats to tie aid to the holding of elections to coerce Park to run for the presidency of South Korea.<sup>41</sup> This meant that his political power was subject to Washington and to the Korean electorate, rather than to the spectre of a potential North Korean invasion. In reality, in institutional terms, the 'checks and balances system', of the Park regime was not free from legislative obstruction from the National Assembly. Since Park Chunghee's *Democratic Republican Party* (*Minju Gonghwa dang*) held a majority throughout his entire tenure in power, the legislature could be denounced as a rubber stamp institution of the regime. The minor parties, however, organized to struggle against the Park regime. For instance, when Park attempted to attain lifetime tenure in 1972, it was the opposition parties who played a leading role in the protest against Park's authoritarian rule.<sup>42</sup>

Park needed legitimate justification in order to defend his position from existing

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<sup>40</sup> Donald S. Macdonald, *U.S –Korean Relations from Liberation to Self-Reliance*. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992).

<sup>41</sup> Bruce Cumings, *op. cit.*, 359.

<sup>42</sup> On 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1972, the Park regime closed the National Assembly and proclaimed martial law. The ROK opposition parties strongly protested at this decision. Many members of the parties were imprisoned for the protest. However, students continuously staged anti-government demonstrations. Cho Kabje, *op.cit.* , 174.



political threats presented by other politicians and the public. One of the most important arguments he made was that South Korea needed a strong leader in order to prevent invasion from the North and undue influence from Communist states, such as China and the USSR. It had been less than ten years since the end of the Korean War, so Park's charismatic military leadership appealed to the electorate's memory of that war. As a result, during the first stage of Park's rule, anticommunism and strong political leadership constituted South Korea's policy towards North Korea, other Communist powers, and South Korea's allies. Park's aims were to maintain South Korean stability and to prevent war through military and economic prowess, rather than to achieve Korean unification. International factors, such as Washington's anticommunist policy and its interventionism, also affected the creation and aims of domestic and foreign policy making in Seoul. Because of their common ideological ground, the Park regime received political and economic support from the US government and could build economic and military foundation for South Korea's national security throughout this period.<sup>43</sup>

Park's anticommunist policy, however, was put into question by South Korean nationalism and the international trend of détente. Although South Korean fear of North Korean hostility continued to exist, most South Koreans also hoped for a peaceful reunification for Korea. The post-Korean War generations acquired the right to vote in the early 1970s and supported the liberals who advocated reconciliation with the Communists. South Korean citizens became organized and confronted policy makers on the authoritarian nature of their governance and on the hostile South Korean policy towards North Korea. Park's political rival, Kim Daejung, publically appealed for a peaceful approach to reunification and for a generous perspective towards the North. Moreover, due to the negative outcomes from the war in Vietnam, the US started to re-think its anticommunist and interventionist strategies in East Asia, at least in form. The Park regime did not welcome the new outlook in American foreign policy but gradually entered the new détente phase of the Cold War from 1968 onwards.<sup>44</sup>

In 1968, Seoul became aware of Washington's reluctance to become more deeply involved in the Korean problem because of the consequences of America's war in Southeast Asia. In January 1968, North Korean forces raided the Blue House, the presidential residence of the ROK, and captured the US spy ship, *Pueblo*. Due to the war in Vietnam, Washington chose not to regard these incidents as serious provocative actions and curbed an aggressive ROK reaction against the North.<sup>45</sup> After Richard Nixon was elected US President, Washington further

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<sup>43</sup> Shin Wookhee, *op. cit.*, 255.

<sup>44</sup> Shin Wookhee, *op. cit.*, 261.

<sup>45</sup> "U.S.'s reaction and South Korean Government's response regarding Panmunjom meetings", 1968, Class Number UNW-0204 Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

restrained the Park regime's aggressive attitude towards the North so to encourage the normalization of US-China relations in the early 1970s. International pressure forced the Park regime to change its policy towards communists.

However, the pragmatic and authoritarian nature of the Park regime resisted this international and domestic trend. South Korea was forced to join the détente system in East Asia because of the shift in American foreign policy in that direction, yet the Park regime never expected North Korea to be militarily weaker than the South and was therefore reluctant to negotiate with Kim Il-sung over national reunification. Moreover, Park Chung-hee needed to continue reemphasizing the Communist threat at home in order to sustain his long-term draconian rule. The democratic voices in South Korea that advocated reconciliation with Pyongyang and the end of domestic military rule were suppressed by the Park regime.<sup>46</sup> Until his death, Park struggled with democratic activists in South Korea and with American leaders who tried to withdraw troops from South Korea and encourage reconciliation between Seoul and Pyongyang.

In conclusion, during the 1960s and 1970s, the creation and aims of South Korea's Northern and general Foreign policies depended on continuous compromise between dictatorship and democracy and between the Cold War and détente. Without any doubt, these domestic and international influences were entirely interrelated and therefore could not be considered separately. Clearly, the liberal and democratic voices in South Korea were encouraged by détente and the American concern over the morality of its allies in the 1970s. South Korean democratic resistance towards the Park regime also affected Washington's decisions about its South Korean policy.

While many scholars have focused on only one of these dimensions, none have argued against their mutual influence. This thesis shows that the impact of these domestic and international driving forces for South Korea's policy is chronologically inconsistent throughout the 1960s and 1970s. As an American ally, South Korea had quickly developed both militarily and economically since the Korean War. In 1975, the US government faced difficulties in preventing South Korea's nuclear development since it had failed to assure South Korea's national security after the US defeat in the Vietnam War.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, Washington's influence on Seoul in the 1970s was less powerful than it had been in the 1960s. Additionally, at the domestic level, democratic actions were tightly controlled by the Korean government, and South Korea's

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<sup>46</sup> Ma Sangyoon, "Anbo'wa Minjujuui, geurigo Bak Jeonghui'ui gil [Security, Democracy and Park Chung Hee's Road: The Origins of the Yushin System Revisited]." *International Politics Collection of Treatises* 43 (2003): 172.

<sup>47</sup> "Review of US Policies toward Korea," Telegram 2807 from Seoul; State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE, National Security Adviser, Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, Box 11, Korea, Ford Library.

security concerns sometimes led to the silencing of critics of the Park administration. Hence the domestic factor was insignificant in some cases because of the powerlessness of the government's opposition. Therefore, my research aim has been to identify the significance of domestic and international influences on the creation and goals of the ROK's Northern and foreign policies.

It has also been my aim to contribute to the historiography of the Cold War as well as to that of Korea. Arne Westad's *Global Cold War*, arguably one of the most influential of books looking at the topic of the Cold War in the context of third-world politics, substantially helped my own research in finding the role of South Korea within the area of Cold War history.<sup>48</sup> The difficulty is the extent to which it is accurate to claim that the ROK played an important role in the Cold War. Arguably, in the Korean War, the survival of the ROK was dependent on UN forces, while the ROK's contribution and participation in the Vietnam War was of little significance because of the eventual Communist victory. Nonetheless, the history of the ROK's government during the Cold War deserves to be studied primarily for its exceptional strategy in adapting its domestic and foreign policies. South Korea attenuated American efforts for détente in East Asia and hence accelerated the resumption of the Cold War beginning in the mid- 1970s. Moreover, the Korean peninsula is the only region in the world where the Cold War did not end, and it is thus a necessary factor for a historian to consider when explaining what contributed to the present setting of the Korean peninsula and East Asia. Therefore, my research will help historians identify Korea's place in the early Cold War and track the process through which Korea's role in the later Cold War emerged.

The volume of literature on South Korean politics and history in the Cold War is enormous. Nevertheless, I feel that there are deficiencies in this field of study. Very few works have dealt with the role of South Korea in America's war against Communism or how the two Koreas failed to end their own Cold War. For instance, many authors have neglected to explain the impact of Seoul's resistance against détente in the 1970s, a policy which discouraged Washington's efforts to calm its conflict with Moscow and Beijing. The inter-Korean rivalry discouraged the further development of relations between the US, USSR, and China. This thesis will provide an explanation of Korea's influence on the Cold War in East Asia and a therefore be a useful resource for current and future historians working of the subject.

I will divide the period covered in my research on the political history of South Korea into four chapters according to changes in South Korea's Northern and foreign policies caused

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<sup>48</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Time*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2005).

by domestic political shifts and/or changes in the international political environment.

The first chapter covers the dramatic year of 1968. The overall purpose of this chapter is to examine South Korea's Northern and foreign policies with respect to its military conflicts with North Korea in 1968. This will be addressed in the context of the international environment where the United States and South Korea are engaged in the Vietnam War.

The raid on the Blue House and the abduction of the *USS Pueblo* by North Korean forces in January 1968 challenged the ROK's anticommunist policy. Since the Korean War in the 1950s, South Korea had assumed a firm stance towards the North based on military, political, and economic support from the US and other Western countries.

Committed to its anticommunist policy, Seoul intended to retaliate against North Korea and expected US support in doing so. However, in both instances, the US, which was directly affected by the capture incident, held a different opinion and pursued a strategy of appeasement toward the North because of ongoing hardship in the Vietnam War. The South Korean leadership rejected the American decision and sought for additional US aid to help bolster national security. Despite its diplomatic efforts and its commitment to anticommunism, American reluctance to be involved in the Korean peninsula made it difficult for the Park regime to maintain its aggressive Northern policy.<sup>49</sup> This chapter will contribute to the understanding of the immediate impacts the changes in US foreign policy had on Korea and East Asia during the Cold War.

The second chapter covers the period of 1969 to 1971. The aim of this chapter is to identify the influence of the Nixon Doctrine and the Sino-American rapprochement on South Korean foreign policy. In 1969, Nixon announced his new plan for foreign affairs which later became known as the Nixon Doctrine. Washington pledged not to get directly involved in any conflict outside her own borders. The White House planned the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea and thus undermined the foundation of Park's anticommunist policy. As a result, liberal politicians in South Korea raised their voices to advocate peace talks with Pyongyang. The Park regime started to recognize that the anticommunist policy was no longer sufficient to safeguard national security and ensure Park position in power.<sup>50</sup>

In addition to the pullout scheme, the rapprochement between the US and China also undermined the common ideological ground between the ROK and the US. This development forced Seoul to accept the détente trend in the East Asia. Because of Sino-Soviet clashes in 1969,

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<sup>49</sup> "North Korea's provocation incident in 1968," 1968, Class Number 2664. 729.55, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea; Joseph S Bermudez Jr., *North Korean Special forces* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1998), 32.

<sup>50</sup> Kim Daejung, *op. cit.*, 121; Shin Wookhee and Kim Youngho, *op. cit.*, 4-5.

China sought to improve relations with the US.<sup>51</sup> The US, in turn, was all too willing to talk with China due to its unsuccessful military campaign in Vietnam.<sup>52</sup> In its quest for amicable relations with China, Washington effectively pushed South Korea to soften its policies towards the North. In order to maintain its anticommunist efforts, the Park regime moved to improve relations with Japan, which shared the fear of abandonment by Washington. He succeeded in winning political as well as economic support from Tokyo. Thanks to Japanese cooperation, Park was able to protect his grip on power against the liberal challengers, especially Kim Daejung, in the presidential election of 1971.<sup>53</sup> Despite these efforts the South Korean government proposed inter-Korean talks in August 1971 due to continuous pressure both from Washington and the electorate. In October 1971 Park finally declared martial law and fought to minimize the impact of his liberal approach on his own political basis, anticommunism.

Park's decision made it clear that the South Korean political leaders felt insecure about on going global changes that required South Korea to take a more lenient view and pursue a more peaceful policy towards North Korea as well as other communist nations. The new American foreign policy stance and the rise of liberal movements directly threatened the Park regime which had thus far justified its lengthy tenure and authoritarian rule by pointing out the persisting danger of renewed military conflict with the North. The regime needed to meet the demands of the international community and its citizens. South Korea changed its Northern and general foreign policies with reluctance.<sup>54</sup> This chapter will show the gap between the new foreign policy and the real intentions of South Korea's leadership.

In the third chapter, We will discuss the drastic changes which took place politically in South Korea from 1972 to 1974 .this is the period that the ROK government proposed direct talks with the DPRK and won Nixon's promise to suspend the withdrawal plan for the time being. The top-level talks, held both in Pyongyang and Seoul during the first half of 1972, culminated in the joint communiqué for the peaceful reunification of Korea. However, because both camps did not honour their respective commitments, inter-Korean negotiations soon stalled.<sup>55</sup> While talking with Kim Il-sung, Park Chung-hee continuously fanned fears of the Communist threat and planned an authoritarian reform for further negotiation with Kim and his presidency.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *op. cit.*, 194- 195.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 59- 99.

<sup>54</sup> Ma Sangyoon, *op. cit.*, 176- 181.

<sup>55</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 25.

<sup>56</sup> "SEOUL NIACT [WE AGREE THAT...]", 1972, 10, 16, POL 23- 9 KOR S 2-28-72, Box 2427, RG59; "Press Guidance", 1972, 10,17, POL 23-9 KOR S 2-28-72, Box 2427, RG59; "Martial Law and Government Changes",

In October 1972, the ROK leadership announced the *Yusin* Constitution (Restoration Constitution) that allowed Park to be elected by politicians and appoint one-third of the members of the National Assembly. It is important to point out that Park established the *Yusin* Constitution under pressure from Washington: Since 1969, the White House had urged the Park regime to improve relations with North Korea. However, this could have undermined the foundation of regime. Facing a possible defeat in the next round of elections, Park had to consider new ways to secure his power. Therefore, ROK elites considered it necessary to silence the liberal opposition movement before entering into further negotiations with Pyongyang.<sup>57</sup>

The entering into force of the *Yusin* Constitution ruined the first détente on the Korean peninsula and even led to a deterioration of South Korea's relations with its two main allies, the US and Japan. Pyongyang increasingly lost its interest in the dialogue with Seoul because of Park's aggressive rhetoric proclaiming a 'war against Communists without gunfire.' Washington and Tokyo disapproved of Park's over-emphasis on the Communist threat because their own talks with communist countries were still ongoing at the time. A sequence of political and diplomatic spats surrounding the diverging perceptions of the communist threat erupted between Seoul and Tokyo in 1973 and 1974.<sup>58</sup> These differences clearly demonstrate the split between ROK and Japan as well as between ROK and the US.

The final chapter covered in this thesis stretches from 1975 to 1979, the year Park died. The fall of Saigon opened this turbulent era of South Korean history. The most important issues of this period are the ROK-US conflict over the development of the nuclear missile in South Korea; Jimmy Carter's Korean policies and the liberal and democratic movement against Park. The renewed intensity of conflict with Pyongyang; the defeat of South Vietnam and the Ford administration's lukewarm attitude toward South Korean security also mounted pressure on the ROK. In the early post- Vietnam War period, Park tried to obtain the 'ultimate weapon' in order to strengthen national security and limit fluctuations in American support in South Korea. The nuclear issue illustrates the fact that the Park regime had an obsessive preoccupation with national security issues. This prompted a stern warning from Washington not to pursue a nuclear weapons program. As a result, Park gave up his nuclear ambitions in return for US security

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1972. 10.23, POL 23-9 KOR S 2-28-72, Box 2427, RG59, National Archives.

<sup>57</sup> Chung Iljoon, "Yusin Cheje'eui Mosun'gwa Hanmigaldeung: Minjujueui eob'neun gukgaanbo [Antinomy of the Yusin System and ROK-US Conflicts: National Security without Democracy]," *Sahoe'wa yoksa* 70 (2006): 3- 278.

<sup>58</sup> "The Kim Dae-jung case-an overview," Secret, Cable, 10 October, 1973, Japan and the United States., 1960- 1976, Item Number: JU01813. Department of state, National Security Archive; Lee Wanbeom, "Kim Daejung nabchi sageon'gwa Park Chunghee jeogyeg sageon [Korea-Japan Relations in the 1970s: Kim Dae Jung Kidnapping Incident and the Assassination Attempt on Park Chung Hee]." *Yeouksa Bipyong* 80 (2007): 329.

guarantees.<sup>59</sup>

Yet the advent of the new American administration marked the end of unconditional US support for the Park regime. Carter and senior members of his administration were highly critical of Park's dictatorial rule. Park and his staff, however, did not have any intention to seek democratic government reforms.<sup>60</sup> As a result, Carter planned the total withdrawal of US forces from Korea. Park could prevent the pullout bill from being passed in the US Congress thanks to the cooperation of US Army commanders stationed in South Korea.<sup>61</sup> Yet, due to Carter's stubborn quest for the bill, Park was forced to enter into talks with the US president in 1979 and accept Carter's demand for the observance of human rights and the introduction of political freedom in South Korea. Carter's policy encouraged the liberal and democratic movements in the ROK while increasing numbers of South Koreans began to challenge Park's lifetime tenure.<sup>62</sup>

In the end, the Park regime collapsed under the pressure as Park himself was assassinated by the chief of the KCIA who was responsible for suppressing democratic movements. Kim Jaegyu, the chief of the KCIA, had been reprimanded by Park for his poor performance and grew increasingly frustrated with his leader. As Kim argued, the split between him and his boss came out of disagreements on how to suppress the democratic movement and counter increased US influence.<sup>63</sup> Even though Kim was the one who killed Park, it could be said that his death was the result of domestic and international pressure.

Before beginning Chapter 1, we need to briefly set out some key events in Korean history prior to 1968. Defeated by the US, Japan had to retreat from Korea, and the Korean people finally gained independence in 1945 after 36 years of foreign domination. It began in early August 1945 when Soviet and US forces freed Korea from Japanese occupation. On 10<sup>th</sup> August, the US proposed to the USSR a temporary division of the Korean Peninsula along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. This suggestion was accepted in Moscow. Three years later, in 1948, independent governments were established in both South and North Korea after the US and USSR could not come to an agreement on the establishment of a unitary government in the Korean Peninsula.<sup>64</sup> Rhee Syngman, the president of the Korean provisional government in China, was elected as the first president of the Republic of Korea, also known as South Korea. In the North, Kim Il-sung,

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<sup>59</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 49- 83.

<sup>60</sup> Ma Sangyoon and Park Wongon, "Détenteg'i-eui Hanmi Galdeung: Nixon, Carter'wa Park Chunghee [ROK-US Split in Détente Period: Nixon, Carter, and Park Chunghee]." *Yeoksa Bipyeong* 86 (2009): 113- 139.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid; Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol. 11, 143- 144; *The Washington Post*, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1977.

<sup>62</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr., *Massive entanglement, ,marginal influence: Carter and Korea in crisis*, (Washington: The Brookings Institution: 1999), 51.

<sup>63</sup> Ahn Dongil, *10.26 Eun Sala Itta [The 10.26 Incident is Still Ongoing]*, (Seoul: Random House Chungang, 2005), 85- 86.

<sup>64</sup> William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Press, 1995), 10- 46.

an officer of the Soviet forces, was appointed as Prime Minister of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. They did not, however, consider each other as qualified leaders. Both argued that the respective counterpart on the opposite side of the new dividing line were merely puppets of either the US or USSR - occupied without justification.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, the fundamental policies of the South and North towards each other prior to and during the Korean War were hostile. As is well known, the Korean War did not end with a clear victory for either side. Instead, in 1953, the armistice treaty was signed and the war subsided into the long-term conflict, a solution both camps had feared.<sup>66</sup>

The Korean War introduced two major driving forces in the policy-making process of South Korea's Northern policy which then further developed after the war. Firstly, national defence. The population on both sides of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel continued to live in fear of full scale war and could thus be identified as the real losers. The second force was US influence. The US demonstrated a strong will to intervene in East Asian affairs. The formulation and objectives of post-war South Korea's policy towards North Korea reflected the influence of these two driving forces. Due to the constant fear of war, policy was created and based on the perspective of national defence. The aim of the policy, therefore, was not the reunification, but the prevention of a potential threat from North Korea. Moreover, policy makers assumed American intervention in Korea. In short, South Korea's post-war Northern policy focused on the prevention of the military threat from North Korea with the help of US forces.<sup>67</sup>

American influence on South Korea's policy towards North Korea intensified after the leadership change in Seoul at the beginning of the 1960s. To the US the nationalistic Rhee government was a difficult partner. It rejected the US determination to seek a truce in the Korean War and refused the US proposal for rapprochement with Japan. As a result, American support for South Korea was limited until 1961. South Korea, led by corrupt and incompetent policy makers, was in total disarray after the war. Rhee Syngman resigned in 1960 following demonstrations against a rigged election, and the parliament took power.<sup>68</sup>

On 16<sup>th</sup> May 1961, Park Chunghee staged a coup and seized power. Park and a group of army and navy officers positioned forces at strategic points in the capital, securing the city and taking control of both the government and the media on the same day. By 17<sup>th</sup> May, his junta had banned all political activity.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Suh Daesuk, *Kim Il Sung: North Korean Leader* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995).

<sup>66</sup> William Stueck, *op. cit.*, 308- 348.

<sup>67</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 10- 12.

<sup>68</sup> Bruce Cumings, *op. cit.*, 305- 308.

<sup>69</sup> Michael Keon, *Korean Phoenix: A nation from the Ashes*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Prentice-Hall International, 1977),



Park Chunghee was born in 1917 and joined the Japanese Kwantung Army in Manchuria. In 1946, after the liberation of Korea, Park graduated from the Korean Military Academy. During the communist rebellion in Yosu-Sunchon in 1948, he and his brother joined the insurgents; Park was arrested but helped the authorities track down insurgents. Thanks to this collaboration, he was granted a special amnesty and was allowed to rejoin the ROK Army.<sup>70</sup>

At the beginning, Park received a cold welcome by Washington due to his communist background and the undemocratic temperament of his.<sup>71</sup> However, he seemed to understand this concern well. For example, his junta, called the “revolutionary committee” pledged anticommunism and close ties with the US.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, unlike Rhee Syngman, who had always shown hostility towards Japan, Park actively worked on rapprochement with Japan as the US wished. Washington wanted to ease the tensions between South Korea and Japan, its two main allies in East Asia. Park finally resumed diplomatic relations with Japan in 1965. This was an important movement since the treaty between the ROK and Japan built a link between the ROK, Japan, and the US in East Asia, a connection that influenced the DPRK in terms of its Cold War strategy, putting in on a confrontation course with Japan. Park’s logic was simple, the enemy of my enemy is my ally. Park’s realpolitik put more emphasis on the practical benefits of improved ROK-Japan relations than on cultivating national antagonisms. Although the US had repeatedly called upon South Korea to work towards a normalization of relations with Japan, Rhee Syngman did not make any amicable gesture towards Tokyo and literally ignored the Japanese economic potential that could have benefitted South Korea in its war against the Communists. Rhee’s nationalistic background, the anti- Japanese resistance during the imperial rule, limited practical diplomacy with Japan. Park, however, established diplomatic ties with Japan even in the face of fierce demonstrations that decried the trauma Korea had suffered under Japanese colonial rule. This rational action laid the economic foundation for Park’s enthusiastic campaign focused on national security.<sup>73</sup> For Park, Japan was not a threat since the two countries had to confront common enemies in North Korea and other communist states. His practical diplomacy clearly distinguished between friends and enemies along the lines of the Cold War realities.

Nevertheless, it has frequently been questioned, whether Park was really guided by

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<sup>70</sup> “Major Park Chunghee” is included in a list of field grade officers in the ROK army “confined for subversive activities” 11<sup>th</sup> Nov, 1948. Secretary of State to PMAG Chief of Staff, RG338, KMAG file, box 5412, White House, quoted in Bruce Cumings, *op. cit.*; Gregg Brazinky, *op. cit.*, 13- 41.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Gregory Henderson, *Korea: The Politics of the Vortex*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968). 183.

<sup>73</sup> Bruce Cumings, *op. cit.*, 318.

ideology. Even though he was one of the most vocal proponents of anticommunism in East Asia at the time, he rarely criticized Marxism and the institutional competition between Capitalism and Communism. It stands beyond a doubt that his authoritarian rule and government-planned economy did not conform to the conventional understanding of Capitalist states. His concept of anticommunism does not imply the ‘philosophic or institutional criticism on Communism.’ Rather, it means the ‘realistic perception of the Communist threat.’

Therefore, despite fundamental similarities between Rhee’s Northern policy (post-war) and Park’s national defence, Park’s regime was more threatening towards the DPRK due to his more realistic interpretation of anticommunism.<sup>74</sup> Regarding international politics, for Rhee, nationalism was the most important principle when establishing relations with other nations. In this sense, the US, which occupied the southern half of Korea, could be the potential enemy that could threaten the autonomy of the Korean people. Furthermore, the majority of South Koreans opposed the rapprochement with Japan proposed by the US. They felt strong animosity towards Japan because of its colonial past. On the one hand, despite his anticommunist emphasis, Rhee did not build any concrete relationship with other Capitalist nations, especially with Korea’s neighbour, Japan, and hence his foreign policy was very limited. As a result, his regime was not particularly threatening to the North in spite of its emphasis on anticommunism in domestic politics. On the other hand, for Park, anticommunism dictated Korea’s allies and enemies in the world in terms of national security. In other words, anticommunism was not only the guiding thought of his Northern policy, but also that of all his foreign policy. In this context, Park was relatively cooperative with the US and even willing to improve South Korea’s relationship with Japan. Consequently, his regime, which had a strong connection with Japan and the US, was more threatening towards North Korea.<sup>75</sup>

In addition, in 1964, Park dispatched Korean forces to Vietnam in order to support the American forces there. In turn, US support for Korea increased in this period.<sup>76</sup> The Vietnam War reaffirmed the strong connection between the ROK and the US, as well as the ROK’s hostility towards communist nations. Consequently, it sent a strong message to the DPRK, which considered North Vietnam a communist brother. The in turn pushed to adopt a more aggressive policy towards the ROK based on its perception of the global communist movement.<sup>77</sup>

However, the term ‘hostility’ does not clearly explain the difference in policies between South and North Korea toward each other. North Korea was in an offensive position. Kim

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<sup>74</sup> Wada Haruki, *Buk Joseon [North Korea- The Present Stage of Guerrilla State]*, (Seoul: Dolbegae, 2002), 120- 124.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Bruce Cumings, *op. cit.*, 321- 322.

<sup>77</sup> Wada Haruki, *op. cit.*, 123.

completed the establishment of his regime in North Korea after the Korean War. Although the people of Korea were the real losers of the war, Kim Il-sung should not be regarded as one. He utilized the great failure of his ambitious political career to persecute rivals, especially domestic communists. This explains the stable development of Kim's regime in North Korea after the war and the aggressive approach to its reunification strategy since the 1960s.<sup>78</sup>

In contrast, Park did not consolidate his rule as strongly as Kim. Park was forced to run for election, and continuously faced political threats to his rule, such as veto points in the presidential system such as the legislature and judiciary; future presidential elections posed threats from other presidential candidates and demonstrations. Furthermore, the economic and military power of North Korea overwhelmed South Korea's meagre equivalent until the late 1960s. Therefore, Park had to focus on keeping domestic political stability rather than pursuing an active Northern policy. For these reasons, the Park regime's policy toward North Korea was not fundamentally different to the Rhee regime's post-war policy despite their different interpretations of anticommunism. National defence remained the priority. In this one sense, the *aims* of Park's Northern policy were similar to Rhee's. Both emphasized anticommunism, assuming that there were only conflicts between the two Koreas. As Park remarked in one of his essays, "...We must establish a determined anticommunism in this land (South Korea) to repel the terrible communists."<sup>79</sup>

Nevertheless, overall Park's and Rhee's aims and strategies were very different except for the reliance on US forces. The major differences in Northern policy between the regimes of Park and Rhee can be found in the policies flanking the Northern policy rather than in the Northern policy itself. For diplomatic reasons, as we have discussed above, Park was willing to cooperate with Capitalist partners under the common banner of anticommunism. The Park regime was more likely to utilise diplomacy as an instrument of its Northern policy. At the domestic political level, Park emphasized economic development under his own strong leadership. Specifically, he argued that the only way to effectively address the Northern military threat consisted of a national defence strategy supported by export-oriented economic policies.<sup>80</sup> This marked a considerable shift in South Korea's place in the 1970s to a developed economy.<sup>81</sup> With this South Korea built up considerable military power and could no longer be considered a

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<sup>78</sup> Suh Daesuk, *op. cit.*, 143-146.

<sup>79</sup> Park Chung-hee, *Nara'ga Wihum Hal Tae Uchi Mokseumeul Aggiri?* [How Can I Spare My Life when My Nation is in Danger?], (Seoul: Dongsuh Books, 2005), 25.

<sup>80</sup> Mark Clifford, *Troubled Tiger: Businessmen, Bureaucrats and Generals in South Korea*, (Armonk: M E Scharpe: 1998), 54-57.

<sup>81</sup> Kim Byungkook and Ezra F. Vogel, *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2011), 336.

client state of the US by the mid-1970s. Yet, it is noteworthy that the presence of US forces remained essential in a situation where the DPRK, which felt threatened by economic and military development in the ROK, further strengthened her armed forces.<sup>82</sup> Since 1961, supported by new economic and diplomatic policies, the ROK's policies towards the DPRK had been designed to improve national defence capabilities and stabilize Park's relatively insecure political position. With a relevant economic policy and with aid from the US and Japan, the ROK's economy developed dramatically which resulted in a reinforcement of national defence that emboldened the regime to take a more assertive policy stance toward North Korea. It was simply logical. If the ROK becomes stronger than the DPRK, the latter would not consider war a viable option.<sup>83</sup> At a first glance, Park's regime was firmly established based on its Northern and foreign policies whose primary concern was national defence.

However, there were international and domestic issues which could challenge the established ROK's Northern and foreign policies. It is necessary to consider those events since they provide the background of two incidents in 1968 which resulted in profound changes to the relationship between the ROK and USA and to the pattern of competition between South and North Korea. One of the most important events is the Vietnam War. In 1966, Washington requested Seoul dispatch additional troops to Vietnam. In return, the ROK demanded more financial and military support in order to maintain its security and develop its economy.<sup>84</sup> However, as is well known, the US suffered significant loss of life and material in the course of the Vietnam War. Hence, this decision to expand support for Seoul further aggravated Washington's financial troubles. In other words, while the Vietnam War put a burden on the American economy, it boosted economic activity in the ROK. The difference between two allies in their interpretations of the Vietnam War bore the potential to negatively affect their post-war relationship.<sup>85</sup>

Secondly, we must consider the Sino-Soviet split. In the 1960s. As O. A. Westad argues, "the Sino-Soviet split opened up both great opportunities and great dangers for Communist parties in the Third World."<sup>86</sup> Likewise, this conflict resulted in a lack of checks against the DPRK who kept a balance between two Communist giants.<sup>87</sup> The decline of China's political influence on the DPRK and that of the USSR too, allowed Kim Il-sung's regime to be more

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<sup>82</sup> Wada Haruki, *op. cit.*, 123.

<sup>83</sup> Park Chunghee, *op. cit.*, 25.

<sup>84</sup> "Brown Pledge (Additional dispatch of ROK forces to Vietnam)," 1966, Class Number, 1867, 729.13US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>85</sup> Ma Sangyoon and Park Wongon, "Détentegi'eui Hanmi Galdeung: Nixon, Carter'wa Park Chunghee [ROK-US Split in Détente Period: Nixon, Carter, and Park Chunghee]." *Yeoksa Bipyeong* 86 (2009): 114- 115.

<sup>86</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *op. cit.*, 158.

<sup>87</sup> Wada Haruki, *op. cit.*, 123-124.

autonomous and pursue a more aggressive policy vis-à-vis the US and South Korea.

Furthermore, the Sino-Soviet split also encouraged the normalization of relations between the US and China in 1969.<sup>88</sup> As a result, the US was reluctant to support the ROK's confrontational Northern policy because it feared antagonizing China. On the other hand, this situation was advantageous to the North Koreans who wanted to remove American influence from the Korean Peninsula.<sup>89</sup> According to Kang Induk, head of the North Korea department of the KCIA at the time, the Park regime was unwilling to address North Korea's frequent provocations in direct talk with Pyongyang but was forced to do so by the US who wanted to alleviate tensions on the Korean Peninsula and to improve its own relationship with China.<sup>90</sup>

Thirdly, the most important domestic issue was the rise of Park Chunghee's political rivals. In 1967, five years into his first term as president of the ROK, Park was re-elected. From this point onwards, many politicians began to worry about Park having lifetime tenure. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 1967, Park won his second term with 5,688,666 votes, more than half of the total votes. The difference between Park and Yun Bosun, the former president from 1960 to 1963 and presidential candidate in the elections of 1963 and 1967, was 1,162,125 votes. This difference is significant since the difference in 1962 was only 156, 026 votes.<sup>91</sup> At first glance, we can deduce from these statistics that Park's economic and anticommunist policies enjoyed broad public support. Yet, this result could also have encouraged Park to run for president once again in 1971. On this manner, minor parties rallied public opinion against Park's lifetime tenure and his Northern policy which provided justification for his despotic ruling style. Among these politicians opposing Park was Kim Daejung. He would eventually become president of the ROK from 1998 to 2002 and stood out for his strong criticism of Park's undemocratic rule and confrontational Northern policy. In 1967, Park became aware of Kim as the spokesman of the *New Democratic Party*, *Sinmin dang*. Before the presidential election in 1967, Kim criticized Park's illegal campaign with exact data, and this irritated Park.<sup>92</sup> Afterwards, Kim proposed a more conciliatory political stance towards North Korea, and his idea promoted democratic movements in 1970s pushing inter-Korean dialogue in 1971.<sup>93</sup> Along with the political apprehension of Park's lifetime tenure, Kim's peaceful reunification idea raised the level of domestic political pressures on Park and on his Northern and foreign policies initiating changes in both policies.

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<sup>88</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *op. cit.*, 195.

<sup>89</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, (Washington: Basic Books: 2002), 2-14.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Kang Induk, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009, Institute of Far Eastern Studies.

<sup>91</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, Vol. 9, 36.

<sup>92</sup> Kim Daejung, *Hangdong'baneun Yangsim [My Fight for Democracy in Korea]*, (Seoul: Geumundang Publishing, 2009), 94.

<sup>93</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.* 13-14.

All of these issues posed potential threats to the ROK's Northern and foreign policies in the Park era. However, they were insignificant until 1968, the starting point of this research project. Regarding the Vietnam War, the Park regime did not seriously consider American travails in Vietnam until the 'Tet Offensive' of 1968.<sup>94</sup> Even worse, the ROK did not expect that the Sino-Soviet split would lead the DPRK to be more aggressive. Only when North Korean forces raided the ROK presidential residence, the Blue House, and seized the USS Pueblo in January 1968, did this analysis change. Moreover, domestic political pressure also came to be more serious after 1968 when Park used more despotic methods to maintain his rule. Due to these changes, the previous Northern and foreign policies were rendered irrelevant and useless for ensuring the security of the ROK as an independent capitalist country and Park as its undisputed supreme leader. As a result, a new South Korean policy towards the North and other nations began to take shape. In this thesis I seek to explain how these international and domestic changes affected the ROK's Northern and foreign policies after 1968.

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<sup>94</sup> In the end of January 1968, North Vietnam initiated the Tet Offensive during which American involvement in Vietnam peaked. Tet means New Year's Day in lunar calendar. Details for this, see Gerdes Louise(ed.) *Examining Issues Through Political Cartoons: The Vietnam War* (San Diego: Green Haven Press, 2004), 27.

## **Chapter I: The turning point: A rift between the Republic of Korea and the United States, 1968**

In January 1968, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) dispatched 31 commandos on a mission to assassinate the leader of the Republic of Korea (ROK), Park Chunghee, and North Korean naval forces seized the American spy ship, the USS *Pueblo*. These events intensified the rivalry between the two Korean states and redefined the relationship between the ROK and the United States. This period has become known as the Korean Crisis of 1968 and is widely accepted to be the cause of the following political rift between Seoul and Washington with respect to the US policies on Communism.

Following Park Chunghee's coup and usurped rise to ROK's prime political position in 1961 his political successes went from strength to strength. Under his leadership, South Korea established a fast growing economy and achieved considerable military strength. Thanks to his achievements, he was re-elected in 1967 for a second term with significant turnout.<sup>1</sup> Yet his accomplishments were heavily based on American support and giving the US significant influence on ROK politics. Park's foreign policy, defined as a strong anticommunism and inspired by Washington, shaped his confrontational Northern policy. Anticommunism also determined the political strategy of his North Korean rival Kim Il-sung, who was supported by Moscow and Beijing. Therefore, conflicts between the two Koreas have always been described as being fundamentally between Washington and Moscow, and/or Beijing.<sup>2</sup>

However, historical evidence on the Korean Crisis of 1968 questions this notion. The North Korean elites planned the raid on the Blue House and seized the USS *Pueblo* by themselves and without prior consultation with their patrons in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) or People's Republic of China (PRC).<sup>3</sup> South Korean leaders, after being rejected by Washington for military intervention in the conflict of 1968, became aware of the limits of their superpower patron. South Korea started to develop its own military force in order to maintain its anticommunist policy and ensure national security.

Why couldn't South Korea use US power to settle the inter-Korean problem in 1968? The simple answer for this question is that the United States was unable to focus on Korea

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<sup>1</sup> Ironically, the democratic supports were one of Park's justifications for his third term which was not allowed by the ROK constitution at that time. The Park regime revised the constitution for his candidacy in 1969. For detail, see the chapter two of this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, (Washington: Basic Books: 2002), 13.

<sup>3</sup> Sergey S. Radchenko, "The Soviet Union and the North Korean seizure of the United StatesS *Pueblo*, Evidence from Russian Archives," Cold War International History Project Working Paper 47 (2005). Available online: [http://wwics.si.edu/topics/pubs/CWIHP\\_WP\\_47.pdf](http://wwics.si.edu/topics/pubs/CWIHP_WP_47.pdf).

because of its fierce war in Vietnam. Compared to the war in Southeast Asia, the military threat from North Korea was not serious and did not undermine overall US Cold War strategy. In contrast, South Korea believed that the North Korean threat was an effort to destroy Capitalism through superior military strength and posed a significant threat.

The overall focus of this chapter is to examine ROK's Cold War strategy in 1968. This will be accomplished by focusing specifically on the international environment during the Vietnam War period between the US and the ROK. Specific focus will be given to the Blue House raid and the attempted seizure of the USS *Pueblo* in January 1968. The cause of the crisis, and the impact on ROK's Northern and foreign policies will be addressed. This chapter will also discuss the origins of the gap between Seoul and Washington and outline how the ROK built the foundations for its new competition with the DPRK.

(1) The origin of ROK-US split towards the North Korean threat: The Korean Crisis of January 1968

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 1968, 31 North Korean commandos in ROK Army uniforms infiltrated South Korean territory. They moved carefully for two days and nights through the border area. On 19<sup>th</sup> January, the team encountered four South Korean woodcutters who immediately identified them as North Korean soldiers based on their awkward outfits and Northern dialect. The North Korean soldiers let the woodcutters go after a stern warning not to inform the police. However, the woodcutters disregarded this warning and notified the police who in turn passed the information on along its chain of command.<sup>4</sup>

On 20<sup>th</sup> January, the commandos entered Seoul and mounted an attack on the presidential palace. The ROK's counter-guerrilla apparatus had already commenced operations and had mobilized thousands of police and soldiers. As a result, the North Koreans posed as soldiers and marched towards the Blue House. A scant 800 meters from there, a police officer halted the platoon and asked questions. The North Korean infiltrators became nervous and shot the policeman after he tried to draw his pistol. A melee ensued in which two of the guerrillas died. The remaining North Koreans scattered, pursued by police and army units.<sup>5</sup> 28 of the 31 guerrillas were killed; two escaped to the North and one was captured. In the course of this counter-guerrilla operation, 30 South Koreans were killed and 52 were injured (including

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<sup>4</sup> "North Korea's provocation incident in 1968," 1968, Class Number 2664. 729.55, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea; Joseph S Bermudez Jr., *North Korean Special forces (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1998)*, 32; and Cho Kabje, *Park Chunghee* (Chogabje.com, 2007), vol. 9. 104 – 136.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., *op. cit.*, 32- 33 and Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, 104 -136.



civilians). On that day, Seoul's citizens could hear the sound of gunshots in the centre of the capital. The captive, Kim Shinjo, announced that he and his team came to destroy the Blue House and to assassinate Park Chunghee. This was the first direct threat by the North on the president and high-ranking officials since the Korean War in the 1950s. This was just the beginning of a nightmare saga.<sup>6</sup>

Just three days later on 23<sup>rd</sup> January, the USS *Pueblo* was captured by the North Korean navy. On 5<sup>th</sup> January 1968, the USS *Pueblo* departed from Sasebo, Japan with particular orders to gather signal and electronic intelligence from the DPRK.<sup>7</sup> According to American accounts, on 23<sup>rd</sup> January, the vessel was sailing in international waters, approximately 15.8 miles off the coast of the nearest North Korean island when it was approached by a North Korean sub-chaser which challenged the *Pueblo*'s nationality. The captain raised the US flag. The North Korean vessel then signalled a heave to under threat of fire. Additionally, three torpedo boats and two MIG-21 fighters arrived on the scene. The USS *Pueblo* had been in constant radio contact with the US Naval Security Group in Kamiseya, Japan during the incident. Nevertheless, no attempt was made to rescue the crew. By the time President Johnson learned of the incident, the spy ship had already been captured. North Korea claimed that the vessel had strayed into its territorial waters and would be taken to port at Wonsan.<sup>8</sup> Both the Blue House raid and the *Pueblo* crisis reminded South Koreans of the horrors of the Korean War and revived South Korean hostilities against the North.

Park Chunghee was enraged by the North Korean assassination plot against him and the attack on American forces. On 24<sup>th</sup> January, he argued that such provocative actions had to be recognised as major violations of the Armistice treaty signed in 1953.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the US too had been involved in the USS *Pueblo* incident. Therefore, the Park regime positioned itself to impose strong countermeasures alongside the US against North Korea, and diplomatic compromise with the DPRK regime was forbidden. Park planned revenge and expected full cooperation from Washington, as the ROK's partner in the anticommunist camp and as a victim of the USS *Pueblo* incident. ROK-US relations during the Johnson administration were better than they had been ever before. ROK's enthusiastic support for the American war in Southeast

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<sup>6</sup> See "Cheongwadae Seubgyeok Sageon Saenpoja Kim Shinjo jeongyeog jeung-eon [The captive, Kim Shinjo's statement on the raid on The Blue House on 21<sup>st</sup> January]," *Shin Donga News Magazine*, 1<sup>st</sup> February 2004, 236- 244.

<sup>7</sup> "Attacked by North Koreans," Retrieved 11 June 2009, USS PUEBLO Veteran's Association, <http://www.usspueblo.org/v2f/attack/attacked.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> See "Questions of international law raised by the seizure of the U.S.S. *Pueblo*," American Society of International Law. Proceedings of the American Society of International Law: at its sixty-third annual meeting held at Washington, D.C. April 24-26, 1969.

<sup>9</sup> "The status of North Korea's provocation, 1967-69," 1969, Class Number 2661. 729.55, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

Asia clearly promoted Seoul as one of Washington's closest allies.<sup>10</sup> South Korea considered the inter-Korean and DPRK-Washington conflict in the same context as the Vietnam War. The Blue House held the opinion that the US should intervene in the inter-Korean conflict as it did in Vietnam. The Park regime prepared for another war against the communists.

At first, ROK and US reactions were similarly characterised by surprise and outrage. The US moved a number of mobile troops including the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise*, from Okinawa to the ROK on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1968 and took a strong preparatory posture against a possible state of emergency. President Johnson lived up to his pledge that the US would not tolerate this kind of hostile act.<sup>11</sup> However, William J. Porter, US ambassador to South Korea, was also told to advise the ROK government "in (the) strongest terms against any attempt at action against North Korea in retaliation for the Seoul raid," particularly for the USS *Pueblo* seizure. This US initial and military decision only further entrenched Park's conviction in maintaining his hostile stance toward Kim Il-sung.<sup>12</sup> This marked the start of a deviation in policy between the ROK and the USA because The White House became increasingly reluctant to resolve the conflicts with North Korea.

After contacting Moscow and Beijing, Washington found that the patrons of North Korea neither knew about the plan to attack South Korea nor directed the seizure of the US ship. Moreover, both the Soviet and Chinese rejected the idea of North Korean-US talks.<sup>13</sup> Washington concluded that the DPRK aggression was an isolated operation of Pyongyang without links to its two allies and the Communist campaign of the Cold War. Simply put, it was pointless for Johnson to take the North Korean threat seriously since the incidents did not affect the war between East and West in the broad sense.<sup>14</sup> Evidence supports the American point of view and can rationalise how and why the White House reached such a conclusion.

It is commonly agreed that the Sino-Soviet conflict of the 1960s was one of the most important foundations of the North Korean aggression in 1968.<sup>15</sup> Compared to their comrades

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<sup>10</sup> Robert M. Blackburn, *Mercenaries and Lyndon Johnson's "more flags": the hiring of Korean, Filipino, and Thai soldiers in the Vietnam War*, (Jefferson: Mcfarland & Co Inc Pub, 1994), 31- 42.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Telegram from the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, Seoul, January 24, 1968, Cables, Country File, Korea, National Security File, LBJ library. Also see Mitchell B. Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident: A Spy Ship and the Failure of American Foreign Policy*, (Lawrence: Modern War Studies, 2003), 102

<sup>13</sup> "Notes of Meetings, Pueblo II," 1:00 p.m. Top Secret. Drafted by Tom Johnson. The meeting was held in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A memorandum of this meeting was also prepared by Harold H. Saunders, and summary notes of this and a brief meeting following the NSC meeting were prepared by Bromley Smith. (Both Ibid, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1968, Vol. IV, Tab 62, National Security Council Meetings, National Security File).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Suh Daesuk, *Kim Il Sung: North Korean Leader* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 143 and see also,

in Eastern Europe, who were firmly controlled by the USSR, the North Korean elites enjoyed considerable autonomy in policy-making thanks to the conflict between its two patrons. That is, the DPRK's policy making towards the South could reflect the intentions of its own leaders rather than those of Moscow or Beijing. Unlike the USSR and China, both of which focused on each other as much as their Capitalist enemies, the DPRK maintained its focus on the war against the Capitalists. Kim Il-sung and his partisans, who had had great success in their guerrilla war against imperial Japan, dominated the leadership of the DPRK in the 1960s.<sup>16</sup> Suh Daesuk explained that the military background of the DPRK's leaders led the government to adopt a hostile Southern policy whose aim was the reunification of Korea through military power.<sup>17</sup> Regarding the fierce conflict which raged between the USSR and China during the 1960s, North Korean elites developed a neutral attitude and were able to formulate independent policy. Whereas the USSR was mindful of its relationship with Western nations, North Korea did not in this sense follow Moscow's line.

Due to their travails in the Korean War, Kim Il-sung and his partisans returned to their roots, namely guerrilla warfare. They trained the commandos which were dispatched on the Blue House Raid. Even though the assassination attempt on Park Chung-hee failed, the DPRK was not discouraged. They dispatched more armed forces who then engaged in guerrilla warfare and propaganda activity in almost every part of South Korea.<sup>18</sup> In January and February 1968, the Soviet leadership failed to reign in Kim Il-sung due to the Soviet ideological commitment to the DPRK, in addition to Kremlin's desire to keep Kim on its side of the Sino-Soviet split.<sup>19</sup> Since the DPRK's two sponsors were unable to intervene in its policy making and the US was engaged in the Vietnam War, North Korea might have seen this as an opportune time to use its strong military power for its benefit in the inter-Korean competition.

The ROK leadership considered that North Korea resorted to guerrilla tactics because of North Korean domestic politics. In his essay collections, written throughout his tenure, Park Chung-hee stated, "...I think that there are several reasons for the recent reckless actions of Kim Il-sung and his partisans... First, by cultivating a sense of insecurity among North Korean people regarding war or invasion, they had hidden the irrational rules of communists... And it was well known that they had no choice but to cultivate people's feelings of insecurity for the stabilization

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Sergey Radchenko, *op. cit.*, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Wada Haruki, *Buk Joseon [North Korea- The Present Stage of Guerrilla State]*, (Seoul: Dolbegae, 2002), 123-124

<sup>17</sup> Suh Daesuk, *op. cit.*, 143- 146.

<sup>18</sup> "The status of North Korea's provocation, 1967-69," 1969, Class Number 2661. 729.55, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>19</sup> Sergey Radchenko, *op. cit.*, 2.

of the regime.”<sup>20</sup> ROK government documents also indicate this intention and concluded that the ROK should make a strict countermeasure toward DPRK in order to discourage Kim Il-sung from using military action for political gain and prevent further aggression from Pyongyang.<sup>21</sup>

On 25<sup>th</sup> January, Park sent a letter to Johnson through the US embassy in Seoul in which it urged the Johnson administration to push Pyongyang to return *Pueblo* and its crew and take responsibility for its violation of the Armistice treaty.<sup>22</sup> But Washington was concerned that the Park regime was preoccupied with the North Korean threat, which did not represent the general ideals of the Communist bloc. Seoul’s determination in engaging in military conflict was regarded as an overreaction by the US government. Since the American campaign in Vietnam had suffered major setbacks, the White House did not want to expand its military involvement into new theatres.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the US worried about Soviet and Chinese intervention on the Korean Peninsula. The USSR and the DPRK concluded a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1961. Article 1 of this treaty states that if either party suffered from an armed attack “and thus finds itself in a state of war, the other Contracting Party shall immediately extend military and other assistance with all the means of its disposal.”<sup>24</sup> For these reasons the US was ‘not willing’ to exacerbate the problem by engaging in hostilities against the DPRK. Furthermore, after launching the Tet offensive in Vietnam on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January 1968, the US was no longer able to use a ‘tactical measure’ as used in Vietnam, against the DPRK. In this situation, the US decided to appease the DPRK and simply refused to consider the two hostile actions a matter of serious concern.<sup>25</sup> This decisive US outcome upset the South Korean elites.

ROK paid more attention to the hostile actions themselves than to the impact of North Korean aggression on the Cold War at large. The two attacks revived memories of the tragedy of the Korean War which had ended only 15 years earlier. It was for this reason that the ROK

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<sup>20</sup> Park Chunghee, *Nara’ga Wibum Hal Tae Uchi Mokseumeul Aggiri? [How Can I Spare My Life when My Nation is in Danger?]*, (Seoul: Dongsuh Books, 2005), 194.

<sup>21</sup> “North Korea’s provocation incident in 1968,” 1968, Class Number 2664. 729.55, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>22</sup> “Notes of the President’s Breakfast Meeting,” Washington, January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1968, Tom Johnson’s Notes of Meetings, *Pueblo* IV, LBJ Library.

<sup>23</sup> ShinJongdae, “The Perception of the ROK on the Sino-US Rapprochement and Its Ensuing Responses,” 19, unpublished article.

<sup>24</sup> “Soviet Policy Toward the North Korea and the Pueblo Incident”, Intelligence Note by INR- Thomas L. Hughes, LBJ library. The PRC and DPRK also concluded similar mutual assistance treaties that month.

<sup>25</sup> Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Korea, Washington, 28<sup>th</sup> January, 1968, 0152Z, Cactus, *Pueblo* Incident--Cactus IV Miscellaneous Papers, Country File, Korea, National Security File, LBJ Library.

government became extremely intent on revenge.

Before January 1968, North Korean guerrilla operations were not unusual in post-war Korea. The Korean Central Intelligence Agency, KCIA, already expected guerrilla operations by North Korean spies. Kang Induk, the head of the North Korean department of KCIA at that time, anticipated that North Korea would dispatch guerrillas to the South in early January 1968. However, nobody in the Blue House expected President Park to be the target of such an attack. The USS *Pueblo* incident further aggravated the situation.<sup>26</sup> The North Korean aggression in January 1968 was recognised as far more serious than past cases.

Public opinion in South Korea also encouraged its elites to punish North Korea using American support. The ROK citizens perceived the two incidents as interrelated. However, due to the relationship between Seoul and Washington, South Koreans considered that the raid on the Blue House had more urgent security implications than did the *Pueblo* incident. There was widespread public opinion that in order to stop recurring North Korean aggression, the ROK and the United States must jointly inflict punishment and impose sanctions on the DPRK.<sup>27</sup> With public opinion taking this hard line stance, President Park expected cooperation from President Johnson. He believed that Johnson would at least allow him to launch reprisal attacks.<sup>28</sup> And yet, Washington decided to put aside the Korean problem.

The surprising result of the inter-Korean military conflict in January was an estrangement between the ROK and the United States, a situation which might have held an unexpected benefit for the DPRK. Decisive differences between the two capitalist partners impaired their diplomatic cooperation with respect to North Korea. South Korean diplomatic documents clearly reflect the difference between the ROK and the United States regarding the response to the two events: the ROK tried to interpret them as serious violations of the Armistice treaty signed in 1953, and hence imposed direct sanction on Pyongyang.<sup>29</sup> In addition, the ROK did not recognise the DPRK as an independent country and therefore tried to organize international political processes against it at a UN Security Council meeting within the absence of North Korean representatives.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, the United States wanted a direct diplomatic contact to the DPRK in order to rescue the crew of the USS *Pueblo*. The South Korean government demanded that the White House prevent North Korean representatives

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Kang Induk, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009, Institute of Far Eastern Studies.

<sup>27</sup> Yang, Seongcheol, and Mun Jeongin, *Han-mi Anbo Gwangyeui Jaejomyeong: Pueblo ho sageoneui uigi mit dongmaeng gwanri saryerul jungsimeu ro* [*The Renewed Discussion on Security Relationship between Korea and US: "Pueblo" incident and crisis*], (Seoul: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, Kyongnam University, 1988), 61-66.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> "U.S.'s reaction and South Korean Government's response regarding Panmunjom meetings," 1968, Class Number UNW-0204, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

from attending the meeting at the UN Security Council, but Washington refused.<sup>31</sup> In addition, Lyndon Johnson tried to contact the DPRK through the Polish government to initiate a direct talk regarding the USS *Pueblo*. Regardless of Seoul's clearly expressed opposition to such action, the meeting between US and North Korean representatives concerning the *Pueblo* incident was held in early February at Panmunjom on the border between South and North Korea.<sup>32</sup>

The ROK now was in a vulnerable position because it had overly relied on the US for its security, and its distrust towards the alliance had now intensified. Charles H. Bonesteel, the Commander of US Forces in Korea and Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Command for Korea requested an increase of US army strength on the peninsula from Washington. The request was repeatedly deferred until November 1968, when it was finally turned down.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, the US government tried to rescue the crew of the USS *Pueblo*. Due to Kim Il-sung's obstinate attitude, this enterprise did not allow for threats or blackmail but required apologies instead. Washington acknowledged that the USS *Pueblo* had invaded territorial waters of the DPRK. This decision, at the same time, nullified Seoul's prosecution of Pyongyang for the Blue House Raid.<sup>34</sup> According to North Korean and American logic, ROK could not criticise the infiltration of North Korean commandos into Seoul because the US spy ship had invaded North Korean maritime territory. The two violations of the Armistice treaty cancelled each other out. Seoul's political leaders sensed that their wishes were being ignored. In response Park started to question America's security commitment to South Korea.<sup>35</sup>

Disappointed with America's low posture diplomacy toward North Korea, the South Korean elites had started to review their national defence policies which relied heavily on American politics. Specifically, Seoul had to find a way to maintain its national security by relying only on their own military power. On 29<sup>th</sup> January 1968, the Blue House held an emergency security meeting. After passing around rice wine, Park said, "... Even if the US is our ally, it is reasonable to consider that the alliance is meaningless when national interest conflicts are raised... We must find a solution for our security problem by ourselves."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> "The status of North Korea's provocation, 1967-69," 1969, Class Number 2661. 729.55 Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>32</sup> "U.S.'s reaction and South Korean Government's response regarding Panmunjom meetings," 1968, Class Number UNW-0204, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>33</sup> Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of Defence for Systems Analysis (Enthoven) to Secretary of Defence McNamara, Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS] 1964-1968 Vol. XXIX: Korea.

<sup>34</sup> "U.S.'s reaction and South Korean Government's response regarding Panmunjom meetings," 1968, Class Number UNW-0204, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>35</sup> Cho Jinkoo, "Johnson Jeonggwon Hoobang'eui Hanmigwangye: Bukhan'eui Dobal'e Daehan Hanmigan'eui Insik Chayireul Joongsim'euro [The U.S.-Korean Relations in the Second half of the Johnson Administration: Dissensions between the Two Allies toward the North Korean Provocations Against South Korea]," Korean and International Politics 19 (2003): 98.

<sup>36</sup> Kim Sungeun, *Kim Sungeun Hoegorok, Naen'i Jan-i Numchi Naiad* [Kim Sungeun Memoirs, You filled my cup to the brim]

Kim Sungeun, Minister of National Defence at that time, recalled,

On the day, President Park was not just angry; he was absolutely furious. He condemned Washington for its lukewarm attitude toward the Korean Crisis. When the South Korean military commanders suggested a retaliatory bombing on the North, Park was extremely excited and agreed with them. But, the problem was that we needed the F-4D Phantom, used by US Air Forces in Vietnam, in order to bomb North Korea. Moreover, the modernization of our armed forces was also required for another war. Hence, the president decided to press Washington. On the next day, I met Charles H. Bonesteel, the Commander of United States Forces in Korea and Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Command in Korea and lodged a strong protest against the US government based on its betrayal.<sup>37</sup>

Bonesteel agreed with Kim on the matter, but all he could do was appease the angry minister, “I was also disappointed with my government for its decision. But antiwar demonstrations are held all over the US [...]”<sup>38</sup> Undoubtedly, the American commander could not go against Washington and the South Korean leadership understood Johnson’s trouble in his domestic politics. Yet Park and Kim hoped that Johnson clearly recognise the gravity of Korean conflict. They thought that Washington owed Seoul a lot this time.<sup>39</sup> As its decision to reconcile with Japan for its relations with US and ROK economy, the Park regime was very realistic. They did not request Washington take retaliatory action against Pyongyang but instead attempted to demand financial support for its own military forces.

The Blue House repeatedly criticised the White House’s lukewarm attitude towards the Korean Crisis. William Porter, the US ambassador to the ROK, had difficulties appeasing the aggressive leaders in Seoul. On 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1968, during his meeting with Park (at Park’s request), the president told Porter, “If our government does not get a guarantee that North Korea will refrain from further aggressive activities, and another incident occurs, we will take retaliatory measures.”<sup>40</sup> Porter calmly conveyed Johnson’s intention to Park and tried to appease him, “The seriousness of uncoordinated action lay in the fact that it would undermine mutual

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(Seoul: Itempool Korea press, 2008), 801.

<sup>37</sup> Kim Sungeun, *op. cit.*, 802.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Kim Sungeun argued that ROK deserved to be paid for its American considerations. Details on this, see Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol 9, p. 154-155 and Kim Sungeun, *op. cit.*, 803.

<sup>40</sup>Telegram From the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, POL 33-6 KOR N-US, Central Files 1967-69, RG 59, National Archives and Records Administration; These comments were made during a news conference on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. (Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1968-69, Book I, 155-163.)

confidence and its bad effects could outlast that of any particular incident.”<sup>41</sup> In his telegram to the State Department, he remarked that he had managed to persuade Park, although “the South Korean” demonstrated a certain amount of discontent.<sup>42</sup>

Further still, in direct and indirect manners, Seoul kept urging Washington to work for South Korean security. At the opening ceremony of the Gyeongjeon Railway on 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1968, right after the talk between the US and DPRK, Park said, “Forget that we have (American) nuclear missiles and UN forces! We must defend ourselves from North Korea through our own power first.”<sup>43</sup> He also announced that the ROK would arm 2.5 million veterans.<sup>44</sup> Although his nationalistic comments were well calculated, he really wanted to say, “If you (Washington) do not want to fight against Kim Il-sung with us, then just help us reinforce our military power in order to balance the military capabilities of the two Koreas.” Park never turned down any support from Washington and looked to maximise US assistance. If he could not expect direct American intervention, he would demand financial aid for the modernization of the ROK armed forces as compensation. Through this speech and his protest against Washington, he bluffed the US into believing the ROK would turn against it and thus was able to bring the US to the negotiating table. Washington was afraid of losing South Korean troops in Vietnam only due to the North Korean threat.<sup>45</sup>

Park’s calculation proved correct. That afternoon, the Pentagon announced the provision of M16 rifles to help modernize the ROK forces. The next day, 8<sup>th</sup> February, William J. Porter, the US ambassador to Korea, was invited to the Blue House to discuss additional American aid. The ROK leadership paid more time and attention to the aid package than to the political reaction against the North Korean threat. Regarding this matter, Dean Rusk, the US Secretary of State from 1961 to 1969, recalled:

The South Koreans were interested in what might be called close-in retaliation, but I never got the impression that the South Koreans wanted to go into full-scale war. So to the extent that it was necessary to restrain them, it wasn’t a very difficult job

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 8<sup>th</sup> February 1968.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> “Notes of the President's Meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff,” Washington, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 1968, 1:04-1:40 pm, Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, *Pueblo*, VIII. Top Secret. Drafted by Tom Johnson, LBJ Library. The meeting was held in the Cabinet Room.; “Panmunjom Talks--Next Steps,” Action Memorandum From the Director of the Korean Task Force (Berger) to Secretary of State Rusk, Washington, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 1968, POL 33-6 KOR N-US, Central Files 1967-69, RG 59, National Archives and Records Administration.



because they were not itching for war, either. They did get very incensed about the Blue House raid and about other types of infiltration that were coming across [...] And so we had a little job at times of cooling them down a bit and restraining them from these retaliations which they were inclined to pull off.<sup>46</sup>

‘A little job at times of cooling them down a bit’ might refer to the diplomatic efforts to prevent South Korea’s retaliation against North Korea. This is very impressive if we review Kim Sungeun’s memoir in which he points out that Washington had a hard time persuading Seoul to stand down. He argued that the Americans were seriously worried that South Korea might take unilateral action to retaliate against the North.<sup>47</sup> It is almost impossible to judge whose argument is correct. The important point is that the gap between Seoul and Washington in terms of their policy toward the communist threat indicated a fundamental difference in their interpretation of the Cold War.

Regarding the USS *Pueblo* issue, Washington still kept a low posture in its talks with Pyongyang. As South Korea was aware of the American intentions, it did not let go of the issue easily and stepped up its bluffing. Park summoned the ROK ambassador to Washington and announced that he would withdraw the ROK armed forces from Vietnam.<sup>48</sup> Washington soon dispatched Cyrus R. Vance, the special emissary, to Seoul and invited Park to Hawaii in April in order to finally close the case of the Korean Crisis and narrow the gap between the two allies.

The widening rift with the US during the Korean Crisis undercut the stability of South Korea, so Park directed his efforts at reinforcing national defence capabilities with limited American support. In some sense, ROK elites were overwhelmed by this sudden rift between the two allies since close US-ROK relations had traditionally constituted one of the most important bases for Seoul’s anticommunist foreign policies. Ironically, it was Washington that pushed Seoul into reviewing these policies rather than its arch-enemy, Pyongyang. It is useful to consider relations between the ROK and the US in context of the Vietnam War: Washington had borne a heavy burden in terms of economic, social and political costs, while South Korea had gained economic benefits, especially as a recipient of US aid. As the war developed unfavourably for the US, this difference between the two allies’ ongoing fortunes became clear. During the Korean Crisis, both parties interpreted the situation differently due to their divergent views on the Vietnam War. The Cyrus Vance’s visit to Seoul in February and the US-ROK summit talks in

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<sup>46</sup>Transcript, Dean Rusk Oral History Interview III, 1/2/70, by Paige E. Mulhollan, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library.

<sup>47</sup>Kim Sungeun, *op. cit.*, 213.

<sup>48</sup>*Donga Ilbo*, 6<sup>th</sup> February, 1968.

April 1968 demonstrated how both parties interpreted their campaign in Southeast Asia and were supposed to narrow this gap.

(2) ROK-US efforts at reconciliation: The negotiations and Summit talks in 1968

Washington needed to appease Seoul who announced its intention to withdraw its troops from Vietnam. South Korea had dispatched 48,000 forces to Vietnam, the third largest power in the allied camp next to the US and South Vietnam. Johnson wanted to keep South Korean troops in Southeast Asia in order to reduce the burden on US forces in the Vietnam War. On 12<sup>th</sup> February 1968, Cyrus Vance, the special emissary from Washington to Seoul, conveyed Johnson's intentions to Park:

(I tried) Primarily to do two things. First, to prevent any precipitate action in terms of a move to the North by Park and the Republic of Korea's army, and secondly, to talk with Park about the kinds of assistance which the United States was prepared to give. So it was a double barrelled set of objectives that we were being asked to discuss with Park and his Cabinet.<sup>49</sup>

The primary purpose of Vance's visit to the ROK was to prevent another war on the Korean Peninsula and to ensure the safe return of the *Pueblo* crew. Yet the ROK was unwilling at first to follow Washington's lead and wanted Washington to consider provocations from the DPRK with the same degree of gravity as the war in Vietnam. Vance recalled:

President Johnson was prepared to provide a hundred million dollars of military assistance. He was terribly concerned that President Park might take some action in terms of a military move across the demilitarized zone into the North which could precipitate a war, and he made it very clear to me that President Park should be under no illusions as to the seriousness of any such action; and that if such a step were taken without full consultation with the US that the whole relationships between our countries would have to be reevaluated.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Transcript, Cyrus R. Vance Oral History Interview II, 12/129/69, by Paige E. Mulhollan, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

Clearly, there was a gap between Park and Johnson in their stance on the Vietnam War as well as North Korean aggression. Despite the fierce battle in Vietnam during the Tet offensive, South Korean leadership still thought that Washington had the capability to punish Pyongyang. During the offensive, National Liberation Front (NLF) forces suffered grave damage. Park Chunghee, a former army general, regarded the strategic victory with some losses as a sign of ultimate victory and thus overlooked Johnson's political damage at home in the US as being the result of battle and sacrifice.<sup>51</sup> Park was deeply disappointed with Johnson whom he regarded as a loser who had surrendered his dignity to students. Kim Seongeun recalled,

In the evening of 15<sup>th</sup> February, Park bitterly told ROK military leaders, "Johnson might be unable to endure a harsh criticism. Even the leader of the world's biggest power does not have any ideas against a student protest." On the one hand, he sympathized with Johnson. On the other hand, he denounced the US president's handling of the crisis.<sup>52</sup>

Considering the South Korean contribution in the Vietnam War and the close relationship between the two countries, the US had little choice but to appease the ROK through economic benefits. At the same time, it also had to appease the DPRK in order to negotiate the safe return of the *Pueblo* crew. To soothe tensions with South Korea and calm down its angry president, Johnson sent a letter to Park explaining the problem.

[...] They (North Korean elites) may think by raising tension in Korea they can force us to divert our attention from the campaign of aggression against South Vietnam. They will not succeed in that effort. The movements of planes and ships to the Republic of Korea in these last days have been from our active forces in the United States and the Pacific. None have been taken from Vietnam. [...]<sup>53</sup>

However, the South Korean president did not stop complaining about the American decision on the USS *Pueblo* and publicly announced that South Korea should fight against North Korea by itself as if Washington had already abandoned Seoul.

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<sup>51</sup> Cho Kabje, *op.cit.*, vol. 9, 207.

<sup>52</sup> Kim Sungeun, *op. cit.*, 220- 221; *Donga Ilbo*, 6<sup>th</sup> February 1968.

<sup>53</sup> Transcript, Cyrus R. Vance Oral History Interview II, 12/129/69, by Paige E. Mulhollan, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library.

We do not want war. But if we are invaded by our enemies as in the Korean War in the 1950s, we have to fight against them to the very end even if our entire territory is destroyed.<sup>54</sup>

Washington had a difficult time in restraining Seoul while talking with Pyongyang. Moscow did not exert similar efforts on North Korea. Johnson administration complained about both the Soviet's attitude and North Korea's excessive demands, such as an official apology and written admission that the US spy ship entered the territorial sea.<sup>55</sup> The US sentiment towards the two Koreas at that time has been well-summarized in the words of Samuel A. Berger, the vice deputy minister of the Department of State, to Kim Dongjo, the Korean ambassador to the US: "North Koreans abducted our ship, and you South Koreans demanded us to provide more money (for the modernization of military forces), so we are in trouble and got tired."<sup>56</sup>

Facing the offense of the Vietcong, the White House decided to take a step back from the Vietnam War which further galvanised South Korea's poor opinion of Washington. On 1<sup>st</sup> April, Johnson announced the cessation of bombing raids over North Vietnam and proposed peace talks to Hanoi. Park, upon hearing the news, harshly proclaimed, "Such a unilateral decision by the US cannot make any contribution to the Vietnamese Crisis."<sup>57</sup> Once again, Park was disappointed with Johnson. The South Korean president thought that the leader of the capitalist camp gave up on war too early and did not show respect to his Allies. However, evidence suggests that it is not true that Johnson ignored Park such as the South Korean leader thought.

Just three days later, on 4<sup>th</sup> April, Johnson invited Park to Hawaii for a summit meeting. In reply to the invitation, Park emphasized the importance of a clear mutual defence treaty to counter North Korean provocations and linked it to future Korean engagement in the Vietnam War. Park did not hide his opinions on the peace treaty between the US and North Vietnam:

It is vividly recalled that at the Seven Nations Summit conference held in Manila in October 1966, we pledged our joint efforts in seeking peace and security for Asia

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<sup>54</sup>Park Chunghee, *op. cit.*, 407. From the speech at the conference of local officers, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1968

<sup>55</sup>Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union, Washington, February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1968, 1901Z., POL 33-6 KOR N-US, Central Files 1967-69, RG 59, National Archives and Records Administration

<sup>56</sup> Kim, Dongjo, *Naengjeon Sidae Uri'eui Ogyo [Our Diplomacy during the Cold War Era]*. (Seoul: Munhwa Ilbo Press, 2000), 157

<sup>57</sup> Cho Kabje, *op.cit.*, vol. 9, 208

terming this area as “the region of security, order, and progress” in the joint statement of “Goals of Freedom”. Therefore, we should militarily overcome our enemy until they lay down their raving arms [...]”<sup>58</sup>

Regarding South Korea’s position in the Vietnam War, only one of the reinforcements, his rhetoric sounded too determined and grave. Although the key stakeholders in the Vietnam War were the two Vietnams and the Cold War superpowers, the South Korean leader also had a great interest in the war. He might have regarded Vietnam as another Korea because of the similarities between Korea and Vietnam, not least of all the division of the nation by Cold War ideology. South Vietnam was a client state of the US, as was South Korea. Because of those similarities, Seoul would have equated itself with Saigon. The South Korean president would have thought that Washington would abandon Seoul in the future if it could abandon South Vietnam. Johnson’s decision destabilized the anticommunist foundation of the South Korean elite, already disappointed with America’s low posture diplomacy toward North Korea since January 1968.

Sympathy for South Vietnam may not have been the only reason why South Korea supported the US effort during the Vietnam War. It is possible that Park wanted to continue the Vietnam War to continue the economic development of his country and secure American economic and military support for it. Thanks to its participation in the war, South Korea had benefited from exports to Vietnam as well as from American aid. Both factors were the major driving forces of the Korean economy and economic foundation of its military power in the 1960s.<sup>59</sup> The South Korean leadership would have worried about the impact of peace treaty between the US and North Vietnam on its economy and American aid. Park did not think that he could make Johnson change his mind on the US-North Vietnam negotiation but could try to secure the best possible deal for the ROK.

[...] What the Korean Government asked for through Mr. Vance, in supplement to the annual military aids, is a matter of great necessity for further strengthening the national defence capabilities of the Republic of Korea. I hope you [US president

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<sup>58</sup>“President Park’s visit to USA from 17 to 19 April 1968,” 1968, Class Number 2577. 724.11US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>59</sup>Along with American aid, the ROK government considered economic relations with South Vietnam important. The major Korean companies, i.e. Hyundai, operated in South Vietnam until 1973. For details on the contribution of the Vietnam War to the Korean economy, see Woo Jung-en, *Race to the Swift: State and Finance in the Industrialization of Korea*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

Johnson] will give a speedy and favourable consideration to that request [...]<sup>60</sup>

It appears Park wanted to obtain assurances against the worst case scenario in which the US gave up Vietnam and Korea. Johnson knew of Park's sense of insecurity, and thus tried to assure him that the US would not abandon South Korea. Johnson intended to persuade his South Korean counterpart to keep troops in Vietnam, since their withdrawal for the purpose of countering to North Korean provocations would have substantially worsened the American military situation in Vietnam. In this sense, the sudden invitation for summit talks could be interpreted as being designed to prevent the estrangement of the two allies. Excluded from negotiation over the fate of the *Pueblo* crew and South Vietnam, Seoul expressed its discontent towards America. "It was a decisive betrayal of the USA that broke Seoul's heart regarding Washington" said Kang Induk.<sup>61</sup>

The South Korean backlash on Washington only built. Facing South Korean protests over American commitment in South Korea, Washington became increasingly frustrated with Seoul, which it perceived was requesting far too much in terms of aid. However, the US had to prevent further disputes with the Park regime in order to keep South Korean forces in Vietnam. Summit talks between the two allies in 1968 were intended to solve this dilemma. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of April during the summit meeting, the US president tried to secure Korean military support for South Vietnam by assuring Park of Korean safety. Johnson said,

The US administration is asking Congress that part of the \$100 million go towards activating one air squadron. We had sent to Korea some squadrons already and called up reserves because of the Korean situation, which should have been destined for Vietnam. With the increased air power in Korea, the ROK is capable of defending itself from North Korea in all service military capabilities.<sup>62</sup>

In return for additional US aid to Korea, Johnson suggested the expansion of services performed by ROK troops already stationed in Vietnam. Additionally, he asked Park to understand his decision concerning the cessation of bombing raids over North Vietnam. However, Park was not yet satisfied. He replied,

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<sup>60</sup>"President Park's visit to USA from 17 to 19 April 1968," 1968, Class Number 2577. 724.11US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Kang Induk, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009, Institute of Far Eastern Studies.

<sup>62</sup>"Summary of Conversations Between President Johnson and President Park, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1968," FRUS 1964-1968 Vol.XXIX:Korea.

I am grateful for your added appropriation request but do not “feel at ease with this amount” since North Korea aims at creating a second Vietnam in South Korea. I feel that since North Korea has tens of thousands trained guerrillas, the ROK army must strengthen its defences in rear areas. Also, ROK army fire power is “far inferior to North Korea’s.” I would like to strengthen the ROK air force and need US assistance for the strengthening of the local reserve corps.<sup>63</sup>

Both presidents exasperated each other. Following Park’s negative response and his additional request, Johnson nearly despaired of his insatiable ally. He declined Park’s request for additional US assistance except for the \$100 million pledged by the Vance mission in February. On the other hand, Park doubted Johnson’s leadership abilities and was disappointed with his incapable patron. According to US sources, as a result of his discussions with the US president, Park remarked that he sensed Johnson had lost considerable political influence. He also stated that the US president was no longer able to exercise effective authority over congressional actions on foreign assistance programmes after his announcement not to seek re-election.<sup>64</sup>

The political damage to Johnson’s leadership as a result of the Vietnam War prohibited further warfare against the communists, including the war against the DPRK. Although the White House did not intend to discourage the Blue House, it could only refuse South Korea’s additional request. These developments in the Vietnam War reiterate the very origin of the discrepancy between the ROK and the US during the Korean Crisis of 1968. Both parties confirmed a mutual breach during the summit meeting in April.

South Korean policy makers finally recognised that American interventionism was not necessarily bound to the Cold War ideology. They came to be aware of how to best utilise their relationship with Washington. In response to Korean protests, the US promised an additional 100 million dollars worth of military support to the ROK even though it continued to object to retaliatory bombings on the North.<sup>65</sup> Although the funding for South Korea’s national security prevented a further breach between the two allies in the early half of 1968, Seoul’s dependency on Washington negatively affected the ROK-US relationship in the later half of 1968. In regards to the issue of Korean security, the two parties’ views were not in sync. To Washington, the Park

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> “Intelligence Information Cable From the Central Intelligence Agency, April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1968,” FRUS 1964-1968 Vol. XXIX:Korea.

<sup>65</sup> “North Korea’s provocation incident in 1968,” Class Number 2662. 729.55, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

Regime was a demanding client who requested too much. Park used the defence of capitalism in East Asia and his troops' involvement in Vietnam as a bargaining chip for extracting more US support. Such an attitude burdened the US, which had already suffered financial pressures from the surging costs of the war in Vietnam. Seoul, on the other hand, considered its request to be wholly reasonable. Park had to prevent further aggressions from the DPRK in order to stabilise his regime. The ROK president related the stability of his regime to that of the whole of Asia. In this sense, he argued that 100 million dollars of US aid were but a minimum requirement for peace in East Asia. For this reason, the gap between the two parties could not be narrowed easily. The rift became more evident towards the end of Johnson's term and the beginning of Richard Nixon's presidency in 1969.

Park clearly recognised the frailty of the ROK-US alliance and did not push Johnson further though he failed to change Johnson's Korea and Vietnam policy. Arriving in Seoul, Park announced that he had reminded the American president of the vital matter of American support for Korea and was generally satisfied with the result of his meeting with Johnson.<sup>66</sup> That is, the ROK accepted the fact that it could not rely on US forces alone for its security, and had to focus on developing its own defensive systems in tandem with using American assistance.<sup>67</sup> Clearly, the South Korean leadership could keep its hostile relations with North Korea thanks to the funding from Washington in 1968.

The Korean Crisis in 1968 was a watershed event that deeply affected Seoul's relationship with Washington and demonstrated that the US was reluctant to entangle with Korean problems. As the US suffered serious economic and political set backs from its involvement in the Vietnam War, the ROK was unable to retaliate against North Korean aggression in January 1968. Despite its repeated efforts to secure American military involvement in the Korean Peninsula, Seoul was unable to affect or change American policy. Whether South Korean leaders wanted to or not, they had to find new ways to maintain national stability and support their regime while preventing North Korean threats.

### (3) Unstable ground of South Korea's anticommunism stance

Due to the reduced willingness and ability of the US to intervene directly on the part

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<sup>66</sup> Telegram from the embassy in Korea to the Department of State, May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1968, 0700Z, Memos Vol. VI, Country File, Korea, National Security File, LBJ Library.

<sup>67</sup> "President Park's visit to USA from 17 to 19 April 1968," 1968, Class Number 2577. 724.11US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea; "Minister Choi's visit to USA from 3 to 7 December 1968," Class Number 2579. 724.31US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.



of ROK security, Park sought to draw upon old virtues of patriotism for national self-defence. After the Korean Crisis in 1968, Park often broached the possibility of another war in Korea to the Korean public and pronounced that South Koreans themselves had to save their fatherland if that situation arose.<sup>68</sup> With noticeably less US support, his Northern and foreign policies could not have attained their goals. Seoul's existing foreign policies appeared ineffectual considering Washington's attitude during the Korean Crisis. The ROK could no longer expect direct intervention from the US or any tangible support from the United Nations as in the 1950s.<sup>69</sup> This meant that the ROK had little chance of resolving a problem without considerable military power of its own. Therefore, the modernisation of ROK forces was initiated in 1968.<sup>70</sup>

Despite its ongoing hardship in the national security sphere, the Park administration ever questioned its Northern policy in 1968. The North Korean military provocations in January worsened the inter-Korean relations and boosted the anticommunist sentiment in South Korea. Seoul believed that it could maintain its policy of confrontation towards the north through the expansion of armaments and existing US forces in South Korea. In addition to the modernisation of military forces, the government prolonged the compulsory military service period and established the reserve forces system. Since the Korean War, Korean men were required to serve in the army for 36 months.<sup>71</sup> This time was moderately reduced to 30 months in 1962. As of 1968, it was again increased by 6 months, resulting in a 36 month total.<sup>72</sup> Additionally, the discharged soldiers were mobilised as Reserve Forces by the Act of Korean Reserve Forces whose main purpose was to stop guerrilla actions in case of attack.<sup>73</sup> With strong support from the major party in the National Assembly, the act was passed and legislated by the National Assembly on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1968. Along with the modernisation of ROK forces, the reserve forces system was designed to support South Korea's military competition with North Korea. Both approaches contributed to reduce the American burden in South Korea's national security and thus reflect the major change in ROK's foreign policy.

This simple decision caused the crack between the Park regime and his citizens. At first glance, the above policies seemed to be the rational product of new diplomatic and military strategies which Seoul was supposed to adopt in the given situation. The reduced US burden of

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<sup>68</sup> "North Korea's provocation incident in 1968," 1968 Class Number 2662. 729.55, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea; "The Vietnam War," Class Number 2851. 772 AG, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> This is also important in terms of ROK foreign policy because the next US administration, under Richard Nixon, planned the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea based on this modernization programme.

<sup>71</sup> The period of service was unlimited during the Korean War.

<sup>72</sup> "Cabinet meeting on the bill of length of military service, 1968," Class Number BA0084531, National Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>73</sup> The act was originally established by President Decree No. 3386, 27 February, 1968.

ROK national defence was now carried by South Korean people. The problem was that Park's decision undermined his public popularity. Coupled with his authoritarian rule, the new military service rule was often criticised by young citizens who had to serve in the military and learned the value of democracy. The new national defence strategies clearly reflected a heightened sense of hostility towards North Korea and placed burdens on the population, which became a political target of minority parties before the presidential election in 1971. In June 1968, only two months after the foundation of the national Reserve Forces, several opposition parties championed the abolishment of the military service rule.<sup>74</sup> This move undermined the credibility of the Park regime which had apparently failed to alarm the South Korean public of the North Korean threat. Increasingly, the citizens thought Korea did not have to be an exception to détente. That is, many voters would be willing to support presidential candidates who tried to apply détente on the Korean Peninsula.

Nevertheless, Park did not change his mind. He was soon able to prove the importance of his new military policy thanks to North Korean aggression. In October and November 1968, 120 North Korean guerrillas infiltrated into South Korea and killed about 20 South Koreans including civilians, police and soldiers.<sup>75</sup> This military threat reduced the negative impact of South Korea's self-defence policy. The Park regime did not consider the reconciliation with the Communists or any liberal approach towards détente. The DPRK continued its aggression and the US consistently prevented South Korea's retaliation against North Korea in 1969.

Considering the effectiveness of these new strategies in terms of their contributions to Northern policy, it is hard to argue that South Korean elites had found an ultimate solution to resolve conflicts with North Korea. To North Korea, the reinforcement of ROK forces might have been another significant reason for keeping up hostilities. The new strategies which reflected clear hostility towards the North could have stimulated further reaction from Kim Il-sung and his military leaders. In spite of the reinforcement of ROK troops, North Korean guerrilla operations peaked in 1968 and 1969.<sup>76</sup> The new strategies initiated after the Korean Crisis in 1968 were unsuccessful for upholding the Northern policy. This ineffectiveness undercut the justification of Park's rule, and his political rivals started to question the utility of confrontational policies after 1968.

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<sup>74</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 20<sup>th</sup> June, 1968; Regarding Park's emphasis on the Reserve Forces on national security, Hahn Honggoo argues that Park started to build a military nation with mobilisation of Reserve Forces. See Hahn Honggoo, *Vietnam Pabydyeong'gwa Byeongyeong Gugga'eui gil* [Dispatching Troops to Vietnam and Militarization of South Korea] (Seoul: Changbi, 2003).

<sup>75</sup> "North Korea's provocation incident in 1968," 1968, Class Number 2662. 729.55, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea. "The Vietnam War," Class Number 2851. 772 AG, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>76</sup> "Provocation from North," 1970, Class Number 2661. 729.55, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

The regime's new approach in its Northern policy pushed Washington to initiate the withdrawal of US forces from Korea. The US forces in Korea constituted a deterrent against possible North Korean aggression in the aftermath of the Korean War. After discussing the withdrawal of ROK forces from Vietnam in the late 1960s as well as the modernization of Korean forces in 1968, the withdrawal of US forces from Korea was discussed as well. Therefore, the withdrawal of US forces could have been a good option to reduce the financial and political burden on Washington. At this point, the modernization of ROK forces justified Washington's decision to withdraw US forces from Korea. Ironically, after initiating an independent national defence system project, the ROK faced another security concern. As a result, the aggressive ROK northern policy introduced a possibility of ROK-US conflict in the near future.

The rift between the ROK and the US in 1968 had introduced a new phase of Cold War to the Korean Peninsula and East Asia. Park's failure to retaliate against North Korean aggression damaged his Cold War strategy and weakened the American pledge in East Asian region. Nonetheless, Park tried to maintain the essence of his Northern policy which still proved useful for his regime and South Korea's national security. He detailed his ideas on the Korean Crisis, "We never allow the replay of tragic errors in our history caused by compromise with belligerent invaders."<sup>77</sup> He believed that emphasis on self-reliance with respect to national defence as a result of his new foreign policy could sustain his Northern policy. Yet it alone was insufficient to justify his rule and secure South Korea's safety. International détente and domestic opposition put into question his new strategies and hard-line policies.

Despite the above limitations, ROK elites began to recognise the new international environment during the Korean Crisis of 1968. Though the elites did not amend their confrontational stance against the North, the crisis had made them acutely aware of the necessity to initiate policy change. In other words, they tried to keep the fundamental northern policy unchanged by implementing new supportive domestic and diplomatic strategies. They would evaluate their effectiveness based on the domestic reactions towards their legislature and also from the mood in Washington. Especially, the challenge from opposition parties in 1968 was significant since he had to prepare for the next presidential election in 1971.<sup>78</sup> For these reasons, the year 1968 was pivotal for both Korean and Cold War history. Its importance lies in the series of events which led the ROK government to change its relations with the US and its Cold War

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<sup>77</sup> From Park's speech to the graduates of Air Force Academy. Details on this, see *Chosun Ilbo*, 22 Feb, 1968.

<sup>78</sup> Among the opposition party members, Kim Daejung, ROK president between 1998 and 2002, made the most scathing criticisms on the act. For this reason, Park hated and checked him, and this hatred resulted in the abduction of Kim by the KCIA in 1973. See also Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol. 9. 28, 253- 254 and "The abduction of Kim Daejung," 1973- 74, Class Number 5665. 701, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

strategy.

## **Chapter II: The Peaceful ‘War’ in Korea: Détente and South Korea’s Northern Policy, 1969- 1971**

In the aftermath of the Korean Crisis in 1968, ROK president Park Chunghee reconsidered his confrontation policy toward Pyongyang. It relied on an American military power which was not able to serve for his goal, the national security of his country. He tried to stabilise his regime that had been challenged by North Korean provocation and American hardship in Southeast Asia and US reluctance to intervene in Korea problems. Even though Washington had blocked Park’s plan for counterattacks against the North, the South Korean leader secured further American aid for the modernization of ROK forces and hence expected to sustain his competition with Kim Il-sung and own political power. Despite his efforts, however, his policy had not worked as effectively as he had hoped.

There were two major threats undermining his efforts, international and domestic challenges toward his foreign policy and the consequence of his long ruling term. Internationally, the bitter experience of US-ROK forces being bogged down in Vietnam devastated his strategic ground of anticommunism. Richard Nixon who took office as US President in 1969, decided to reduce American intervention in Asia and considered a diplomatic relationship with the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The Nixon Doctrine, announced at a press conference on Guam on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1969, and subsequent changes in American strategies were among the most important factors pushing ROK to change its policy toward the North and its foreign policy in general. There was a potential fallout due to the proposed reorientation of US strategy through increased cooperation with Japan, which shared the fear of the communist threat. Although the Park regime tried to minimize the effect it became more difficult to maintain existing ROK anticommunist foreign policy. Specifically, during the ROK presidential election in 1971, Nixon supported South Korean oppositions who agreed with him on the need for reconciliation with the communist North and challenged Park’s dictatorial rule. In a nutshell, the new American policy toward ROK resulted in the rise of Kim Dae-jung, the archrival of Park Chunghee.

Coupled with American pressure, domestic resistance toward the ideological basis of the Park regime increasingly encouraged the liberal idea and required the South Korean leadership to re-consider its foreign policy. Despite Park’s ambitious plan for improving national defence through the modernization of ROK forces and reserves, the Korean public started to question Park’s northern policy that seemingly cause a further deterioration in inter-Korean relations. DPRK did not stop its military provocation of the South. In 1969, military conflicts between the two Koreas proved how ineffective Park’s northern policy and new defence strategy

of 1968 was. That required tougher and lengthier military service to young South Korean citizens. Still, Washington kept silent on the Korean problem. Highlighting the ineffectiveness of South Korean anticommunist policy in 1969 considerably damaged Park's popularity.

In 1970 Kim Daejung promoted reconciliation with the Communist north and promised to reduce the national security burden on South Koreans. ROK's young voters enthusiastically supported Kim. Since Park Chunghee decided to prepare for the next presidential election in 1971, he had to reconsider his policy in order to discourage South Koreans from changing their allegiance in favour of his political rivals. Disappointed with his relatively poor performance in the 1971 presidential election and mounting American support for his rival, the South Korean president eventually subscribed to the US-led détente approach in order to keep his post.

Between 1969 and 1971, the Cold War mindset of the ROK leadership was scrutinised by both the South Korean public and the US government. Why did Park's anticommunist strategy fail to improve the safety of South Korea? One obvious reason was the ROK's military capabilities. According to KCIA reports, the DPRK invested heavily in the advancement of its military power which as a result of precedence the ROK's.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, the ROK had to assure an American intervention in order to defend its territory from the communist North. As the US would not sufficiently guarantee ROK's security, Park's commitment to anticommunism was not able to enhance the security of his state. The ROK-Japan cooperation during the early Nixon era was a joint effort to limit the impact of the Nixon Doctrine on regional security. The political and economic aid from Tokyo encouraged Seoul to maintain its fierce competition with Pyongyang and the communists.<sup>2</sup> Yet this new partnership could not replace the American assistance and did not last long because Japan did not possess sufficient military power to guarantee ROK's security. Consequently, the ROK-US relations in the early Nixon period undermined the strategic position of Park regime and pushed South Korean elites to re-think their Cold War strategy.

Along with the security issue, Park's authoritarian rule had damaged his public support. The Korean constitution did not allow him to run for a third term in office yet, in 1969, he tried to revise the constitution in a way that was clearly inconsistent with democratic standards. For institutional reasons, he faced fierce challenges from his opposition, who were insisting on the need to set limits to Park's authoritarian rule. In response, Park used undemocratic measures

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Kang Induk, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009, Institute of Far Eastern Studies.

<sup>2</sup> Victor Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 59- 99.

throughout his additional term and enraged South Korea's citizens.<sup>3</sup>

For Park Chunghee and the ROK elite, the discontent of Korean citizens in the late 1960s and early 1970s was a paradox of democracy. While the people wanted powerful leadership which could protect their life and property from the northern communist threat and develop the economy, they increasingly also expected the elite to grant more democratic rights. Pleasing the electorate on both issues equated to trying to square a circle: before 1969 Park was convinced that his way of leading the country could satisfy the people's needs. This view was based on the result of the 1967 presidential election:

When I was victorious in the presidential election in 1967 with far more votes than four years before, I was moved since it was a proof that my success in economic development has been acknowledged by my people.<sup>4</sup>

In some sense, it was too risky for Park to keep a direct election system, which could endanger his political career in the long run. At the same time, he needed to maintain democratic institutions to deflect the constant criticisms of his despotic rule. Moreover, he was convinced he could win the elections- as he later did. As long as he was the optimal candidate for ROK supreme power, there was no serious factor which could really challenge his rule or derail his policies. However, it was only up to his second term, he could consider the election a rite of passage for his presidency showing off his successful performance in the previous term. The ROK constitution allowed him a second term so the Korean public did not object to his rhetoric. Park repeatedly explained to his people that he had to keep anticommunism and hence limit some political rights for the sake of security and economic growth.<sup>5</sup>

While most people might have been willing to acknowledge Park's achievements up to his second term in office they were definitely reluctant to accept Park's leadership for much longer after Park had announced his will to run for a third consecutive term as president in 1969. The public could not conceive that Park's idea was the proper approach to advance South Korea's national interest, support its national security and economic development, at least after 1968. They publically began to question whether Park aimed to keep his political power until death once he forced to pass the bill for his third-term. This authoritarian nature of Park's

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<sup>3</sup> Ma Sangyoon, "Anbo'wa Minjujuyi, geurigo Bak Jeonghui'ui gil [Security, Democracy and Park Chung Hee's Road: The Origins of the Yushin System Revisited]." *International Politics Collection of Treatises* 43 (2003): 173.

<sup>4</sup> Park Chunghee, *Nara'ga Wibum Hal Tae Uchi Mokseumeul Aggiri?* [How Can I Spare My Life when My Nation is in Danger?], (Seoul: Dongsuh Books, 2005), 167.

<sup>5</sup> Park Chunghee, *op. cit.*, 249.

regime further undermined the rationale of his aggressive stance toward North Korea and other communist states.<sup>6</sup>

Park thought that the 1968 crisis would alert the South Korean people to the seriousness of the North Korean threat and established his new security strategy with this idea. In a general sense, his idea was totally reasonable since the North Korean commandos attempted to kill the South Korean leader. Park attempted to reinforce South Korean security by calling in large amounts of mainly US aid, extending the compulsory military service period and establishing the ROK reserve forces. The result differed from his expectation. His efforts had put additional burdens on the backs of average citizens who were already exhausted by a lengthy military service and endless conflicts between the two Koreas. Against this backdrop, the president's ambition for a third term in power ran into unexpected resistance.

The challenge from the opposition parties was deeply rooted in the discontent of the electorates concerning the existing confrontational policy toward communism as well as its disappointment with the performance of the country's democratic institutions. To demonstrate the competition between Park and opposition candidates, we will focus mainly on Kim Daejung. It was Kim who officially raised the political discussion over Park's Cold War strategy and his lenient approach to Pyongyang that really threatened Park's prospects for re-election in 1971.<sup>7</sup> Challenges from opposition groups will be addressed in chronological order. Firstly, the resistance against Park's constitutional amendment for his third term in 1969 and secondly, the opposition against Park for the presidential election in 1971. Regarding the first topic, the opposition parties repeatedly weakened the institutional foundation of the Park regime. Needless to say, Park's constant conflicts with the opposition often undermined his ability to gain legislative support for passing his bills. As result, Park resorted to dictatorial measures in order to suppress the parties and implement his policy.<sup>8</sup> In this sense, his anticommunist policy did not enjoy solid legislative support and later became a symbol of his despotic rule. The liberal approach of opposition parties questioned the effectiveness of Park's Northern policy, too. As I have already indicated earlier, the discussion of ROK anticommunist policy was triggered

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<sup>6</sup> For example, the Reserve Forces, established for anti-guerrilla operations in 1968, consist of young men who already finished three years of their military service. This system was especially unpopular to young people since they were mobilised without any payment and too often. The Park's oppositions criticised the inefficient operation of the Reserve Forces. Kim Daejung, *Hangdong'haneun Yangsim [My Fight for Democracy in Korea]*, (Seoul: Geumundang Publishing, 2009), 120.

<sup>7</sup> The ROK government and ruling party, Democratic Republic Party singled out Kim as the most threatening rival of Park. For detail, see The Democratic Republic Party, *The history of Democratic Republic Party* (Seoul: The Democratic Republic Party, 1973). For details of Kim Daejung's idea for South Korean politics and election in 1971, see Kim Daejung, *Hangdong'haneun Yangsim [My Fight for Democracy in Korea]*, (Seoul: Geumundang Publishing, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> In fact, Park passed many bills including the bill for his third term of presidency by irregular and/or illegal measures.



internationally by continuous North Korean provocations and a lack of US intervention in 1969. Domestic political triggers included, Park's ineffective, aggressive policy toward Pyongyang and the détente mood toward East Asia which became a powerful weapon for liberals. This next chapter will discuss the interaction between domestic and international factors and their effect on South Korean politics. Specific emphasis will be given to historical events concerning domestic political conflicts, North Korean provocations, first inter-Korean negotiation and international environments between 1969 and 1971.

(1) The Opening of a Discussion of South Korean Anticommunism and Authoritarianism, 1969

Two years after winning his second term as president, Park took action to run for third term. As the Korean constitution allows only two consecutive terms, Park was to hand over supreme power in 1971. Park, however, planned to hold the position another term. He was treading cautiously because his plan had the potential to spark fierce resistance. Yet on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1969, Park indicated his intention to alter the constitution during his annual message,

It is not a good time to discuss (the) constitutional revision. Even if we have to amend the constitution, we are not supposed to discuss the issue at this moment. It is not too late for us to deal with it in the end of this year or early next year.<sup>9</sup>

In 1969, Park decided to refer the issue to public opinion. Despite his cautious comments in his annual message, a debate erupted concerning a possible constitutional amendment. According to the records of the *Democratic Republic Party*, the ruling party had already discussed the issue. On 6<sup>th</sup> January 1969 Kil Jaeho, the party's secretary general at that time, stated during an unofficial interview that,

We, the *Democratic Republic Party*, are carefully reviewing the constitutional amendment issue in order to supplement the defect of present constitution which has been detected by the enforcement of it.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "Park's annual message on 10<sup>th</sup> January, 1969," The electronic library of president Park Chunghee, <http://www.parkchunghee.or.kr>.

<sup>10</sup> The Democratic Republic Party, *op. cit.*, 499.

The next day, Kil Jaeho and other members of the party elite announced the details of their discussion to the members of *Democratic Republican Party (DRP)*. The most important topic was definitely the Park's quest for a third consecutive term as president.<sup>11</sup> Despite the power game within the ruling party, Park successfully mobilised the legislative branch of his government, the *DRP*, to endorse his quest for a third term.

In comparison, threats originating from within his own party were much easier to deal with than challenges from opposition groups that were more complex to address. While Park could silence the reactionaries inside his own party through promises for promotion and the assignment of posts in the next government, this conciliation option did not present itself where representatives from other parties were concerned.

The *ROK* president had the authority to appoint cabinet ministers and other high ranking government officials. For this reason, the party in power usually dominates the executive branch of government as well. Hence the opposition was in no position to force Park to compromise since he, through his party, dominated *ROK* politics in a comprehensive manner.<sup>12</sup> Yet it is noteworthy that this institutional threat was not significant to Park up to 1967 at least. In 1967, Park won his second presidency with significant turnout and was satisfied with his popularity.<sup>13</sup>

Park was successful in convincing *ROK* citizens that he was the best choice as *ROK* president up to his second re-election. His strict anticommunist rhetoric strongly appealed to South Koreans who had lost their properties and family members during the Korean War. As the military and economic power of the communist North was stronger than that of the Capitalist South by the time Park entered office, his aggressive approach towards the *DPRK* resounded with the electorate. In addition, his economic policies had been extremely successful. The South Korean per capita GDP had increased by 42% during his First Five-Year Plan for Economic Development (1963- 1967).<sup>14</sup> No matter how people criticised his political cruelty and despotic rule, they rarely criticised Park's economic strategies.<sup>15</sup> Compared to his predecessors, president

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<sup>11</sup> The Democratic Republic Party, *op. cit.*, 499- 501.

<sup>12</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, 23.

<sup>13</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, 36.

<sup>14</sup> "Principal Indicators on National Account (1953- 1970)," Statistic Korea, [http://kosis.kr/feature/feature\\_0102List.jsp?menuId=all&mode=listAll](http://kosis.kr/feature/feature_0102List.jsp?menuId=all&mode=listAll).

<sup>15</sup> For this reason, Park often named 'developmental dictator'. For instance, Lee Byeongcheon indicates that Park's developmental dictatorship shaped the modernity of *ROK*. In his book, he claims that Park prioritized the economic development over welfare and democracy. For detail see Lee Byeongcheon, *Developmental Dictatorship and The Park Chung-Hee Era: The Shaping of Modernity in the Republic of Korea* (Seoul: Changbi, 2003).

Syngman Rhee and premier Jang Myeon<sup>16</sup>, both of whom did not make significant achievements for developing the economy, Park proved a capable architect who effectively reconstructed a modern post-war economy in South Korea. Thanks to his strong commitment to anticommunism and support for the US in Vietnam, Washington provided financial aid to Seoul for its role in the Vietnam War and helped the South Korean elites develop South Korean economy. In short, the popular ideological base and stellar economic performance of Park administration in 1960s never allowed opposition parties a realistic chance for taking away his second term.

Park, however, could not prevent the strong resistance from the oppositions to his ambition for a third term by pointing out his past achievements alone. With the 1971 presidential election ahead, the opposition parties questioned whether the Park regime's indisputable economic success of the past could guarantee a similar performance in the future. They also rejected the idea, that Park was the only one who could ensure sustainable economic development. In addition, as a consequence to Park's economic policy framework, the development gap between urban and rural areas had widened. Secondly, they argued that Park's efforts to secure a third term in office subverted the country's democratic institution. In other words, the oppositions thought that Park did not qualify for three consecutive terms as president, believing his economic successes could have been achieved by another leader. Thirdly, and most importantly, the opposition attacked Park's Cold War strategy and its effectiveness in securing the ROK.<sup>17</sup> In 1968 and 1969, despite the new military arrangements of the Park regime, North Korean provocations increased both in frequency and insolence. It was against this background, that opposition groups began to challenge Park and his party's efforts for constitutional amendment. Among these issues, the prevailing Northern and foreign policies became the bone of contention between the Park administration and its opponents. This was largely due to the threat from Pyongyang and the indifference of Washington toward South Korean security.

On 15<sup>th</sup> April 1969, a US Navy Lockheed, *EC-121M Warning Star* was shot down by the DPRK Air Force over the East Korean Sea. All 31 Americans on board died in the crash. The response of Nixon administration towards this incident was not so much different from that of the Johnson administration towards the USS *Pueblo* crisis one year earlier. It decided not to retaliate against North Korea.<sup>18</sup> By doing this the US undermined Park's Cold War rhetoric

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<sup>16</sup>From April 1960 to May 1961, ROK adopted British parliamentary system. Under this institution, the prime position was premier (or prime minister) not president.

<sup>17</sup> Kim Daejung, *op. cit.*, 105- 106.

<sup>18</sup> Memorandum to Thomas L. Hughes, Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, John, H. Holdridge, INR/EAP Files, Department of State, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

based largely on American sponsorship. As already discussed in the first chapter, the ROK president kept his strict anticommunist policy even though the White House refused to intervene in Korean issues. The president calculated that Kim Il-sung would not provoke South Korea if he declared his will to reinforce military power in the South. The South Korean leadership, however, misunderstood Kim's strategy. The North Korean premier who already enjoyed his victory over Lyndon Johnson in 1968 for the *Pueblo* incident was convinced that Washington would not intervene in Korea unless the situation in Vietnam changed.

On 18<sup>th</sup> April, Park told William J. Porter, US ambassador to ROK, in a telephone conversation of his firm belief that similar incidents would happen again as soon as the DPRK saw an opportunity.<sup>19</sup> As in 1968, Washington did not take any military action in retaliation to the North Korean provocation, turning down Park's explicit request.<sup>20</sup> Clearly, along with the cases of Blue House raid and abduction of the USS *Pueblo* in 1968, this incident confirmed Washington's reluctance to intervene in the Korean conflict. The new US administration was not willing to support Park's policy of confrontation even before Richard Nixon announced his doctrine in July 1969. As a result, Park Chung-hee suffered wavering confidence in his Northern policy.

Park complained to Porter about the lack of supports from Washington, "I do not think that even though we took partial countermeasures against North Korean provocation, USSR and PRC would interfere in this case. Anyway, my opinion is different to that of the US on this issue."<sup>21</sup> Regarding this, Henry Kissinger, the National Security Advisor of the Nixon administration, recalled that the muted American response to the *EC-121* incident had inspired enemies and demoralised allies.<sup>22</sup> In fact, after the attack on the *EC-121* was followed by what the South Korean public interpreted as indifference toward ROK security on the part of their American allies. Placards were posted on US army facilities which read "North Korea 2 to US 0".<sup>23</sup> This inter-Korean and international situation inspired Park's opponents who criticise his ineffective Northern policy. Among those critics, Kim Dae-jung of the *New Democratic Party* (*Sinmindang*) was most prominent and was able to use the point for his presidential campaign.<sup>24</sup>

The reason why this relatively young politician, aged 45, became influential in South

<sup>19</sup> Telegram from the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, Seoul, 18<sup>th</sup> April 1969, Korea, Vol. I, to 9–69, Far East, Country Files NSC Files, Box 540, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>20</sup> Memorandum From Secretary of Defence Laird to President Nixon, EC–121 Shootdown, General Materials--EC–121 Shootdown Korea, Box 438, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>21</sup> "The summary of talks between Park and the United States ambassador Porter (invitation) (1969. 4. 18)", Number: Unknown, File number: 01, "The incident of shooting down US scout, EC-121, 1969. 4. 15", 1969, Class Number: 729.55, Diplomatic Archives, Republic of Korea.

<sup>22</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years*, (New York: Little, Brown, 1979), 320–321.

<sup>23</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 416.

<sup>24</sup> The party was the coalition of conservative and liberal minor parties in ROK.

Korean politics was his clear understanding of inter-Korean politics and Park's strategy for his rule. Kim pointed out the president's mistake in his approach toward Pyongyang and his real intention. The ROK president justified his despotic rule by pointing out the need for a determined leader who can defend his country from the communist threat. However, his hostility towards Kim Il-sung without reliable American military support jeopardized the ROK's safety in 1969. Kim Dae-jung condemned Park's policy on the grounds that it did not serve ROK's security interests, and only served to help Park cement his power. Clearly, Kim argued that ROK should adapt itself to the new world order.<sup>25</sup> He quickly accepted the new American policy while Park continued to resist. As the 1971 elections that we will review in the third part of this chapter have demonstrated, Park's rhetoric effectively alienated large parts of the ROK electorate.

Facing both the North Korean threat and American indifference to it, the ROK attempted to improve its relationship with Japan. The Japanese leadership also felt that the Nixon administration did not consider East Asian regional security seriously. Before 1969, Japan had been indifferent to the Korean issue. For instance, during the Korean Crisis of 1968, Japan had kept a neutral position. The Japanese press had even blamed Park's hostile attitude towards North as the ultimate cause for North Korean provocations. The ROK government expressed disappointment at these views.<sup>26</sup> According to Victor Cha, the enigma of the shared history between the two allies undermined their partnership against the communists. South Koreans condemned what they perceived to be Japanese efforts to re-colonize Korea through the economic field, while Japanese harboured a strong distaste of South Korea who, they felt, demanded an absurd amount of money as compensation for Japanese atrocities committed in Korea under imperial rule.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, Tokyo did not consider Pyongyang's threat as seriously as Seoul did. The first targets of the DPRK were definitely going to be South Korea or the US, not Japan. During the Korean Crisis in 1968, the ROK government argued that the North Korean threat is linked to the international communist campaign. Yet its ally, Japan disagreed. For Tokyo, the inter-Korean conflict was a 'matter between the two Koreas' rather than one between the capitalist and communist camps. In this sense, it was totally unnecessary for Japan to provoke Pyongyang. Tokyo refused to cooperate with the Park regime which often bragged about being a shield for Japan.<sup>28</sup> The prevailing attitude was that unless Japan directly faced a

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<sup>25</sup> Kim Dae-jung, *op. cit.*, 104- 105.

<sup>26</sup> 'North Korea's provocation incident in 1968,' Class Number 2664. 729.55, 1968, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>27</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 44- 45.

<sup>28</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 41- 43.

communist threat, it was the best to remain silent on the matter of the Korean conflict. After Nixon entered the White House, however, Japan finally accepted the South Korean mindset.

Japan started to sense a serious threat to its security due to American responses after the crisis. Washington kept silent regarding the consecutive provocations from North in late 1968 and early 1969. In April 1969, Sato Eisaku, the Prime Minister of Japan from 1964 to 1972, criticized the North Korean attack of the *EC-121* and urged the US to resume reconnaissance operations at the perimeter of Japanese territory in spite of the domestic resistance against his intervention in the conflict between US and North Korea.<sup>29</sup> Japan had strong doubts about the US commitment towards Japanese security. In this sense, the ROK and Japan shared a sense of insecurity and thus started to cooperate for improving regional security. The joint efforts of the two nations could be summarized in following themes; the negotiation concerning the return of Okinawa to Japan; its relationship with Korean security; and inter-governmental affairs.<sup>30</sup>

Due to its importance for the security of Japan, the problem of Okinawa's reversion was one of the most important issues in Japanese politics until the archipelago was returned to Japan on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1972. Okinawa consists of hundreds of Islands, which extends southwest from Kyushu to Taiwan. During the 19th century, Japan annexed the islands. Later because of its strategic importance, the US administration occupied them after WW II. Since then, the islands were essential for US operations. During Korean War, the headquarters of the UN forces were located in Okinawa. Moreover, it provided logistical support to the US campaign in Vietnam. In this sense, the islands were of great importance for Asian security.<sup>31</sup>

The US and Japanese governments kicked off negotiations on the terms of Okinawa's reversion in 1969. The most important issue was whether or not Japan agreed to keep US forces and nuclear weapons stationed in Okinawa after the reversion.<sup>32</sup> The timing of the discussion was very sensitive: the continuous conflicts between the US and North Korea on the Korean Peninsula and America's lukewarm attitude towards the North Korean threat brought about a security risk to Japan.<sup>33</sup> In this situation, the reversion of Okinawa would increase the level of

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<sup>29</sup> *Japan Times*, 14- 16<sup>th</sup> April 1969.

<sup>30</sup> Victor Cha *op. cit.*, 72- 76. Regarding the ROK-Japan cooperation during Nixon era, please refer Cho Yanghyun, "Détente Cheje Jeonhwang'eu Hanil'gwangye [The Korea-Japan Relationship within the Structural Change of the Cold War System in East Asia: Focusing on the Case of Okinawa Reversion and the U. S. Troop Withdrawal from Korea]." *International Regional Research* 20 (2011): 62- 63, See also Yun Dukmin, "Miil Okinawa Banhwanhyeobsang'gwa Hangook'woegyo [Korean Response to U.S. -Japanese Negotiation of Okinawa Reversion: ROK-US-Japan Policy for Korean Security Issues in Relation to Okinawa Reversion]. *Korean Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 31, (1992): 123.

<sup>31</sup> Victor Cha *op. cit.*, 72.

<sup>32</sup> H. T. R. Havens, *Fire Across the Sea: The Vietnam War and Japan, 1965-1975*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press., 1987), 120.

<sup>33</sup> Yun Dukmin, *op. cit.*, 122- 123.

insecurity of Japan. The issue was also sensitive to South Korea. For the ROK, the control shift of the islands from the US to Japan would be a second impact followed by the reduction of US forces in Korea. Such combination of plans would completely abrogate Park's defence programme.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Washington's two main allies in East Asia thought that the reversion of the islands could result in the total withdrawal of American forces from Asia.<sup>35</sup> With their shared concern for national security, Seoul and Tokyo started their political cooperation.

In April 1969, the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested the Japanese ambassador to report on the progress of the negotiation on the Okinawa reversion issue between the US and Japan and to give the Japanese right for prior consultation after the reversion of islands through his letter.<sup>36</sup> In reply to the South Korean government, the Sato administration indicated that it fully recognised the ROK's interests in Okinawa issue.<sup>37</sup> Before Park's visit to the US in August of the same year, both nations repeatedly affirmed their common interests in Okinawa. As Victor Cha has indicated, this cooperation could be accomplished by through close communication between the two East Asian allies. Interestingly, while the Okinawa reversion issue only affected Japan and the US; Japan allowed the ROK to enter the discussion.<sup>38</sup> For instance, Kiichi Aichi, the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, soothed Korean anxiety by confirming that even if Okinawa were returned to Japan, its strategic value would not decrease.<sup>39</sup> For the ROK, such a cooperative mindset on the part of the Japanese government was a positive signal that would help the ROK reduce the security risk.<sup>40</sup> The Park regime interpreted such a '*détente*' mood between the two hostile allies as an exceptional diplomatic success.<sup>41</sup>

Meanwhile, the Nixon administration eventually announced its official policy toward its allies in East Asia and triggered the discussion on ROK's policy toward the communism. On 25<sup>th</sup> July 1969, Nixon stated that the US expected Asian nations to be increasingly self-sufficient in terms of their defence capabilities.<sup>42</sup> Park feared a reduction of American military support despite Nixon emphasizing that the US had no intention of abandoning South Korea. Coupled with the

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<sup>34</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 72- 76.

<sup>35</sup> Yun Dukmin, *op. cit.*, 124.

<sup>36</sup> *Japan Times*, 16 Apr. 1969.

<sup>160</sup> *Japan Times*, 10-12 June 1969.

<sup>38</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 67, On the other hand, Yun Dukmin argues that this is not a 'yield' but a 'realistic choice' of Sato regime because it had to consider the situation of Korea. Yun Dukmin, *op. cit.*, 122.

<sup>39</sup> For detail of Aichi's interview, see *Japan Times*, 29<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1969; Tokyo Kyodo, 29<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1969, in *FBIS*, 29 Aug. 1969, 2- 3.

<sup>40</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 67.

<sup>41</sup> "The 3<sup>rd</sup> annual ROK-Japan joint ministerial conference," 1969, Class Number 723.1JA, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Nixon: "Informal Remarks in Guam With Newsmen," July 25, 1969. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2140>.

American indifference to the incident in April of the same year, the Nixon Doctrine thoroughly weakened the ideological grounds of Park regime. No matter how Nixon emphasized that the USA does not abandon ROK, Park was afraid of that Nixon would reduce US military supports for ROK. Keeping this in his mind, Park visited San Francisco for talks in August 1969 not long after Nixon had announced his doctrine. During the meeting, Nixon made his best efforts not to trigger Park's sense of insecurity. Yet the core of his idea was clear, "Washington is well aware of the North Korean threat. However, South Korea must be defended by South Koreans themselves."<sup>43</sup>

After listening to Nixon's words carefully, Park revealed his real aim for his visit.

Now I could grasp the core of the new American [doctrine], the so called Nixon Doctrine, and it is true that many Asian people have relied too much on America since WW II. I think that it is [more] reasonable that these people are independent. Yet 'some of them' worry about the [new] policy since it could mean that the US abandons Asia.<sup>44</sup>

The US president may well have considered that Park was referring to ROK as the one of those who worried the US policy. Park wanted Nixon's guarantee for keeping US forces in Korea and an exception to the Nixon Doctrine for ROK. The US president was also aware that if ROK forces were to be withdrawn from Vietnam, US forces would have a greater burden there. If he did not placate the stubborn South Korean leader, then this could soon become a reality. For this reason, Nixon tried to appease Park by stating, "The US will not withdraw its forces from Korea."<sup>45</sup>

Despite Nixon's guarantee on Park's most important priority, the South Korean president then quickly moved onto the Okinawa issue. He requested Nixon's guarantee that Washington would not reduce the level of US force in Okinawa upon its reversion. Apparently, the cooperation with the Sato administration had encouraged him to do so. However, Park omitted the contribution of Sato and his cabinet to South Korean security. He even complained that

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<sup>43</sup> "President Park's visit to US, 20- 25 August, 1969," 1969, Class Number 724.11 US, Diplomatic Archives, Republic of Korea.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. Park believed that Nixon would not withdraw US troops from South Korea because of the South Korean troops in Vietnam. Shin Wookhee and Kim Youngho, "Jeonhwangi'eui Dongmaeng: Détente Siki'eui Hanmianbogwangye [Alliance in Transitional Period: ROK-US security relations in the détente era]" Korea Political History Conference, Seoul, Republic of Korea, 7 April, 2000, 4.



Japan did not consider ROK's security interests.<sup>46</sup> Park said,

At present, some countries are sharing excessive burdens beyond their ability and vice versa. The Republic of Korea and Japan are good examples. Korea is not only divided but also is a developing country. Japan, despite its strong economy, is hardly carrying its share of the burdens in Asia. The Japanese are even trying to refuse to provide military bases in Okinawa when it is returned to Japan, thus hindering the unity of Asia. Several Asian countries as well as the people of ROK are dissatisfied with this Japanese posture. I do not have the details on the bilateral negotiations for the return of Okinawa to Japan, but I believe that if the island is to be reverted to Japan, the Japanese share of the burdens in Asia must be increased first, before Okinawa is actually returned.<sup>47</sup>

There is no evidence to support the claim that the Japanese prime minister had worked against South Korean interest. It was Park's aim to exaggerate the security risk and importance of Okinawa for South Korean safety. Nixon generally accepted Park's standpoint regarding the Okinawa plan. In contrast to the troop reduction programme in Korea, the Okinawa reversion was addressed only in the context of Japanese financial contributions to an East Asian security framework. The South Korean president stated that if Sato was willing to keep US forces in place and helped to cover related expenses, Washington would not need to withdraw its forces from Okinawa. This did not oppose Nixon's policy. Nixon response was positive,

For a long time I have thought that Japan should play a much more significant role than the present in its defence and collective economic activity. Some progress has been made in the economic aspect. As you are aware, Prime Minister Sato is coming here in November, and we should make every effort to have him survive politically. Free Korea is very important to Free Japan. Japan spends only about one percent of its GNP in its defence, which I believe is too small.<sup>48</sup>

Upon returning to Korea, Park quelled fears by confirming in his homecoming

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<sup>47</sup> "The President and President Park," Korea Memorandum of Conversation, San Francisco, California, August 21, 1969, 4:15–6:15 p.m., Presidential/HAK Mem Cons, Mem con, Box 1023, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

interview that, “There is no change in US policy toward Korea.”<sup>49</sup> However, it took only about a month before he realized that Nixon’s promise for the station of US troops in South Korea had been empty words.<sup>50</sup> In June 1969, a month before the Nixon doctrine was formally announced, Secretary of Defence Melvin R. Laird confided to the House Appropriation Committee the administration’s intent on reducing America’s military commitment to ROK. When these comments were revealed in early October 1969, they greatly disappointed Park who felt betrayed.<sup>51</sup> Once again, the US government tried to appease the Park regime through the US ambassador to the ROK, William Porter, who reported that “Laird’s comment manifested the fundamental standpoint of the US that the primary responsibility on the reduction of the US army and defence of the concerned nation are also applied to the US army in South Korea. (...) We considered that there is no such a concrete plan on the reduction of the US army in South Korea now.”<sup>52</sup> However, on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1969, Nixon officially launched a withdrawal plan. Washington denied that its plan was in progress. The intent of this may have been to minimize the resistance from ROK until its plan was well underway. When South Korean ambassador to US telephoned Assistant Secretary Green regarding Secretary Laird’s comments on troop withdrawals and spoke also with Deputy Assistant Secretary Brown on 21<sup>st</sup> January, the US Department of Defence assured Kim that:

There won’t be any immediate U.S. troop withdrawals. Rather he (Laird) was emphasizing the importance of additional MAP [Military Assistant Programme] for modernization of ROK forces. The US government does not have any proposal regarding troop withdrawal to make at this time. It always consults with ROK government on matters of that degree of importance and it would certainly do so before taking any step to reduce U.S. force level.<sup>53</sup>

Park did understand Nixon’s true intentions. Despite the euphemisms used by the US

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<sup>49</sup> “President Park’s visit to US, 20- 25 August, 1969,” 1969, Class Number 724.11 US, Diplomatic Archives, Republic of Korea.

<sup>50</sup> Shin Jongdae, “The Perception of the ROK on the Sino-US Rapprochement and Its Ensuing Responses.” Unpublished article, 6.

<sup>51</sup> “The comment about reduction of US army in South Korea and reports on the press, 1969,” 1969, Class Number, 729. 23, Diplomatic Archives, Republic of Korea.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. See also Shin Jongdae, *op. cit.*, 7- 8. One interesting point is that Porter repeatedly added “now” or “at the present” whenever he made comments on the issue: on October 28<sup>th</sup>, when he met ROK Foreign Minister, he said, “*At the present*, we do not have any plan for retreat. The United States army and the other foreign troops could not stay in Korea forever, but there will be no reduction of the United States army in Korea without a balance of power and counter- balancing.” See “The comment about reduction of US army in South Korea and reports on the press, 1969,” 1969, Class Number, 729. 23, Diplomatic Archives, Republic of Korea.

<sup>53</sup> “MAP and US Force Levels”, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Korea, Far East, Korea, Vol. II, 10/69–5/70, Country Files, Box 541, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

president, it was clear that the ROK would not become an exception to Nixon Doctrine. Rather, it could be the model of the doctrine alongside with Vietnam. Clearly, Washington's promise, "No consulting, no withdrawal" did not ring true to Park. Needless to say, Nixon launched a withdrawal plan without consulting Park. Unfortunately for Park, there was no plan B. No matter how much the US president promised a military assistance programme for the modernization of ROK forces, Park was not willing to approve the reduction of US forces stationed in Korea. While the modernisation of South Korean forces took a long time, Park had to guarantee the security of his citizens immediately in order to run for his third term. In a nutshell, the withdrawal of US forces from Korea would have undermined his confrontational Northern policy which, for the most part, rested on the deterrent effect of American forces stationed in Korea. For this reason, Park attempted to delay or at least reschedule the American withdrawal. Nonetheless, he did not change his Cold War mindset but prepared to minimize the fallout from a potential US pullout through establishing a new partnership with Tokyo.

In contrast to his negotiation with Nixon over the US troops in South Korea, Park's diplomatic efforts on the Okinawa issue were met with success in November 1969 when Nixon and Sato had a summit meeting in Washington. The Japanese prime minister and the US president agreed to accomplish the reversion in 1972. Basically, due to Japanese distaste of nuclear weapons, both parties also agreed to withdraw American nuclear weapons from the area before the reversion.<sup>54</sup> During their meeting, both leaders frequently mentioned the situation in Korea. The two summits produced two important agreements that affected the ROK. The first one was the so-called the Korean Clause,

The President and the Prime Minister specifically noted the continuing tension over the Korean peninsula. The Prime Minister deeply appreciated the peacekeeping efforts of the United Nations in the area and stated that the security of the ROK was essential to Japan's own security.<sup>55</sup>

The second clause, as Victor Cha indicated, is related to the Japanese recognition that US forces in Okinawa play an essential role in regional security.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 72- 74. In some point, Washington also wanted withdraw the nuclear missiles from Japan for its negotiation with PRC. See Yun, Dukmin, *op. cit.*, 126.

<sup>55</sup> "Joint Communique Between President Richard Nixon and Prime Minister Eisaku Sato," United States Embassy Transcript, 21 Nov. 1969, sec. 4; U.S., State, Department of State Bulletin, 15 Dec. 1969.

<sup>56</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 74.

The Prime Minister was of the view that, in the light of such recognition on the part of the Japanese government, the return of the administrative rights over Okinawa in the manner agreed above should not hinder the effective discharge of the international obligations assumed by the United States for the defence of countries in the Far East including Japan. The President replied that he share the Prime Minister's view.<sup>57</sup>

During a press conference one day after the meeting, the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs remarked that the ROK government was satisfied with the outcome of the US-Japan summit meeting in which both allies had considered Korean interests in the Okinawa issue.<sup>58</sup> Since Japan had decided to accommodate the ROK's security interests, the negative impact of the drawback of US forces in Korea could be partially offset. Moreover, thanks to political amelioration, Japan provided economic assistances to Park for his new economic development plan.<sup>59</sup> In other words, Park had managed to fill the void that was created by the withdrawal of US forces with Japanese diplomatic and economic support. Even before Nixon officially confirmed his withdrawal plan of US armed forces in early 1970, Park had successfully minimised the impact of Nixon's policy on South Korean security and his rule through reliance on Japanese support.

However, it was immediately clear that the 'vacuum' could not be completely filled by Japan alone. Due to its constitutional limits on rearmament, Japan did not possess enough armed forces to fight communists. Furthermore, Park was not completely satisfied with the result of the Nixon-Sato summit meeting. In his meeting with Kanayama Masahide, Japanese ambassador to ROK, the ROK president said that he was sorry to hear that Washington would withdraw its nuclear weapons before returning Okinawa to Japan.<sup>60</sup> Clearly, despite his diplomatic efforts, the basis of Park's anticommunist policy had been gradually undermined.

In domestic politics, Park strongly pushed the *DRP* to pass the bill for his third term candidacy in next presidential election. Despite the best efforts and strong resistance from opponents, the party used corruptive measures and improper procedure to pass the bill.<sup>61</sup> After

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<sup>57</sup> Secs. 6 and 7 of the Communiqué, U.S., State, Department of State Bulletin, 15 Dec. 1969.

<sup>58</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1969.

<sup>59</sup> *Japan Times*, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1971. Japanese government promised economic assistance for Park's economic development plan during his inauguration ceremony.

<sup>60</sup> "The summary of meeting between president and Japanese ambassador, 24 November 1969 (The Okinawa reversion issue)", 1969, Class Number 3451 722.12JA/US Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>61</sup> Kim Daejung, *op. cit.*, 105. The Democratic Republic Party, *op. cit.*, p. 559; In his memoirs, Kim Daejung recorded the conflicts between the Park regime and the opposition. He criticised the corruptive measures Park and his party had used to push, for the necessary constitutional amendments to enable Park's third term as ROK president. Before officially discussing the agenda in the ROK National Assembly, the government and *DRP* bribed four members of the National Assembly from opposition parties with a sizable amount of money. Additionally, Park's

the bill was passed in the National Assembly, the constitutional amendments were decided through referendum. On 21<sup>st</sup> October 1969, Park proclaimed the decision and his will to run again for office. The *DRP* publicized the affirmative vote to the international press.<sup>62</sup> Kim Daejung clearly pointed out the undemocratic and corruptive rule as the dark sides of the Park regime which were commonly hidden behind his stellar economic performance. Park's efforts for his third term highlighted these dark sides and increasingly alienated South Korean citizens.<sup>63</sup> Students held demonstrations against the Park regime in the streets. While a few conservative groups, such as the ROK Association of Veteran, supported Park, the general public and press criticized their president even after the bill was passed.<sup>64</sup>

Along with America's new Cold War strategy, the anti- Park sentiment in South Korea severely undermined the foundation for his anticommunist policy. Even though the policy was the rational result of ROK's reaction toward North Korean aggression, it became the major target of opposition groups because the main justification of his third-term was that ROK still needed bold leadership to face the North Korean threat.<sup>65</sup> Preparing his campaign for the ROK presidency in 1970, Kim started to argue that Park's anticommunist policy was designed to excuse his undemocratic rule.<sup>66</sup>

In summary, the Nixon Doctrine and Park's undemocratic efforts for his third-term in 1969 started to destabilize the foundation of Park's anticommunist policy. Although the president was able to amend the constitution, he lost public support due to the opposition's resistance to the undemocratic process that lead to the amendments. Washington's lack of conviction and enthusiasm toward the North Korean provocation and the Nixon Doctrine also weakened his justification for the extension of his rule. Park had limited success reducing the impact through diplomatic relations with Tokyo. However, the challenge from the opposition became much stronger and undermined the rationale of Park's anticommunist policy in light of his endeavour to extend his term through undemocratic measures. In 1970, the South Korean

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ruling party changed the venue for the vote in the National Assembly to another location so as to exclude members of the opposition, a procedure that was improper as well as illegal. In addition, Kim Daejung did not accept the outcome of the referendum or the vote in the National Assembly. Kim condemned the Park regime for mobilising public servants in the referendum. The young politician argued that opposition groups never had a fair chance to frustrate Park's ambition due to such undemocratic and corruptive practices of ROK executives. In fact, apart from the referendum itself, there exists no clear evidence that a majority of the electorates was in favour of the bill that won their president an additional term in office. For Park, Kim Daejung was a thorn in his side. In Kim's memoirs, here called that since 1967 Park had attempted to prevent him from being elected as a member in National Assembly and promoted in New Democratic Party.

<sup>62</sup> The Democratic Republic Party, *op. cit.*, 565- 588.

<sup>63</sup> Kim Daejung, *op. cit.*, 110- 117.

<sup>64</sup> Ma Sangyun, "Anbo'wa Minjujuyi, geurigo Bak Jeonghui'ui gil [Security, Democracy and Park Chung Hee's Road: The Origins of the Yushin System Revisited]." International Politics Collection of Treatises 43 (2003):175.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Kim Daejung, *op. cit.*, 120.

leader found it even more difficult to maintain his policy after Richard Nixon officially announced his pullout plan, and Kim Daejung established common practical ground with Nixon.

## (2) The Decision on a Reduction of US Troops and the Presidential Campaign of 1970

On 20<sup>th</sup> March 1970, Nixon signed National Security Decision Memorandum 48, which ordered the withdrawal of one army division from the ROK. The Nixon administration drafted a preliminary plan for the withdrawal of twenty thousand US soldiers from Korea by the end of the fiscal year, 1971, and directed the US ambassador to Seoul to consult with Park as soon as possible about the practical arrangements.<sup>67</sup> On 27<sup>th</sup> March, Porter met Park and officially reported the pullout plan. Subsequent reports document Park appearing to be frightened and exclaiming “profound shock.”<sup>68</sup> It should be considered that Park might have exaggerated the seriousness of the report in order to delay the timing of the plan.

Annoyed by Park’s over-reaction, Nixon drafted a response that emphasised America’s continued commitment to South Korean in the event of an armed aggression from the North. Significantly, Nixon stated that while he was authorising the withdrawal of some US forces, he was not proposing a total withdrawal. In addition, he promised further military aid for the modernisation of the ROK’s armed forces between 1971 and 1975.<sup>69</sup> Simply put, Nixon was effectively saying “you are over-reacting, calm down, here is something to make you happy.” In spite of this, Park still maintained a hard-line opposition to the American proposal.

One of the reasons why the South Korean leader tried to keep the US forces in Korea was US conciliatory policy toward People’s Republic of China. In March 1969 the long-term conflicts between Beijing and Moscow had reached its peak with the Sino-Soviet border conflict. For Nixon whose first priority was to reduce tensions in Asia, the split between the two leading communist powers offered a great opportunity. The president and his staff generally agreed that they had to improve American’s relationship with PRC without antagonising the Soviet

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<sup>67</sup> Without any doubt, as we discussed above, Nixon administration frequently revealed its plan to Park through various routes, and therefore the official report was not that surprising to Park. See National Security Decision Memorandum, Washington, March 20, 1970, Subject Files, Box 363, National Security Decision Memoranda, NSC Files, Nos. 1–50, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives. to Seoul, March 25, transmitted a summary of this NSDM. (Ibid, Box 541, Country Files, Far East, Korea, Vol. II, 10/69–5/70).

<sup>68</sup> Shin Wookhee and Kim Youngho, *op. cit.*, 4-5.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Letter From President Nixon to Korean President Park,’ Washington, May 26, 1970, Presidential Correspondence 1969–1974, Korea: President Park Chunghee, Box 757, NSC Files, National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials.

Union.<sup>70</sup> As such, Kissinger proposed the modification of existing travel and trade restrictions on PRC.<sup>71</sup>

However, the PRC did not respond directly to Washington's appeasing gesture. As Nixon and Kissinger expected, PRC was still cautious about its relationship with the US. Yet based on Zhou Enlai's talks with Kim Il-sung during his visit to Pyongyang in April 1970, we can assume that Nixon's approach was not meaningless to Beijing. The most important aim of Zhou's visit to North Korea was to mend relations with Asian neighbours in order to prevent the excessive rise of Soviet influence. During his meeting with North Korean elites, Zhou made a critical remark on the Taiwanese Clause approved at the meeting between Nixon-Sato on Okinawa Reversion.<sup>72</sup> For this, as South Korean sources described, Zhou did not make any exceptional comment on the US. On the other hand, he aggressively expressed condemnation for the Japanese regime. He accused Japan of insulting the "one PRC" policy of the Chinese people.<sup>73</sup>

Regarding Zhou's visit to Pyongyang, South Korea worried about Nixon's new conciliatory policy toward the PRC because of Chinese hostility toward the US allies in East Asia, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. According to ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs analysis of this DPRK-PRC meeting, the three US allies in East Asia perceived this Chinese aggressive attitude toward them as the most serious threat ever.<sup>74</sup> Without American commitment for their security, PRC could break down the balance of power in the region. This international challenge further compelled Park to maintain his hard-line opposition to the pullout of US forces from South Korea. Yet despite his efforts, Washington did not change its plan.

In 1971 the US government decided on the timing of the troop reduction. Park eventually decided to ask for unreasonable amounts of US military aid for ROK forces in order

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<sup>70</sup> His regime was afraid of that its conciliatory movement towards one or both of them heightens the tension: on 15 May, during the Senior Review Group Meeting, the staff of White house discussed the Sino-Soviet difficulties. Kissinger noted that it is possible that the Soviets and Chinese each think the United States is playing with the other. It is not clear to him that Washington achieve better relations with the Moscow necessarily because of a hard policy toward Beijing and vice versa. See Minutes of the Senior Review Group Meeting, Washington, May 15, 1969, 2:10–3:55 pm. SRG Minutes, Originals, 1969, National Archives, Box H-111, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>71</sup> "National Security Decision Memorandum 17," Washington, June 26, 1969. NSDM Files, NSDM 17, Box H-210, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>72</sup> The Taiwanese Clause was that Japan shall allow US to use its base in Japan for defence of Taiwan. See "Joint Communiqué between President Richard Nixon and Prime Minister Eisaku Sato," United States Embassy Transcript, 21 Nov. 1969, sec. 4; U.S., State, Department of State Bulletin, 15 Dec. 1969. For Zhou's speech in Pyongyang, see "Chinese Premier, Zhou Enlai's visit to North Korea in April 1970," 1970, Class Number 3598. 725.32, CP, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

to delay or discourage the reduction of US forces in South Korea.<sup>75</sup> When Park met with Ambassador Porter and General John Michaelis, the US commander in Korea in early August 1970, he reminded them of his request for reconsideration of the withdrawal decision and stated that he would not negotiate the reduction of US forces without the commitment of a 'satisfactory level of compensation' for the modernization of South Korean forces.<sup>76</sup> Negotiations with Park stalled at this point because the assistance Park had requested was beyond the authority of Porter and Michaelis to grant. However, the US government decided to accept Park's request if he agreed to the withdrawal of US troops. On 24<sup>th</sup> August Washington dispatched Vice President Spiro Agnew to Seoul on official 'authority' to discuss the program and the amount of aid with Park.<sup>77</sup>

Because of Nixon's determined attitude for US troop reduction, Park already expected that he could not delay or cancel the plan without significant change in the Korean Peninsula. The foundation for Park's anticommunist policy was destabilised by Nixon's plan for the reduction of US forces in ROK. In this situation, Park needed to re-emphasise the tension in the Korean Peninsula.<sup>78</sup> His announcement on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1970 reflects his calculation. In his statement, he demanded that the DPRK should abandon its present strategy for unification under the banner of Communism through violent revolution. In addition, he stated that if the North accepted his request, he would suggest a dramatic solution for the elimination of the artificial barrier separating the two Korean states.<sup>79</sup> Yet he also expressed his aggressive idea about North Korea: he stated that he wanted to ask Kim Ilsung to participate in good faith in creative competition to decide which one is better for its people, democracy or despotic communism.<sup>80</sup>

As Ma Sangyoon has argued, his announcement was aimed at Washington and the South Korean public rather than Pyongyang.<sup>81</sup> First and foremost, his announcement was made before the Park-Agnew meeting.<sup>82</sup> He tried to prevent Nixon's plan by emphasising the North

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<sup>75</sup> Shin Jongdae, *op. cit.*, 11.

<sup>76</sup> Telegram From the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, Seoul, August 4, 1970, 0450Z, Korea, Vol. III, 6/70–Dec 70, Far East, Country Files, Box 542, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>77</sup> Backchannel Telegram From the Ambassador to Korea (Porter) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Seoul, August 25, 1970, 0910Z. Republic of Korea, August 1970. Vice President's Briefing Book, Subject Files, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, Box 406, National Archives.

<sup>78</sup> Ma Sangyoon, *op. cit.*, 185.

<sup>79</sup> *ChosunIlbo*, (15<sup>th</sup> August, 1970). Referred also from Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol 10, 45.

<sup>80</sup> *ChosunIlbo*, (15<sup>th</sup> August, 1970). One interesting point here is that he did not use the term, Capitalism as an antonym of Communism. Rather, he used 'democracy' in order to criticising North Korea. This is very interesting point. Some South Korean does not distinguish Capitalism from democracy probably because of anti-communist education.

<sup>81</sup> Ma Sangyoon, *op. cit.*, 185.

<sup>82</sup> The meeting between them was held on 24- 26<sup>th</sup> August.



Korean threat.<sup>83</sup> And if Washington concluded the negotiation over US troop reduction in the end of August, it seriously damages Park's popularity as well as his policy. His military background benefited his long-term rule because ROK citizens wanted a strong and charismatic leader who could protect them from the North Korean regime. Park had successfully projected this image that contributed to his political career as effectively as his strong performance in terms of economic development. The South Korean president needed to show his initiative in the inter-Korean competition and to prevent political upheaval after Agnew concluded the withdrawal scheme.<sup>84</sup> Park might have tried to hide the chaotic situation in ROK politics behind its Communist policy including his offensive offer to Pyongyang. He did not make any comments on the US withdrawal from South Korea or other damaging news about ROK security. The South Korean president just boasted that his country was safe.

Moreover, the president drew a clear line on his Northern policy. The ROK president wanted to remind the population of the 'reality' of Korean affairs. In not so few words he stated in a public address "We, South Koreans, love peace and want to reduce the tension on the Korean Peninsula, but the North Korean puppets share the same goal."<sup>85</sup> He stated his suggestion was valid only under the precondition that North Korea stopped its provocative actions. The problem was that Pyongyang had already 'stopped' its military operation in order to promote the American withdrawal from South Korea.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, the ROK government did not take any significant action to promote the inter-Korean exchanges after Park's statement. The South Korean leader still expected that the hostilities between the two Koreas would continue unabated and did nothing for promote inter-Korean exchanges in practice.<sup>87</sup>

For the Park regime, the meeting with Agnew presented a final chance to delay or cancel the plan for pullout even though it was expected that the US would conclude the negotiations for withdrawal in this meeting. In his second meeting with US vice president, Park said that he had no objection to a pullout of 20,000 troops out of the total of 63,000 soldiers. This was provided that the ROK military equipment was modernized, its national defence capability strengthened, and that there would be no further reductions of the remaining US forces until the modernization programme was complete.<sup>88</sup> Agnew rejected Park's proposal,

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<sup>83</sup> Ma Sangyoon, *op. cit.*, 185.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> *ChosunIlbo*, (15<sup>th</sup> August, 1970). Referred also from Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, 45.

<sup>86</sup> Yang Homin, *Nambuk Daehwa ui Wonjom Gwa Wonhyong [The Origins and Patterns of North-South Dialogue]*. (Seoul: Soхва, 1996), 250.

<sup>87</sup> But thanks to the unclear nature of his draft of new Northern policy, he was able to propose the first inter-Korean talks in the next year without damaging his anticommunist image, too.

<sup>88</sup> "Agnew, Spiro T. US vice president' visiting to South Korea, 1970. 8 24-26," Vol. 1(basic document), 1970, Class Number: 724. 12 US 1970, Diplomatic Archives, Republic of Korea.

reiterating the American position that, “The US will implement the plan as scheduled. Yet there will be no additional reduction of US forces in South Korea unless a serious problem occurs and the US will not additionally reduce the US army presence in South Korea until long after the 1971 election at least.”<sup>89</sup> However, he was well aware that the aggressive ROK leader would not accept Nixon’s proposal unless both sides settled on an appropriate measure of compensation. Through three sessions of negotiation, the two countries agreed to continue discussion on (a) the modernization of South Korean forces, (b) long-term military support, and (c) a US guarantee that it would not remove more than twenty thousand US soldiers from South Korea.<sup>90</sup>

Almost immediately after Agnew’s visit, the Park administration received clear signals that the United States would not keep its promises. According to Kim Jeongryeom, Park’s Chief Presidential Secretary, only days after the talks Agnew revoked his promise to the Koreans at a press conference in Taiwan, stating: “When the modernization of South Korean forces is completed, perhaps within five years, the US army in the ROK will completely withdraw from South Korea.”<sup>91</sup> His comment, that completely contradicted his pledge during the talks, perplexed the ROK.<sup>92</sup> After receiving the report about Agnew’s comments, Park reportedly remained silent for a while before saying, “The self-reliance of national defence is the only way for our survival. We must quickly get out of the situation in which we fluctuate between hopes and fears of US policy...”<sup>93</sup> Clearly, the Nixon Doctrine continued to undermine Park’s anticommunist policy.

In this situation, South Korean opposition groups pressured the ROK government for its anticommunist policy. Unlike Park, Kim Daejung directly supported Nixon’s idea and advocated the reconciliation with Pyongyang without any preconditions. Kim was eventually nominated as presidential candidate for *New Democracy Party* in September 1970 and immediately launched his election campaign. During his nation-wide tour, he promised voters a major shift in the country’s Northern and foreign policies. Much to the dismay of the Park administration, Kim’s campaign was met with great enthusiasm on the part of the electorate. The *DRP* recorded, “Kim allured many citizens to his side and provoked the controversy over the national security of Korea. The party in power convened emergency meetings in order to establish countermeasures regarding Kim Daejung’s campaign.”<sup>94</sup> During a press interview on 16<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> “Agnew, Spiro T. US vice president’ visiting to South Korea, 1970. 8 24-26,” Vol. 1(basic document), 1970, Class Number: 724. 12 US 1970, Diplomatic Archives, Republic of Korea.

<sup>91</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol. 10. 109.

<sup>92</sup> Shin Jongdae, *op. cit.*, 13.

<sup>93</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 109.

<sup>94</sup> Kim Daejung was also known as DJ, the initials of his first name. The Democratic Republic Party, *op. cit.*, 700.

October 1970, Kim promised the abolition of the Homeland Reserve Forces Law established in 1968. This was the imposition of a collective security system on the Korean Peninsula supported by four great powers including the United States, Japan, the USSR, and PRC (so called “four-power pact”). He also promised the promotion of inter-Korean exchanges. All these campaign pledges essentially rejected the basic idea on which the Park regime had built its power. This being a confrontational policy stance towards the DPRK combined with strict anticommunist policy.<sup>95</sup>

Kim’s promises touched Park’s sore spots. First of all, the Reserve Forces, established for anti-guerrilla operations in 1968, consisted of young men who had already finished three years of their military service. This system was especially unpopular to young people since they were mobilised often and without pay.<sup>96</sup> Secondly, despite Park’s efforts to improve national security, the tension between the two Korean states had not been alleviated. In fact, the establishment of the Reserve Forces and the military modernization did nothing to stop the DPRK’s military provocations. Kim argued that the national security of South Korea could not be accomplished by means of anticommunist policy or military reinforcements. He believed the situation required a series of nonaggression treaties with communist countries and the promotion of exchanges with the DPRK instead. Thanks to the participation of the four major powers and improved relations with the communist North, Kim insisted, the two Koreas would be reunified peacefully some day.<sup>97</sup> It stands beyond a doubt that he was able to build political ties with Nixon through his campaign in 1970. Nixon started to take an interest in Kim in late 1970 and invited his potential and ‘desirable’ partner to Washington in early 1971.

Facing Kim’s determined challenge, Park was put on the defensive. Unfortunately for Park his realistic ideas were not welcomed by a South Korean population who, in 1970, yearned for détente and was disappointed with Park’s authoritarian rule. Due to the deep scars of the Korean War had inflicted, Park did not pay much attention to the prospect of a reunification of Korea in the 1960s. He focused on reconstruction of economy and the advancement of national security instead. The problem was that this realistic approach did not promise anything further once those goals are attained. Park was a little indifferent toward the nationalistic ideas of the Korean people. In contrast to his competitor, Kim Daejung, Park never demonstrated a roadmap for reunification until 1970.<sup>98</sup> He was firmly committed to defending his country against the

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<sup>95</sup> Kim Daejung, *op. cit.*, 117- 120.

<sup>96</sup> Kim Daejung, *op. cit.*, 120.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. The Northern policy he promised on the day was subtitled “From closed war-oriented policy to open peace-oriented policy.”

<sup>98</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 44- 45.

communists and publicly declared his hostility toward Pyongyang. His counterpart in North Korea acted in the same way toward the capitalists and Seoul. Since the separation of Korea became more and more significant, inter-Korean military or political conflicts was unavoidable. However, as the international environment changed, the balance of power between South and North Korea started to shift. The war in Vietnam dealt a severe blow to American politics, economy, and even its commitment to the ROK.<sup>99</sup> Park's anticommunist policy did not succeed in shoring up national security because Washington refused to intervene on behalf of Seoul.

Kim Daejung was well aware of this Achilles' heel. Park's inefficient anticommunist policy and dictatorship would be where Kim focused his attack. The young and determined challenger denounced Park for his ineffective policies and accused him of creating implementing them with the sole purpose of ensuring his grip on power.<sup>100</sup> Following Park's own logic, Kim argued that the South Korean leader was not willing to reduce the hostility between Seoul and Pyongyang and did so to maintain his dictatorship.<sup>101</sup> The contender aroused suspicion on the president and his motives. This question increasingly undermined Park's public credibility.

In short, Nixon's new Asian policy deeply undermined Park's long-term efforts for national security and his aggressive policy towards the North. The reduction of US troops in the ROK resulted in a chaotic period of ROK politics in which the leaders had to consider many possible alternatives for ROK national security. The Sino-Soviet conflict also elevated the level of insecurity in the ROK since the US was trying to take advantage of the situation by improving its relationship with the PRC. Kim Daejung's liberal ideas supported American policies and hence further pushed Park to change his policy. Against this backdrop, Park decided to revise his policy in order to better respond to the various domestic and international challenges targeting his regime.

The international and domestic pressure on his policy encouraged him to develop a preliminary reunification policy. In August 1970, Park suggested talks to Kim Ilsung on inter-Korean exchange in a rather hostile and unclear manner. The rationale behind this was simple. Park was actually reluctant to talk with Pyongyang but tried to conceal his difficulties in managing ROK-US relations and anticommunist policy with this surprising request. Thanks to its ambiguous nature, the draft provided Park with considerable flexibility for future policy. Even if he had to introduce liberal policies toward the DPRK, he could have justified this by saying

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<sup>99</sup> Shin Wookhee, "Giheo'eseo Gyochk Sangtae'ro [From Opportunity to Stalemate]." Korea politics and diplomatic history collection vol. 26 2<sup>nd</sup> issue (2005): 270.

<sup>100</sup> Kim Daejung, *op. cit.*, 121.

<sup>101</sup> Park Chunghee, *op. cit.*, 247. Park Chunghee said that South Korea needed a charismatic leader who could save his own nation from evil communists. Furthermore, if necessary, the leader must be able to limit the freedom of his people for the sake of national interest.

that his regime was willing to change its attitude toward the DPRK for the better future of all Korean people. Furthermore, he could have also returned to the confrontational policy at any time claiming he would talk with the DPRK only if it stopped all military action against the South. Through this vague terminology, the Park regime reduced the impact of possible inter-Korean negotiations.

Despite Park's equivocal rhetoric, it is worth noting that he officially proposed a reunification plan. Of course this did not imply that he actually intended to reunify the Korean Peninsula through warm-hearted talks with Kim Il-sung. He did not want his new idea to become a new concrete policy. However, because of pressure from Washington and opposition groups, which limited his ability to mobilise ROK and US forces, Park had to consider peace propaganda rather than direct military conflict. In this context, he started to consider changing the mode of competition between the two Koreas from sabre rattling to economic and diplomatic power in which Park had a strong confidence.<sup>102</sup> Park finally made his decision on the new strategy in 1971. Two important events took place in that year, the presidential election (April) and the inter-Korean dialogue (August), each demonstrated how and why the Park regime made fundamental changes in its policy toward the DPRK.

### (3) The Presidential Election and First Inter-Korean Talks in 1971

Park could not be sure of his victory in the 1971 presidential elections due to American pressure. Because of Park's resistance to Nixon's policy Washington clearly wanted a new and cooperative partner to run the ROK rather than the stubborn and aggressive incumbent. The White House had already found its preferred partner, Kim Dae-jung, who had made himself a name for his liberal view on North Korea and his flexible foreign policy perspectives. Since the start of Kim's presidential campaign in September 1970, Nixon was paying close attention to the performance of this young and charismatic candidate. Despite the CIA's pessimistic report of Kim's election prospects, Nixon invited him to Washington to encourage him.<sup>103</sup> Park was

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<sup>102</sup> The former director of Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), Kang Induk testified that Park often emphasized his confidence in economic competition with Kim Il-sung because the economy of South has surpassed that of North since 1969, and hence. Interview with Kang Induk, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009, Institute of Far Eastern Studies.

<sup>103</sup> Kim was elected as a ROK president in 1997 despite a series of political persecution of military government on him. In 1971, Nixon requested a study of Kim to CIA. In response, CIA reported, "He is an attractive, active, forty-five year old politician, a Roman Catholic, and does not speak English. He is described by U.S. officials who have dealt with him as more forthcoming and direct than most Korean politicians, a proven vote getter with a persuasive manner and an eloquent, oratorical style. Kim likes to be called the "Kennedy of Korea." Despite the widespread favourable reaction to Kim's opening campaign speeches, his prospects for victory next May appear at this time to be marginal at best. In comparison to President Park's Democratic- Republican Party, the mostly conservative New

extremely nervous about this invitation. Yet he did not publicly reveal his anxiety since he was reluctant to officially recognise Kim Daejung as his strongest opponent fearing that this would prove beneficial to Kim's campaign. Nevertheless, US source clearly indicate Park's fear of Nixon's attitude. On 27<sup>th</sup> January 1971, the ROK Prime Minister, Baek Doojin, visited the US embassy and complained about Kim's visit to the US. The US ambassador reported,

Luncheon with Prime Minister today was almost entirely taken up by his recital of ROK government fears that Kim Daejung will see important people in the United States. He said that there are many rumours in Seoul that the Americans were paying for Kim Daejung's trip and were pledging to support him. He reached peak of this remarkable statement by urging me to issue a public statement to effect that the U.S. is absolutely neutral in matter of ROK elections "despite rumours that we are supporting opposition."

We would make appropriate appointments for Mr. Kim as we do for other ROK Assemblymen who visit U.S." He said, "We should guarantee that Kim did not see "important people," that Kim is only ordinary Assemblyman. I inquired why ROK government feels so intensely worried about Kim's trip. Was it because govt. feared that Kim would receive great publicity here? Only time Baek Doojin laughed during interview was at that point. He said "That will never happen."<sup>104</sup>

This clearly demonstrates how nervous Park was about Nixon's endorsement of Kim. Specifically, Kim's liberal views concerning future relations with North Korea and communist countries were in line with the Nixon Doctrine. In spite of Park's complaints, Kim already left for the US on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1971. Even though Nixon did not meet Kim personally (The ROK presidential candidate later remarked that it was "Nixon's political consideration" for him since Park would be angry if Nixon himself has a meeting with Kim).<sup>105</sup> Instead, he met the senior government officials and congressional leaders, such as Marshall Green, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs; Winthrop G. Brown, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs; William P. Rogers, Secretary of State as well as former

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Democrats are poorly organized and short of money. Moreover, Kim cannot count on even the unswerving support of all of his own party." See Memorandum From John H. Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Washington, December 23, 1970, Korea, Vol. III, Far East, 6/70-Dec 70, Country Files, Box 542, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>104</sup> Telegram From the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, Seoul, January 27, 1971, 0927Z, POL 7 KOR S, Central Files 1970-73, RG 59, National Archives.

<sup>105</sup> Kim Daejung, *op. cit.*, 134.

vice president Hubert Humphrey, and Senator Edward Kennedy. In all these talks, Kim discussed the present state of Korean politics and the upcoming elections.<sup>106</sup> According to American sources, judging from the response of the Park regime, and based on Kim's memoirs, it appears clear that Nixon favoured Kim to be his new partner in Korea. As officials in Washington were pessimistic of Kim's chances, Nixon was not prepared to meet Kim or support him publicly since this would have alienated Park who was likely to stay in office.<sup>107</sup>

Despite American support for Kim, Park was not isolated. Tokyo wanted the present ROK president to keep his post. This was considered to be in its best national interest. As indicated, Japan shared the sense of insecurity after Nixon had declared his doctrine. Consequently the Japanese government sided with Park due to their common interests. It decided to keep US forces in Okinawa after its reversion to Japan. Moreover, the Sato government supported Park's third term of presidency. Kawajima Shojiro, vice head of the *Liberal Democratic Party*, the party in power at the time, announced that the long-term tenure of the Park regime was important for stable politics in the ROK.<sup>108</sup> Tokyo also provided an enormous amount of economic aid to the Park regime, including loans for the Pohang steel mill project. Japan provided a loan of 123 million US dollars to South Korea for construction and operation of this large scale industrial project. Thanks to the project, ROK became one of the world's leading steel suppliers.<sup>109</sup> As Victor Cha has argued, through political and economic support, Japan had become an essential partner of the Park administration and had thus made a significant contribution to Park's victory in the 1971 presidential election.<sup>110</sup>

However, the political and economic cooperation was not a 'free lunch'. The Sato regime expected Park to make a contribution for Japanese security. In contrast to Washington, Tokyo did not want the liberal Kim Daejung to become its new partner. Kim Jeongryeom, the Chief Presidential Secretary, even said that it [the acquisition of Japanese aid for the Pohang steel mill and other projects] was the basis of our fast-growing economy at that time.<sup>111</sup> His words summarized the impact of Japanese support in 1971 quite well. For Kim Daejung, the close relationship of Park and Sato was a major concern during his campaign. He recalled:

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<sup>106</sup> Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Korea, Washington, February 3, 1971, 0125Z, POL 7KOR S, Central Files 1970-73, RG 59, National Archives.

<sup>107</sup> Memorandum From John H. Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Washington, December 23, 1970, Korea, Vol. III, 6/70-Dec 70, Far East, Country Files, Box 542, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>108</sup> *Japan Times*, 15 Oct 1969.

<sup>109</sup> Kim Hosup, *Policy-making of Japanese Official Development Assistance to the Republic of Korea, 1965-83*, PhD dissertation, the University of Michigan, 1986. 111- 51.

<sup>110</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 59- 99.

<sup>111</sup> Kim Jeongryeom, *Oh, Park Chunghee* (Seoul: Chung-ang M&B, 1997), 202.

Japan kept supporting Park. [...] Although many countries refused to provide aid for the project of Pohang steel mill because the project appeared not to be beneficial in an economic sense, Japan supported it not for economic but for political considerations. The project made our people believe that ROK is becoming one of the developed countries in the world. [Japan] presented one million votes to Park through this project.<sup>112</sup>

In this sense, the South Korean presidential election of 1971 was not only a big event for South Korea, but also an important international issue for which the US and Japan both showed great concern. However, there was a big difference between Washington and Tokyo. Park was more likely to be elected than Kim, Washington was not able to support Kim publicly at the expense of its relationship with Park. According to CIA reports to Nixon, despite the widespread favourable reaction to Kim's opening campaign speeches, his prospects for victory in April 1971 appeared "marginal at best."<sup>113</sup> The reason is clear, Kim's party, the NDP, was poorly organized due to uneasy coalition arrangements between liberals and conservatives. Moreover, the party was short of funds. Park's economic development policies during his rule had been successful. Moreover, he was able to mobilise intelligent agents and bureaucrats to launch a dirty election campaign.<sup>114</sup> For such reasons, Washington was not able to directly support Kim. In contrast to the US, Japan was in confidence with Park's chances at the ROK presidency and hence able to provide political supports to him without any hesitation. The election outcome did not come as a surprise to most observers. Park was re-elected as president with 6.3 million votes. The difference of votes between Park and Kim was about 0.1 millions. In some sense, Japan won the game against Washington. Yet it is important to note that Park did not think he had overwhelmed Kim but was nervous because of Nixon's hostility towards him. In fact, he was angry with the result.<sup>115</sup>

In contrast to Kim Daejung, my people treated me terribly. Clearly, democracy has a weakness. In the case of [South] Korea, it is possible that some strange guy can be

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<sup>112</sup> Kim Daejung, *op. cit.*, 130.

<sup>113</sup> Memorandum From John H. Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs, Washington, December 23, 1970, Korea, Vol. III, 6/70–Dec 70, Far East, Country Files, Box 542, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>114</sup> Dirty campaign consists of physical violence by political thugs, KCIA blackmail to supporters of other candidate, groundless criticism and etc. "Intelligence Note Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence And Research," Washington, December 28, 1970, POL 15–1 KOR S, Central Files 1970–73, RG 59, National Archives.

<sup>115</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 116–117. The number of votes for Kim was about 5.4 millions.



elected if there is some political upheaval. If so, I am wondering whether this nation can consistently maintain a strong liberal democracy. I am seriously worried about the upcoming election results. As you know, we spent a lot of money! Our party [DRP] sent such a great amount of money to each district. But why is the difference just like this!?'<sup>116</sup>

For this episode, Kim Jongpil, one of Park's closest subordinates, recalled,<sup>117</sup>

The reason why the difference [between Park and Kim] was only 0.95 million is that the citizens doubted Park's intention with the constitutional amendment and were worried that Park would do something [i.e. run for fourth term] if they gave many votes to Park.<sup>118</sup>

Despite his defeat in the election, Kim Daejung taught Park an important lesson during and after the election campaign.<sup>119</sup> In international political terms, the 1971 election re-confirmed the American influence on ROK politics. Park realized that Nixon's preference for Kim had shifted many votes away from him to his rival. This Nixon-Kim alliance could be potential threat to his next term. No doubt, US troops in Korea and American support in general were still essential for the ROK both in security and economic terms. In short, Park had to re-consider his relations with Nixon and accept Nixon's policy agenda in order to keep the remaining US troops on Korean soil and continue to receive American aid. Clearly, Tokyo's support for Park Chunghee during his presidential campaign was decisive for his victory. However, Park now had to make a realistic decision for his and the ROK's future. Sato could not provide any military forces to him the way Nixon did. Furthermore, since Nixon did not want Park to win the election, he would try to undermine Park's political foundation in order to have a new and more cooperative partner. Considering their relationship, the US government would quickly commence the total withdrawal of US troops from Korea and cut aid to the Park

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> **Kim Jong-pil** (born January 7, 1926) is a South Korean politician. He founded the Korean Central Intelligence Agency and served as Prime Minister from 1971–1975 and from 1998–2000. Kim had served as a henchman of Park since Park's coup in 1961. In addition, Kim was the second-in-command in Republic Party next to Park as well as husband of Park's niece. For detail of his profile, please refer following website, Organization of ROK Constitution and Politics. [http://www.rokps.or.kr/profile\\_result\\_ok.asp?num=911](http://www.rokps.or.kr/profile_result_ok.asp?num=911).

<sup>118</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 117.

<sup>119</sup> The gap between Park and Kim was about 0.95 million votes. Compared to previous election where the difference between Park and Yun Bosun was about 1.1 million votes, the result was not too different. Yet, Kim and New Democrats criticized Park that he mobilised KCIA and bureaucrats for his dirty campaign. If this is the case, the difference could be narrower, or Park was defeated in fact. See *DongaIlbo*, 29 April 1971.

government.

Regarding the issue of the withdrawal of US troops, the détente mood between Washington and Beijing heightened the level of the ROK's insecurity. On 15<sup>th</sup> July 1971, Nixon announced his plan to visit PRC in February 1972. Park was very nervous about the upcoming talks between the US and PRC and worried whether or not PRC would insist on the complete pullout of US forces from Korea.<sup>120</sup> In his graduation ceremony message at the National Defence Graduate School, the ROK president remarked that the situation of Korea's neighbours seems to be "peaceful at first glance" but we must be well aware that "there is still tension in the Korean peninsula."<sup>121</sup> Yet Park had to accept the new realities and even Sato, his Japanese counterpart, was unsettled by Nixon's announcement. According to William P. Rogers, US Secretary of State, the Japanese prime minister revealed his concern about Sino-US talks in 1972 through his ambassador to Washington. He would have considered that the ROK-Japan alliance could not stand up to PRC.<sup>122</sup> Like Tokyo, Seoul was unable to ignore the reconciliation between Washington and Beijing which supported Pyongyang. It would have been dangerous if Nixon abandoned the ROK for the sake of a harmonious relationship with the PRC. Beyond doubt, the US influence on Korea was still enormous and hence Park had to change his attitude toward Nixon. In order to keep US forces in the ROK and win Nixon's support for his regime, Park announced an important decision which demonstrated the changes in his Northern and foreign policy only a few months after the election.

After Nixon announced his visit to the PRC, Park proposed a conference between the two Korean states through the Korean National Red Cross on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1971. The Park regime's peaceful approach toward the DPRK was underpinned by a mood of détente encouraged by the US and PRC's rapprochement. Kim Daejung was furious with Park for his two faced behaviour. During the campaign period, Park had condemned Kim as pro-communist.<sup>123</sup> Nonetheless, the president, who presented himself as the model anti-communist, was apparently simply plagiarizing Kim's idea. Park had learned from Kim how a peaceful stance can ensure good relations with Nixon, a lesson he applied after the election.

Considering his previous hard-line policy, Park's announcement in August 1971 was astonishing. But considering his draft for a new Northern policy, announced on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1970,

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<sup>120</sup> Park Chunghee, *The collections of President Park's speech draft*, 8<sup>th</sup> volume, 380-381.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Memorandum from the Secretary of State to President, July 22 1971, Japan (Sato Corr) 1969- July 8 1972, Presidential Correspondence 1969- 1974, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>123</sup> Kim Daejung, *op. cit.*, 130 Kim Daejung argued that South Korea needs to talk with North Korea and other Communist countries in order to reduce tension in Korean Peninsula. Park Chunghee criticised this idea that this liberal idea will break down ROK's national security. But, after he was re-elected, Park adopted Kim Daejung's idea.

this was neither impossible nor unexpected. Park's remarks about possible changes in his policy toward the DPRK enabled the regime to respond to a fast-changing international environment without hurting the conservative support. At this point, it is hard to claim that Park just copied the essence of Kim's idea. The real aim of the new policy was not the peaceful reunification of Korea, at least in the beginning. By yielding, Park tried to prevent the total withdrawal of US forces and discourage Nixon from looking for a new partner in South Korea. He supported Nixon's East Asian policy by engaging in talks with the DPRK.

However the South Korean president did not stop criticising Kim Il-sung regime. Furthermore, his government had a negative opinion about the DPRK's 1970 peace strategy. According to reports from the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the DPRK had reframed from acts of serious provocation, such as seen in 1968 and 1969, in order to manipulate Nixon's decision making. The ROK elites considered that Kim Il-sung hoped to relieve Nixon's anxiety and encourage him to push for the total retreat of US forces from the ROK.<sup>124</sup> In a nutshell, the South Korean leadership was still cautious in its new approach to North Korea. It was concerned that Pyongyang would suddenly attack the South once Seoul and Washington dismissed the possibility of another war in Korea.

It was Park who officially proposed inter-Korean talks to Kim. However, this does not mean that the ROK took the initiative for improving the inter-Korean relationship as Park had proudly claimed. Like Seoul, Pyongyang was also supposed to adapt itself to the new international political realities established by Washington and Beijing. For the Chinese, the Kim Il-sung's regime was an important client that could play a decisive role in its conflict with Moscow. PRC often discussed sensitive political issues with the DPRK and did not ignore North Korean interests. In short, the impact of Sino-US rapprochement was less serious for the DPRK than for the ROK. PRC improved its relationship with the US without antagonizing the DPRK. According to Don Oberdorfer, Kim Il-sung was in Beijing when Henry Kissinger visited PRC in July 1971. The Chinese government reported every detail of the Zhou-Kissinger meeting to its North Korean guest.<sup>125</sup> Moreover, Beijing appreciated Kim Il-sung's consideration over its compromise with the US and provided considerable military aid to Pyongyang.<sup>126</sup> In this sense, Kim Il-sung was willing to support PRC. Even before Kissinger's secret visit to PRC, Pyongyang

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<sup>124</sup> "North Korea's reunification policy in 1971," 1971, Class Number 4289. 726.22, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea. Lee Jongseok argued that North Korea stopped its military provocation because of its failure in raid on Blue House and other guerrilla mission in 1968 and 69. See Lee Jongseok, *Bundan Sidae'eni Tongilbag [Study on Reunification Policy in the Divided Era]*, (Seoul: Hanwul, 1998), 81- 82.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> For PRC military supply, see *USFK Hist. 1974*, secret (declassified 1994). See also Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, (Washington: Basic Books, 2002), 12- 13.

continuously requested 'direct talks' with Seoul.<sup>127</sup> During his speech for honouring Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the Cambodian head of state on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1971, Kim announced that he would like to engage in talks with the ROK.<sup>128</sup> Kim Ilsung expected more Chinese aid as a result of Sino-US talks, while Park was struggling to keep American support.<sup>129</sup>

Park did not overlook this North Korean movement and Sino-US reconciliation. As the détente mood in East Asia encouraged Washington to withdraw its forces from South, the inter-Korean talks may have provided decisive justification for the withdrawal. The ROK government considered that North Korea had more powerful forces than the south, and the US forces stationed in the ROK compensated for this imbalance between the two Koreas.<sup>130</sup> Therefore, the DPRK was the more dominant part in the bilateral contest and could have been far stronger than the ROK if the US pulled out of South Korea. For this reason, the South responded with caution to DPRK's peaceful approach.<sup>131</sup>

The first inter-Korean dialogue did not involve the southern and northern Korean governments but took place between the Red Cross organizations of Southern and northern Korea. This was Park's trick to reduce the risk of a situation that may encourage the withdrawal of US forces. Park did not propose direct talks between the two regimes in order to block any sensitive political discussion. The Red Cross was selected as representative for this reason. Through the Red Cross, Park could show his willingness to accommodate the détente in the region without engaging in serious political deals with Pyongyang. Clearly, the ROK president was not prepared for talks with the DRPK premier. The South Korean 'Red Cross delegate' was Jung Hong Jin, who was in reality the deputy director of the international affairs bureau of the South Korean Central Intelligence Agency. DPRK followed the same approach. Kim Duk Hyun, the North Korean 'Red Cross delegate' was actually a senior official of the Workers Party Organization and Guidance Department, the DPRK's control mechanism.<sup>132</sup> On 20<sup>th</sup> August, the two 'Red Cross' representatives met in Panmunjeom, which lay at the centre of the Joint Security Area. As both sides had totally different motives for the meeting, the historical talks did not make any progress for developing the relations between the two brothers.

From the get go of this meeting between the two Koreas, ROK immediately backed the continued presence of American forces in South Korea. It is noteworthy that the ROK had

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<sup>127</sup> "North Korea's reunification policy in 1971," Class Number 4289. 726.22, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 12- 13.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with Kang Induk.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 14.

dispatched Hahm Pyongchoon, Special Assistant to the President for Political Affairs, to Washington in order to highlight the need for a continued US military presence in ROK during inter-Korean Red Cross talks. One interesting point is that Hahm did not exaggerate the threat from PRC toward the ROK as other South Korean elites had done before. Rather, he stated that PRC would not want the US to withdraw its forces from the ROK due to a potential threat from Japan.<sup>133</sup> His rhetoric was definitely lacking any sense of logic since there was absolutely no likelihood of Japanese armed aggression against PRC at that time. In addition, even Zhou Enlai, premier of PRC, requested Henry Kissinger to withdraw the American forces from Korea during their initial meeting in July.<sup>134</sup> Yet Washington clearly understood what the ROK official meant. Despite his euphemism, Hahm's idea was clear, "Do not withdraw your forces from our land!" In addition, Park continuously asked Nixon to keep the military support for South Korea through the US embassy in Seoul, too.<sup>135</sup> But the US did not make any change in its military plan in ROK.

Park finally changed his mind and opted for a more aggressive strategy. On 20<sup>th</sup> November, after nine rounds of fruitless meetings, the South Korean delegate suddenly proposed direct high-level talks with his Northern counterpart.<sup>136</sup> This radical approach marked a significant departure from ROK's cautious approach in the past and came as a surprise, making it difficult to assess its real intent. Park might have considered that the Red Cross meetings that continued for two months were not enough to persuade Nixon trust him. As the American documents indicated, Seoul was extremely sensitive to Nixon's visit to PRC. The South Korean leader was afraid of that PRC and the US would discuss American military support for ROK.<sup>137</sup> For this reason, Park aimed to impress Nixon before his visit to Beijing.

The White House had not made any changes to its Korean policy yet, it was pleased with South Korea's support for the Sino-US relations and encouraged Blue House to have more close contact with Pyongyang. In Nixon's letter to Park dated 29<sup>th</sup> November 1971, the US president praised Park's effort and promised that his talks with PRC would not affect ROK-US relations.<sup>138</sup> However, it was apparent that he was not entirely satisfied with the Red Cross Talks

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<sup>133</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, September 1, 1971, 9:30–11 a.m., Korea, Vol. IV, 1 Jan–31 Dec 1971, Far East, Country Files, Box 542, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>134</sup> Henry Kissinger, *op. cit.*, 751. See also Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 14.

<sup>135</sup> Telegram From the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, Seoul, November 3, 1971, 0728Z, Korea, Vol. IV, 1 Jan–31 Dec 1971, Far East, Country Files, Box 542, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>136</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 15.

<sup>137</sup> "Untitled [After dinner at my residence the vice minister of foreign affairs Yoon Sukhon...]", 1971.11.30, POL KOR S-US 9-27-71, Box 2429, RG 59.

<sup>138</sup> Letter From President Nixon to Korean President Park, Washington, November 29, 1971, Presidential Correspondence 1969–1974, Korea, President Park Chunghhee, 1971, Box 757, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential

which did not produce any political agreement between the two Koreas. He pushed Park to develop the talks further and have a more meaningful exchange with Kim Il-sung.<sup>139</sup> Interestingly, Park had already proposed inter-governmental talks as Nixon had hoped. It seemed that the ROK government did not actually change its policy until Nixon's letter was sent to Park. It is not hard to imagine a bitter smile on Park's face since he had anticipated Nixon's position.

Before entering the inter-governmental talks, the South Korean elites decided to tighten their control over South Korea. Park was well aware of the side effects of liberal strategy. The inter-Korean dialogue had originally been suggested by Kim Dae-jung and hence improved Kim's position in the next round of presidential elections. Moreover, Park's military background and his hostile attitude toward the North in the past made him look awkward in this period of détente. As Park had titled himself the 'only one who can match Kim Il-sung', ironically, the hostility between two Koreas was essential for his rule. Therefore, Park had to keep the South Korean public reminded of North Korea's real face before entering the inter-governmental talks.

#### (4) Peace and Tension

On 6<sup>th</sup> December 1971, Park declared the state of national emergency and started to emphasize the dangers of North Korean threats although there had not been any significant provocation from the North. Through a variety of ways, the Park regime scared the ROK public. For instance, movie theatres had to show footage of the training sessions of North Korean forces before the main movie. Park made a declaration that can be summarized as; strengthen security; each individual is called upon to fulfil his part in the security plan whether Homeland Reserve drills, military training or reserve training; the press should refrain from printing provocative or irresponsible articles; the people should be infused with a new appreciation of the security situation rather than be lulled into a feeling of peace-mindedness and security.<sup>140</sup>

South Koreans were perplexed by Park's sudden change in tone, since their government had just made a gesture of détente toward the North. As a result, they were quite sceptical of the seriousness of a potential conflict with the north. On the same day that Park proclaimed a national emergency situation, Kim Dae-jung was in Japan receiving treatment after being injured in a traffic accident.<sup>141</sup> He was surprised by the radical attitude of the ROK president but was

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Materials, National Archives.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> The Democratic Republic Party, *op. cit.*, 739.

<sup>141</sup> Kim argued that the traffic accident was not 'accident' since the truck that hit his car was registered by the member of party in power. For details, see Kim, Dae-jung, *op. cit.*, 166.

soon able to grasp his real intentions. Kim returned home immediately and tried to inform the public of what he saw as the Park regime's true motives.

North Korea does not attack the South. This [the declaration] is political propaganda for Park's dictatorship. At present, the North cannot initiate a war against the South and have no plan for it. It [the declaration] is totally opposite to the facts and is false.<sup>142</sup>

Kim tried to provide his idea through the South Korean press. However despite Kim's effort the press could not convey his idea to the public properly because the ROK government had prohibited any behaviour of agitation pursuant on Park's order.<sup>143</sup> There was no South Korean press organisation which dared to publicize his idea.

The Park regime worried about the impact of its recent step on its relationship with Washington. For this reason, four days before declaring the national state of emergency, the ROK government held talks with Philip C. Habib, who had succeeded William J. Porter as US ambassador to Seoul in 1971. Like his predecessor, Habib had a difficult time attempting to bridge the gap between Washington and Seoul because Park had already decided to commence his plan for national emergency. However, the Park regime might have considered that it was okay if it explains to Nixon its real intent behind this the radical decision. The one who took on this irksome task was the director of the KCIA, Lee Hurak. Habib was told that Park was planning to make a statement sometime during the first week of December in which he would declare an emergency situation. Lee, who expected Habib to disagree with this decision, added hastily that this would not be an emergency declaration in a legal sense as provided for in the constitution. He also said that it was intended to be an exhortative declaration to "awaken" the people and make them realize there were things that needed to be done to ensure the security of Korea. Park definitely exaggerated the security crisis without any substantial fact. Lee did not forget to add his positive opinion on the inter-Korean talks that were supposed to ease Nixon's concerns about Park's behaviour. In his report to the White House, Habib stated that the recently imposed emergency measures were meant to project a strong position vis-à-vis the North in anticipation of coming negotiations just as Lee and ROK government expected. However, Habib also emphasized that the current situation in Korea was not as serious as Park indicated.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Kim Daejung, *op. cit.*, 167.

<sup>143</sup> Kim Daejung, *op. cit.*, 167 – 168.

<sup>144</sup> Telegram From the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, Seoul, December 2, 1971, 0952Z, POL 15–1 KOR S, Central Files 1970–73, RG 59, National Archives.

Washington understood Park wanted to prevent the impact of a sudden change to his northern policy. The White House considered that the South Korean leader was trying to tighten his control over the ROK. It was because of the internal situation, where he saw stability threatened by a combination of factors including the problem of his presidential succession, the loss of cohesion as the nation's fear of North Korean hostility and hence diminishment of his strong anti-communist ideology, and the declining US support.<sup>145</sup> The US decided to warn Seoul anyway. Nixon conveyed his idea to Park in a letter. Washington confirmed that there was no danger of imminent conflict on the Korean Peninsula.

Another interesting point in the letter is that Nixon declined Park's invitation for summit talks in Korea on his way to PRC in February 1972.<sup>146</sup> The US president might not have wanted to let Park enter his historical mission and make another unnecessary request that could affect Sino-American bilateral affairs. Simply, Washington was not happy with Park's recent emphasis on anticommunism. Nonetheless, it did not show any strong antipathy toward the South Korean movement because Park promoted the inter-Korean talks on the other hand that did encourage the détente mood in the East Asia before Nixon's visit to Beijing in the next year.

Why did the Park regime pursue such two-faced strategies? The answer could be drawn from the impact of the Nixon Doctrine on the political foundation of Park regime. As we have discussed earlier, Kim Daejung gained American support thanks to his liberal perspectives toward North Korea and other communist countries. Even though he lost the 1971 election, Kim was supposed to run again in the next election. After all, Park had promised, during his 1971 campaign that he would not seek another term in office.<sup>147</sup> Yet the biggest problem was that there was no one in his party, the *Democratic Republic Party*, who stood a chance to beat Kim Daejung other than Park himself.<sup>148</sup> Accordingly, Park might have worried about the political retaliation of Kim Daejung who was likely to take supreme power at some point in the future.<sup>149</sup> In this situation, Park had to take a special measure in order to prove his value not just to Nixon but also to the South Korean public. Nevertheless, he did not think that the dialogue between

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<sup>145</sup> "Republic of Korea: Park Increases His Power to Counter "Emergency Situation," Intelligence Note Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, December 10, 1971, POL 15-1 KOR, Central Files 1970-73, RG 59, National Archives.

<sup>146</sup> Telegram From the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, Seoul, December 13, 1971, 1016Z, POL 15-1 KOR S, Central Files 1970-73, Central Files 1970-73, RG 59, National Archives.

<sup>147</sup> He kept his promise in fact since he did abolish the election in 1972.

<sup>148</sup> Park indicated that Kim is not friendly and hence is not suitable for his successor in May 1971. See Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 120- 121.

<sup>149</sup> Because Park was killed, he was not the one, retaliated by next regime. Yet it was common in Korean politics that the former president or high-ranking officials are punished by the following regime, e.g. Chun Duhwan and Roh Taewoo.



the two Koreas would result in the end of Korean War as Kim Daejung argued.<sup>150</sup>

For Park Chunghee, the inter-Korean talks were another mode of war. The direct talks were held in Pyongyang and Seoul, which implied that the North Korean delegate could compare the different levels of economic development in South and North Korea. According to Kang Induk, the former head of the KCIA who visited North Korea in 1972, Park believed that South Korea's economy had grown significantly since 1969 and was in far better shape than the North's. As such, South Koreans made a point of showing off Seoul's achievements to the North Korean delegates. Simply, the high level talks were not the platform of reconciliation between the two Koreas. But Park was concerned that the South Korean public regard the dialogue as the step towards reunification.<sup>151</sup>

The Nixon administration might not have considered Park's concerns seriously. Washington did nothing but comment negatively on Park's decision. This was probably because Nixon did not want to discourage Park who at least did what the US president wanted, namely promote the détente trend in the region. As a result, Nixon's lukewarm response to the declaration of national emergency let him know that the US would not punish him even if he made a further move. Nixon's carelessness made it possible for Park to establish his lifetime tenure in 1972.

In short, Park Chunghee was reluctant to change his foreign and Northern policy but was pushed to do so in this period. Domestic and international factors including a political challenge toward Park's undemocratic politics, American reluctance to intervene in Korean conflicts, the détente mood between Washington and Beijing, and the practical ties between South Korean oppositions and Washington increasingly deteriorated South Korea's commitment to anticommunism. As this asymmetrical alliance implicated, Washington reduced its level of protection for South Korea from its communist threat once it found the opportunity to freeze the Cold War. In the beginning of 1970s, the United States considered South Korean demand for its national security more than necessary becoming trapped in the Korean conflict.<sup>152</sup> Seoul continuously attempted to demonstrate its strategic importance to American in East Asian strategy but failed to maintain the same level of American support.

While in bilateral negotiation with Nixon, the Park regime also attempted to minimize the influence of new US policy with Japanese economic and political support who also felt the sense of insecurity because of changes to American policy. Clearly, the diplomatic ties between

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<sup>150</sup> Park Chunghee, *op. cit.*, 176- 177.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with Kang Induk, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009, Institute of Far Eastern Studies.

<sup>152</sup> James D. Morrow, "The United States and ROK alliance: An Asymmetric Alliance over Time", *The Korean Journal of Security Affairs*, 11-1 (June 2006), 103-121.

the two East Asian allies of Washington helped Park remain in power and keep his anticommunist policy. But Nixon's plan to withdraw US forces from South Korea and support for Kim Daejung forced Park's ROK to join the détente more towards. Park initially suggested a preliminary draft of a liberal policy to the North in 1970 and developed it into an official policy in 1971.

In the second half of 1971, Park finally materialised his new policy toward Communism yet maintained hostility toward it. ROK had Red Cross Talks with DPRK and even promoted high level talks in Pyongyang and Seoul. This dramatic political action relieved both Nixon and South Korean citizen. Officially, the focus of ROK's Northern policy moved from confrontation to reconciliation. However Park never allowed the South Korean public to regard his new Northern policy as fundamentally changed in the nature. He was well aware of his own weakness. The South Korean people would not support the authoritarian regime if there was no threat from North Korea. Hence the South Korean government never stopped its criticism on its 'evil' counterpart in the North while making an effort for direct inter-governmental talks in 1972 and even declared a state of national emergency in December 1971. Despite Park's authoritarian action, Washington did not keep him in check effectively because of his support for Sino-US talks in 1972 and due to the weak influence South Korean domestic politics had on détente trend in the East Asia on which Nixon and Kissinger put a heavy emphasis in their foreign policy. The Red Cross Talks and the promotion of high level talks between the two Koreas let Park to reduce American antipathy toward him and tighten his control over South Korean politics. Park quickly joined the new world order and effectively utilised it in the interests of South Korean security and his own power. Brawling with Nixon in 1969 and 1970, the South Korean leader finally learned how to secure American support. He dramatically moved forward to détente and established his power and stability in 1972. As Don Oberdorfer and Kim Daejung have argued, the president sought to gain political benefits from his talks with Kim Il-sung.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op.cit.*, 44 and Kim Daejung, *op. cit.*, 170- 171.

### Chapter III: Détente in Korea and the Restoration of Anticommunism, 1972- 1974

In the last chapter, we reviewed how, after the ROK presidential election in 1971, the ROK government arranged its dialogue with its northern counterpart, and Richard Nixon announced his visit to China. Clearly enough, Seoul could not ignore the implications of reconciliation between Washington and Beijing—the latter was, after all, Pyongyang's closest ally. Faced with the dangerous possibility of Nixon marginalizing South Korea in the interests of Sino-American relations, and in order to prevent the total withdrawal of American troops from Korea - and additionally to catch the trend of détente in the East Asia - Blue House made an important decision: South Korea started to talk with North Korea and thus made an important contribution to Nixon's new policy in 1971.<sup>154</sup> However, their decades-old mutual hostility since the Korean War in the 1950s ensured that the two Koreas never regarded their talks as a platform for mutual peace. Rather, the talks were the key to a 'peaceful war'. The narrative of South Korea's policy towards the North in 1971 is thus the story of a tenuous balancing act between a semblance of détente and the maintenance of the traditional security imperatives of the Cold War, both in order to legitimise its anticommunist regime, and to secure the support of the USA.

First of all, this chapter will examine how the Park regime altered its policy toward the North in response to the demands of the Nixon administration, and will further discuss the nature and limitations of the policy with regards to the hostile approach of the regime toward Pyongyang, and Communists, during its talks with North Korea in the early half of 1972. The presence of US troops in South Korea, the American sponsorship for Seoul, and mutual mistrust between the North and South largely limited the development of inter-Korean relations throughout the high-level talks: Kim Il-sung managed the peace negotiations to facilitate the pullout of US forces from South Korea, something that Park Chung-hee never wanted to discuss with Kim. Before and during negotiations with North Korea, the South Korean leader repeatedly requested of Washington to suspend the US troops withdrawal schedule. The ROK internal idea about talks in Pyongyang and Seoul, and the joint communiqué of both South and North in 1972, only confirmed the gap between South and North Korea in their Cold War strategy. Park had neither any idea of how to negotiate with Pyongyang on the topic of US military forces in his country, nor did he have a lenient and liberal view toward Communists. In Park's realistic view,

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<sup>154</sup> Regarding the reduction plan, see *New York Times*, 27 August 1970. See also Cho Kabje, *Park Chunghee* (Seoul: Chogabje.com, 2007), vol. 10, 109. Regarding Park's response to Nixon's announcement to visit China, see Park Chunghee, *The collections of President Park's speech draft*, 8<sup>th</sup> volume, 380-381.

based on the North Korean military provocations, the reconciliation between East and West did not necessarily bring peace to the Korean peninsula.<sup>155</sup> Clearly, based on North Korean provocations until 1969, the Blue House concluded that North Korea was stronger than the South in terms of military power and relatively autonomous from the influence of its two patrons, Moscow and Beijing.<sup>156</sup> Hence the South Korean elites were reluctant to accept North Korean terms that excluded any foreign power from Korea.

Secondly, the ideological ground of the Park regime limited the reconciliation with Pyongyang. It was too risky for the Park regime, whose long-term reign benefited from South Korean antipathy toward the communists, to maintain friendly relations with North Korea.<sup>157</sup> The introduction of the liberal policy toward the Communist South Korean security undermined Park's Cold War rhetoric that firmly supported his long-term authoritarian rule. The public believed that the inter-Korean talks were the road to peace, and expected more political freedom in the country. Consequently, Park may have believed that new inter-Korean relations might encourage his rival, Kim Daejung, who originally proposed the liberal policy. For this reason, he had to keep ties with Pyongyang for the benefit of American sponsorship of South Korea, while maintaining his external anticommunist presentation, in order to retain political power. Ma Sangyun argued that Park, therefore, worried about the retreat of US troops from South Korea, and needed to limit the liberal voice in his land.<sup>158</sup>

The paradox of Park's policy regarding the communists pushed him to eliminate both the international and domestic pressure on his post by the *Yusin* (Restoration) reform in October 1972. The *Yusin* constitution allowed Park to get rid of major obstacles to his lifetime tenure, and political challenges, to implement his policy. The new findings in the US archives indicate that the drastic change in the political institution of the ROK was the result of Park's efforts for maintaining his rule, rather than the external threat of the North Korean peace propaganda and Sino-US diplomacy.<sup>159</sup> Through various channels during the talks, Park said that Pyongyang must not invade the South in the near future.<sup>160</sup> According to Park Chunghee biographer Cho Kabje,

<sup>155</sup> Park Chunghee, *Nara'ga Wibum Hal Tae Uchi Mokseumeul Aggiri?* [How Can I Spare My Life when My Nation is in Danger?], (Seoul: Dongsuh Books, 2005), 176- 177.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with Kang Induk, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009, Institute of Far Eastern Studies.

<sup>157</sup> Ma Sangyun, "Anbo'wa Minjujuyi, geurigo Bak Jeonghui'ui gil [Security, Democracy and Park Chung Hee's Road: The Origins of the Yushin System Revisited]." *International Politics Collection of Treatises* 43 (2003): 189.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> "SEOUL NIACT [WE AGREE THAT...]", 1972, 10, 16, POL 23- 9 KOR S 2-28-72, Box 2427, RG59; "Press Guidance", 1972, 10,17, POL 23-9 KOR S 2-28-72, Box 2427, RG59; "Martial Law and Government Changes", 1972. 10.23, POL 23-9 KOR S 2-28-72, Box 2427, RG59, National Archives.

<sup>160</sup> "President Park's View of North Korea Threat", 1972. 4.6, POL 15-1 KOR S 12-7-71, Box 2426, RG59; "President Park's Comment on South-North Talks, Korean Question at UN", 1972.8.23, POL KOR N- KOR S 7-14-72, Box 2422, RG59, National Archives.

Park planned the *Yusin* Reform while talking with Kim Il-sung in order to unify the national opinion for Northern policy.<sup>161</sup> His analysis implies that the ROK leadership utilised the dialogue and Sino-US rapprochement for its own rule. Lee Jongseok suggests that Park exaggerated the North Korean threat during the inter-Korean negotiations, throughout his lifetime tenure.<sup>162</sup> Certainly, the ROK leader could maintain the inter-Korean negotiations without any concern for the liberal resistance, and hence could keep both his post and US support. South Korean scholars generally criticised the rationale of Park regime for his authoritarian rule, and recent findings in South Korean and US archives support their thought.

This authoritarian and conservative reform of the Park regime attenuated the American pressure on the South Korean reconciliation with the Communists. Washington regarded this as an indirect challenge from Park. Without any doubt, his rationale for this new institution was that the Sino-US reconciliation and North Korean threat undermined South Korean security. In other words, he tried to say that Nixon was responsible for this undemocratic decision. Moreover, the South Korean president did not consult with Nixon about this reform but only ‘informed’ him a couple of weeks before the D-day. The US officially complained to Park in a disappointed tone, but could not reject his decision.<sup>163</sup> Clearly, because Park abolished a direct election for presidency, Nixon could not press the South Korean leader through his support for specific presidential candidates, as he had in 1971. Moreover, as Shin Jongdae indicated, Washington did not ignore that Park contributed to the Sino-US reconciliation with his unwillingness to negotiate with Kim Il-sung. Consequently, the White House did not make any significant action against Park’s sudden attack.<sup>164</sup> The over-reaction of the Park regime toward the East-West reconciliation deteriorated Nixon’s efforts for détente in East Asia. Henry Kissinger and the East Asian specialists in Washington advised that Nixon should change his South Korea policy in order to prevent further unexpected actions from Park, which could undermine the American relations with the Communists. Consequently, the American concern for its relations with Seoul led the White House to stop the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea.<sup>165</sup>

Just when Park seemed to be able to keep his negotiation with the DPRK without sinking his anticommunist rhetoric and the appearance of a US retreat, North Korea decided to

<sup>161</sup> Cho Kabje, *Park Chunghee*, vol. 10, (Seoul: Chogabje.com, 2007), 147. This argument is based on Lee Hurak’s interview with Monthly Chosun. Monthly Chosun, 12<sup>th</sup> issue, 1986.

<sup>162</sup> Lee Jongseok, *Bundan Sidae’eni Tongilbag [Study on Reunification Policy in the Divided Era]*, (Seoul: Hanwul, 1998), 83-84.

<sup>163</sup> The White House just did ‘complain’ only. Nixon who faced the election for his second term in December 1972 would be reluctant to make a serious dispute with Park. For this see Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 38.

<sup>164</sup> Shin Jongdae, *The Perception of the ROK on the Sino-US Rapprochement and Its Ensuing Responses*, 30. Unpublished article.

<sup>165</sup> “US Policy in Korea- Country Team Message,” 1972. 12.10, POL 1 KOR S-US 1973, Box 2429, RG59; and “US Policy toward the Korean Peninsula,” 1973. 4. 18, POL., 27-7, KOR N, 5-5-70, Box 2421, RG59, National Archives.

stop talking with South Korea, which dimmed its military superiority. The North resumed its military provocation against capitalists after it found out that the US would not retreat from South Korea, and it could not implant its revolutionary idea within the South, as the military regime was in control with a firm grip. The DPRK announced the end of the dialogue once the KCIA abducted Kim Daejung in 1973. Nevertheless, the Park regime tried to maintain an inter-Korean contact, which would not deteriorate national security any longer. In June 1973, the Blue House announced that it would recognise the DPRK, and allow it join the United Nations if it accepts the principles for peaceful reunification of Korea.<sup>166</sup> Yet the generous offer of South Korea was totally ignored by Pyongyang, which lost its interest in the negotiations with Seoul. The détente in Korea quickly ended with bitter conflicts in 1974.

While South Korea resumed its competition with North, its relations with Japan and the US in 1973 and 74 were largely deteriorated, too. The abduction of Kim Daejung by the KCIA on Japanese territory - and the assassination attempt in the National Theatre in Seoul committed by Moon Sekwang, a North Korean resident living in Japan - identified the gap between the ROK and Japan in their policy toward Communists in this period. The KCIA arrested Kim Daejung for his organization of the anti- *Yusin* movement in Japan. Facing Japanese protest for this brutal action, the Park regime argued that Kim deserved to be punished for his anti-government activities. Regarding Moon's assassination attempt against Park in 1974, Seoul condemned Tokyo for its careless management of North Korean residents in Japan. Because Tokyo made significant development of its diplomacy with the Soviets and the PRC in 1973 and '74, it had an explicit antipathy toward the excessive anticommunist policy of the Park regime, which posed a threat to Japanese security.

Furthering Seoul's estrangement from Washington, Kim Daejung's abduction adversely affected South Korean relations with US officials who tried to save Kim from death. The White House had a difficult task to curb its aggressive client from breaking the détente mood in the East Asia, while Blue House was increasingly losing credit from its patron, who did not take the new inter-Korean competition seriously.

This setback in ROK-US relations can be confirmed in South Korea's approach to diplomacy during the first oil shock in 1973. The Blue House tried to improve its relationship with the Arabic nations who refused to supply oil to the ROK due to its close ties with US and Israel. Seemingly, ROK was a good ally of USA due to its long -term commitment in Vietnam. However, the ROK government declared that it did not support Israel, and was no longer a

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<sup>166</sup> "ROK Foreign Policy Changes", 1973. 6.9/23, POL 1 KOR S 6-5-73, Box 2423, RG59, National Archives.

client state to the US for securing its oil supplies from the Middle East.<sup>167</sup> Officially, Seoul did not make any changes to its American diplomatic policy, but its approach toward Arab states during the first oil shock was an astonishing departure.

However, the isolation of Park Chunghee from his closest allies did not last long. South Korea restored its relations with Washington as détente in East Asia was declined. The advent of the Ford administration, due to Nixon's resignation following the Watergate scandal in 1974, was a watershed moment in the restoration of ROK-US relations and resumption of the Cold War in Asia. The Ford administration focused on the stability of its East Asian ally, as it was having difficulty progressing its diplomatic relationships with China and USSR. With the American support and a new inter-Korean rivalry, South Korea prepared to enter the second phase of Cold War against its northern brother.

(1)Unwilling détente: Nixon's visit to China and the inter-governmental dialogue between two Koreas

While promoting direct talks with the North Korean government, President Park Chunghee did not forget to highlight his anticommunism policy. Commencing his third term, Park stated that North Korea was stronger than the South, and still had ambition to reunify the Korean Peninsula under the Communist's banner. On 11<sup>th</sup> January 1972, during a beginning-of-year press conference, he said, "Thanks to our first and second 5-year economic development plan, we became superior to the North Korean puppet regime in terms of economy, culture, and other fields except military."<sup>168</sup> He praised his own achievement during his prior terms and reminded the ROK public that he was still the optimal leader who could keep the ROK away from the evil North Korean Communists. He continuously emphasised North Korean military power, "I cannot but accept that North Korea is stronger than us. For the last decade, the North Korean puppet regime only focused on military forces and is far stronger than us at present."<sup>169</sup> He added that he had to declare a state of emergency the year before because of this North Korean threat, and boasted that he demanded Nixon not mention the Korean issue during his

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<sup>167</sup> "Republic of Korea's position on the Middle East War, 1973," 1973, Class Number 721.1XF, Diplomatic Archives, Republic of Korea.

<sup>168</sup> *Kyunghyang sinmun*, 11<sup>th</sup> January, 1972.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

visit to China, which he promised to do.<sup>170</sup>

His words were inconsistent with reality. His government was working on inter-governmental talks with Pyongyang, and North Korea had refrained from violent provocation toward ROK during negotiations.<sup>171</sup> To no one's surprise, Park firmly controlled the information and revealed only what he wanted ROK citizens to know. Even worse, Nixon's personal letter assuring that no agreements will be made in Beijing regarding Korea does not indicate that Nixon was seriously worried about a North Korean threat.<sup>172</sup> Further, according to Philip C. Habib, ambassador to Korea from September 1971, Nixon rejected an invitation by Park to visit Seoul on his way to Beijing in February. Seemingly, if Nixon had shared Park's concerns on the Communist threat he would have accepted the invitation. In lieu of a visit, he sent a letter responding to the points raised by the ROK president.<sup>173</sup> Habib was advised the following by the White House:

We are aware of ROKG need for some public demonstration of our concern for protection of Korea's interests, as well as Park's problem of 'face.' Accordingly, in delivering a letter to President Park one may say that we will understand if he desires to let the press know that he has received a personal letter of assurance from the President stating that no agreements will be made in Peking regarding Korea.<sup>174</sup>

Park tried to call public attention to the North Korean threat and prevent any participation of his rivals in inter-Korean contacts. Park's speech could have misled the ROK public to believe that the US president had seriously considered the Communist threat on South Korea. But this appeared exaggerated, according to the letter to Habib above. As Wu Seungji argued, Park worried about trends of détente in the East Asian and Pacific region because the reconciliation between the US and the PRC could undermine anticommunism in South Korea, the foundation of national security and his own political power.<sup>175</sup> As such, the South Korean leader never regarded a détente mood as a real peace, and was consistently emphasising the *real*

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 12- 15.

<sup>172</sup> "Letter From President Nixon to Korean President Park," Washington, 29 November, 1971, Presidential Correspondence 1969-1974, Korea, President Chung Hee Park, 1971, Box 757, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Korea, Washington, Korea, Vol. IV, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1971, Far East, Country Files, Box 542, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>175</sup> Wu Seungji, "Nambuk Hwahae Wa Hanmi Dongmaeng Gwangyeui Yihae [Understanding Inter-Korean Relations and the Alliance Relationship between South Korea and the US, 1969-1973]," Korean Political History Collection of Treatises 26 (2005):121.



face of the North Korean Communists. For this reason, he did not publicise his diplomatic efforts for the inter-governmental talks between the two Koreas.

The South Korean leader was annoyed with his ally, Nixon, who continuously destabilised South Korea's foundation for its national security. He criticized Nixon's visit to China, while at the same time continued following Nixon's policy. On 22<sup>th</sup> Feb 1972, one day after the US president's arrival in China, during a dinner with the Blue House correspondents, Park bitterly said, "90 percent of the purpose of Nixon's visit to China was his re-election. Nixon's low posture diplomacy toward the PRC is not a desirable thing. How long can we trust the US?"<sup>176</sup> However, despite Park's antagonism toward the Sino-American reconciliation, nothing changed. Nixon's historic arrival into Beijing on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February, made the front page of South Korean newspapers on the same day. South Korean journalists were excited with the hot news. A number of buoyant expressions such as, 'historic occasion,' 'historic handshakes,' and 'peaceful exchange,' were plastered all over the front pages.<sup>177</sup>

Nonetheless, the Park regime did not stop condemning North Korea. On 15<sup>th</sup> March, about three weeks after a Panmunjeom meeting of Red Cross delegates of the two Koreas, which happened on the same day as Nixon's arrival to China - and of which Victor Cha indicated, "The regional détente trend extended to Korea"<sup>178</sup> - ROK's Foreign Minister, Kim Yongsik, presented a statement listing North Korea's violations of the armistice agreement:

Since 1953 when the armistice was signed, the north Korean Communists have violated the provisions of the agreement as many as 10.921 times.<sup>179</sup> Recently they are again creating a grave problem in this area by committing most serious and clear violations of the agreement under the cover of the mood of international détente. It has been revealed that, during the past several months, they have clandestinely built in the demilitarized zone 225 guard posts and brought in field artilleries, armed regulars. This is not only the most serious violation of the armistice agreement but also a grave threat to peace (...).<sup>180</sup>

The statement above was hostile, and contradicted Seoul's effort to talk with Pyongyang

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<sup>176</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 141; Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 13.

<sup>177</sup> "Headline: Nixon's visit to China," *Donga Ilbo*, 21 February, 1972.

<sup>178</sup> Victor Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 44- 45.

<sup>179</sup> In this official ROK documents providing both Korean and English version, the initial of "North" was intentionally written in lower case.

<sup>180</sup> The ROK ministry of foreign affairs, *The chronology of ROK diplomatic history, 1972*, (Seoul: The ROK ministry of foreign affairs, 1973), 125.

at that time. However, evidently Park did not really want to stop talking with North Korea, since Jung Hong Jin, the South Korean Red Cross delegate, secretly entered North Korea in order to discuss the KCIA director's visit to North Korea on 28<sup>th</sup> March. Despite ROKG's criticism on North Korean aggression two weeks prior, Jung talked with North Korean officials about upcoming inter-governmental talks in Pyongyang without any serious problems.<sup>181</sup>

These efforts clearly illustrate Park's secret promotion of the détente mood in the Korean Peninsula while keeping his Cold War rhetoric in public. Shin Jongdae explained that ROK's friendly approach toward the DPRK had two different purposes: to establish national security, and to meet the demands of the people of the ROK for a peaceful reunification.<sup>182</sup> To accomplish this, first Park had to accept the US policy in order to keep American aid for South Korea's security. If he had refused to join the trend of détente, his relationship with Nixon would have drastically deteriorated. Park might have expected that Nixon would cut the American budget for its aid to the ROK armed forces, or withdraw all US forces from the ROK unless he made a friendly gesture towards the Communists, and hence support Washington. Additionally, South Korea needed more time to modernise its military forces.<sup>183</sup> Therefore, for security reasons, he had to follow Nixon's policy.

Secondly, he needed to meet the Korean people's demands on the reunification issue to some extent. Park could not ignore the influence of nationalism on his popularity since Kim Daejung threatened Park's presidency with his reunification plans during the presidential campaign in 1971.<sup>184</sup>

On the other hand, the radical change in the "Northern policy" could damage the Park regime, as well. Clearly, the authoritarian regime could not legitimise itself without a programme against the Communist threat. The military background and anticommunist spirit of the Park regime appealed to the ROK electorates so far, who generally were conservative as an effect of the Korean War.<sup>185</sup> Yet these two virtues of his became insignificant after the détente mood had dominated the Korean peninsula. The Park regime needed to prove why he still was essential for the fatherland, through continuous emphasis on North Korean aggressions. In addition, for the KCIA and high-ranking officials, the core class of the Park regime, the hard-line approach was not an option, but a requirement. Under the banner of anticommunism, they committed numerous political crimes from illegal access to personal information acquired by

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<sup>181</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 143. As I described his identification in the previous chapter, he was not a regular staff of Red Cross but a KCIA official.

<sup>182</sup> Shin Jongdae, *op. cit.*, 17.

<sup>183</sup> Kim Jeongryeom, *Oh, Park Chunghee* (Seoul: Chung-ang M&B, 1997), 322- 324.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ma Sangyun, *op. cit.*, 174.

kidnapping and torture of people who challenged them.<sup>186</sup> Needless to say, Kim Daejung would have eliminated these people if he had won the next presidential election. And as the president worried, no one could challenge Kim Daejung except Park himself.<sup>187</sup> Hence the regime had to make every justification for the extension of Park's tenure. In other words, they already intended to use the first exchanges between the two Korean governments to back their domestic politics.<sup>188</sup> The aggressive approach of the Blue House during inter-Korean negotiations, and KCIA's initiative in the process, confirmed the regime's fear of a post-Park period.<sup>189</sup> In short, the Park regime needed to keep American and domestic supports without tainting its anticommunist reputation.

With those sensitive intentions in mind, the ROK representatives visited Pyongyang in early May. The man in charge of this exchange in the South was Lee Hurak, the director of KCIA.<sup>190</sup> The most confidential organization of the Park administration, the KCIA, controlled information about inter-Korean affairs during the talks, and managed the ROK's negotiation with its counterpart in the DPRKG. In this context, it was natural for Park to choose Lee Hurak as his deputy for inter-Korean talks in Pyongyang. Before entering North Korea, the KCIA director met Park on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May and said that *he had contacted the CIA* in Seoul and would bring potassium cyanide [in order to commit suicide for the ultimate exit] to the North. Shortly after that, the two Koreas opened a hotline between Seoul and Pyongyang.<sup>191</sup> At present, the ROK government has not declassified the documents about Lee's visit to Pyongyang, but the American resources provide some information on this historic meeting, corroborating the dual concerns of the Park regime discussed enunciated previously. According to the American record, the KCIA director requested American support for South Korea before his visit to the enemy camp:

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<sup>186</sup> For instance, in 1967, KCIA agents kidnapped a number of Koreans in Europe, especially in West Germany, who were suspected as agents of North Korea. The North Korean embassy in East Berlin provided funds for South Koreans in Europe and educated North Korean strategy. This incident has been called East Berlin incident. For detail, see Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, 5- 45.

<sup>187</sup> "Yi[Lee] Hu Rak on Elections", 1972. 4.7, POL 14 KOR S 6/1/71, Box 2425 RG59.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. The Park regime was disappointed with the result of last presidential election in 1971 and already discussed to abolish the public election under the pretext of insecurity during inter-Korean talks before entering first inter-governmental dialogue in Pyongyang.

<sup>189</sup> For detail, see Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, 117.

<sup>190</sup> Lee was born in 1924 and died in 2009. He was the director of the Korea Central Intelligence Agency from 1970 to 1973. In early 1970s, as KCIA had more influence on Northern policy, Lee was considered the successor of Park at that time. See Kang Junman, *Hanguk hyundae'sa sanchaek (The Journey in Korean Modern History)*, vol. 1 of 1940s', (Seoul: Inmul, 2002), 196.

<sup>191</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 145. It is worth noting that Lee Hurak's contact with the American CIA prior to his trip is important in understanding the overall purpose of his dangerous trip: the South Korean government wanted Nixon to know that it was making a genuine contribution to his policy, except that it could only be done in a secret way since the Park regime had also considered that this radical approach toward Pyongyang would cause domestic agitation.

Yi [Lee] said he thought his government would welcome strong U.S. Government support should his visit become known publicly, either through a communiqué or through leaks. U.S. support would help counter-domestic criticism in South Korea, as well as improve Seoul's position in dealing with Pyongyang.<sup>192</sup>

It seems clear enough that Washington had no reason to oppose inter-Korean détente, and the reason why Lee requested 'U.S support' from the White House was not because Washington was obstructing such a Korean dialogue. In fact, Washington welcomed South Korea's decision.<sup>193</sup> It was rather, if it was anything of importance, a statement of the Seoul's perception of a quid pro quo; indirectly demanding *some* political concession from the Americans for its erstwhile service to the cause of East Asian détente. In concrete terms, what Park wanted and attempted to achieve, was the prevention of any further discussion on the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea that would undermine the South Korean position in dealing with the North.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May, Lee and his aides entered North Korea. According to his briefing to Habib on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May, right after his return, the KCIA director first had two meetings and a dinner with Kim Ilsung's younger brother and the First Vice-Premier of the DPRK, Kim Youngju.<sup>194</sup> Two days later, the historic meeting between the North Korean leader and the director of the southern KCIA began. It seems the conversation began with much mutual praise, as the second-most powerful figure in the South began by praising Kim's achievements, while the North Korean Premier responded with much admiration for President Park and KCIA Director Lee — Lee in fact recollects that Kim called him 'a very bold person' and 'a hero' who came to the opposite camp on his own.<sup>195</sup>

The record of this remarkable talk was kept by Lee's aide and was not disclosed for seventeen years. Yet the KCIA director reported the details of his talk with the North Korean premier to Habib. Therefore, the United States already knew about the content and substance of

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<sup>192</sup> "South Korean CIA Director's Further Comments on His Visit to North Korea May 2–5 for High Level Discussions: *Memorandum From John H. Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs*," Korea, Vol. V, 1 Jan–31 Dec 1972, Part 2, Far East, Country Files, Box 543, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> "Results of South Korean CIA Director's Visit to North Korea May 2–5," *Memorandum From John A. Froebe, Jr., of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)*, Washington, 12 May, 1972, Korea, Vol. V, 1972, Part 2, Far East, Country Files, Box 543, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

the two Korean summits even before Lee officially disclosed his records. Thanks to both ROK and US resources, we can compare and double-check the so-called ‘secret’ record of Lee with his report to the US Ambassador, allowing us an insight into the American viewpoint toward the first inter-governmental exchanges in Korea, and the real intentions of the Park regime for the meeting in Pyongyang. The following is an extract from the talks between Kim and Lee in Pyongyang,

**Lee:** President Park Chunghee and I believe unification should be achieved by ourselves without interference of the four powers [the United States, China, Japan, the Soviet Union] ... We are never frontmen of the United States or Japan. We believe we should resolve our issues by ourselves...

**Kim:** Our position is to oppose reliance on external forces on the issue of unification. This is where I agree with Park Chunghee...

**Lee:** I'd like to tell you that President Park is a person who detests foreign interference most.

**Kim:** That being so, we are already making progress to solve the issue. Let us exclude foreign forces. Let's not fight. Let's unite as a nation. Let's not take issue with Communism or capitalism...

**Lee:** A nation with 40- 50 million people is a powerful country. [The population of the South in 1972 was 32 million; that of the North 14 million.] One hundred years ago we yielded to big powers because we were weak. In the future the big powers will yield to us. I'd like to make it clear to you, the big powers only provide lip service to our hope for unification. But in their hearts, they don't want our unification.

**Kim:** Big powers and imperialism prefer to divide a nation into several nations.<sup>196</sup>

Both sides seemingly shared an antipathy to their respective superpower patrons. And the conversation, it seems, developed along the lines of a discussion on the unification of Korea. In addition to this commonality in feelings toward their respective patrons, they talked about the Blue House raid in 1968. Kim apologised for the incident and said he did not know of the plan in advance. He argued that the “leftist chauvinists” within the North Korean structure did it without his approval. Regarding the *Pueblo* incident, Kim explained that the capture of an

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<sup>196</sup> Regarding the transcript for the Kim-Lee meeting, see *Monthly Joongang*, March 1989. The English translation was presented in Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 23- 24. Quote from Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*

American spy ship was “happenstance and was not planned.”<sup>197</sup> Kim blamed some daredevil factions in North Korea whom he could not effectively control, and denied his association with them consistently. Even though Lee did not believe that this was true (as he said to the American ambassador to Seoul afterwards), this did not hurt Lee’s positive impression of Kim: The KCIA director argued, “Kim’s admission of the fact of the assassination attempt—Pyongyang had consistently denied it—and his disassociating himself from it now are quite significant and add to the credibility of his interests in détente with the Park Government.”<sup>198</sup>

Excited with this historical meeting with the North Korean leader, the Director of the KCIA came back to Seoul and reported his mission first to Park,, and then later to the US Ambassador, on 10<sup>th</sup> May.<sup>199</sup> Lee evaluated his trip positively but said that the DPRK Premier and he himself had neither reached any important conclusions nor settled any problems. Certainly, Lee did not mention his and Kim’s bitter criticism of the four powers (including the US) to Habib.<sup>200</sup> Instead of these words, Lee said that Kim Il-sung and he had discussed ‘American and Japanese roles in Korea.’ Habib sent his report to Washington after his meeting with the KCIA Director. In his report, he said that Lee’s secret trip to Pyongyang was successful.<sup>201</sup> To sum up the situation - although there were minor differences between Lee’s record and his report to the US Ambassador - such as the deliberate omissions of critical comments on US - the KCIA Director provided almost every point that he had learned from Pyongyang to the US. Considering that the ROK government did not consult with the US government properly for many other important problems - perhaps most prominently on the Vietnam War issue - this is very significant. Simply speaking, Park seemed to have learned how to work with Nixon. Park possibly regarded the whole situation as a necessary means to call and secure Nixon’s attention to the ROK by promoting détente in the East Asia in secret, without causing domestic agitation.

However, Park did not consider that Lee’s negotiation with Kim had been successful. In fact, it seems that he regretted his decision to dispatch Lee Hurak to this mission to the North. For the South Korean President, his KCIA director—who had boasted of his *successful* meeting

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> “Results of South Korean CIA Director’s Visit to North Korea May 2–5,” Memorandum From John A. Froebe, Jr., of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Washington, 12 May, 1972, Korea, Vol. V, 1972, Part 2, Far East, Country Files, Box 543, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>199</sup> Lee’s report to Park was not declassified.

<sup>200</sup> The four powers include the United States, Japan, PRC, and USSR.

<sup>201</sup> “Results of South Korean CIA Director’s Visit to North Korea May 2–5,” Memorandum From John A. Froebe, Jr., of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Washington, 12 May, 1972, Korea, Vol. V, 1972, Part 2, Far East, Country Files, Box 543, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

with Kim in excitement—looked silly and naïve, unaware that he had been outwitted by Kim Il-sung. During his meeting with the North Korean leader, Lee Hurak had accepted the three principles for Korean national reunification as ‘*independence, peace, and national unity*,’ without any consultation with the Blue House.<sup>202</sup> Among these three concepts of national reunification, ‘*peace*’ was the only one that Park had directly proposed to North Korea in 1971. In other words, Lee’s decision was arbitrary and, in fact, meant far more progress than Park had intended for. Park had not sought any real or deep impact from the inter-Korean talks; certainly not on South Korean politics. The result of the first high-level contact between the two Koreas was thus disappointing to Park, and hence it was criticism of Lee’s carelessness and his thinly veiled ambitions for the next presidency that came to dominate the Park regime’s assessment of the talks. Among these critics, it was Park’s long-term aide, Kim Seongjin, who indicated that Lee had volunteered for this dangerous mission due to his ambitions to run for office in the next elections.<sup>203</sup>

Surprisingly, even inside of KCIA, critics existed. According to Kang Induk, who had accompanied Lee to the DPRK:

The most serious problem of these three principles was ‘independence’, which was mentioned even before ‘peace.’ What does this mean? Without any doubt, the North wanted to drive out American forces from the South. Without ‘peace’ in the Korean Peninsula, ‘independence’ would be beneficial to North Korea, [who were] stronger than the ROK in military terms.<sup>204</sup>

Park generally agreed with these critics.<sup>205</sup> He also considered that Kim Il-sung wanted Nixon to withdraw the US troops from Korea, and utilized his peace propaganda for this purpose. Kang tried to revise the joint communiqué agreed upon between Lee and Kim Il-sung.

Peace must have been placed first. If peace is guaranteed, then the US forces could withdraw to its own country. However, the order of principles, Korean national reunification, independence, and peace, was already agreed, and it was impossible to revise it. Even in Park’s written instruction to Lee for his meeting with North Korean elites, “The reunification of our nation must be realised in

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<sup>202</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 23- 24.

<sup>203</sup> Kim Seongjin, *Park Chunghee’reul Malhanda [Talking about Park Chunghee]*, (Seoul: Life and Dream, 2006), 122-156.

<sup>204</sup> Interview with Kang Induk, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009, Institute of Far Eastern Studies.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

‘peaceful’ manner through political dialogues” was suggested only.<sup>206</sup>

The South Korean leadership did not have any idea to exclude Washington from the Korean problem and was deeply disappointed with the agreement between the KCIA director and North Korean Premier. Although Park did not reject the North Korean idea of *independence* for national reunification, in order to keep the détente mood between the two Koreas, he had no intention of materializing the principle that rationalises the retreat of US forces from his territory.<sup>207</sup>

Lee remained a deputy of Park for the high-level negotiation with Pyongyang, but his authority was clearly limited afterwards.<sup>208</sup> Simply, he just followed Park’s direction and hence became very cautious with his approach to North Korean officials. This significant gap between Park and Lee was not discussed in many famous works probably because their authors did not know of the conflict inside the ROK government, particularly on the sensitive inter-Korean agenda. Those works directly or indirectly indicated that Park was willing to accept North Korean terms because Park had delegated his authority to his KCIA director. Yet this is not true: Lee made an arbitrary decision that Park rejected. This split was revealed by high-ranking officials working in the Park regime about three decades later during 2000s.<sup>209</sup> Kang’s testimony and the newly published South Korean books reject the previous interpretation of first inter-Korean contact, which simply concluded that it was successful and smooth.<sup>210</sup>

While waiting for the North Korean delegates’ visit to Seoul, Park received Nixon’s letter. As Park had hoped, the US President appeared highly impressed by the ROK-DPRK meeting.<sup>211</sup> He extolled Park’s effort to reduce the Cold War tensions in the East Asian and the Pacific region and promised to support such actions. In his letter, the US President also mentioned his visit to Moscow and explained that he would affirm America’s strong ties with the ROK as he did before visiting Beijing.<sup>212</sup> It thus seemed that Park had achieved his first goal of

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Kim Seongjin, *op. cit.*, 132-156.

<sup>209</sup> For instance, Kim Seongjin’s work was published in 2006. But Bruce Cumings and Don Oberdorfer’s books discussing this subject were published in 1990s.

<sup>210</sup> In fact, for instance, Don Oberdorfer did not mention anything about this serious dispute inside the Park regime in his prominent work, *the Two Koreas*.

<sup>211</sup> The timing of the letter was impressive. South Korean matter was regarded as a low-priority work in the White House at that time, and Nixon did not write many letters to Park. It is noteworthy that Nixon sent a letter to Park only a couple of weeks later after the Pyongyang meeting.

<sup>212</sup> “Letter From President Nixon to Korean President Park,” Washington, 19<sup>th</sup> May, 1972. Presidential Correspondence 1969–1974, Korea: President Chung Hee Park, 1972, Box 757, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives. The text of President Nixon’s letter was transmitted in telegram 97271 to Seoul, June 2, with a request that a copy shall be delivered to President Park as soon as possible. Ibid, POL 15–1 US/NIXON, Central Files 1970–73, RG 59, National Archives.



his new Northern policy, gaining the security of Nixon's support.

However, the South Korean leader could not be relieved yet. While encouraging Park to talk with Kim Il-sung, Nixon mentioned his intention for further reduction of US troops in the ROK.<sup>213</sup> As such, there was a clear gap between the US intentions and the desires of the ROK president. Park considered that the détente in East Asia would not last long. His simple logic was that North Korea would invade the South as soon as the last US troops had returned to their own country. Nixon, however, believed that the ROK was safe as long as Washington had a good relationship with Pyongyang's two patrons, Moscow and Beijing. Since the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) between Washington and Moscow was successfully ended on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1972, the US president had a strong confidence in his foreign policy.<sup>214</sup> And in his letter to Park, he reminded Park that everything goes well even though he did not mention the SALT.<sup>215</sup>

As Park saw it, the actual problem was that Nixon made no effort to reassure him. As indicated, he had rejected Park's invitation to Seoul in February before his visit to Beijing. Moreover, Nixon's deceptive manner during the negotiations over the reductions programme for US forces in 1969-70 had also destabilised Park's trust in Washington.<sup>216</sup> Consequently, Nixon's comments on the further withdrawal of American armed forces only had the effect of worsening Park's distrust towards his erstwhile superpower patron. As a result, the South Korean leader became even more cautious in his subsequent negotiations with Kim Il-sung.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of May, North Korean delegates secretly visited the Blue House and met Park. The head of the delegation was Park Sungchol, the Second Vice-Premier of the DPRK. Information on this meeting has been revealed by two different sources: the first one, again, is Lee Hurak's report to Habib. The second is the testimony of the ROK politicians who attended the meeting. Lee's report from the US records contains details of meetings, including the minutes of this inter-Korean meeting. Conversely, the ROK politicians' testimony focused on the general atmosphere of the meeting and Park Chunghee's assessment of the North Korean

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2005), 195.

<sup>215</sup> 'Letter From President Nixon to Korean President Park,' Washington, 19<sup>th</sup> May, 1972. Presidential Correspondence 1969-1974, Korea: President Chung Hee Park, 1972, Box 757, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives. The text of President Nixon's letter was transmitted in telegram 97271 to Seoul, June 2, with a request that a copy shall be delivered to President Park as soon as possible. Ibid, POL 15-1 US/NIXON, Central Files 1970-73, RG 59, National Archives.

<sup>216</sup> Richard Nixon denied the discussion on the programme in the United States government several times in 1970. Due to the deceptive manner of the United States president, Park did not trust him. See Diplomatic Archives, Republic of Korea, "The comment about reduction of US army in South Korea and reports on the press, 1969," 1969, Class Number, 729. 23. See also "National Security Decision Memorandum," Washington, March 20, 1970, National Security Decision Memoranda, Nos. 1-50, Subject Files, Box 363, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives; Ibid, Korea, Vol. II, 10/69-5/70, Far East, Country Files, Box 541.

delegates. Although Lee's testimony for this meeting, which was kept by the US government, would be the most important source, his report seemed biased to some extent, in order to highlight his achievement. Because of this bias, there is a clear difference between the two sources for the perceived role of Lee. Due to his vacation immediately after the inter-Korean dialogue on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May, Lee's report to the American embassy was delayed until the 13<sup>th</sup> of June.<sup>217</sup>

Lee's report in June sounded similar to the one in May: he emphasized his role in inter-Korean negotiation. Lee reported that he thought that the most important result of the last meeting was the establishment of an "agreed coordinating committee," which he did not describe further. Regarding the committee, he said that even though the North Koreans officially proposed its establishment, this was resulted from his own initiative in suggesting a means of coordinating inter-Korean relations during his earlier visit to the North.<sup>218</sup> However, according to other officials attending the meeting along with Park Chunghee and Lee Hurak, Lee's initiatives made during the meeting were not mentioned at all.<sup>219</sup> As discussed above, it is possible that the role of KCIA director was limited after his talks with Kim Ilsung.

Nonetheless, Lee's assessment about the North Korean delegates was generally coinciding with the others' records. Park and Lee called the North Korean representatives 'robots,' firmly controlled by Kim Ilsung. Park Sungchol, the Second North Korean Vice-Premier, just read out what was written in his notebook and refused to deliver his own ideas to

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<sup>217</sup> Park would have intentionally delayed the report to Washington because the ROK government needed time to prepare the report in order to filter some sensitive information that Park would not want to inform to US. This assumption is based on two evidences suggested in US sources: first, when the United States ambassador, Habib, met Park on 10 June, Park asked if he had been briefed on the last meeting [by Lee]. Habib said that he did not get any report from Lee and would only meet the KCIA director in the following week. And then, Park said, "Lee is away resting in the countryside." This was a quite awkward situation because the ROK president already knew that Lee was out of town immediately after the inter-Korean meeting and he would have approved of the director's vacation by himself. And it is also weird that the KCIA director was out of town for almost two weeks only for rest. (Lee returned to Seoul on 12<sup>th</sup> June).

In addition, during his meeting with Habib, Lee did not provide any explanation about the key agreement of the meeting, the establishment of an "agreed coordinating committee [between the two Koreas]." And the director did not provide any reason. The reason why ROKG did not want to inform the White House is not clear yet. However, it is possible that the nature of the committee mislead Nixon to believe that North Korea is not aggressive and irrational, and hence he would initiate the total withdrawal of US forces from the ROK. And Lee himself suggested similarly that the ROK government rejected to issue a joint communiqué as a result of discussions since if they did, "the U.S., Japan, and other third-party countries might conclude too quickly that tensions on the Korean Peninsula were being effectively resolved" said Lee. If this is true, we can assume that Lee's vacation was fake, and ROKG tried to gain time to think about its report to US government.

For details of the meeting of Park and Habib on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June, see "Telegram From the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State," Seoul, June 10, 1972, 1119Z, POL KOR S-US, Central Files 1970-73, RG 59, National Archives. For details of Lee and Habib meeting and Lee's report, see Telegram From the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, Seoul, June 13, 1972, 0939Z, Korea, Vol. V, 1 Jan-31 Dec. 1972, Far East, Country Files, Box 543, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>218</sup> Lee's exaggeration on his role through emphasizing the establishment of committee was also criticized by others in the Park administration. See Kim Seongjin, *op. cit.*, 122-156.

<sup>219</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 145- 146.

the South Korean President. Moreover, when Park proposed a cocktail to the North Korean, he also refused it, saying “Because I recently took medicine...”<sup>220</sup> The KCIA director concluded that Park Sungchol had even less authority than Kim Youngju, the First Deputy-Premier of DPRK and Kim Ilsung’s younger brother. Lee also considered that he and Kim Youngju could issue a joint communiqué after the next meeting. Habib urged Lee to make the facts of these meetings and their developments public as soon as possible, since the director’s visit to Pyongyang had already leaked out, which was not desirable.<sup>221</sup> However, Seoul was cautious not to reveal its secret meeting with Pyongyang.<sup>222</sup>

Meanwhile, in the North, Kim Ilsung had considered that the secret talks should be publicized because the inter-Korean contact could cause agitation or, at least, encourage the liberal voices in the South, as well as an American retreat from South Korean soil. Surprisingly to South Korean elites, Kim thus proposed a four-phase troop reduction for the Korean Peninsula to Washington through an interview with Selig Harrison of the *Washington Post*.<sup>223</sup> The core of his idea was simple, to reduce the UN and US forces in South Korea. Yet his tone was not aggressive. He tried to persuade Washington, seemingly in line with the Zeitgeist of détente in Korea. Washington interpreted this surprising demarche as a form of pressure on Park who had not wanted to publicize the inter-Korean talks.<sup>224</sup>

Perhaps what is more surprising is that the South Korean media did not introduce this shocking news at that time. Instead they sported headlines about the ROK-US security consultative meeting and its results; all of this was still focused on, even as the South Korean government prepared to announce its joint communiqué with the North. Ironically, the ROK press highlighted that this security meeting concluded that North Korean peace propaganda was fake and dangerous.<sup>225</sup> The reason why the ROK press did not introduce Kim Ilsung’s interview with Harrison is not clear; yet it is possible that the ROK government and/or KCIA censored and banned the news in South Korean media right after the *Washington Post* issued Harrison’s

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<sup>220</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 146.

<sup>221</sup> Telegram From the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, Seoul, 13<sup>th</sup> June, 1972, 0939Z, Korea, Vol. V, 1 Jan–31 Dec. 1972, Far East, Country Files, Box 543, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>222</sup> As many scholars argued, the Park regime made such a dramatic development in its relations with DPRK in order to appeal the United States. As discussed before, Park did not want to implement “liberal Northern policy” which Kim Daejung suggested first. In a short term, the policy could alleviate the tension in the Korean Peninsula and hence make Park more popular. However, in a long run, the peace would get rid of the justification of Park’s long term and draconian rule. See Wu Seungji, *op. cit.*, 109.

<sup>223</sup> Selig Harrison, “Kim Seeks Summit, Korean Troop Cuts,” *The Washington Post*, June 26, 1972.

<sup>224</sup> This analysis indicates that a few days later of release of this interview, Seoul decided to agree to a joint communiqué with Pyongyang on 4 July. Memorandum From John H. Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), “State’s Analysis of North Korean Premier Kim Il-song’s Proposals of June 21,” Washington, 4<sup>th</sup> July, 1972, Korea, Vol. V, 1 Jan–31 Dec 1972, Part 2, Far East, Country Files, Box 543, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>225</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 27<sup>th</sup> June, 1972.

interview with Kim. This argument is plausible, but the problem is that the ROK issued a joint communiqué with DPRK about a week later. The true intention and reason why the ROK media did not introduce the ‘scoop’ is unclear so far. However, it is possible that the South Korean elites kept silent for a while in order to have time to discuss it further, once the joint communiqué had been announced. In any event, the agreements between South and North Korea were not revealed beyond ROK government inner circles. Even Kim Daejung did not expect that the two Koreas would make such an advance in their relationship. In this situation, the Park regime considered that it was safer to censor Kim Ilsung’s interview at the moment.<sup>226</sup>

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, the Park regime finally announced the joint communiqué with North Korea. The three principles, ‘*independence, peace, and national unity*,’—as already discussed—had already been agreed on during the Kim-Lee meeting in early May. In addition, the two Koreas agreed to refrain from criticising one another, nor to use military forces against each other. Furthermore, they also agreed to promote more exchanges between Seoul and Pyongyang. Park did not think that Kim Ilsung could, or would, keep all of these agreements.<sup>227</sup> To be sure, he did not trust his counterpart in Pyongyang at all, and did not take these series of contacts seriously. According to Park’s long time aide, Kim Seongjin, Park said to him, ‘I have no intention at all [to meet Kim Ilsung]. Why should I meet the fellow?’<sup>228</sup> Nonetheless, these agreements were not useless to the ROK President. Kang Induk, in charge of inter-Korean talks (at the Government working-level), recalled that ‘some parts of the communiqué were not satisfactory, but both sides [the South and North] considered that this joint communiqué could be useful, [so we signed it].’ It seems the ROK was indeed afraid of the North Korean military forces which were overwhelmingly superior to the South’s, or at least according to KCIA reports. Park thus needed a peaceful approach in order to gain time to modernise the ROK armed forces.<sup>229</sup> Moreover, as highlighted previously, the main priority of the ROK’s Northern Policy was to keep US forces in Korea, and this made it imperative for the ROK to support Nixon’s policy. Therefore, despite its hostility toward Pyongyang, Seoul had a clear motivation to change its Northern policy.

The DPRK, however, considered the negotiation an opportunity to dismantle the South

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<sup>226</sup> Kim already knew Lee’s visit to Pyongyang but was never told that Kim Ilsung and Lee made agreements on the principles of Korean reunification. Details, see Kim, Daejung, *op. cit.*, 170.

<sup>227</sup> Some agreements in the communiqué were not kept even right before 4<sup>th</sup> July. For instance, on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, the ROK government urged the White House not to change the official name of North Korea to DPRK. The South Korean government argued that the change can support North Korean ambition to reunify the Korean Peninsula under the banner of Communist. See *ChosunIlbo*, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1972. Yet, on 5<sup>th</sup> July, the ROK premier Kim Jongpil reported to National Assembly that DPRK would be used as an official name of North Korea as a result of inter-Korean talks. See *Kyungbyangsinmun*, 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1972.

<sup>228</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 26 Kim Seongjin’s quotes on Park are from Don’s interview with Kim, 24<sup>th</sup> May, 1993.

<sup>229</sup> Interview with Kang Induk.

Korean leadership. Kang also provided an explanation for North Korean motives, 'North Korea calculated that it would be easy to establish the united front of anti-America and anti-government in the South once the two Koreas agree to the three principles of reunification.'<sup>230</sup> This idea was supported by Communist sources. In a confidential presentation to the East German Politbüro, North Korean ambassador to East Germany, Lee Changsu, enunciated that North Korea would make South Korea free from American and Japanese influence.<sup>231</sup> The Blue House was not careless, however. It already knew North Korea's intentions over talks between the two Koreas. The Park regime did not stop criticising DPRK even during the negotiation period, in order to prevent the rise of liberals. And this two-faced strategy did work even before the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Meanwhile, the most influential politician among the opposition parties and liberals, Kim Daejung, did not do anything during the negotiations.<sup>232</sup> Park successfully excluded Kim from the table of inter-Korean talk. The former candidate for ROK presidency, Kim Daejung, condemned the two faces of the president while being please that this fact proved his insight:

(...) It [the sudden and dramatic changes in Northern policy] proves that he [Park Chunghee] can make a complete about-face without any hesitation in order to protect himself. (...) This communiqué, however, was welcomed in general. I thought that [we] must welcome this joint communiqué with enthusiasm. (...) I was deeply touched that my idea became materialized.<sup>233</sup>

As Kim recalled, the inter-Korean contact made Park popular right after the announcement of the joint communiqué. Soon Park enjoyed the result of its liberal approach on the ROK with new public support for his decision. As the ROK newspaper vividly testified, "Many people were excited with the astonishing news and even pleased with it. About ten million ROK citizens had left their family members and relatives in the North. This news relieved the broken heart of theirs."<sup>234</sup> Regarding his competition with Kim Daejung, Park intended to gain more popularity from the liberal idea of the joint communiqué. But in the long run, he still needed the Cold War rhetoric, rather than the détente mood.<sup>235</sup> Even with the new

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 25. This presentation is from conversation of Hermannn Axen with Lee (31<sup>st</sup> July 1972), SED Archives.

<sup>232</sup> Kim Daejung, *op. cit.*, 171.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> "The reactions of Seoul citizens toward joint communiqué," *Maeil Kyungje*, 4<sup>th</sup> July 1972.

<sup>235</sup> Chung Iljoon, "Yusin Cheje'eui Mosun'gwa Hanmigaldeung: Minjujueui eob'neun gukgaanbo [Antinomy of the

ROK Constitution, which allowed him his third term, Park was not supposed to run another campaign for the presidency. He needed a special reason in order to extend his tenure. In that sense, the inter-Korean contact made him popular for a while, but was not a good enough reason to justify an additional term.

More seriously, the publication of the joint communiqué undermined the very foundation of the authoritarian regime, i.e., its anticommunism and/or anti-Northern attitudes. In terms of Cold War rhetoric, the Park regime lost its ideological colour due to its pragmatic and non-ideological decisions. Both liberal and conservative politicians criticized it, and the liberal opposition led by Kim Daejung, the left wing in the *New Democratic Party*, publicly lamented that the government did not consult the ROK citizens with such an important decision, and boasted Kim's insight for the inter-Korean relations. Simultaneously, the conservative oppositions, such as the right wing in the *NDP*, condemned South Korean government's exchange with the Communists who dispatched guerrillas to South Korea just few years prior – an ironic criticism for the model anticommunist.<sup>236</sup>

However, Park could not stop the inter-Korean contact mainly because of his relations with Nixon. What he could only do was minimize the impact of his new Communist policy. The elites of the Park administration tried to hold its ideological basis. Park continuously emphasized the Communist threat during his negotiations with Kim Il-sung.<sup>237</sup> This discordance in his words and actions increasingly made him seem awkward for both the Left and Right wings of South Korea. However, the North Korean aggressions toward the capitalists, immediately after the joint communiqué was announced, helped the South Korean leader to overcome the ideological dilemma and enabled his return to the original position of anticommunism.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, the North Korean leadership had argued that, 'since the DPRK-ROK had announced a joint communiqué, American imperialists should not interfere in our national affairs and [should] withdraw its invasion forces without delay.'<sup>238</sup> Kim Il-sung's threat did not work at all and was counter-productive. The Park regime did not accept this, and even the White House re-considered its withdrawal programme for US forces from South Korea due

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Yusin System and ROK-US Conflicts: National Security without Democracy],” *Sahoe'wa yoksa* 70 (2006): 172- 173.

<sup>236</sup> These two Kims affiliated in the same party, *Sinmin dang* (*New Democratic Party*), the largest opposition party in ROK. This party was a coalition of two heterogeneous groups, liberals and conservatives. For the reactions of *NDP*, see *Maeil Kyungje*, 4<sup>th</sup> July 1972.

<sup>237</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 158- 159.

<sup>238</sup> Korea International Cultural Association, “Nambukdaehwa: Nambukjojeolwiwonhoe, Nambukjeoksibjahoedam [South-North Korean dialogue: South North Coordinating Committee and South-North Red Cross talks],” Korea International Cultural Association 2 (1973).

to the seemingly aggressive attitude of the North Korean leadership.<sup>239</sup> Even South Korean citizens found it difficult to trust DPRK when they saw that North Korean Red Cross delegates, who visited Seoul in September, repeated ‘Our Chosen [North Korea] Labour Party’, ‘We Communists’, and ‘Dear great leader Kim Il-sung.’<sup>240</sup> South Korean press criticized the North Korean attitude and even argued that the ROK had to consider a Korean national reunification more cautiously.<sup>241</sup> Ironically, this overbearing North Korean manner only reinforced Park’s, “*war with talks*,” rhetoric for inter-Korean talks. The president sought to extend his tenure based on this unstable peace in South Korea.

The narrative of South Korea’s policy towards the North in the first half of 1972 is thus the story of a tenuous balancing act between a semblance of *détente*, and the maintenance of the traditional security imperatives of the Cold War, both in order to legitimise its anticommunist regime, and to secure the support of the USA. It is clear that the new American policy, reconciliation with the PRC, was the major driving force of the Korean dialogue in 1972. In terms of a global Cold War, dominated by the United States and the two Communist giants, this first diplomatic contact of the Koreas was a part of larger movement in Sino-US and Soviet-US negotiations. And partially, the growth of democratic movement in South Korea promoted the *détente* mood, as well.

However, the Park regime did not regard the inter-Korean talks as the path to the end of the Cold War and a peaceful reunification of Korea, due to its mistrust of Kim Il-sung. Furthermore, the South Korean elites believed that such a lenient approach to Pyongyang could undermine the ideological basis for its rule, anticommunism. In fact, it is highly doubtful that South and North Korea really tried to talk about their common future. As Pyongyang did, Seoul did not recognise the counterpart as a potential partner. The South Korean leadership just paid attention to the talk itself, that is, the impact of this fake-*détente* action on the ROK-US and the ROK domestic politics. Both South and North Korea wanted to win the proverbial battle rather than make compromises or make a peace agreement, hence they could not narrow the gap through this series of talks. Through the dialogues, Seoul aimed to simultaneously appease the US desire for *détente* and keep American forces on its territory, while Pyongyang wanted to ease

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<sup>239</sup> Paul M. Popple -the director of Office of Research and Analysis for East Asia and Pacific, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State- argued that inter-Korean talks are the important events which affect American status in Asia as well as ROK-US relations. He added that it became more difficult for Washington to withdraw its forces from ROK although DPRK demanded it. See INR/REA-Paul M. Popple to: EA-Marshall Green (Memorandum 1972.7.7).

<sup>240</sup> Park Gunyoung, Park Sunwon, and Wu Seungji, Park Gunyoung, Park Sunwon, and Wu Seungji, “Je 3Gonghwaguk Sigi Gukje Jungchi’wa Nambukgwangye [The International Politics and Inter-Korean Relations in the Third Republic]” National Strategy 51 (2008): 86.

<sup>241</sup> *Kyungbyang sinmun*, 18 September, 1972.

Nixon's mind and drive out the US troops from South Korea. Without a doubt, the talks, or the so-called battle itself, rested on America's decision regarding its troops in the ROK. The North Korean aggressive posture after July 1972 increasingly ruined the optimism of the Americans. The hostility between Seoul and Pyongyang further encouraged Park to 'upgrade' his authoritarian rule and re-arm the South Korean public with anticommunism ideology in order to sustain the dialogue with mutual mistrust.

(2) *Yusin* Reform: the setback in South Korean liberal policy

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 1972, three months after the announcement of the ROK-DPRK joint communiqué, the Park regime suddenly announced the *Yusin* reform.<sup>242</sup> That same day, the ROK president declared a national emergency and made the following special measures:

First, the National Assembly shall be dissolved, and the activities of all political parties and other political activities shall be suspended. Secondly, the Extraordinary State Council (hereafter ESC) will undertake the functions of the National Assembly. Thirdly, the ESC shall announce the draft amendments to the present Constitution with the view of peaceful unification of the nation.<sup>243</sup>

Along with these emergent measures, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October, the President, Park Chunghee, made constitutional changes. The essence of these changes is the indirect presidential election through the National Conference for Unification, which had the following three functions: (a) the election of the President, (b) to deliberate and decide the method for the reunification of Korea, and (c) to confirm appointed members of the National Assembly, who will be nominated by the President.<sup>244</sup> These functions of the NCU served only Park and eliminated any chance for other presidential candidates, since any political activity of a political party within/for the Conference was not permitted. That is, the NCU only could nominate Park Chunghee for the ROK presidency in practice. This sudden action puzzled the US leaders as well as South Korean citizens, both of whom had found no reason for another coup by Park.

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<sup>242</sup> Although many Koreans believe that the term, *Yusin* (維新), originates from Japanese *MeijiYishin* (明治維新), the root of the term is Chinese classic. Park's background, an army official in Japanese military forces, would have made people to link *Yusin* with *Meiji Yishin*.

<sup>243</sup> "The Special Declaration," Class Number 4783. 701, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea. See also The ROK ministry of foreign affairs, *op. cit.*, 293- 298.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid. English translation is available: "Telegram From the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State," Seoul, October 16, 1972, 1349Z, Korea, Vol. V, 1 Jan-31 Dec 1972, Part 2, Far East, Country Files, Box 543, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.



Regarding his action, Park remarked upon the unstable situation of South Korea. He indicated that there were too many different voices in the South in contrast to the North, and this division of public opinion would encourage Communist revolution attempts in the ROK. He argued that the new and 'strict' institution would resolve the conflict in ROK politics over the inter-Korean dialogue and frustrate the North Korean ambition for revolution inside of South Korea under the banner of Communism.<sup>245</sup> Despite his complex rhetoric, the essence of reform was simple, to allow lifetime tenure to the ROK president, and to get rid of all institutional checks against him in order to keep talking with Pyongyang. Although Park could extend his tenure with this reform, it appeared that he really believed that this was essential for further negotiation with Kim Il-sung.<sup>246</sup> Philip Habib, the US ambassador to Seoul, reported to the US State Department that Park's action was preparation for the future inter-Korean relations in a new international environment and criticising it as 'unnecessary' action.<sup>247</sup>

The ROK leadership considered that democracy was not efficient for national interests. Shin Jongdae pointed this out, arguing that the South Korean president only thought about the efficiency of the institution for the mobilisation of national power, and ignored the idea and value of democracy.<sup>248</sup> Simply, for Park, the democratic system was vulnerable to Communist propaganda. And, as North Korea intended, the joint communiqué of two Koreas encouraged domestic challenges toward the Park regime.<sup>249</sup> Although the challenges from both conservative and liberal oppositions were not strong enough to repel Park - due to public support for the new policy and Park's contribution to it - the president considered that these challenges would threaten his post in the near future.<sup>250</sup> For his main purposes, to maintain his post, Park had just two choices: to keep talking with Kim Il-sung and make the oppositions silent, or to stop negotiating with Pyongyang and hence prevent further challenges toward his rule. Park chose the first option because of the positive result of the Korean talks, e.g. the cease of North Korean military action against the South.<sup>251</sup>

More importantly, in the international perspective, the South Korean leader attempted to keep American support for his country through this reform. He indicated that the Sino-US

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<sup>245</sup> Kim Youngseon, *Janggwan chisa (appreciation of minister)*, 1972. Also refer to: Park Gunyoung, Park Sunwon, and Wu Seungji, *op.cit.*, 87.

<sup>246</sup> Ma Sangyoon, *op. cit.*, 189.

<sup>247</sup> "Comment on Martial Law and Government Changes in Korea," 1972. 10.16, POL 23-9 KOR S 2-28-72, Box 2427, RG59, National Archives.

<sup>248</sup> Shin Jongdae, *op. cit.*, 28.

<sup>249</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 25.

<sup>250</sup> Yi Jeongbok, *Hangook geunhyundae'sa [Korea Modern Political history]*, (Seoul: Eulymunhwa company, 1992), 289-309.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

reconciliation is the other reason for the institutional change.<sup>252</sup> Park argued that the American rapprochement with China and the reduction of its troops in South Korea mounted the threat from the outside. And he dictated that South Korea should be re-structured for this national crisis. In the draft of the presidential proclamation for *Yusin*, the ROK president criticised that Sino-US relations in East Asia threatened South Korean security.<sup>253</sup> Even though this direct condemnation of US policy was deleted due to American request, Park did mention that the détente mood among the great powers was fake, and the reason why he introduced a drastic institutional change.

[...]There is now taking place a significant change in the balance of power among the big powers around the Korean peninsula. I think that this change may, directly or indirectly, bring forth a dangerous effect on the security of our country, because it might result in transforming the existing order in Asia as a whole and also threaten to affect adversely the security systems which have so far served as the effective backbone for maintaining the peace in this region.<sup>254</sup>

This sounded like Washington had abandoned Seoul. The South Korean leader knew that Nixon was cautious in his diplomatic relations with Mao Zedong, and his drastic reform comprising criticism on Sino-US relations would irritate the US president. In that sense, the reform was blackmail from Park to Nixon. The South Korean leader wanted to make clear that he could do anything that adversely affected the Sino-US bilateral affairs if Nixon worked against South Korean interests, e.g. the withdrawal of US troops.<sup>255</sup> Without the sponsorship of Washington, he would stop the inter-Korean talks, leading to the end of negotiations that ultimately would have a negative affect the US-Sino relations. The leader was assured that the White House would not reject his decision because of his role in the East-West reconciliation, an assumption that is supported by the American response to the South Korean national emergency in 1971 discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>256</sup> Basically, the Nixon administration was reluctant to

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<sup>252</sup> "The Special Declaration," 1972, Class Number 4783. 701, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>253</sup> "Comment on Martial Law and Government Changes in Korea," 1972. 10.16, POL 23-9 KOR S 2-28-72, Box 2427, RG59, National Archives.

<sup>254</sup> "The Special Declaration," 1972, Class Number 4783. 701, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea. See also The ROK ministry of foreign affairs, *op. cit.*, 293- 298.

<sup>255</sup> Kimiya Tadashi, "Dynamics of the Korean Cold War: A Consideration of the Impact of the United States-China Rapprochement in the early 1970s," Prepared for Presentation at the International Workshop on "The Cold War and the Korean Peninsula: The Domestic Politics and Foreign Relations of North- and South Korea" organized by the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, IFES & Beijing University, Beijing China, May 18, 2007: 14-15. And see also Ma Sangyun, *op. cit.*, 189- 190.

<sup>256</sup> "The Special Declaration," 1972, Class Number 4783. 701, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea. See also The

interfere in ROK domestic politics, and reserved itself to only making a negative comment on the overreaction of Park at the time.<sup>257</sup> In short, Nixon aimed to keep American support for South Korea without significant deterioration in ROK-US bilateral relations.

Park's criticism on US politics aimed to secure American support for South Korean security, but also revealed his strong antipathy toward détente.<sup>258</sup> Clearly, nobody was able to guarantee that Nixon's liberal approach toward Beijing and Moscow would bring peace to the East Asia and Pacific region. In Park's sense, détente was another mode of Cold War. And he argued that South Korea must be organized as a military nation in order to win this odd form of war.<sup>259</sup> The KCIA director agreed with Park. Lee Hurak who designed the *Yusin* institution said,

As I was in charge of inter-Korean talks, I could see our weakness [political challenges from oppositions]. Whenever I talked with North Koreans, they always mentioned that there are so many different ideas about [Korean] reunification method. When we had talks with North Korea, I never dreamt of *Yusin*. But I thought that we will be in trouble if there are too many different voices about reunification in South Korea. Hence I talked to my president, "With this institution, it is difficult to talk with Pyongyang. We have to unify our public opinion." ...<sup>260</sup>

Lee remembered that he suggested this to Park at the end of August, less than two months before *Yusin* Reform, and played a decisive role in its coming into effect<sup>261</sup> Simply, the Park regime argued that the opposition leaders, especially Kim Daejung, hamstrung its efforts both for peaceful reunification and national security. In addition, the elites blamed Washington of abandoning South Korea in this critical situation. In Park's logic, the authoritarian and anticommunist reform was an essential task for South Korea's peace.<sup>262</sup> However, ironically, this

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ROK ministry of foreign affairs, *op. cit.*, 293- 298.

In some sense, however, it is more exact to say that Washington was not able to check Park because of its domestic affairs: the timing of *Yusin* was did not fit into Nixon's busy schedule for him to be able to deal with this international issue seriously. The United States president was preparing the United States presidential election in November 1972. The ROK leader carefully managed his 'coup' against Washington and chose the date of the D-day carefully: just three weeks before the *Yusin* announcement, Philippine president Fernando Marcos did establish a strict and authoritarian institution, and the Nixon administration did nothing. For this see Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 38.

<sup>257</sup> "US Response to Korean Constitutional Revision," 1972. 10.23, POL 15-3 KOR S 1-1-70, Box 2426, RG59, National Archives.

<sup>258</sup> Ma Sangyoon and Park Wongon, "Détentegi'eui Hanmi Galdeung: Nixon, Carter'wa Park Chunghee [ROK-US Split in Détente Period: Nixon, Carter, and Park Chunghee]." Yeoksa bipyeong 86 (2009):. 123-4.

<sup>259</sup> Park Chunghee, *op. cit.*, 247- 278.

<sup>260</sup> "Lee Hurak Interview," *Shindonga*, October 1987.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Park Chunghee, *op. cit.*, 247- 278.

justification for *Yusin* was rejected by another KCIA official, Kang:

Did Park and Lee really initiate *Yusin* for ROK national security?

Definitely not! The institutional change was only for their power. They tried to keep their own power [through the new institution]. It was nothing but despotic measure which totally destroyed the South Korean democracy but worked for the Park regime.<sup>263</sup>

Kang's testimony was astonishing. KCIA was the core department of the new institution, and he was one of the important KCIA officials who managed North Korean affairs. In other words, he himself was responsible for this 'despotic' measure, but did not justify his past in the way that Lee and Park did. It would be in part because the ROK is not currently under Park's rule any longer, so that he could frankly confess the fault of the Park regime without any political pressure. This is a very cynical criticism that undermines Park and Lee's justification for keeping the national security state in place.<sup>264</sup> Definitely, the North Korean threat was not a proper excuse for Park's authoritarian reform, made during the peak of détente in Korea.

Furthermore, the other evidence negated Park's North Korean rhetoric for his reform. During his tea party with the United Nations Commission for Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea (UNCURK), Park asserted that Kim Il-sung gave up his ambition to conquer South Korea with military power.<sup>265</sup> Secondly, in contrast to its rationale for *Yusin*, the ROK did its best to maintain contact with the DPRK. Apart from Park's real intention, his drastic movement could stimulate Kim Il-sung. Surprisingly, according to American sources, the South Korean government might have reported the details of *Yusin* reform to North Korea before 17<sup>th</sup> October. This intelligence report was supported by North Korean reaction. Pyongyang did not issue any serious criticism on Park's drastic action.<sup>266</sup> Additionally, the two Koreas had scheduled Red Cross talks in November. In this context, the North Korean threat was not as serious as the

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<sup>263</sup> Interview with Kang Induk.

<sup>264</sup> It seemed that these two officials did not have a good relationship. For example, Kang and Lee did not reach an agreement on the North Korean negotiation. See footnote 33. In this context, the chief of KCIA North Korean Bureau, Kang Induk, merely underestimated Lee's consideration for ROK national security. If this is true, then this bias could be one of the limits of my research. However, even considering the bias, it is still noteworthy that even the elites of the Park administration did not like this drastic and unpopular reform.

<sup>265</sup> "President Park's Comment on South-North Talks, Korean Question at UN," 1972.8.23, POL KOR N- KOR S 7-14-72, Box 2422, RG59, National Archives.

<sup>266</sup> "Martial Law and Government Changes – Timing of Action," 1972. 10. 25, POL 23-9 KOR S 2-28-72, Box 2427, RG59; "Intelligence note: South North Talks, A Pause Follows Rapid Progress," 1972. 12.18, POL KOR N- KOR S 10-12-72, Box 2422, RG 59.

South Korean elites highlighted. The decisive cause of *Yusin*, therefore, was neither the American policy nor the Communist threat. It was the aspiration of the Park regime for more a powerful and legitimated rule.<sup>267</sup> The regime attempted to be free from any risk - from its own country (divided political parties, disoriented citizens), Communists, and even Washington, through the reform and inter-Korean talks.

Due to its deep impact on South Korean politics and society, *Yusin* has often been seen as the result of inter-Korean exchanges and American abandonment. It is not correct at all to regard it as just a by-product of any new Northern policy of Seoul and Washington, nor as a domestic event. The reform was the origin of the South Korean conflict with the US and Japan in the mid- and late 1970s, and new competition between the South and the North. The strong anticommunist nature of the new Park regime resulted in a setback in its relations with allies, which increased contact with Communists. First, it undermined the US influence on ROK politics and interests in South Korea.<sup>268</sup> In 1971, Nixon supported Kim Daejung during the ROK presidential campaign, which was a decisive factor pushing Park to talk with Kim Ilsung. As the general election was abolished by the new constitution, Washington could not control Seoul with its support for specific candidates, and the White House could not stop this reform due to inter-Korean talks that were a part of Sino-US diplomacy.

Despite South Korea's dependence on American military power, Washington had a difficult time managing its client state.<sup>269</sup> Clearly, Nixon became more reluctant to converse with Park, and almost excluded South Korea from his main diplomatic partner list. He felt betrayed by his partner in Seoul. In September 1972, Henry Kissinger, the National Security Advisor, proposed a US-ROK summit meeting to Nixon, to discuss the Korean reunification issue and the presence of ROK troops in Vietnam until 1974 in order to develop the partnership between the two allies. The proposed date of summit talks was either before or after the US presidential election in November 1972.<sup>270</sup> Yet it appeared that Nixon rejected Kissinger's proposal after

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<sup>267</sup> Ma Sangyoon, *op.cit.*, 174.

<sup>268</sup> Hong Seokryul, *Nixon Doctrine'gwa Park Chungbee Yusincheje* [*Nixon Doctrine and Park Chungbee's Yusin institution*]. (Seoul: Seohaemunjab, 2006), 81; Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 41.

<sup>269</sup> For the studies discussing this international challenge to ROK politics in early 1970s, refer to: Bae Geungchan, *1970nyeondae Jeonbangini Gookjebwangyeong Byeonhwa'wa Nambukgwangye* [*International Situation Changes and Relationship between the Two Koreas in First Half of 1970s*], (Seoul: Baeksan Seodang company, 1999); Ma Sangyun, "Anbo'wa Minjujuyi, geurigo Bak Jeonghui'ui gil [Security, Democracy and Park Chung Hee's Road: The Origins of the Yushin System Revisited]." *International Politics Collection of Treatises* 43 (2003); Shin Jongdae, "Yusin'cheje suribwonin'e gwanhan jaejomyeong: Bukhanyoin'ui yeonghyang'ga dongwon'eul jungsimeuro [The Renewed Discussion on the Causes of Establishment of Yusin Institution: Focusing on the impact of North Korea factor and mobilization of that]." *Social Science Research*, 13 (2004).

<sup>270</sup> Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, 14 September 1972, CO 78-2 Republic of Korea (South) 1969- 70, Box 48, White House Central Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

Park established his authoritarian rule and made his antagonism toward detente in October.

Secondly, the reform undermined the ideological ground of Seoul and its two major allies. As discussed above, Park blamed both close Japanese and American relations with the Communists in the draft of the presidential proclamation of the new institution.<sup>271</sup> Simply put, the Park regime described the present ROK as an isolated democratic country, which was fighting against the evil Communists on its own. Consequently, after reviewing the draft of *Yusin* Constitution before its announcement, both Japan and the US were upset with this sudden attack from Park and requested the ROK delete language critical of them.<sup>272</sup>

South Korea had already prepared for this situation, so that it could easily manage the resistance from US and Japan without any hesitation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs prepared answers to expected questions from US and/or oppositions officials that provided the rationale for institutional changes in the international context.<sup>273</sup> Yet both Washington and Tokyo did not have any intention of following Park's hard-line anticommunism movement at this point. But because the reform was established by ROK national referendum, Nixon decided to keep silent about *Yusin*.<sup>274</sup>

The ROK fear and hostility toward the communists, well reflected by its reform, soured its relationship with Japan. In contrast to South Korea, which rejected the détente mood in East Asia, the Japanese government interpreted Nixon's visit to the PRC and the USSR as an opportunity to normalize its relationship with the communists. On 29<sup>th</sup> September 1972, Tokyo and Beijing signed a joint statement establishing diplomatic relations between Japan and the PRC. According to Victor Cha, these developments made the South Korean commitment to Japanese defence unnecessary. Even further, its partnership with the ROK, an aggressive anticommunist country, was not helpful to its national security at that moment.<sup>275</sup>

As discussed in the previous chapter, Japan's close ties with the ROK and Taiwan offended North Korea and the PRC. Japan was fully aware of those feelings and therefore limited its confrontational policy toward the North only to encourage Beijing and Moscow. Technically, its cooperation with the Park regime until the end of 1971 was the last resort for its

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<sup>271</sup> "Comment on Martial Law and Government Changes in Korea," 1972. 10.16, POL 23-9 KOR S 2-28-72, Box 2427, RG59.

<sup>272</sup> Regarding American request on change in the draft, see Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Korea, Washington, October 17, 1972, 0026Z, 1 Jan–31 Dec 1972, Vol. V, Korea, Far East, Country Files, Box 543, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives and also see "Modifications in ROKG Presidential Declaration", 1972. 10. 17, POL 23-9 KOR S 2-28-72, Box 2427, RG59. Regarding Japanese response, see Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol 10, 165. According to Cho, Park criticized Japan that it had no guts.

<sup>273</sup> "The Special Declaration," 1972, Class Number 4783. 701, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>274</sup> "US Response to Korean Constitutional Revision," 1972. 12. 23, POL 15-3 KOR S 1-1-70, Box 2425, RG59.

<sup>275</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 116.

own security when the US tried to end its commitment to the safeguarding of East Asia.<sup>276</sup> Later, Tanaka Kakuei succeeded Sato Eisaku, who actively worked for the Japanese partnership with the ROK and Taiwan in July 1972. The new PM started to talk with mainland China - an action that annoyed the ROK. The South Korean argued, "Sino-Japan normalization would pave the path to Japanese-North Korean diplomatic and economic ties."<sup>277</sup> As such, the ideological ties between Seoul and Tokyo became weak.

Documents from the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs support this idea. The South Korean government considered that Japan tried to have a relationship with both South and North Korea in order to reduce tension with the communists and seek economic benefits by exporting goods to North Korea. A South Korean analysis of the Japanese 'realpolitik' turned out to be extremely hostile. These documents did not hide its antagonism toward Japan's opportunistic behaviour in 1972.<sup>278</sup> However, this was the only the beginning of the deterioration of the ROK-Japanese relations, and in 1973 and 74, the relations between two East Asian allies became worst since they formed their alliance.

Regarding the inter-Korean relations discussed above, Pyongyang intended to encourage the split in ROK politics through its talks with Seoul. The *Yusin* institution, which eliminated all potential threats to Park's rule in South Korean domestic politics, deprived the DPRK of one of its most important goals in its exchange with the ROK: destabilisation of the Park regime. Ironically, Park's efforts toward national security eliminated the interests the North Korean delegation favoured in the peace talks, and ultimately opened the new phase of military competition on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>279</sup>

In his interview with foreign journalists, Kim Ilsung clearly indicated the prerequisites for the Korean reunification. He said that the US imperialists had to return to their country, and the two Koreas should promote their political freedom. He criticized the deployment of US forces in South Korea, and asked the South to allow the progressive and liberal people to join the inter-Korean talks.<sup>280</sup> However, in contrast to Kim's hope, the inter-Korean dialogue produced entirely different results. The constitutional change which legitimated Park's dictatorship clearly affected the North Korean idea about its peace approach toward Seoul, since

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<sup>276</sup> "Chinese Premier, Chou Enlai's visit to North Korea in April 1970," 1970, Class Number 3598. 725.32,CP,Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>277</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 118.

<sup>278</sup> "Japan's policy toward Korean Peninsula, 1973," 1973, Class Number 721.2JA,Diplomatic Archives, Republic of Korea.

<sup>279</sup> Shin Wookhee, "Giheo'eseo Gyochk Sangtae'ro [From Opportunity to Stalemate]." Korea politics and diplomatic history collection 26 (2005): 269.

<sup>280</sup> Kim Ilsung, *Weagug Gijadeul'i Jegi'han Jilmun'e Daehan Dabbyeon [His answers to questions of foreign journalists]*, (Pyongyang: Chosun Labour Party Press, 1973), 37.

Pyongyang's aim - to promote the challenge of oppositions toward Park Chunghee - emerged as impossible due to *Yusin* reform.<sup>281</sup> Furthermore, this drastic action checked Nixon's policy and prevented the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea, which Pyongyang had always wished for.<sup>282</sup> As a result, DPRK started to question the benefit from inter-Korean contact.

Nonetheless, the DPRK did not make an instant change in its strategy toward South Korea, since it benefited from the by-product of the inter-Korean talks as well. As the South Korean elites indicated, Kim Ilsung sought to gain legitimacy for his regime from other countries using the inter-Korean exchanges.<sup>283</sup> Washington also expected that many countries in the UN would recognise the DPRK due to the inter-Korean talks.<sup>284</sup> Even though the ROK did not yet recognise North Korea as a sovereign state, the international society considered DPRK a legitimated state due to the inter-Korean political exchanges, which clearly recognised two Koreas on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>285</sup>

The role of the DPRK in the détente between the two Communist giants, the PRC and USSR, along with the US through inter-Korean talks, became more prominent than before. In terms of international politics, Pyongyang benefited much more from the negotiations than Seoul did. Before the two Koreas started to talk, South Korea had relations with many more countries than the North. However, the inter-Korean dialogues changed this situation. Whereas the ROK did not make any considerable progress in diplomacy with the Communist states in spite of its efforts, North Korea could make a significant number of diplomatic relations with capitalist countries.<sup>286</sup> For this reason, Pyongyang might have just *deferred* to stop inter-Korean talks, as they were no longer valid for its primary purpose.

In short, the development of inter-Korean relations and the US rapprochement with China pushed the Park regime to re-structure the political system of South Korea. Seemingly, Park did believe that the ROK needed to restrict any political movement that could support Kim Ilsung in South Korea, while assuring his lifetime tenure with this *Yusin* 'reform.' The drastic institutional re-organization, therefore, was the product of Park's realistic politics that met the new international environment and aspiration for the political power. This new institution,

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<sup>281</sup> "South-North Talks", 1972.7.4, POL KOR N- KOR S, 6-29-72, Box 2421, RG59.

<sup>282</sup> "US Policy in Korea- Country Team Message", 1972.12.10, POL 1 KOR S-US 1973, Box 2429, RG59; and "US Policy toward the Korean Peninsula", 1973. 4. 18, POL, 27-7, KOR N, 5-5-70, Box 2421, RG59, National Archives.

<sup>283</sup> "Red Cross Talks - October 24 meeting," 1972. 10.13, POL KOR N- KOR S 10-12-72, Box 2422, RG59 and "South North Contacts", 1972. 9.19, POL KOR N- KOR S 7-14-72, Box 2422, RG59, National Archives.

<sup>284</sup> "The Impact of the Korean Talks", 1972.7.7, PIL KOR S-US 9-27-71, Box 2429, RG59, National Archives.

<sup>285</sup> The conservative group of *NDP* condemned the Park administration for its secret talks with Pyongyang because any negotiation between the two Koreas would represent an acknowledgement of two Koreas on the Korean Peninsula. This assumption is inconsistent with the South Korean constitution which did not recognise North Korea as a state. Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 43- 45.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*



however, strongly limited the development of liberal and progressive ideas for the inter-Korean relations, and hence failed to work for the Korean nationalistic aim of the reunification of Korea. Therefore, the *Yusin* reform was not merely the result of a new South Korean policy toward North Korea, but also the cause of a new military conflict with the DPRK. The strong anticommunist spirit of Park through such actions also confirmed the gap in policy toward communism between Seoul and its two closest allies, Washington and Tokyo, and soured their relations.

### (3) The renewal of confrontation in Korea and reconciliation with the allies, 1973- 74

In 1973 and 74, despite its continuous efforts to maintain the peace behind hostility on the Korean Peninsula, South Korea failed to make Kim Il-sung stay at the table. Pyongyang increasingly lost its interests in the dialogue, which only restrained its military measures, and did not make any change in the balance of the two Koreas. Specifically, Kim was deeply disappointed with Nixon's decision to leave the US troops in the ROK, and Park's domination of South Korean politics. Indeed, along with the US decision, the suppression on the liberal politician, Kim Dae-jung, was North Korea's primary reason to end the Korean talks. The ROK was forced to return its confrontational policy toward the DPRK after Pyongyang unilaterally stopped the dialogue. Besides, the ROK faced serious setbacks in its diplomacy after its new authoritarian institution strongly rejected the common idea of its two allies, Japan and the US, about détente. It is noteworthy that the two powers were still in the détente mood with the communists in 1973 while Seoul returned to the Cold War. The discrepancy between the South and its two allies was well demonstrated by their reaction toward KCIA's abduction of Kim Dae-jung from Japan. The Blue House was condemned by its two allies for that political crime and its 'misperception,' in the international environment.

However, the second North Korean campaign against the South, the American hardship in Southeast Asia, and limitation in its negotiations with Moscow and Beijing increasingly encouraged the reunion of the three allies. Coupled with their disappointing progress in the diplomatic discussion with the PRC and the USSR, the North Korean threat led Japan and the US to reconcile with the ROK. Gerald R. Ford, who replaced Nixon in August 1974, gave his best effort to keep the stability of his East Asian allies and helped in the settlement of the dispute between the ROK and Japan in the Cold War rhetoric. In spite of the widespread hostility toward the despotic South Korean president in the US Congress, the new US leader

visited South Korea and revived the partnership against communists.<sup>287</sup> The years of 1973 and 74 marked the transitional period in which the ROK conflicted with its allies due to their discrepancy in the Cold War strategy, and so they adjusted their ideas in order to meet their common security interests. The ROK quickly returned to its fierce battle with the Communists, and the other two countries slowly but surely prepared the next phase of the Cold War in this era.

After the enforcement of the *Yusin* institution, Kim Daejung strongly questioned Park's draconian reform and his success in his Northern policy 1972. The democratic activist denounced the South Korean president that he abused South Korean people's aspiration for national reunification for his own political power.<sup>288</sup> Despite South Korea's drastic change, the two Koreas did not halt their talks immediately. Pyongyang's silence even helped Park. Some conservative groups, such as the Korea Veteran Association (KVA), extolled Park's conservative reform as a valiant endeavour for the Korean nation. The South Korean press had a similar response; one newspaper introduced the KVA's support for Park and even called *Yusin* 'the reform orienting a peaceful reunification.'<sup>289</sup> Kim Daejung lamented the death of the ROK democracy as well as such an optimism widely spread in the ROK public.

This opinion [the positive viewpoint of the South Koreans toward *Yusin*] was clearly introduced in the newspapers. This was the most painful situation to me. It appeared that I had isolated myself [from ROK society]. Yet I expressed my belief that the Park regime's aim is not to establish national reunification but to prolong its rule. And he [Park] is just using the national justification [reunification] for this. And my belief was proved true.<sup>290</sup>

As Kim argued, Park's reform was not helpful for the national unity of Korea at all. In fact, the two Koreas had not produced any significant agreement since late 1972.<sup>291</sup> Evidently, the series of inter-Korean meetings by the South-North Adjusting Committee ended with a huge gap between two brothers in the process for reunification. Unlike Lee Hurak who strongly advocated the necessity of political exchanges between the governments, Park limited the exchanges between the two Koreas on the civil level, e.g. the activities for reunion of separated

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<sup>287</sup> Before his visit, only two US presidents visited South Korea, Dwight D. Eisenhower and Lyndon B. Johnson.

<sup>288</sup> Kim, Daejung, *op. cit.*, 172.

<sup>289</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1972.

<sup>290</sup> Kim, Daejung, *op. cit.*, 181.

<sup>291</sup> Hong Seokryul, *op.cit.*, 81.

families in South and North Korea.<sup>292</sup> Coupled with the American decision to end the pullout plan, the cautious approach of stability in the ROK eliminated North Korean interests in the exchanges. In this situation, for Pyongyang, which wanted to divide the South Korean society, Kim's resistance toward Park was a very important reason to maintain its contact with Seoul, since the liberal and democratic activist encouraged the domestic resistance against the Park regime.

Both in Japan and the US, Kim Daejung was actively working with Japanese leftists and condemned Park's draconian rule. Kim argued that Tokyo and Washington would have to stop their support for Seoul in order to revive South Korean democracy. He met Dr. Jerome A. Cohen, the first American academic to visit the DPRK in 1972, and asked Cohen to urge the White House to stop providing aid to the ROK.<sup>293</sup> Kim Daejung's anti-*Yusin* movement stimulated the Park regime and the KCIA. And the ROK government did not allow him to continue his resistance out of Korea. Not surprisingly, he was not safe even though he was in Japan. In 1973, the organization decided to punish Kim.

On 24<sup>th</sup> July 1973, the KCIA spy ship, *Yonggeum ho*, departed from Busan for Osaka. On 29<sup>th</sup> July, the ship arrived in Osaka. Five sailors including two KCIA agents were charged with abducting Kim Daejung. From Osaka, they drove to Tokyo. On 8<sup>th</sup> August, Kim was abducted by two unidentified assailants in the Palace hotel in Tokyo. The next day, he was loaded into the KCIA spy ship by the KCIA agents. The ship headed to Busan. However, the Japanese police identified that the Blue House was involved in this criminal act when they found a fingerprint left by First Secretary Kim Dongwoon, at the ROK embassy in Tokyo.<sup>294</sup>

It was reported to Park on the same day that Kim had been kidnapped. According to Cho Kabje who interviewed various persons under Park Chunghee at that time, Park was surprised by the report. Cho argued that Park was not the one who directed the KCIA mission.<sup>295</sup> It is clear that the KCIA director, Lee Hurak, was the one who had been directly involved in this action. Park negated his involvement. He even assumed that Kim Daejung planned this incident by himself in order to slander Park.<sup>296</sup> However, Habib, the US ambassador, nullified Park's argument and indicated that Park "explicitly or implicitly" approved

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<sup>292</sup> "Foreign Minister Discusses November 2-4 Coordinating Committee Meeting and Related Matters", 1972. 11. 10, POL 32-4 KOR N- KOR S 12-1-70, Box 2422, RG 59 and "North South Talks: A Status Report", 1972. 11. 20, POL KOR N- KOR S 10-12-72, Box 2422, RG59). The two Koreas had six meetings from October 1972 to August 1973. But they did not make any joint communiqué upon what they agreed during these meetings.

<sup>293</sup> "Kidnapping of Kim Daejung, 1973," 1973- 74, Vol4. National Assembly hearings), Class Number 701 Diplomatic Archives, Republic of Korea.

<sup>294</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.* Vol. 10, 240.

<sup>295</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 242.

<sup>296</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 241.

Lee's plan. In his telegram to Washington, Habib affirmed that Park was in charge of this terrorism.

[...] The Kim case has had a corrosive effect on the Korean domestic scene and the image of the Park government abroad. The kidnapping itself, Kim's surfacing in Seoul and the subsequent domestic events still unfolding have heightened internal ROKG rivalries and are illuminating the increasingly authoritarian, coercive nature of the Park government, particularly its reliance on the police agencies as the essential instrument for the exercise of political power. [...] In actual fact, the kidnapping was the act of the ROK CIA, certainly under the direction of Yi Hu-rak [Lee Hurak] and, probably with explicit or implicit approval of President Park. [...]<sup>297</sup>

The US ambassador was informed of Kim's kidnapping on 8<sup>th</sup> August as well. He immediately ordered his aides to find out where the victim was. The next morning, informed that KCIA had seized Kim Daejung, Habib contacted the Blue House. It seems that the US embassy was able to prevent Kim from being murdered by the agents, as he returned to Seoul on 13 August.<sup>298</sup> Kim, one of the most influential rivals of Park, was back in the ROK, but under house arrest.

There are many unclear points in this event, but its implications and impact are very clear. First and foremost, the relationship between the ROK and Japan was deteriorated further. The ROK government did not negate its infringement on Japanese sovereignty and delivered a statement of *regret*. However, due to South Korean hostility against Japanese relations with the communists and historical animosity, the ROK government did not accept the Japanese request to return Kim Daejung to Japan and to let Japan investigate Kim Dongwoon, the first secretary at the ROK embassy in Tokyo whose fingerprint was detected in the Grand Palace hotel.<sup>299</sup> And the statement of regret itself was only given to Japan after its lengthy brawl with South Korea. The South Korean government forcefully closed *Yomiuri Shinbum* local offices in Seoul on 24 August, 1973 for its report implicating the KCIA involvement in the political kidnapping. In

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<sup>297</sup> "The Kim Dae-jung case-an overview, Secret," Cable, 10 October, 1973, Japan and the United States., 1960- 1976, Item Number: JU01813., National Security Archive.

<sup>298</sup> *The Times*, 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1999. Donald Gregg was a director of the CIA in ROK at that time. It was Gregg that informed to Habib what happened in Japan. In this article of the Times, he argued that Habib visited the Blue House to talk with Park on 9 August in order to save Kim. Yet there is no evidence that indicates Habib's visit to Park's office other than his statement. Even Habib did not say that he met Park on 9 August. However, it is possible that the ROK president requested the ambassador to keep the matter secret.

<sup>299</sup> According to Kim Hyosoon, Kim Dongwoon was a KCIA agent in fact. Kim Hyosoon, *Il Gong'an'eun Nabchi'reul Sajeon'e Alat'da* [The Japanese public security office did know the kidnapping in advance], *Hankyoreh* 21, issue 666, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

response to this, the government of Japan recalled its ambassador from Seoul for consultation.<sup>300</sup> According to the ROK official documents about this incident, even opposition parties expressed their hostility toward Japan while criticising the KCIA and the Park regime. They even blamed the Japanese government of not checking Kim's political activities against the ROK government.<sup>301</sup> But the ROK leadership needed Japanese funds, and so made a compromise with Japan by delivering a statement of regret.<sup>302</sup> Yet this split between the two allies completely nullified their efforts for mutual interests between 1969 and 1971. Without any doubt, both Seoul and Tokyo refused to understand each other's mindset. For Japanese perspective, South Korea just attempted to destroy the peace in East Asia.

Washington, which bridged these two countries in the 1960s, was also concerned about the conflict. The US embassy reported to the White House that the Blue House utilised the national hostility and Cold War rhetoric toward Japan in order to restrain Japanese protest. The US ambassador believed that the ROK strategy worked successfully and prevented the worst case, the end of diplomatic relations.<sup>303</sup> However, this does not mean that the United States accepted South Korea's aggressive approach toward communists.

Due to this incident and the *Yusin* reform, Washington was further disappointed with Park and questioned his reliability. His political adventure increasingly irritated Washington. For Nixon, it was Park Chunghee who most likely could break down the peace in East Asia. Accordingly, the US should have checked Park's excessive behaviour but could not. Washington could not use its ultimate card to control the ROK (the withdrawal of US forces in South Korea) because of its decision made in April to stay. Moreover, the White House was well aware that the Park regime would take any action to damage the American relations with the communists if Nixon tried to punish Park. Due to the realistic concern of Washington, the excessive action of

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<sup>300</sup> "Seoul reported mollifying Tokyo over kidnapping" *Japan Times*, 1 September. 1973; and *New York Times*, 1<sup>st</sup> September.1973.

<sup>301</sup> "Kidnapping of Kim Daejung, 1973" 1973- 74, Vol.4 National Assembly hearings, Class Number 701, Diplomatic Archives, Republic of Korea. There is another interesting point in this discussion at the National Assembly. Many participants including members of *NDP* criticized Kim for his anti-government activities abroad as he tarnished South Korean reputation. This is confusing. Why did *NDP* members condemn their leader? However, as I already indicated before, there were two different factions in this party. The party was a coalition between liberal and conservative minor parties in fact. The members who stood against Kim were conservatives that competed with Kim's liberal faction. Since 1972 when Kim moved to Japan, his oppositions dominated *NDP*. That's why the participants from the party in this discussion did not advocate Kim Daejung. Regarding the intra-party competition within *NDP*, see chapter 2 of this thesis or Kim Daejung, Kim, Daejung, *Hangdong'haneun Yangsim [My Fight for Democracy in Korea]*, (Seoul: Geumundang Publishing, 2009).

<sup>302</sup> Richard Halloran, "Tokyo and Seoul Harden Positions," *Japan Times*, 10 October. 1973.

<sup>303</sup> "The Kim Dae-jung case-an overview," Secret, Cable, 10 October, 1973, Japan and the United States., 1960-1976, Item Number: JU01813. Department of state, National Security Archive. Habib's analysis could be wrong: some argue that the ROK government gained approval from Japanese government in advance and even provided a great amount of money to the Japanese Prime Minister, Tanaka Kakuei. If this is the case, the Japanese government just pretended to push the ROK government. See Kim Hyosoon, *op. cit.*

Seoul was not properly checked.<sup>304</sup>

Park was well aware of the animosity in US politics toward his aggressive behaviour and might have thought he could not recover his popularity in the US.<sup>305</sup> This gap between the two allies was demonstrated by ROK's decision during the first oil crisis starting in October 1973. The members of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries proclaimed an oil embargo in response to the American support to Israel.<sup>306</sup> OAPEC stopped supplying oil to South Korea, an ally of US. However, Park decided to disassociate the ROK from the American Middle East policy and even assured Arab states that the ROK-US relationship has been soured in order to secure the oil supply from the Middle East.<sup>307</sup> For this, the KCIA restricted the ROK press that released biased news about the Middle East War.<sup>308</sup> This could be criticized as opportunistic diplomacy, but demonstrates how the ROK-US relationship had been deteriorated compared to the Lyndon Johnson era, when South Korea decided to dispatch its troops to Vietnam and had gained enthusiastic support from Washington.

In contrast to the two allies of Seoul, Pyongyang made an extreme response to Kim's tragedy. On 28<sup>th</sup> August, the North Korean vice premier as well as Kim Ilsung's younger brother, Kim Youngju delivered a statement on North Korean television and criticized the director of the KCIA for his violent action. This second most powerful man in the DPRK was a co-chairman in the South-North Adjusting Committee together with Lee Hurak. The North Korean vice premier declared that he could not work with such an oppressive person.<sup>309</sup> Yet the DPRK actually just wanted to stop talking with the ROK. Eventually, Park dismissed Lee from all official positions on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1973, but this did not influence any change on the North Korean decision on 28<sup>th</sup> August.<sup>310</sup>

It is noteworthy that Pyongyang stopped negotiations with Seoul right after the incident

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<sup>304</sup> Yet this does not mean that the United States government did not have any idea about his inhumane and draconian movement: especially in the United States Congress, along with the *Yusin* reform, the moral problem of the Park regime and human rights issues in South Korea had been seriously discussed since 1972. And the United States legislature reduced the amount of aid for the modernisation of the ROK armed forces. Nevertheless, the Nixon and the Ford administration did not take the moral problem in South Korea into realistic concern. In the end, however, Jimmy Carter had questioned Park's despotic rule and raised the withdrawal issue again, right after his inauguration in 1976. The details of this issue will be discussed in the next chapter. See Ma Sangyoon and Park Wongon, *op.cit.*, 123.

<sup>305</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol 11, 12- 52.

<sup>306</sup> "Second Arab Oil Embargo, 1973-1974," US State Department, <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/OPEC>.

<sup>307</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol 11, 12- 52.

<sup>308</sup> "Republic of Korea's position on the Middle East War, 1973," 1973, Class Number 721.1XF, Diplomatic Archives, Republic of Korea.

<sup>309</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 29 August, 1973.

<sup>310</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1973.

was revealed. Some authors and the ROK government argue that KCIA's abduction of Kim merely provided a good justification to the North who wanted to stop any inter-Korean negotiation and return to its old confrontational policy toward the South. ROK's logic sounds reasonable. Pyongyang noticed that it could not raise any significant challenge against the Park regime after the ROK adopted a new institution. Therefore, the political lynchpin to democratic activists, the *Yusin* reform, might have been used by Kim Ilsung to stop his talks with Park.<sup>311</sup> However, this is not exact in some sense. Kim Daejung was in Japan and actively worked for anti-*Yusin* movements there. For Pyongyang, which wanted to divide the South Korean society, Kim's existence itself was a very important reason to maintain its contact with Seoul. That is, after Kim was abducted from Tokyo, and therefore could not challenge Park, the DPRK lost one of its most significant reasons to talk with the ROK. Already, Pyongyang had lost the other goal of its negotiations with Seoul, as Washington officially cancelled its withdrawal schedule of the US armed forces from South Korea.<sup>312</sup>

However, Kim Daejung's persecution was not the only reason for this breakdown, even though Pyongyang, through this incident, had reached the limits of its patience.<sup>313</sup> Kim Youngju also mentioned that Park Chunghee's statement on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1973 was not tolerable by the Korean people because Park intended the permanent division of Korea.<sup>314</sup> The so called "6.23 declaration" or "Diplomatic Policy Proclamation for Peaceful Unification of 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1973" confirmed that the ROK government did not oppose the DPRK's application to join UN, and that the two Koreas could not intervene in each other's internal affairs. It means that the ROK *de facto* recognised the two Koreas on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>315</sup> At first glance, North Korea's negative response to this realpolitik of the Blue House seems irrational. Pyongyang could have created more and better chances to have diplomatic relations with other countries resulting from this decision. Yet, seemingly, it was South Korea's efforts to maintain the negotiations which did not make any progress in the reunification debates for Korea.

But Park's idea was tricky for the following reasons: since the joint communiqué in July

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<sup>311</sup> This argument is made by persons who usually reject Kim Daejung's role in the inter-Korean exchange and question his real intention in his liberal approach towards the North. Among them, Cho Kabje is one of the most significant authors. See Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol.10, 46.

<sup>312</sup> "US Policy toward the Korean Peninsula," 1973. 4. 18, POL, 27-7, KOR N, 5-5-70, Box 2421, RG59, National Archives. Shin Wookhee, "Giheo'eseo Gyochk Sangtae'ro [From Opportunity to Stalemate]." Korea politics and diplomatic history collection 26 (2005): 269.

<sup>313</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 43- 44.

<sup>314</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 29<sup>th</sup> August, 1973. Interestingly, both South and North Korea did not recognise each other a 'legitimated' country. In principle, the inter-Korean talks were regarded as a negotiation with the puppet regime of either USA or USSR respectively.

<sup>315</sup> Chi Bongdo, "Building a unification infrastructure: To legislate a basic inter-Korean law." East Asian Review 16 (2004): 111.

1972, the DPRK had already established diplomatic relations with a lot of Western countries. Furthermore it joined the World Health Organization of the UN in May 1973 even before Park declared his new idea.<sup>316</sup> In other words, the ROK's 'new' policy toward the DPRK was only recognition of the existing reality. Even worse, this policy could limit Pyongyang's propaganda to the South because those two Koreas had no justification to intervene in each other's politics if they recognised each other as a legitimate sovereign entity. Moreover, the DPRK did not want to lose its influence in inter-Korean competition or negotiations. Pyongyang might have considered that it could not destabilise South Korea under Park's tight control after Kim Daejung was emasculated by KCIA in Japan.<sup>317</sup>

The North Korean leadership was disappointed with the result of the dialogue. It expected that Washington would withdraw all of its forces from South Korea, but there was no exchange between Seoul and Washington about this issue.<sup>318</sup> The Nixon administration considered that further reduction of US forces from South Korea could break the balance between the two Koreas and end the peace on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>319</sup> This pushed Pyongyang to return to its hostile strategy. In the second half of 1973, the DPRK resumed its military provocations against the ROK which reached their peak in 1974.

After announcing the end of negotiations with the ROK, the DPRK slowly but surely raised the tension on the Korean Peninsula. In October 1973, the North Korean navy started to carry out provocative actions in the contiguous waters off the West Sea (or Yellow Sea) of the Korean peninsula. In December, North Korea claimed that the waters contiguous to the group of five islands - under the military control of the UN command, off the west coast of South Korea - were within its own sovereign coastal waters. Pyongyang also noticed that it would take "proper steps" against the vessels sailing to the area without its permission. Seoul was furious with North Korea's provocative actions and solidified their beliefs that the DPRK did not have any intention to abide by the joint communiqué of 1972.<sup>320</sup>

Nonetheless, this did not end Park's efforts for the inter-Korean relations. On 16<sup>th</sup> November 1973, Henry Kissinger visited Seoul on his way back from China. For four and half hours, the US National Security Advisor explained the result of his talks with Chinese elites and Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972. Unlike his president who maintained a bad relationship with

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<sup>316</sup> Shin Wookhee, *op. cit.*, 269.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, 267.

<sup>319</sup> "Korean Policy Reconsideration: A Two-Korea Policy," 29<sup>th</sup> May 1973, Pol 32-4 Kor/UN, Subject-Numeric Files, National Archives.

<sup>320</sup> The ROK ministry of foreign affairs, *The chronology of ROK diplomatic history, 1973*, (Seoul: The ROK ministry of foreign affairs), 302.



Park, Kissinger continuously attempted to calm down the aggressive South Korean president and assured Park an American military support for South Korea. And the National Security Advisor recommended the ROK president keep his negotiation with Kim Ilsung.<sup>321</sup>

With American support, the Park regime made continuous efforts to resume the inter-Korean dialogue. Immediately after Park-Kissinger meeting, the South requested that the North resume the Red Cross talks and the South-North Adjusting Committee meeting.<sup>322</sup> In January 1974, the ROK president even proposed a non-aggression agreement to Pyongyang during a beginning-of-the-year press conference.<sup>323</sup> But these proposals were utterly ignored by the DPRK. On 15<sup>th</sup> February, North Korean naval vessels ambushed South Korean fishing boats in the West Sea. They killed the poor South Korean fishermen and abducted the survivors.<sup>324</sup> South Korean elites realized that their efforts were totally useless. Park Chunghee condemned Kim Ilsung's ambition and provocative actions on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1974, one year after he made "6.23 Declaration." He assured South Korean citizens that they must be armed with the principles of anticommunism.<sup>325</sup> However, it was Park himself that resulted in the new rivalry between the two Koreas, and he was not able to manage the North Korean provocation properly. Since the *Yusin* institution established his own dictatorship, everything had gone bad. Kim Daejung argued against Park's rule to Japan, leading to his kidnapping. However, the nightmare had just begun. The most tragic event of the new inter-Korean rivalry happened only two months later, on the happiest Korean anniversary that celebrated Korea's liberation from Japanese rule.

On 15<sup>th</sup> August 1974, Park Chunghee delivered a speech at the National Theatre of the ROK. At some moment, a young man ran down the aisle of the theatre and fired gunshots at the stage where Park, his wife, his aides, and choirs were. The president quickly ducked down behind a lectern on stage, which saved his life, but his wife did not. Yook Youngsoo, the ROK first lady and beloved one by the South Korean people for her good deeds, was shot and fatally wounded. She was quickly moved to the hospital but died soon after. The assassin, Moon Sekwang, was a Korean resident living in Japan and pretended to be a Japanese VIP invited to the 8.15 Ceremony at the National Theatre. It appeared that he was trained and instructed to kill Park by

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<sup>321</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Seoul, November 16, 1973, POL 7 US/Kissinger, Box 24, Central Files 1970–1973 (TS Files), RG 59, National Archives. The meeting was held in the Blue House. It is also impressive that Kissinger did not mention the human rights issue in South Korea which had been critically discussed in the US Congress since the establishment of *Yusin* institution in 1972. In his realistic view, Kissinger might have ignored the sensitive issue that could worsen the ROK-US relations. For this, see Kim Jeongryeom, *Oh, Park Chunghee*, (Seoul: Chung-ang M&B, 1997), 114–116.

<sup>322</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1973.

<sup>323</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 18<sup>th</sup> January, 1974.

<sup>324</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1974.

<sup>325</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1974.

a pro-North Korean group in Japan, *Jochongnyeon*. According to South Korean official documents, Moon was a twenty-two-year-old South Korean resident of Osaka and entered the ROK with a fake Japanese passport. He had used a pistol stolen from an Osaka police station.<sup>326</sup> Moon Sekwang's terrorism proved that North Korea had changed its strategy again and had resumed its military campaign against the South. Along with Pyongyang's provocation in the West Sea of the ROK, this event completely concluded the "détente" on the Korean Peninsula.

This incident tested the ROK-Japan-US relations once again. This second ROK-Japanese Crisis in 1970s was far more influential on alliance politics than the first one. It scratched the ROK-Japanese bilateral relations, not fully recovered from the first impact in 1973. As it did in the last year, the Blue House questioned Japanese responsibility to anti-ROK groups in Japan. For the ROK, Japan was a centre of reactionaries and had to properly restrict their activities towards its ally. South Korea even demanded an official "apology" from Japan for this tragic incident. Tanaka Kakuei, the Japanese prime minister, did not accept this demand.<sup>327</sup> The government of Japan neither admitted its responsibility for this occasion, nor condemned the DPRK, since it did not want to agitate North Korea. Moreover, the Tanaka administration argued that the *Yusin* institution was the ultimate cause of this incident.<sup>328</sup> That is, Japan focused on Moon himself, and his personal beliefs against Park's draconian rule, rather than on the one's supporting him. Hence Japan was reluctant to cooperate with the ROK to instigate and punish *Jochongnyeon*. This neutral Japanese attitude greatly annoyed Park, who had just lost his wife, and was furious with Kim Ilsung for pulling strings behind pro-North Korean groups in Japan.

Park implied that the ROK would terminate diplomatic relations with Japan unless Tanaka accepts his demands, to apologize for this incident and monitor the North Korean community in Japan.<sup>329</sup> Nonetheless, Japan did not make its decision quickly because of its deep national pride.<sup>330</sup> With American arbitrations, this case was settled on 19<sup>th</sup> September. Japan dispatched a special envoy, Shiina Essaburo, a vice-president of the Japanese LDP, to express "regret" over the assassination attempt, rather than to "apologise" for it. Shiina also provided a *note verbale* that the government of Japan would monitor anti-ROK groups in Japan. Yet he did

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<sup>326</sup> "President Park Assassination attempt, 1974," 1974, Vol.2 Negotiation with Japan, Class Number 701, Diplomatic Archives, Republic of Korea.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> "President Park Assassination attempt, 1974," 1974, Vol.2 Negotiation with Japan, Class Number 701, Diplomatic Archives, Republic of Korea.

<sup>329</sup> *Korea Herald*, 31<sup>st</sup> August, 1974.

<sup>330</sup> Lee Wanbeom, "Kim Daejung nabchi sageon'gwa Park Chunghee jeogyeg sageon [Korea-Japan Relations in the 1970s: Kim Dae Jung Kidnapping Incident and the Assassination Attempt on Park Chung Hee]." Yeouksa Bipyong 80 (2007): 329.

not mention *Jochongnyeon* at all.<sup>331</sup> Clearly, the Tanaka regime did resist Park's demands but made a minimum yield. However, it is noteworthy that this serious incident did not result in the end of the alliance, and even concluded without further deterioration of their relations.

One interesting and important point is that both Seoul and Tokyo were reluctant to publicise their exchanges about Kim Daejung and Moon Sekwang incidents and closed the cases as quickly as possible.<sup>332</sup> Although the allies confirmed their fundamental differences in their Cold War mindset through the bitter experiences, both countries still reminded the benefit of their alliance.<sup>333</sup> Simply put, both Seoul and Tokyo attempted to keep their relations for the resumption of Cold War –which revived in Korea already- despite their mutual hatred.

In that sense, the new rivalry on the Korean Peninsula was one of the triggers of the demise of the détente in the East Asia. Even though Tokyo did not agree to the ROK's argument that the détente was a fake, it was aware of the communist threat existing in the north. The Cold War rhetoric still remained in the Japanese mind. Clearly, Japan did not entirely trust its communist neighbours and recognised the role of South Korea in the East Asian security. Tokyo's fear of Beijing and Moscow was confirmed very soon. Because of Soviets' aggression in Africa, Middle East, and Eurasia and painful and slow process of Sino-US negotiation, South Korea's two major allies, the United States and Japan, recognised the frailty of detente.<sup>334</sup> After Saigon collapsed in April 1975, Tokyo quickly resumed the cooperation with South Korea in order to prevent the aggression of the Communists.<sup>335</sup>

In contrast to Japan, the United States changed its mindset and supported Park's new struggle against the North already in the latter half of 1974. Richard Nixon's resignation due to the Watergate scandal, and Gerald Ford's inauguration, mitigated Park's insecurities to some extent. In contrast to his predecessor, Nixon - as well as his successor Jimmy Carter - Ford maintained a good relationship with Park. Despite his short term in office, Ford spent much of his time trying to take care of Park and stabilizing South Korea.<sup>336</sup>

Facing Soviet expansionism in the Third World and Chinese reluctance to process Sino-US normalisation because of Taiwan, Washington reviewed its Cold War strategy and decided to strengthen the bond with South Korea.<sup>337</sup> Before Ford visited Japan, USSR, and Korea in November 1974, Henry Kissinger, the US Secretary of State, clarified the US approach toward

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<sup>331</sup> Lee Wanbeom, *op. cit.*, 338.

<sup>332</sup> Lee Wanbeom, *op. cit.*, 348.

<sup>333</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 133.

<sup>334</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 141.

<sup>335</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 142.

<sup>336</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 63- 64.

<sup>337</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 142.

South Korea. He emphasised security over human rights issues, and the Park regime was satisfied with his comment and Washington's conciliatory gesture to Seoul.<sup>338</sup> The new US president visited Seoul on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1974 and reassured the American commitment to the ROK, endlessly challenged by North Korean threats throughout the year.<sup>339</sup>

Just a week before the American president's visit to Seoul, on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1974, a nine-man Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) civil police squad from the United Nations Command found North Korean underground tunnels inside the southern sector of the DMZ. The squad came under some 300 rounds of automatic weapons fire. There were no casualties sustained, but this underground war further mounted the level of insecurity. The Blue House renounced the DPRK's violation of the armistice agreement and its aggressive schemes against the South.<sup>340</sup> Simply, the year of 1974 was full of military provocations by the North. At this moment, Kissinger's emphasis on security and Ford's visit to Seoul, and his personal reassurance of the US commitments on 22<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>th</sup> November, encouraged South Korea. Nonetheless, because the Americans did not offer any tangible defence commitments in Vietnam, Ford's credit for his efforts in South Korea were limited.<sup>341</sup>

Korea's very short détente ended with bitter military conflicts and terrorism. Until the early half of 1974, South Korea's drastic way back to its war against the Communists made it hard to gain the political supports from its allies, the US and Japan, both of which kept a decent relationship with the Communists. The two incidents in 1973 and 74 and South Korea's Middle East policy during the First Oil Shock clearly demonstrated the gap between the ROK and its two allies in their Cold War perception in this era. During the ROK-Japan conflicts over the two political events, they hardly narrowed their discrepancy down, mainly because of South Korea's staunch stance of anticommunism. It quickly closed every window to all Communists once it faced the North Korean threat again, while Washington and Tokyo put far more emphasis on the PRC and the Soviets than the DPRK. Both Capitalist powers did not think that the aggressive policy of Pyongyang toward Seoul necessarily meant the end of détente in the region. As a result, South Korea continued its lonely war against 'the Communists' throughout 1974. Despite this unidentified difference in their concept of anticommunism, however, Seoul and its two allies re-thought their security interests together after late 1974, when all of them observed the limited participation in the détente from Vietnam. In that sense, John Lewis Gaddis argued

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<sup>338</sup> Kim Jeongryeom, *Oh, Park Chunghee*. (Seoul: Chung-ang M&B, 1997), 507.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> The ROK ministry of foreign affairs, *The chronology of ROK diplomatic history, 1974*, (Seoul: The ROK ministry of foreign affairs) 409.

<sup>341</sup> Victor D. Cha, *op. cit.*, 146- 147.

that the détente froze the cold war, not end it.<sup>342</sup> And Park believed what Gaddis maintained.

In conclusion, during the period from 1972 to 1974, South Korea's relationship with North Korea dramatically changed. In 1972, the reunification of the two Korean nations was almost reached. On 4<sup>th</sup> July, Park Chunghee and Kim Ilsung surprised international onlookers, as well as their own citizens, with their joint communiqué that advocated a peaceful national reunification based on Korean initiatives. Through the communiqué, they agreed that they would cooperate in order to reunite Korea, and to stop threatening each other. However, in reality 'reunification' was never the goal of either camp. Mainly, they wanted to be victorious over one another in the 'war without gunfire.' Therefore, the détente mood, which had reached its peak in July 1972, could not be sustained.

Despite the gap between the two Koreas, the peace talks seemed welcomed by both sides. The ROK wanted to keep the US armed forces on its soil, prevent every North Korean military provocation, and gain time for a modernization programme of its military forces. As Park argued, the ROK needed more time to stand against the DPRK.<sup>343</sup> Clearly, Park did resist the new American policy in 1971, but he used it for his own goal in 1972, to gain time for the strengthening of the economy and military forces. The DPRK was also willing to reduce the tension on the Korean Peninsula in order to encourage Washington to withdraw all of its forces. Along with this primary aim through the talks, Pyongyang also wanted to support the liberal voice in the South to divide South Korean politics into two extremes, the liberal and the conservative. Park was well aware of Kim Ilsung's intention, and intended to utilize the North Korean threat to strengthen his rule. He quickly made a serious decision in order to exclude the liberals, especially Kim Daejung, from inter-Korean exchanges.

In October 1972, Park got rid of any political challenge to his rule and constituted his dictatorship through the institution of the *Yusin* constitution. Moreover, the US was reluctant to withdraw its forces from the ROK because North Korea requested the withdrawal from the US in aggressive manner after July 1972. As a result, Kim Ilsung lost a chance to attain his aims. Park's drastic reform and his own political ambition ruined North Korea's willingness to negotiate with the South. The DPRK finally decided to stop talking with the ROK when Kim Daejung was abducted by the KCIA in 1973. South Korea continuously requested peace talks toward the North, but the request was ignored. The new military competition between the two Koreas was inevitable. In this sense, South Korea's Northern policy was forced to return to its previous confrontational policy. Park proved his own belief that détente was a fake. But the

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<sup>342</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: a new history* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), 198.

<sup>343</sup> Interview with Kang Induk.

problem was that he was unable to make his allies agree because Washington and Tokyo were still believed in the capabilities of the détente.

The ROK's diplomacy with its allies also suffered a considerable setback. The *Yusin* institution, the draconian and anticommunist measures taken to prevent any threat to the Park regime, resulted in a drastic deterioration of the ROK-Japan and ROK-US relations. The conflict between the ROK and Japan was unavoidable because of the differences between their recognition of détente. First of all, South Korea's harsh criticism on Japanese relations with Moscow and Beijing quickly soured the ROK-Japan relations. In addition, The Kim Daejung and Moon Sekwang incident incited the hostility of both nations toward each other again and almost broke down the relationship. Clearly, Seoul returned to Cold War quickly while Japan continued its diplomatic efforts to ease the tension in the East Asia.<sup>344</sup> Yet the two allies kept their alliance despite their deep antagonism. Japan was not sure that détente ended the Cold War, and still needed its partnership with South Korea for its military power. For this reason, as Lee Wanbum argues, the two allies agreed to keep silent on the Kim and Moon incidents, and prevent further deterioration of their relations.<sup>345</sup> Still, their common interest in the regional security worked for their bilateral relations and provided them the potential to recover their partnership in the post-Vietnam era.

For the United States, the *Yusin* reform and the kidnapping of Kim were indirect challenges to its authority as a patron of the ROK. As Park clearly indicated that the Sino-US negotiation was one of the main reasons of his drastic action, Washington clearly grasped Park's antagonism against US policy.<sup>346</sup> However, despite its deep disappointment with Seoul's outrageous reaction against US global strategy, the White House did not frustrate the South Korean president's efforts. Moreover, Nixon did nothing but rescue Kim Daejung from death in 1973. Washington could not check Seoul effectively due to South Korea's role in the East-West reconciliation, but instead excluded Seoul from its decision making process.<sup>347</sup> As a result, the Park regime rejected the American Middle East policy during the first oil shock in 1973. Considering the ROK-US relations in the 1950s and 60s, the split between Seoul and Washington in their Middle East policies reaffirmed that South Korea's reliance on the United States had decreased during the Nixon era.

However, because of the American hardship in its diplomacy with communists and the war in the Southeast Asia, the Ford administration re-considered the strategic importance of

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<sup>344</sup> Shin Wookhee, *op. cit.*, 269.

<sup>345</sup> Lee Wanbeom, *op. cit.*, 36.

<sup>346</sup> Shin Wookhee, *op. cit.*, 272.

<sup>347</sup> Hong Seokryul, *op. cit.*, 81.

South Korea in late 1974, and restored the ROK-US relations. The White House started to return to its confrontation with communists as the Blue House did early in 1973<sup>348</sup> However, Washington still needed more time to understand Park's true concept of anticommunism was merely "anti- North Koreanism" and refused to provide any tangible commitment on South Korean ground right after its Vietnam mission was ended up with bitter failure. And both allies continued their discussion of anticommunism with the demise of Saigon and the development of a South Korean nuclear weapon in 1975.

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<sup>348</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op.cit.*, 60- 63.

#### Chapter IV: The Post- Vietnam Crisis and Demise of the Park regime, 1975- 1979

The collapse of South Vietnam in 1975 opened up a new phase of the Cold War for Korea. The general concern of Seoul was that South Korea could be another South Vietnam. According to his speech and diary entries on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1975, Park Chunghee considered that the defeat of the United States and its allies in Indochina would inspire North Korea to become more aggressive.<sup>1</sup> His point was correct to some extent: Pyongyang was inspired by the success of Hanoi's Communist mission. But the victory of North Vietnam did not result in another Korean War. According to Don Oberdorfer's interview with PRC and Soviet officials, Kim Il-sung visited the PRC during April 1975 and expressed his intention to capture Seoul under the banner of the Red Army, just as his North Vietnamese comrades had done before. However, Chinese leaders rejected his idea, which they did not consider realistic. Even the Kremlin opposed Kim's new hostile Southern policy.<sup>2</sup> In short, the victory of North Vietnam could not motivate any collective action among Moscow, Beijing, and Pyongyang directed toward Seoul.

Nonetheless, it was still true that the defeat of the US in Southeast Asia undermined South Korea's position in the Cold War, and weakened the political basis of Park Chunghee's anticommunist policy. First and foremost, the collapse of Saigon was serious enough to destabilise Park's trust in his patron, the White House. In various media, he argued the American pullout from Vietnam ruined Saigon.<sup>3</sup> The major concern of the ROK government was definitely American post-Vietnam policy and its impact on South Korean security. Since Washington was not able to guarantee any concrete military support to ROK, Seoul tried to find its own solution for the inter-Korean conflict, e.g., the acquisition of nuclear weapons. Seoul's intent to develop nuclear weapons led to irritations in the ROK-US relationship. However, President Gerald Ford tried hard to reassure his Korean ally of continued US military support. Nevertheless, his successor, Jimmy Carter eventually pushed for the withdrawal of US forces from South Korea – a move that unsettled Korean leaders' confidence in their US partners after the collapse of South Vietnam.

Generally, the end of the Vietnam War destabilised South Korea and deteriorated ROK-US relations. Seoul quickly improved relations with Tokyo - which also harboured serious security concerns in the post-Vietnam era - while making diplomatic efforts to stall Carter's pullout plan. According to archival documents and oral history in the ROK and the US, the

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<sup>1</sup> *DongaIlbo*, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1975.

<sup>2</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, (Washington: Basic Books, 2002), 64.

<sup>3</sup> *DongaIlbo*, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1975.



South Korean leader attempted to ensure the national security of the ROK in various ways. Once he faced American opposition to his nuclear project, Park used the project as the card for negotiations with Washington, and gained Ford's support for his battle against Kim Il-sung in the DMZ.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, he fought Jimmy Carter in order to keep U.S. ground forces in the country. Park succeeded in derailing Carter's withdrawal plan, but was forced by Washington to introduce more democratic ideas to his rule. This decision emboldened opposition groups to become more assertive, and thus further destabilised the political basis of Park regime.<sup>5</sup>

Coupled with the ROK-US split in the post-Vietnam period, the domestic political resistance deteriorated the basis of the Park regime's anticommunist policy. Until 1976 the security concern caused by the Vietnam shock helped repel advocates of the reconciliation with Pyongyang, and the restoration of presidential elections. Yet this criticism was revived in the late 1970s, when the regime failed to effectively address socio-economic issues, such as worker protests calling for improved working conditions. In the absence of significant economic growth, and with a widening income gap, poor labour conditions, and high inflation, popular support for Park was undermined.

The economic grievance of workers got worse after the second oil shock struck the world economy in December 1978. The Park-Carter conflict over the presence of the US Army in South Korea further inspired Liberals. The *Yusin* Institution that enabled Park to maintain his presidency aimed to stabilise the ROK facing the North Korean threat. But the despotic nature of the *Yusin* regime itself was questioned by Carter and became the most important rationale of a US pullout from the Korean Peninsula. In other words, the Park regime itself became a threat to South Korean national security. Strengthened by their ideological link with Carter, the Liberals challenged the Park government, ended the dictatorship in 1979, and opened up a new discussion on South Korean foreign policy and its relations with Communists.

#### (1) The South Korean Nuclear Crisis and Post-Vietnam Diplomatic Strategy, 1975-76

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<sup>4</sup> Regarding the relationship between Park's will for independent national defence and nuclear programme, see Cho Cheolho, "Park Chunghee'eui Jaju Gukbang'gwa Haekgye-bal [President Park Chunghee's National Defense Policy of Self-Reliance and the Development of Nuclear Weapons]," *Yeoksa bipyeong* 80 (2007); Cho Wooseok, *Park Chunghee: Hanguk'eui tansaeng [Park Chunghee: The birth of Korea]*, (Seoul: Salim press, 2009); and Don Oberdorfer, *op.cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Regarding the conflict between Park and Carter in this period, see Ma Sangyoon and Park Wongon, "Détenteg'eui hanmi galdeung: Nixon, Carter'wa Park Chunghee [ROK-US split in détente period: Nixon, Carter, and Park Chunghee]," *Yeoksa bipyeong* 86 (2009) and also Park Wongon, "Cater Jeonggwon'eui Ingwon Woegyo'wa Hanguk Jeongchaek [Cater Administration's Human Right Policy towards Korea.]," *Korea American Studies* 30 (2007), 23-52.

On 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1975, Park Chunghee delivered a New Year's speech. The 57 year old president repeated his catchphrase, "Let us do our best for national security and economic development," which he had presented annually for 12 years.<sup>6</sup> It had become a tradition that the South Korean people could expect in every New Year's speech. As always, he said, "We are in a *crisis* of national security... The split in public opinion shall result in the invasion of the North Korean puppet regime..."<sup>7</sup> Throughout this lengthy speech his point was clear: that it is neither a good time to return to democracy, nor talk about a peaceful reunification of a Korean nation. He apparently never considered his old catchphrase would lose credibility or legitimacy. Facing the collapse of Saigon, the ROK president consistently wanted to firmly ingrain his anticommunist ideology in the minds of his people.

The national security of South Korea in the post-Vietnam era was in the forefront of Park's considerations when beginning discussions with Richard Nixon about the withdrawal of US forces. The priority for improving South Korean national security was the modernization of South Korean armed forces. This programme had been promoted with American aids, provided by Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon since 1968.<sup>8</sup> However, Park seemed to believe that another plan, a nuclear project, would be a decisive factor for ROK national security if Washington reduced its military engagement in East Asia. The secret discussions surrounding South Korean nuclear weapons started in 1972. Oh Won Cheol who took charge of the ROK defence industry in the 1970s was ordered by Park in early 1972 to secure nuclear weapons technology.<sup>9</sup> The ROK negotiated with Canada in order to import a CANDU (Canada Deuterium Uranium) reactor and an NRX (National Research Experimental Research Reactor), and had talked with France about reprocessing facilities beginning in 1973.

However, Park soon found it was difficult to acquire these facilities from abroad. In 1974, India carried out a nuclear test with NRX from Canada. This nuclear proliferation in South Asia adversely affected the South Korean project. The White House started to question the intentions behind the ROK's nuclear programme and tried to stop Park's quest, which could ultimately result in the proliferation of nuclear weapons in North Korea and Japan.<sup>10</sup> And the

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<sup>6</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 1 January, 1975.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> The core of this programme was the introduction of M16 rifle as a standard issue in ROK army and of F-4 Phantom to ROK air force.

<sup>9</sup> *Weekly Chosun*, Issue 2028, 12 January, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Memorandum From Richard Smyser and David Elliott of the National Security Council Staff to Secretary of State Kissinger, Washington, February 28, 1975, Korea 4, Box 9, Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, National Security Adviser, Ford Library; "ROK Plans to develop nuclear weapons and missiles," Dos cable, 4 March, 1975, secret /nodis (declassified 1997), quoted in Don Oberdorfer, *op cit.*, These documents suggested that

American concerns about ROK nuclear research seemed to have its effect on negotiations with Canada. On 6<sup>th</sup> January 1975, Allan J. MacEachen, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, sent a letter to Kim Dongjo, the South Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs. The letter made it clear that Canada would only export CANDU under the condition that the ROK signs the NPT (Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty) and hence gives up the military use of nuclear energy.<sup>11</sup> On 17<sup>th</sup> January, Park received a cable from Kim Youngju, the ROK ambassador to Canada. Kim reported that [South Korea] will be able to build three to six [nuclear missiles] a year if it introduced a CANDU reactor. However, he did not consider it possible, stating, "... if [the US] restricts uranium supply, it is impossible to secretly produce nuclear weapons..."<sup>12</sup>

Washington started to press the ROK into ratifying the NPT.<sup>13</sup> Despite such a negative opinion about CANDU, the South Korean leadership decided to continue with its import, and sign the NPT on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1975.<sup>14</sup> However, Park did not expect that his concession to join the NPT was the end of Seoul's nuclear weapon programme. Furthermore, he seemed upset that Washington did not provide any solution for South Korean security that would be as resolute as he viewed his own plan would be. The ROK leadership desperately wanted American confirmation of its commitment in South Korea if they would not allow the development of ROK nuclear weapons. Yet, even after the fall of Saigon, Ford did not make any clear decision regarding the presence of US forces in South Korea, due mainly to the pervasive antipathy of the US public toward American international intervention.

Park's fear of the Communists was further intensified by the discovery of North Korean tunnels in the Korea Demilitarised Zone in March 1975.<sup>15</sup> On 28<sup>th</sup> March, at the graduation ceremony of the ROK military academy, he made his thoughts about North Korea clear,

[...] We should not look on today's South Vietnam and Khmer situation with indifference. As you well know, it was revealed that North Koreans secretly dug

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the United States embassy to Seoul had studied the capabilities and intention of Blue House for nuclear weapon since 1974.

<sup>11</sup> "Agreement between ROK and Canada for peaceful nuclear development and application, 1975- 77," 1977, Class Number, 761. 64 CN, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea. The ROK government considered that there was American influence on MacEachen's decision.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Memorandum From Richard Smyser and David Elliott of the National Security Council Staff to Secretary of State Kissinger, Washington, February 28, 1975, Korea 4, Box 9, Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, National Security Adviser, Ford Library.

<sup>14</sup> "Agreement between ROK and Canada for peaceful nuclear development and application, 1975- 77," 1977, Class Number, 761. 64 CN, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>15</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 19<sup>th</sup> March, 1975.

tunnels in the many sites of DMZ for their invasion to south after commencing talks with us [...]<sup>16</sup>

On 22<sup>nd</sup> April, it was reported to Park that Kim Ilsung had embarked on a visit to the PRC starting four days before on 18<sup>th</sup> April. This report from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated that Kim had reaffirmed his hostility toward South Korea and the US during his speech in China.<sup>17</sup> One day before South Vietnam's surrender, the ROK president announced a special address on national security and the current situation. Park delivered his words in a determined manner, "If North Korean puppet regime invades the South, then it will only destroy itself."<sup>18</sup> He emphasised that South Koreans are capable to repel their enemy if they were united in such a goal.<sup>19</sup>

Despite his determined and confident voice, this special statement demonstrated his anxiety. He could not know how the defeat of Saigon would affect inter-Korean affairs and whether it would lead the two Koreas into another fraternal war. Park needed a special measure to save his own nation and presidency from the impact of the Vietnam War. He decided to introduce a new law to ban communist and/or pro-communist actions, which, according to his own logic, had resulted in the defeat of South Vietnam. On 13<sup>th</sup> May, Park released the Emergency Decree No. 9, the main idea of which was intended to prevent any form of antigovernment activities such as demonstration, broadcasting, writing, or other forms of criticism against the *Yusin* Constitution, or the ROK government.<sup>20</sup> While this new rule demanded the prevention of communist and/or pro-communist actions in ROK, the Emergency Measure also directed the police to punish anyone who criticised the Park regime, regardless ideological affiliation. Clearly, Park utilised the Vietnam impact to solidify his position and suppress any critics of his regime with his, "South Korea is another South Vietnam," logic.<sup>21</sup> Coupled with his clamorous post-Vietnam actions, Park might have intended to demonstrate a sense of insecurity to Washington. On 16<sup>th</sup> May through the resolution of ROK National Assembly, Park urged Washington to reaffirm its pledge to defend South Korea against the

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<sup>16</sup> "The presidential instruction at the commencement of military academy 1975, 28 March 1975," President Park Chunghee electronic library, <http://www.parkchunghee.or.kr/search.html>.

<sup>17</sup> "North Korean Premier Kim Ilsung's visit to China (former Communist's China) 18 April 1975- 26 April 1975," 1975, Class Number 725.31 CP, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>18</sup> ROK Presidential Secretary's office, "President Special Statement for national security and present situation," April 29<sup>th</sup> 1975. The tone and contents of this statement is very similar to present North Korean statement regarding its national security.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 13<sup>th</sup> May, 1975.

<sup>21</sup> Chung Iljoon, "Yusin Cheje'eui Mosun'gwa Hanmigaldeung: Minjujeui eob'neun gukgaanbo [Antinomy of the Yusin System and ROK-US Conflicts: National Security without Democracy]," *Sahoe'wa yoksa* 70 (2006): 167- 170.

Communists.<sup>22</sup>

South Korea quickly improved its relationship with Japan, which was likewise dissatisfied with American politics. Unlike his predecessor, Tanaka Kakuei, the new Japanese Premier, Miki Takeo, believed cooperation with Seoul to be essential for Japanese security, and, during his summit talks with President Ford in July 1975, re-confirmed the Korean clause in Okinawa reversion issue that defined the role of US forces in Okinawa as the deterrent in South Korea as well as Japan.<sup>23</sup> Park welcomed Miki's decision and resumed the ROK-Japan high-level exchanges for their common security.

Washington's East Asian allies demanded a continued US commitment for military engagement in their countries. President Ford and Secretary Kissinger were well aware of Seoul's anxiety, did not pay it much focus due to their post-Vietnam affairs, e.g. the evacuation of US forces from Vietnam. In fact, the US ambassador to Seoul, Richard L. Sneider, informed both of Park's resentment toward Washington and his growing anxiety over the fate of Saigon on 22<sup>nd</sup> April. He advised the White House to review its Korean policy in order to prevent a decline of South Korean confidence in the US commitment. Specifically, the ambassador worried about the risk of a North Korean provocation to test US resolve and ROK capabilities. In a long run perspective, Sneider was concerned that the US could lose its control over South Korea. He argued that although the ROK still depended on the US, it could no longer be considered a client state. Consequently, he recommended an increase in military and economic aids for South Korea.<sup>24</sup>

His indication is remarkable: the American ambassador adeptly interpreted Park Chunghee's anxiety, although the South Korean president had not yet made any significant criticisms about Washington's policies. Furthermore, Sneider thought that South Korea had become a middle power, and could turn away from the White House to satisfy its security needs if the US failed to make a credible commitment. Specifically, the Sneider paid special attention to the ROK's nuclear project, and considered that Seoul was likely to build its own missile if Washington lost its influence on the Blue House.<sup>25</sup> His analysis was accurate: The nervous ROK president eventually expressed his dissatisfaction with Washington's ambiguous attitude toward his country. In his interview with the *Washington Post*, he explained his idea of American post-Vietnam policy as if he had known about the US ambassador's concerns:

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<sup>22</sup> *The Korea Times*, 16<sup>th</sup> May. 1976.

<sup>23</sup> Department of US State Bulletin, 8 Sept. 1975, 382- 84, especially clause 3. Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 142.

<sup>24</sup> "Review of US Policies toward Korea," Telegram 2807 from Seoul, State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE, Korea, Box 11, Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, National Security Adviser, Ford Library.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

[...] There were and still are quite a number of Koreans doubting the commitment of the United States since the fall of Vietnam. Even without assistance, our people are determined to fight to the last man and not to concede an inch of our territory [to North Korea]. We have the [nuclear] capability, but are not developing it and are honouring the Nuclear non-proliferation treaty. If the US nuclear umbrella were to be removed, we have to start developing our nuclear capability to save ourselves. [...]

If American ground troops were removed, the enemy will be inclined to make a miscalculation, and American promises would carry far less credibility.<sup>26</sup>

In short, Park plainly indicated that he would have a nuclear weapon unless Ford promised an American defence commitment in South Korea.

Regarding Park's interview, Sneider sent another cable to Washington a few days later, on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1975 and warned of future South Korean movements after Vietnam War:

[...] Our present policy toward Korea is ill-defined and based on an outdated view of Korea as a client state. It does not provide a long-term conceptual approach to Korea, geared to its prospective middle power status. It leaves the ROK government uncertain what to expect from us and forces us to react to ROKG on an ad hoc basis. We have not for example made clear to the Koreans what the prospects are for a continued, long-term U.S. military presence. [...] These uncertainties lead President Park into preparations which included internal repression and plans for the development of nuclear weapons [...]<sup>27</sup>

Again, the ambassador had analysed the ROK-US relationship accurately. The reduction of US forces in South Korea in 1971 during the Nixon era, and American pullout from Vietnam in 1973 forced Park to confront the US. Sneider wanted the White House to adjust its Korean policy based on the situation at hand. Simply put, his recommendation was, "durable partnership based on a significant US force presence with indefinite tenure..."<sup>28</sup> His argument made sense and well identified the cause of Park's deviation from American policy.

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<sup>26</sup> *The Washington post*, 12 June, 1975.

<sup>27</sup> "US policy towards Korea," Emb. Cable, 24 June, 1975, secret (declassified 1996), quoted in Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

However, a major flaw of Sneider's recommendations was that they ignored American public opinion on international policy, and its importance for Ford's re-election. Due to the Vietnam shock, the indefinite and significant presence of US forces in South Korea was deeply unpopular among the American public.<sup>29</sup> Hence, this risky idea was not viable for Ford, who was preparing his re-election campaign. The US president was unable to guarantee the requested military support for ROK. On 25<sup>th</sup> June, in his news conference, the Ford was asked by Bob Schieffer of CBS news if he would use nuclear weapons to stop North Korea from attacking the South. Ford did not answer the question directly: "We have a strong deterrent force, strategically and tactically, and of course, those forces will be used in a flexible way in our own national interest, but I do not believe it is in our national interest to discuss how or when they would be used under the circumstances."<sup>30</sup> However, as Schieffer inquired whether he would rule out the use of nuclear bomb, Ford reluctantly responded: "I am not either confirming it or denying it. I am saying we have the forces and they will be used in our national interest, as they should be."<sup>31</sup>

Some South Korean media interpreted Ford's comment as determination to protect the ROK from possible attacks by the DPRK.<sup>32</sup> However, regarding the American original text, this interpretation seems too optimistic. Washington's obscure attitude did not have any impact on Park's direction. As Shin Wookhee has argued, such a gap between Seoul and Washington post-Vietnam war, led Park to take more drastic measures for the security of his country.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, with the White House delaying its policy decisions toward South Korean security, Park continued his negotiations with Canada and France over the purchase of nuclear facilities. Allan J. MacEachen visited Seoul for the sales of CANDU and NRX on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June. On 27<sup>th</sup>, Kim Dongjo, the ROK Minister of Foreign Affairs and MacEachen agreed on the supply of CANDU from Canada to South Korea. After South Korea had signed the NPT as Canada had requested, both countries signed an agreement stipulating peaceful nuclear development and application.<sup>34</sup>

Despite this joint communiqué, Washington still doubted Park's intentions; he was still negotiating with France for reprocessing facilities, not necessary for 'peaceful nuclear activities.'<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, p.67.

<sup>30</sup> Gerald R. Ford: "The President's News Conference," 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1975. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=5021>.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 26<sup>th</sup> June, 1975.

<sup>33</sup> Shin Wookhee, "Giheo'eseo Gyochk Sangtae'ro [From Opportunity to Stalemate]." Korea politics and diplomatic history collection vol. 26 2<sup>nd</sup> issue (2005): 280.

<sup>34</sup> "Visit of Allan J. MacEachen, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada," 1975, Class Number, 724. 32 CN, Diplomatic Archives, Republic of Korea.

<sup>35</sup> Reprocessing facilities were necessary to extract plutonium for nuclear weapon. Based on Oh Woncheol's recommendation to use plutonium for South Korean nuclear warhead, ROKG might have decided to import

According to the record of US Deputy Secretary of State, Robert S. Ingersoll, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1975, the White House concluded that the ROK did not need the reprocessing facilities for economic reasons, and that the US should request South Korea to forego the introduction of reprocessing plants for nuclear tests. Furthermore, Ingersoll confirmed that Park's interview with the *Washington Post* had revealed the South Korean intention to possess its own nuclear weapon.<sup>36</sup> This study on South Korean intentions was delivered to Kissinger July, 24<sup>th</sup>.<sup>37</sup>

Sneider conveyed the American objections regarding South Korea's acquisition of reprocessing capabilities for the ROK government. It is noteworthy here that the US ambassador did not express American concern to Park directly, since he was well acquainted with Park's stubborn attitude. Instead, Sneider often talked with ROK presidential secretary, Kim Jeongryeom. Moreover, he never mentioned 'South Korean nuclear weapons' while talking with Kim. His sole request to the secretary was the end of negotiations with France regarding the reprocessing plant.<sup>38</sup> The Park regime, however, did understand his subtext. And despite Sneider's request, the Blue House kept silent and refused to provide any comment on its nuclear ambitions.

Ford thusly felt it necessary to ease Park's anxiety in order to put an end to his nuclear ambitions. James Schlesinger, the US Secretary of Defence, was dispatched to Seoul in August. The official purpose of Schlesinger's visit, - to stop the ROK-French nuclear exchanges - was not revealed to the public. The South Korean press indicated that he visited Seoul for a ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting.<sup>39</sup> In the view of ROK citizen, this meeting was not unusual, as such meetings were held on an annual basis. And as it was commonplace for Americans to visit the Blue House in order to discuss ROK-US affairs, the gravity of this meeting was easily masked.

As it was the aim of the US representatives to relieve the anxiety of the ROK leadership, their attitude appeared very friendly at first. However, the meeting between President Park and the US Secretary of Defence was serious indeed. Even though the Secretary did not mention American intelligence findings concerning the South Korean nuclear weapons programme, Schlesinger clearly conveyed that South Korea's breach of the NPT would result in

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reprocessing facilities from France. See "Interview with Oh Woncheol," *Weekly Chosun*, Issue 2089 (2010). Regarding the background of South Korea's nuclear programme, see Oh Woncheol, *Park Chunghee'neun uduke gyeongje gangguk mandleotna* [How Park Chunghee Could Build a Strong Economy], (Seoul: Dongsu Munhwasa, 2009), 393-396.

<sup>36</sup> "Approach to South Korea on Reprocessing, Department of State," Memorandum for the Assistant President for National Security Affairs from Robert S. Ingersoll of DOS, July 2, 1975, Ford Library.

<sup>37</sup> "The National Security Council Memorandum on persuading Seoul," Memorandum for Secretary Kissinger from Jan M. Lodal and Dave Elliott, July 24, 1975, Ford Library.

<sup>38</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 274.

<sup>39</sup> *Kyeonghyang sinmun*, 27<sup>th</sup> August 1975.



the collapse of the ROK-US alliance. Without hesitation, Park replied that his country had every intention to meet its obligations as defined in the NPT. Park, stubborn as always, also remarked that he only answered the question of the Washington Post journalist, Robert Novak, about ROK actions in case the US removed its nuclear umbrella. To the question, he said he had replied, “Washington would not remove its nuclear umbrella from South Korea.”<sup>40</sup> Facing Park’s confident attitude, Schlesinger did not make any negative retort. To the contrary, trying to relax Park during their meeting, Schlesinger said that he foresees no basic changes in the level of US forces until 1977, and even if Ford was not re-elected, the Democrats would keep up US support for the ROK. Despite the American efforts, however, the South Korean leadership did not accept the American request.<sup>41</sup>

South Korea’s attitude toward American pressure on its nuclear programme suggests a very important point for its Cold War strategy after the fall of Saigon: Park needed to prevent additional reductions of US troops from his country. In this case, he might have thought that he could trade his nuclear ambitions for the continued presence of US troops and the persistence of its nuclear umbrella.<sup>42</sup> This reasoning follows a simple logic: South Korea was not capable of building a nuclear missile in the short run. When Park started to consider the nuclear option in 1972, South Korea did not have a core facility to carry out such an ambitious plan. Park’s vague suggestion to the Washington Post that “we have capabilities”, was misleading and somewhat exaggerated. As a matter of fact, it would have been more accurate to say, “We’re trying to have capabilities.” Even until Park’s now infamous interview with the American press in June, South Korean efforts to build up nuclear facilities and get hold of essential technology were blocked by Washington, which had already found out about the ROK’s nuclear ambitions in March of the same year.<sup>43</sup> At the moment of Park-Schlesinger talks, Park did not have anything to lose: he could give up his slow moving nuclear project in return for Ford’s commitment to keep US troops stationed in South Korea for the long term and maintain the protection of the nuclear umbrella.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> “Meeting between President Park and Secretary Schlesinger, 26 August, 1975,” Memorandum of Conversation, Seoul, August 27, 1975, Korea 11, Box 9, Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, National Security Adviser, Ford Library.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. Regarding Schlesinger’s comment on the Democrats, Don Oberdorfer indicated that he might not have known that Jimmy Carter had begun to discuss the withdrawal of US forces from South Korea. As Carter was elected in 1976, Schlesinger’s promise became really vain. For detail, see Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 71.

Regarding ROK-French cooperation, South Koreans argued that they are afraid that they will suffer a serious loss of face and pay the penalty if they cancel the purchase of French reprocessing plant.

<sup>42</sup> Cho Cheolho, *op.cit.*, 369.

<sup>43</sup> “ROK plans to develop nuclear weapons and missiles,” Dos cable, 4 March, 1975, secret /nodis. quoted in Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*

<sup>44</sup> Cho Cheolho, *op.cit.*, 368.

For the White House, keeping a military presence with infinite tenure in East Asia was greatly complicated by the Vietnam War debacle. Moreover, such a guarantee appeared too expensive to exchange with South Korea's fledgling nuclear scheme. Ford did not consider any reduction of US troops and/or nuclear weapons from South Korea, and might have thought that this was all he could do.<sup>45</sup> However, as Snider worried, Park began questioning the American commitment in South Korea. He did not criticise Ford because he was aware of the peculiar situation faced by the US president. And although Park did not expect any major changes during Ford's time as president, he did worry about the intentions of the next administration.<sup>46</sup> His sense of insecurity intensified the conflict between the Blue House and the White House in 1976. In the long term, Park still needed a nuclear weapons programme in order to prepare for what he saw were the potential military consequences of an eventual withdrawal of US troops in the future.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the Blue House pushed its nuclear project ahead.

Park decided to ignore American 'advice', in the form of a de facto threat, and continued to negotiate with France. The cooperative attitude of his French government further encouraged Park. In contrast to Canada, which did not want to break ranks with the US for the sake of Korean security, the French government did not allow American intervention in its business.<sup>48</sup> Based on Kissinger's order in March, the US ambassadors to Paris and Seoul requested the French government and their counterparts to immediately end negotiating with the ROK. France did not waver, declaring, "If South Korea cancels the cooperation programme and pays the cancellation penalty to France, we can accept it."<sup>49</sup> Obviously, South Korea would never want to pay the penalty and argued that the pilot reprocessing plant delivered by France would be used for academic purposes. Additionally, the Blue House complained that the US had not opposed the Japanese acquisition of reprocessing facilities.<sup>50</sup> In his in-depth report on South Korean reprocessing plans to Kissinger, Philip Habib, the former US ambassador to Seoul, proposed an assertive approach.<sup>51</sup> Habib, who had experienced Park's *Yusin* reform during his

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<sup>45</sup> Gerald R. Ford: "The President's News Conference," 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1975. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=5021>.

<sup>46</sup> And as Jimmy Carter was elected in 1976, this fear came true.

<sup>47</sup> Cho Cheolho, *op.cit.*, 369.

<sup>48</sup> Henry Kissinger and Allan MacEachen talked about South Korean contract with Canada and France for reprocessing plant and shared their concern on it in December, 1975. See Memorandum of Conversation, conversation between Secretary of State and Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, 17 December, 1975, Korea 11, Box 9, Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, National Security Adviser, Ford Library.

<sup>49</sup> "Korean Reprocessing-Next step," Memorandum for the Secretary of State from the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 18 November 1975, Korea 11, Box 9, Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, National Security Adviser, Ford Library.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> "Korean Reprocessing-Issues and options," Memorandum for the Secretary of State from the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 18 November 1975, Korea 11, Box 9, Presidential Country Files for East

tenure in South Korea, believed that Park might do practically anything unless the US showed a serious opposition. Starting from December 1975, Habib warned the South Korean ambassador to Washington, Hahm Byeongchoon, and called upon Seoul to cancel its contract with France, which had already been signed. However, the ROK government rejected the American demands.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, Habib was dispatched to Seoul in December. Unlike his successor as ambassador, Sneider, Habib was not reluctant to confront Park directly. As we discussed in the previous chapter, Park effectively silenced the domestic opposition, but never challenged American authority in South Korea. Understanding this, Habib was determined on his mission to Seoul. According to Sneider's letter to Habib, the former and the incumbent US ambassadors met Park on 9<sup>th</sup> December in secret talks.<sup>53</sup> Park's position, interestingly, had begun to waiver soon after his meeting with his old American friend. According to South Korean newspapers, Habib explained the result of Ford's visit to Beijing and his Pacific Doctrine put forth on 7th December.<sup>54</sup> The Korean press indicated that the former ambassador had come to Seoul in order to convey Ford's commitment to South Korean security.<sup>55</sup> However, Habib's role was not that of a messenger conveying Ford's new doctrine, and the article provided some hint for his role. Why did the Assistant Secretary of State travel all the way to Seoul only to explain Ford's new (yet, old in practice) doctrine? This task could have been fulfilled by Sneider, the incumbent. That is, Philip Habib had taken over for Sneider, who had proved unable to properly manage the nuclear weapons issue. Based on his previous comments for ROK-US relations, it appeared that the US ambassador kept a soft-stance towards Park. This attitude did not inflict any change on South Korean politics. Therefore, the former ambassador needed to threaten Park. It is possible that Habib addressed possible US sanctions should Seoul press ahead with its nuclear plan.<sup>56</sup> Conversely, Sneider had been emphasising the benefits of ROK-US cooperation provided if South Korea cancelled its contract with France<sup>57</sup>, which did not appeal to Park.

Soon after the Park-Habib meeting, the ROK government announced its intention to review the contract with France in January. The new American strategy had succeeded. Prime

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Asia and the Pacific, National Security Adviser, Ford Library.

<sup>52</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 70- 71.

<sup>53</sup> "Habib's visit to Seoul," Memorandum for the Department of State and Pacific Affairs from the embassy in Seoul, 5 December 1975, Korea 11, Box 9, National Security Adviser, Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, Ford Library. The conversation record between the two diplomats have not yet been declassified.

<sup>54</sup> This doctrine formally guaranteed that the United States will stay in Asia. For ROK, however, this is not new: Washington reiterated the same logic several times. Moreover, there was no tangible plan for this commitment. See Cha, Victor, *op. cit.*, 143.

<sup>55</sup> *Dongailbo*, 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1975.

<sup>56</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 72.

<sup>57</sup> Emb. Cable, 16 December, 1975, nodis (declassified, 1998), quoted in Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*

minister, Kim Jongpil stated that “The president Park recognised the risk in which the ROK-US relation is ended if he pushed ahead with the plan...”<sup>58</sup> Clearly, to Park the American intervention remained the most important element of ROK security, especially since more time was needed to construct an operational nuclear warhead.

Washington felt that it had successfully stopped Park’s ambitious plan after all, and on 24<sup>th</sup> January, Kissinger discussed the situation with Canadian officials. Canada required the ROK to forgo its plan to acquire a reprocessing plant. Stated in this meeting, regarding MacEachen’s comment, “We are working with the ROK to soften them up, but I don’t know if we can deliver a knockout blow.”<sup>59</sup> The US Secretary of State replied with confidence, “I think it’s safe to say we’ve delivered the knockout blow [to South Koreans]”<sup>60</sup>

Nonetheless, the Blue House did not officially cancel its contract with France. On the one hand, the Ford administration worked hard to pass its bill for military aid for ROK in the Congress in order to appease Blue House.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, the US mounted pressure on Park once again in May, as the new Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, confirmed the American determination to review its support for ROK unless Park gave up his quest for a reprocessing plant.<sup>62</sup> Under strong American pressure, Park was forced to abandon his nuclear weapons programme. The problem was timing: despite Rumsfeld’s stern warning, the ROK elites did not decide when exactly the contract with France should be cancelled. Even though Ford and Kissinger did their best to save Park’s face, the ROK leader was not able to let go of his plan easily. In other words, he needed Washington’s security guarantee for the ROK which Ford had not yet provided to Park.

It is noteworthy that Kim Jeongryeom, the Chief of Presidential Secretary who discussed the nuclear issue with Sneider more than anyone else, did not provide any information about the ROK-US conflict on nuclear weapons in his memoir. Regarding the same issue, Don Oberdorfer has argued that the White House still had the power to counter the determined intentions of the Blue House in the mid- 1970s.<sup>63</sup> If this is true, the ROK elites did feel helpless and bore hostility toward Washington. Nevertheless, Jeongryeom omitted the ROK-US split. The interesting point here is that he even frequently emphasised Ford’s commitment in South

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<sup>58</sup> Cho Kabje, *op.cit.*, 278.

<sup>59</sup> “Conversation between Secretary of State and Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs,” Memorandum of Conversation, Brussels, 24 January, 1976, Korea 11, , Box 9, Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, National Security Adviser, Ford Library.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> “Information Memorandum From the Acting Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs in the Department of Defence (Bergold) to Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld,” Washington, March 16, 1976. OSD Files: FRC 330–79–0049, Korea, 092, 1976, Washington National Records Centre.

<sup>62</sup> Cho Kabje, “Interview with Jaenae Sohn,” *Monthly Chosun*, August, 1995.

<sup>63</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 72- 73.

Korea. According to this and other testimony of ROK veterans, the Park-Ford relationship was not bad at all. At least Park did not criticise Ford in the same way he condemned Nixon and Carter.

In a general sense, however, the conflict between Park and Ford in late 1975 and early 1976 was serious enough to ruin their friendship. Still, the US leader did something to close the gap between him and Park not long after their lengthy discussion on the ROK nuclear programme. On 18<sup>th</sup> August 1976, a group of ROK and UN forces consisting of two US army officers, Capt. Arthur Bonifas and Lt. Mark Barrett, entered the Joint Security Area to trim a poplar tree. Soon after the trimming began, a group of North Korean soldiers appeared and demanded Bonifas to stop cutting the boughs of the tree which Kim Ilsung himself had supposedly planted. The US officer ignored the North Korean instructions leading the angry KPA (Korean People's army) officer, Lieutenant Park Chul, to send one of his subordinates to call in reinforcements. Even as additional KPA soldiers arrived on the scene, carrying clubs and crowbars as weapons, Bonifas still did not stop his work. In the fight that ensued, KPA soldiers beat Bonifas and Barrett to death with an axe and injured South Korean and the remaining American soldiers.<sup>64</sup>

According to Kim Jeongryeom, regarding American presidential election in November, the Blue House concluded that Pyongyang killed US soldiers in order to promote an anti-war mood in the US and create popular support for the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea.<sup>65</sup> The military conflict between the two Koreas in August had pushed the previous conflicts between Capitalist allies aside. As a result, Ford kept his word and supported Park's retaliation against the North. This finally gave Washington an opportunity to prove its commitment of South Korean security and hence contributed to the end of Seoul's nuclear plan even before Carter revived the withdrawal of US armed forces from South Korea.

If this assault had really been planned by Pyongyang, as the Blue House suggested, this implies that Kim Ilsung had seriously misunderstood the political situation. First and foremost, the White House needed to spare Park a major embarrassment over the outcome of the nuclear programme issue, and also consider options to repair the damaged relationship with South Korea. Pyongyang did not expect any serious response from Washington since the DPRK had never been punished by the US, and/or the ROK forces, for its provocative actions against them in the past. Yet this time was totally different. Even before the furious Park had offered an

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<sup>64</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 74- 83.

<sup>65</sup> Kim Jeongryeom, *Choebinguk'eseo Sunjinguk Munteokggajji [From Despair to Hope : Economic Policymaking in Korea, 1945-4979 ]*, (Seou: Random House Chungang, 2006) 442.

invitation, the US ambassador and the commander of the US Forces in Korea, Richard Stillwell, were ordered to visit the Blue House and discuss the incident with the Secretary of State.<sup>66</sup> As he did in 1968 and 1969, Park requested a determined response from Washington. He reminded Sneider and Stillwell of the North Korean provocations in 1968-69 and declared that the North Korean puppets considered Washington a ‘paper tiger’ because it did not punish Pyongyang, essentially ignoring Park’s request. As the two American officials sided with the South Korean president on this issue, it came as no surprise that the White House accepted Park’s call for a retaliatory strike.<sup>67</sup> Following, the South Korean leader became even more determined. On August, 19<sup>th</sup> at the entrance ceremony of military academy at Yeongcheon, Park condemned Kim Ilsung in a determined tone, “There is a limit of our patience [...] Mad dogs deserve clubs.”<sup>68</sup>

A few days later, a joint ROK-US taskforce launched operation Paul Bunyan, an operation designed not for trimming the boughs of poplar trees, but cutting them down.<sup>69</sup> Through this action, Park and Ford intended to show off the overwhelming power of the UN forces to Pyongyang. However, they decided to limit this action without introducing any heavy arms in order to prevent an escalation of tensions.<sup>70</sup> In the morning hours of 21<sup>st</sup> August, without prior notice to the DPRK, a group of US engineers arrived on the site of the DMZ and cut down the tree. A thirty-man security platoon with pistols, and sixty-four ROK Special Forces, all experts of *tae kwon do*, observed the task and monitored the North Korean side. Needless to say, this small-scale action was limited to the DMZ in accordance to the Korean armistice agreement. Behind the scenes, the ROK and US Army, Navy and Air Force were standing by to provide support. In this tense moment, at 7:00 am, the engineers started to cut the poplar tree, the cause of the axe murder incident, with chainsaws and axes. At that exact moment, Kim Jeongryeom was waiting for a report from the ROK army. Stillwell had told him that the tree could be cut down within five minutes. But there was no news from DMZ until 7:20 am. At that time, Kim was told that 150 KPA soldiers had gathered across the poplar tree. If the North Koreans made any action to engage the engineers, the second Korean War or WW III could start. Fortunately, however, the North Koreans were just watching. At 7:55 am, the combined ROK-US forces completed their task and even removed unauthorised North Korean guard posts. As the operation concluded without any interference, Kim Jeongryeom saw that Park clenched his

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<sup>66</sup> “Meeting with President Park,” Telegram 206084 From the Department of State to the Embassy in the Republic of Korea, August 19, 1976, 0110Z, Korea, , Box 10, , Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, National Security Adviser, Ford Library.

<sup>67</sup> Kim Jeongryeom, *op. cit.*, 443- 444.

<sup>68</sup> *Dongailbo*, 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1976.

<sup>69</sup> Paul Bunyan is a mythical lumberjack in North American tradition.

<sup>70</sup> Yet Kim Jeongryeom indicated that Park intended to advance to Gaesung if DPRK escalated the tension. In fact, the ROK forces hid fire arms below their vehicles. See Kim Jeongryeom, *op. cit.*, 446.

fists.<sup>71</sup>

This show of force may have come as a shock for Kim Il-sung, who had not experienced South Korea's revenge for his military provocation. The North Korean leadership did not consider the impact of the ROK's nuclear project on US policy. Technically, they were not likely to know of the secret negotiations between Seoul and Washington. Even though Seoul was forced to forgo the nuclear weapon, this agreement was sustainable only as long as the US provided a considerable military deterrent.<sup>72</sup> Pyongyang had ignored the soured relationship between Washington and Beijing. In the Nixon era, the US was very reluctant to intervene in the inter-Korean conflict so as not to irritate PRC leaders.

Yet, as Victor Cha has indicated, this *détente* mood did not last long: Ford did not make any progress in Sino-US diplomacy even though he visited Beijing in December 1975.<sup>73</sup> His Pacific Doctrine, announced after his visit to China, suggests such a setback of Sino-US relations. He proclaimed American determination to keep close relations with its allies in East Asia including Taiwan. Thus, this new US doctrine could not be welcomed by Chinese leaders. The latent tension between Washington and Beijing deteriorated the *détente* mood, along with the US defeat in Vietnam. If Pyongyang had planned the brutal murder at the DMZ, its planning had not been sophisticated enough to foresee this change. The US president did not intend to provoke the PRC. But he did not ignore North Korea's provocative attitude either.<sup>74</sup> Additionally, Washington also had to take into account the particular sensitivities and requirements of Japan, Taiwan, and its other allies in managing this incident. The axe murder incident was the first military conflict between the southern capitalists and northern communists since Ford's doctrine had entered into force. It stands beyond doubt that Washington's Asian partners kept a keen eye on the American reaction to this incident. For various reasons, the US government could not ignore these troubles.

Against his will, Kim Il-sung made arrangements for Ford to relieve the anxiety of the stubborn South Korean president and other Asian partners. Kim decided to calm his enemy down. After the military action was over, in the afternoon of August, 21<sup>st</sup>, Kim Il-sung sent a message to US forces:

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<sup>71</sup> Kim Jeongryeom, *op. cit.*, p. 445.

<sup>72</sup> This statement can be proved by historical fact: Park revived his nuclear plan after Carter urged the withdrawal of US armed forces from South Korea. This will be discussed in the next sub-chapter.

<sup>73</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 143.

<sup>74</sup> Considering the limited operation, Paul Bunyan, the United States did not want to escalate the tension more than it could control. In other words, Washington did not expect that PRC intervened in this conflict between DPRK and ROK-US unless the UN soldiers use heavy fire arms. The intention of US revealed by Stillwell's rage after the mission was completed. The United States commander got angry when he was aware that the ROK Special forces armed with rifles and grenade, hidden below vehicles before the operation was launched. See "Interview with Park Huido," *New Daily*, 25 November, 2009. <http://www.newdaily.co.kr/news/article.html?no=36779>.

It was a good thing that no big incident occurred at Panmunjom for a long period. However, it is regretful that an incident occurred in the Joint Security Area, Panmunjom this time. An effort must be made so that such incidents may not recur in the future. For this purpose both sides should make efforts. We urge your side to prevent the provocation. Our side will never provoke first, but take self-defensive measures only when provocation occurs. This is our consistent stand.<sup>75</sup>

The supreme commander of the KPA did not apologise for the death of the American official when his message was delivered to Stillwell. But the Park regime was satisfied with Kim's subdued reaction. Kim Jeongryeom called this military and diplomatic victory the first humiliation of Kim Il-sung since the Korean War.<sup>76</sup> Park was glad and rewarded the Special Forces generously.<sup>77</sup> The axe murder in Panmunjom, and the subsequent Paul Bunyan operation, demonstrated Park's steadfast anticommunist attitude and illustrated continued American support for his policy stance, even after the collapse of South Vietnam. Before long the Blue House gave up the purchase of a reprocessing plant from France. It is not exact to say that Park was convinced the national security of ROK was due to this military success. However, it is possible that the political support from the Ford administration facilitated him making such a serious decision. It is not clear when exactly South Korea signed away its nuclear weapons programme. However, according to a Sneider-Scowcroft meeting in White House on September 15<sup>th</sup>, the ROK cancelled its contract with France and so informed Sneider before mid-September 1976.<sup>78</sup>

Considering the timing of the ROK's decision, the success of the joint ROK-US operation did help ROK elites give up their programme for a nuclear weapon, and nuclear energy was only allowed for real 'peace purposes' in South Korea. Ryu Byoung-hyun, the director of the Joint Chiefs at that time, recalled that the ROK president clearly ordered him to stop developing a nuclear weapon. And Park did not make any other attempt to secure plutonium, e.g. to import the radioactive material secretly.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, Park's confidence in the American

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<sup>75</sup> Reed R Probst, *Negotiating With the North Koreans: The U.S. Experience at Panmunjom*, (Pennsylvania: U.S. Army War College, 1977). Retrieved 17 December 2009.

<sup>76</sup> Kim Jeongryeom, *op. cit.*, 445.

<sup>77</sup> "Interview with Park Huido," *New Daily*, 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2009.  
<http://www.newdaily.co.kr/news/article.html?no=36779>.

<sup>78</sup> Memorandum of Conversation of Brent Scowcroft, Richard Sneider, William Gleysteen, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1976, Korea 19, Box 10, Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, National Security Adviser, Ford Library.

<sup>79</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 282.



commitment for South Korean security had been restored. Regarding its Northern policy, the ROK leadership gained confidence with its military success, and maintained its hostility toward the DPRK. And although Park had never scored any significant victory in the inter-Korean conflict before 1976, along with the North Korean aggression, this triumphant atmosphere in South Korea further promoted anticommunism sentiment throughout the country, only furthering the possibility to have another détente mood on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>80</sup>

In the aftermath of the US' defeat in the Vietnam War, Seoul urgently sought to shore up its national security. The development of nuclear energy for military purposes was the core of South Korean security conceptions during this era. Since 1974, when India successfully tested a nuclear weapon for the first time, the US had paid increased attention to similar development efforts in other countries, including South Korea. Washington had monitored South Korean efforts for its own nuclear missile since March 1975. As the nuclear plan was revealed, the ROK changed its original plan. The ultimate goal of South Korea's policy was not the possession of nuclear weapons in and of itself, but the effect this would have for increasing national security. Without any doubt, as long as Washington rejected a South Korean nuclear programme, it was almost impossible for the ROK to have its own warhead. For this, Park proclaimed his willingness to develop the nuclear weapon unless the US provided him with a concrete, and better, security programme. But Ford was not able to reinforce US support for South Korea due to the anti-war atmosphere in his country. As a result, the ROK-US negotiations were not concluded in 1975. Yet the signature of the contract to obtain a reprocessing plant pushed the US to change its strategy: Philip Habib, who knew Park's stubborn nature, advocated a stern approach to the ROK in the late 1975 and early 1976. Park had to re-consider his cooperation with the French government, which could jeopardise the partnership with Ford. Still, he waited with the decision to cancel the contract despite mounting US pressure. He needed American security guarantees to replace his nuclear programme. In this situation, the murder in the demilitarised zone opened a new phase in the ROK-US negotiations. Washington helped Park punish North Korea for its violence in the DMZ. Even though operation Paul Bunyan was a fairly limited military action, the American support for Park's confrontational Northern policy saved him embarrassment and reinforced his political stature, relieving his anxiety for national security.

Thanks to the first Korean nuclear crisis in 1975 and 76, South Korea could keep its close ties with the United States and prevent a major security crisis after the collapse of Saigon. Despite the military success in the DMZ resulting from the Ford Doctrine, however, it is

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<sup>80</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 83.

doubtful that the two allies shared a similar level of animosity toward the communists. Clearly, the White House was reluctant to involve the United States in another conflict. As the US commander in South Korea indicated, Washington attempted to limit operation Paul Bunyan in the DMZ area and did not want to resume the Cold War in the East Asian region through the inter-Korean conflict.<sup>81</sup> The Blue House even interpreted the tragic incident in the DMZ, the Axe Murder incident, as a crisis of capitalists in the East Asian region, and prepared a full-scale war without initial American involvement, or even without the Americans knowing about it.<sup>82</sup> The operation Paul Bunyan resolved the most urgent problem between Seoul and Washington, the South Korean nuclear programme, but did not narrow the gap between the two allies in their Cold War perception.

The union between Park and Ford did not last long because of this difference. American commitment in South Korea's national security began to be overshadowed by US interest in post- Vietnam War politics. The White House gradually revealed its reluctance to pay enormous amounts of money supporting the South Korean authoritarian regime.<sup>83</sup> Park soon faced the most serious conflict with Washington ever since they had established a diplomatic relationship. Towards the end of the Ford administration, South Korea's illegal lobby organization to the US Congress was revealed. Along with the suppression of human rights by the Park regime, this political crime damaged his moral legitimacy as a key partner of US. Consequently, in November 1976, when Jimmy Carter was elected as a new president, he began to criticise Park's despotic rule. Moreover, he advocated the withdrawal of US armed forces from the ROK as he had repeatedly promised during his election campaign. The new American leader, even unknown to most Americans until 1976, broke the American commitment in South Korea that Ford made. His policy was what Park was most afraid of after the Vietnam War debacle, and now he inevitably faced the real crisis of post-Vietnam era.

## <2> The Beginning of Discussion on Human Rights and US Armed Forces in South Korea in 1977

In the latter half of the 1970s, the Park regime faced strong opposition, from both his own citizens and the United States. Ironically, Park himself planted the seeds of this adversity.

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<sup>81</sup> "Interview with Park Huido," *New Daily*, 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2009.  
<http://www.newdaily.co.kr/news/article.html?no=36779>.

<sup>82</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 82.

<sup>83</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 84.

He persecuted outspoken critics without mercy, and his draconian rule was often criticised in the American government circles. Moreover, his harsh treatment of subordinates, especially intelligence officials, resulted in a series of defections among key figures in Korean politics. These converts revealed Park's misdemeanour - a famous and serious case of disclosure - to the US. On 24<sup>th</sup> October, 1976, *the Washington Post* reported that the White House had found out about a bribery scheme orchestrated by the Blue House targeting ninety members of US Congress, as well as other officials. Due to its similarity with previous eavesdropping scandals in the White House, this shocking revelation was called 'Korea-gate.' The *Post* also indicated that the Korean agent, Park Tongsun, had distributed sums reaching from \$500,000 to \$1 million to various members of Congress already.<sup>84</sup> The goals of South Korean lobbying of US Congressmen were diverse, but the most important one had been to build American legislative support for the preservation of US forces in the ROK ever since the Nixon administration. It turned out that the ROK had bribed American officials for a decade. Surprisingly, this bribery issue had already been discussed in White House since Lyndon Johnson was president.<sup>85</sup> During South Korean engagement in the Vietnam War, the US government did not deal with this corruptive matter in a serious way. When in South Korea, Philip Habib tried to politicise Park's wrongdoing but failed to score points with it.<sup>86</sup> Yet as the White House secured decisive evidence of illegal lobbying activities of the ROK government, the disclosure of the bribery scheme had a deep impact on the ROK-US relationship.<sup>87</sup>

The subsequent revelation of additional lobbying plans hedged by the KCIA further incited tension between the two allies. The Blue House had already planned yet another bribery scheme for pacifying American politics, 'operation snow-white'. This unnecessary effort complicated the situation tremendously. Due to the failure of his mission, Kim Sanggeun, a KCIA official and in charge of this operation, was ordered to return to Seoul. However, he defected to the US because he expected to be punished by Park upon his return to the ROK. Even worse, the one who arranged for his asylum in the US was none other than the former KCIA director, Kim Hyungwook. Because of his disappointment with Park who had dismissed him in 1969 and deprived him of his membership in the National Assembly in 1972, Kim left for the US. Both Kim Sanggeun and Hyungwook started to uncover the details of Park's illegal

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<sup>84</sup> *The Washington post*, 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1976.

<sup>85</sup> Todd S. Purdum, *The New York Times: Accusation against lobbyist echo charges in 70's scandal*, (New York: The New York Times Company, 2005), 2.

<sup>86</sup> Lee Chaejin, *A troubled peace: US policy and the two Koreas*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 96.

<sup>87</sup> Lee Chaejin, *op. cit.*, 99.

lobbying of US Congress despite ROK efforts to appease them.<sup>88</sup> The deplorable human rights situation in South Korea, the illegal lobbying of US Congressmen, and the subsequent betrayal of former ROK intelligence officials seriously damaged the Park regime's image in the US.

Nevertheless, these moral aspects themselves did not directly break the link between Washington and Seoul before Jimmy Carter gained the prime power of the US. As indicated above, the South Korean bribery scheme had been an open secret in US politics for years. Furthermore, the White House had been well aware of Park's undemocratic rule and the constant repression of human rights. In other words, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Gerald Ford did not seriously question the morality of Park. Johnson ignored those issues to ensure South Korean assistance in Vietnam; Nixon needed Park's understanding of his plan, the reduction of US troops stationed in South Korea and hence did not check Park's *Yusin* constitution; and Ford was reluctant to provoke Park who was trying to build a nuclear missile and had questioned American commitment in South Korea. However, unfortunately for Park, the new US president, Carter did not ignore the bribe scandal. Immediately after his inauguration, Carter seriously questioned the morality of the Park regime after South Korea's illegal lobbying of US Congress eventually turned out to be true. He also urged the South Korean president to stop persecuting the democratic critics in his country, by drafting a withdrawal plan of US ground forces from South Korea.<sup>89</sup>

On 4<sup>th</sup> November 1976, American news reports shocked South Korean politics when it was reported that Jimmy Carter had defeated Gerald Ford. It appeared that the ROK government had been caught off guard by Carter's election victory: its Ministry of Foreign Affairs urgently prepared the analysis of Carter's policy and his administration. The report concluded that the US policy toward the ROK would be stricter due to Carter's emphasis on an ethical foreign policy.<sup>90</sup> In contrast to this urgent atmosphere in his government, Park was rather undisturbed. He underestimated Carter's leadership skills and questioned the likelihood of the US president keeping his election pledges.<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, it was clear that he was sensitive to the criticisms concerning the human rights situation in South Korea. The humanity issue was his Achilles heel. Thanks to inter-Korean conflicts, he was able to justify his draconian rule for

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<sup>88</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol 12, 118- 127. Because of his disclosure, Kim Hyungwook might have been killed by KCIA in either somewhere of France or basement of Blue House. For detail, see Bruce Cumings, "Korean scandal or American scandal?," Japan Policy Research Institute Working Paper No. 20 (1995).

<sup>89</sup> Lee Chaejin, *op. cit.*, 99.

<sup>90</sup> Even regarding Nixon regime that proclaimed the withdrawal of US forces from the East Asia, the ROK government did not make such an urgent research. For detail of ROK study of Carter regime, see "The ROK-US relationship regarding the establishment of new US government, Carter administration, 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1977" Class Number 721. 52 US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>91</sup> Kim Jeongryeom, *op. cit.*, 508.

about one and half decades. In reality, the iron fist rule of Park was not a matter of importance to Washington unless his rule directly threatened the national security of the ROK and the US.<sup>92</sup>

However, it was Jimmy Carter who eventually integrated ethics standards into the US policy stance toward the ROK.<sup>93</sup> Due to the *Korea-gate affair* and subsequent instances of exposure of Park's wrongdoing, the new US trend was accelerated further. That is, the combination of the ROK moral issue and Carter's victory soon produced anti-Park sentiments in American politics.<sup>94</sup> Soon after his inauguration, South Korea became a model case for Carter's human rights policy. The new US leader started to deal with the 'taboo' of the ROK-US relationship. Carter's plan was firmly based on previous American studies of US military aid to the ROK and hence relevant until his first year in the White House. That is, the Ford administration also considered the revival of Nixon's plan. For instance, according to the Solarz-Fraser Amendment to withdraw US troops from South Korea, which was submitted to Congress in December 1975, the US government seriously planned the withdrawal of most of the US troops from South Korea.<sup>95</sup> A report of the US Centre for Defence Information, the assessment of the Solarz-Fraser Amendment, also advocated the reduction of US aid to the ROK for the modernisation of ROK armed forces and the despotic rule of Park:

While the South Koreans have legitimate military needs that should be treated sympathetically, future requests for military aid need to be examined with care. The South Koreans have often understated their own strength and emphasised North Korean strength in order to justify further assistance [...]

Alleged South Korean violations of human rights are a continuing issues and Could have a bearing on future military and economic aid to South Korea because of a provision in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974 and new amendments to the 1975 Military Assistance Authorization Bill passed by House and Senate Committees. The 1974 law directs the President to reduce or terminate military or economic assistance to any government which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally

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<sup>92</sup> Ma Sangyoon and Park Wongon, "Détentegi'eui Hanmi Galdeung: Nixon, Carter'wa Park Chunghee [ROK-US Split in Détente Period: Nixon, Carter, and Park Chunghee]." Yeoksa bipyeong 86 (2009): 125

<sup>93</sup> Ma Sangyoon and Park Wongon, *op. cit.*, 127.

<sup>94</sup> Yet as we will discuss later in this chapter, Carter was not able to keep this anti- Park mood in the long run.

<sup>95</sup> "Solarz-Fraser Amendment to Withdraw US Troops from South Korea," 1975. 12.30., US Policy toward South Korea, Box 135, Jimmy Carter Papers – Pre Presidential. 1976 Presidential Campaign Issue Office-Noel Sterret. Clippings-Foreign Issues., Jimmy E. Carter Library & Museum.

recognised human rights violations by advising the Congress that extraordinary circumstances require it [...]<sup>96</sup>

In short, after its pullout from South-East Asia, Washington did care about the economic interests and moral aspects of American foreign intervention due to its bitter experience in Vietnam. Specifically, this study indicated that, the US national interests in Northeast Asia, “a strong and independent Japan and the peace of the Korean peninsula,” could be best maintained by naval forces [and hence the land forces could be withdrawn]. In addition, it also advised the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons in South Korea that could result in general nuclear war.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, this idea was not developed as a policy since Ford had to guarantee his military support for Park due to the South Korean nuclear crisis. However, Carter, who firmly stood on his belief in moral politics, started to push the plan in the early 1977.

At the first meeting of new administration’s NSC members, the new team selected Carter’s withdrawal plan for priority review and decision making along with the other fourteen items.<sup>98</sup> On 26<sup>th</sup> January 1977, the new US president ordered the review of American policies toward the Korean peninsula, including the withdrawal issue. It appeared that Carter did not want to hesitate to put his new Korean policy into action. His order to review the policies meant considering “how” to withdraw US forces from South Korea, not “whether or not” to withdraw them.<sup>99</sup> On 15<sup>th</sup> February, Carter sent his first letter to his ‘immoral’ counterpart in Seoul, through Sneider. Carter first informed the internal discussion on the withdrawal of US ground forces from the ROK. This was what the ROK leadership expected, and Park was already prepared for this. Yet he felt a strong antipathy toward his self-proclaimed ‘moral’ partner in Washington when he read the sentences in which Carter urged him to consider the human rights issue in South Korea.<sup>100</sup> In his reply, dated 26<sup>th</sup> February 1977, the ROK president satirised the lack of logic in Carter’s idea:

[...] Under the difficult circumstances of national division, the Republic of Korea has been making steady progress as a free democratic nation while coping with war

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<sup>96</sup> “Korea and US Policy in Asia,” 1976. 1., US Policy toward South Korea, Box 135, Jimmy Carter Papers – Pre Presidential, 1976 Presidential Campaign Issue Office-Noel Sterrett. Clippings-Foreign Issues, Jimmy E. Carter Library & Museum.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1983), 51.

<sup>99</sup> PRM-13 from *Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC 13*, 26 February, secret (declassified 1991), quoted in Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*

<sup>100</sup> “The letter from US President Carter to President Park, 15 Feb 1977,” The presidential letter exchanges between President Park Chunghee and US President Carter, 15 Feb 1977- 6 Mar 1979, Class Number 722.9 US., Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

provocations and incessant military threats by the North Korean Communist regime which totally denies individual freedoms or human rights to its people and indulges in merciless repression [...]<sup>101</sup>

Interestingly, Park did not spend many pages talking about the withdrawal issues, which were the most impending issues to the ROK. Instead, he elaborated why he had no choice but to limit human rights.<sup>102</sup> Without any doubt, Park felt more threatened by Carter because of this issue than that of security, since US emphasis on morality could reignite the democratic movement in South Korea, and hence threaten his presidency.<sup>103</sup>

He continuously criticised the US president for his moral concern. On 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1977, just a few days before Carter announced the withdrawal plan, Park spoke to journalists about the new US idea,

Now I am going to make a remark about President Carter. Isn't it annoying to say such and such about the morality of another country even though he could not resolve the moral problems in his own country. Why didn't he mention the Khmer genocide? Moreover, he keeps silent toward North Korea, and what does this mean?<sup>104</sup>

In contrast to his deep concern on the human rights issue, the ROK leader was relatively confident on the security issue.

[...] It is possible that some US forces would return to America as Carter pledged, but even if it is the case, we are still able to fight against North Korea [...]<sup>105</sup>

Park emphasised that the military force of the ROK was by no means inferior to that of the DPRK. But it did not mean that he would let Carter withdraw US ground forces from South Korea. Once the US president proceeded with implementing his plan, Park, in fact, attempted many secret efforts to frustrate it.

Unfortunately for the US president, the pullout plan was not completed due to South

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<sup>101</sup>“The letter from President Park to US President Carter, 26 Feb 1977,” The presidential letter exchanges between President Park Chunghee and US President Carter, 15 Feb 1977- 6 Mar 1979, Class Number 722.9 US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ma Sangyoon and Park Wongon, *op. cit.*, 127.

<sup>104</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol. 12, 132.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

Korea's interference; a lack of military and legislative support in the US, Japanese resistance, and new findings regarding the North Korean armed forces. First, Park tried to win over the conservatives in the US military. In early March, Park Dongjin, the ROK Foreign Minister, met Carter for a 'consultation.' But the US leader made a unilateral decision to withdraw and informed the South Korean official accordingly.<sup>106</sup> After Seoul received notification of the withdrawal plan from Washington, American military officials in South Korea started to voice their oppositions toward their Commander-in-Chief. After Park and the generals of the Eighth United States Army had played golf, Park spoke with them about the US president's withdrawal plan. "Because Carter has military experience, he will be well aware of the issue," said Park.<sup>107</sup> One of the US military officials cynically replied, "He had been on board a submarine for three months. That could be counted as his *military experience*."<sup>108</sup>

Park refrained from criticising Carter too much himself, but encouraged US commanders to express their objection towards their own president. This strategy worked effectively. In fact, the US military in the ROK, another important party in the pullout plan, stood against their Commander-in-Chief already because they considered that the North Korean military strength was still threatening. However, they were excluded from the discussion on the pullout.<sup>109</sup> According to American documents, the US State Department attempted to exclude them from the decision making process because they did not agree with Carter,

I am told that General John W. Vessey, Commander of our forces in Korea, is scheduled to testify on February, 27th before the Military Personnel Subcommittee of the House Armed Service Committee on U. S. force levels in Korea. An appearance of this kind would normally be routine. Obviously, it is not at this moment, in view of Vessey's widely publicised remarks in December opposing U. S. force reductions in Korea, and the current inter-agency review of our Korean policy. I believe it is important that Vessey's appearance be cancelled – or at a minimum postponed. Cancellation should not be difficult to arrange if the Subcommittee is informed that Vessey would not be able to speak freely at this juncture since the Administration's

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<sup>106</sup> The detail of notification is as in the following: Park must understand the withdrawal of US ground forces from South Korea (Air forces will stay). Carter also indicated that the United States-ROK relations are worst ever according to Congress and American people. And he emphasised that his military aid and tolerance toward Park is only temporary. See "Meeting with South Korean Foreign Minister Park Dongjin," memo from Brzezinski to Carter, 8 Mar, 1977, secret (declassified 1996).

<sup>107</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 138.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> "Singlaub Challenge Begins to 'Draw The Line' On Carter War Policy," Executive Intelligence Review, EIR Volume 4, No. 22, 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1977.



review of the issue will not have been completed by February, 22<sup>th</sup> [...] <sup>110</sup>

The ostracised US army officials in South Korea considered that the Park regime also did not want any reduction of US armed forces, and therefore made an important decision: while the US ambassador, Richard Sneider, talked with the Blue House in order to specify the terms of a pullout, the US Army in South Korea attempted to frustrate it. After President Carter signed an order specifying the withdrawal schedule in early May, the American military officials in South Korea eventually launched an operation against their president.<sup>111</sup> On 18<sup>th</sup> May, the special assistant of KCIA director, Lee Dongbok, secretly met Jim Hausman, the special assistant of US armed forces commander in South Korea, in a room of the Plaza Hotel near Seoul city hall. The KCIA official later reported his dialogue with the American military official to his superior, Kim Jaegy, the KCIA director. The contents of this talk were astonishing: John W. Vessey, the commander of US armed forces in South Korea, decided to reject any level of reduction in US troop number. Just six days ahead of a visit of senior US diplomats to Seoul who wanted to discuss human rights and military pullout issue with Park, Vessey tried to collaborate with the ROK government in order to stall the withdrawal plan. He recommended that the ROK officials in working-level under ministers should not make any moderate comment during the upcoming ROK-US consultation considering his stance, even though President Park should make a political [moderate] comment.<sup>112</sup> He also requested having a secret adjustment meeting between senior representatives of the two militaries in advance (even unknown to the US ambassador). Finally, he informed the KCIA that Carter had promised him that the president would not make any decision on the US forces in South Korea without prior consultation. Furthermore, the general said, “I will leave the army if the US leader does not keep his words.”<sup>113</sup>

Facing the rebellious message from a US commander, the KCIA director decided to meet Vessey. On the next day, they met up in Vessey’s official residence. Wearing an annoyed face, the US commander in South Korea broached his idea about Carter’s policy. He expressed his anger about his president’s inflexibility and expected the pledge would not be materialised. He said that Carter’s plan is divorced from reality, and therefore is a flawed policy that could result in

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<sup>110</sup> “General Vessey’s Testimony on Korean Troop Withdrawals,” 2 February, 1977, Korea, Republic of. 1/77- 1/81., Box 43, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material. Country File, JECL.

<sup>111</sup> The time table of initial withdrawal plan by Jimmy Carter was as following: the White House will withdraw one brigade of the Second Division by the end of CY 1978. And a second brigade shall be withdrawn by the end of June 1980. The American nuclear weapons were to be replaced with the ground forces. For more detail information, see *Presidential Directive/NSC-12*, May 5, 1977, top secret/sensitive/eyes only (declassified 1991), quoted in Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*

<sup>112</sup> This means that Park should pretend to approve Carter plan.

<sup>113</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 143.

a war. Nonetheless, he wanted to talk with Kim Jaegyu in order to prepare complimentary measures for the US ground forces withdrawal, just in case. Vessey's idea about complimentary measures was simple, but it did make sense: if the ROK government demands compensation for a reduction of US military forces at a level that makes a pullout more expensive than the status quo, this would spark a fierce discussion about the bill and lower its chances of passage in Congress.<sup>114</sup>

The secret dialogue between Vessey and Kim was immediately conveyed to the Blue House. Vessey's suggestion was a key point that demonstrated Park's real intention during ROK-US negotiations after May 1977. As the US commander in South Korea advised, the ROK leader did not oppose Carter's pullout plan from South Korea. He even reiterated his old catchphrase, 'self-reliance of national defence,' and announced 'non-disagreement' over withdrawal of US land forces from his country. Yet the term, 'non-disagreement', does not mean 'agreement.' He did not 'agree' with his counterpart in Washington. According to Kim Jeongryeom, Chief of presidential secretary, the ROK president was enraged when he said, "I will not stop Carter from pulling out his forces from Korea."<sup>115</sup> Even if he resisted against American pressure, the reduction of US forces in South Korea would be enforced in the near future. The American unilateralism in its South Korean policy was already proved by the withdrawal discussion during the Nixon era. Clearly, Park's over-reaction was calculated from his past experience and current intentions.<sup>116</sup>

In addition to their secret connection with Park, the US army officials in South Korea also publicly criticised Jimmy Carter on his policy toward Korea. During his interview with a *Washington Post* correspondent, Major General John Singlaub, the chief of staff of the US command in South Korea stated, "If US land forces are withdrawn on the schedule suggested, it will lead to war."<sup>117</sup> Without any doubt, this rebellious comment from a US official enraged the President Carter. Once he read the *Washington Post* article, the US president called the dissenters up to Washington. Although Carter reprimanded Singlaub and removed him from his post in South Korea, this was just the beginning of Carter's nightmares. On May, 25<sup>th</sup> the rebellious official expressed his fear of a war in Korea once again before Congress. Singlaub highlighted the significant reinforcement of North Korean armed forces based on the recent intelligence findings and argued that South Korea would be in grave danger if the US troops left as scheduled. He also emphasised that this view is almost universal in the US military in the

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<sup>114</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 143- 144.

<sup>115</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 64.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> *The Washington Post*, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1977.

ROK and elsewhere.<sup>118</sup> After hearing Singlaub's testimony, the House Armed Services Investigations Subcommittee held a meeting. His testimony put the brakes on Carter's plan: the Subcommittee assessed,

We have to draw the line on what these people in the administration can get away with. The situation is very dangerous, we're on the brink of nuclear war. Congress has to move to counter Carter's policies.<sup>119</sup>

Contradicting the president's intention, Singlaub's removal from his post brought him a lot of sympathy from the legislature and the press. They considered that the president had silenced his subordinate who had bravely challenged a flawed idea.<sup>120</sup> After all, the military personnel's criticism on Carter's new policy triggered the controversy about the pullout of US forces from South Korea.<sup>121</sup> The domineering manner of the '*moral*' president adversely affected his image, and only helped the opposition in the legislature.<sup>122</sup> In short, Carter already faced a strong challenge even before advancing his plan onto the international level.

Needless to say, Singlaub's testimony and its influence on the American government also inspired South Korea. His advocacy for ROK security was presented in the South Korean press, too.<sup>123</sup> During later vacation visits to South Korea, the public applauded him.<sup>124</sup> Thanks to the opposition in the US military and a chaotic controversy surrounding the Carter plan, the Blue House easily seized the opportunity to kill Carter's plan.

The South Korean elites pulled the strings without any significant mistakes, and the Carter administration did not identify the connection between the Blue House and US Army in South Korea. In other words, Park was clearly in a stronger position against Carter in terms of information. Even worse, the impatient US leader was obsessed with his pledge and continually pushed his flawed idea forward without consideration of its consequences to South Korean policy. In this situation, the South Korean leadership decided to utilise the anti- Park sentiment in the US Congress to terminate Carter's quest. That is, the resistance of Park against US policy would not have been effective and only increase the hostile reaction from the US legislature.

Park prepared to meet with then US Undersecretary of State, Philip Habib, and the

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<sup>118</sup> Executive Intelligence Review, *op. cit.*

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> *The New York Times*, 26 May 1977.

<sup>121</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 90.

<sup>122</sup> Executive Intelligence Review, *op. cit.*

<sup>123</sup> *DongaIlbo*, 26 May, 1977.

<sup>124</sup> This implies that the ROK public did not support Carter's idea, either. Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 151.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General George Brown, in the Blue House on 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> May. According to American sources, John Vessey, supposedly at the centre of the anti-Carter movement, also attended this meeting.<sup>125</sup> The US commander in South Korea had already had a series of talks with the Blue House about the ROK-US negotiations, which had produced an agreement. Based on this secret consultation with Vessey, the ROK president decided to demand a compensatory scheme rather than to reject the American withdrawal programme.<sup>126</sup> First, Habib tried to reassure the ROK president. Park pretended to resist the withdrawal plan but did not keep his position. The South Korean leader emphasised that the compensation should be implemented in parallel with the withdrawal of US ground forces, while accepting the US pullout schedule. The president also did not forget to satirise the conflict between the White House and Congress: he said that he would only accept these terms if the Congressmen who questioned the withdrawal plan approved of it.<sup>127</sup>

The US embassy in Seoul expected that the Blue House would request about 1.5 billion US dollars for compensation and modernization of its forces. The State Department considered that the costs associated with a pullout were prohibitively high. Moreover, Seoul also requested Washington to return the operational control of the ROK's armed forces back to the ROK government.<sup>128</sup> He needed congressional approval to meet South Korea's excessive demands for compensation, but the legislature had no idea about this bill: Congress still had not considered whether they approved or disapproved of the bill. Under such pressure, South Korea's excessive demands for compensatory measures left Carter no other choice but to back down.

In addition, the revived discussion on the nuclear issue in South Korea presented the President Carter with an additional problem. In his cable to the State Department, US ambassador Sneider indicated that the ROK media had highlighted the nuclear issue in June. The interesting sentence in his report is "This discussion is clearly tolerated by the ROK government."<sup>129</sup> Park utilised the South Korean press to reveal his thoughts to Washington. In fact, during his meeting with other ROK elites at the Blue House in May, he said that he would develop nuclear missiles if Carter removed American nuclear weapons from South Korea.<sup>130</sup> It is possible that Park revealed his comments intentionally in order to agitate Washington.

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<sup>125</sup> "Brown/Habib Report on Korea, 29 May, 1977, Korea, Republic of, 5- 6/77," Box 43, National Security Affairs-Brzezinski Material. Country File, JECL.

<sup>126</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 153.

<sup>127</sup> "US Ground Force Withdrawal: Second Meeting with President Park," 26 May 1977, Korea, Republic of, 5- 6/77, Box 43, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material. Country File, JECL.

<sup>128</sup> "Compensatory Measure," 17 June, 1977, Carter Withdrawal of US Troops from Korea – Dep. Of State Documents, Box 1, Oberdorfer Korea Collection, NSA.

<sup>129</sup> "Korean Intensify Discussion of Nuclear Option," 17 June, 1977, Carter Withdrawal of US Troops from Korea – Dep. Of State Documents, Box 1, Oberdorfer Korea Collection, NSA.

<sup>130</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 140.

Furthermore, the Blue House indirectly indicated its nuclear ambitions. Sneider stated, “[The South Korean] Foreign Minister as well as the Deputy Prime Minister, reportedly speculated to the press some weeks ago that circumstances in Asia could force ROK consideration of the nuclear option.”<sup>131</sup>

Even the ROK opposition parties opposed the pullout plan of US forces. They argued that the US troops must stay in South Korea in order to prevent Park’s suppression of human rights.<sup>132</sup> Their rhetoric is noteworthy: “The US forces in ROK are the only available leverage on President Park toward respect for individual liberties within the country.”<sup>133</sup> It is true that Carter attempted to use the pullout of US troops for checking Park’s authoritarian rule.<sup>134</sup> But the US president did not try to use the pullout plan as the leverage for a moral issue in South Korea in order not to stimulate Park. For instance, on 7<sup>th</sup> May, weeks before the discussion surrounding the pullout plan, Habib met Park and said that the White House does not link the human rights issue with the pullout of US forces. The National Security Council and Carter considered that it would be a lot easier to persuade the Park regime if they did not relate both issues.<sup>135</sup> But his careless decision soon turned out to be a serious mistake. The problem was that Congress did consider the morality of Park. Many members in the US legislature did not like Park due to the *Korea-gate* affair and his inhumane politics.<sup>136</sup> However, in this instance, Carter was asking Congress to pass his bill for providing enormous military aid to the ‘evil’ Park regime.<sup>137</sup> It was a decisive blunder to separate the two policies of the pullout of US forces and human rights in South Korea, once Park did not oppose the withdrawal plan. Simply put, the US legislature felt that Carter had abandoned the oppressed South Korean citizens in order to withdraw the US troops, and was even willing to pay a lot of money to the corrupted Park regime,<sup>138</sup> two very different pledges conflicting with each other.

Interestingly, even the South Korean opposition movement was mobilised by Park.

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<sup>131</sup> “Korean Intensify Discussion of Nuclear Option,” 17 June, 1977, Carter Withdrawal of US Troops from Korea – Dep. Of State Documents, Box 1, Oberdorfer Korea Collection, NSA.

<sup>132</sup> “Briefing by General George Brown and Under Secretary of State Phil Habib on U. S. Troop Withdrawals from Korea,” 8 June, 1977, Korea, Republic of. 5- 6/77, Box 43, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material. Country File, JECL.

<sup>133</sup> “The letter from US President Carter to President Park, 15 Feb 1977”, The presidential letter exchanges between President Park Chunghee and US President Carter, 15 Feb 1977- 6 Mar 1979, Class Number 722.9 US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> “Human Rights: Meeting with President Park,” 7<sup>th</sup> May, 1977, Korea. Republic of. 5- 6/77, Box 43, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material, Country File, JECL.

<sup>136</sup> Ma Sangyoon and Park Wongon, *op. cit.*, 128.

<sup>137</sup> “Congressional Reactions to Our Korean Policy,” 21 July, 1977, Korea, Republic of, 7- 9/77, Box 43, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material, Country File, JECL.

<sup>138</sup> “Letter to Honorable Zbigniew Brzezinski,” 25 April, 1977, NSA, Staff Material-Far East, Armconst-Chron File, 4/27- 30/77 ~ 6/28- 30/77, Box 3, Collection #26. JECL.

Although the South Korean leader did not officially object to the pullout of US forces, he did not really want Washington to move ahead with its plan either. Park met Lee Chulseung, the party leader of the *New Democratic Party*, the leading opposition, and explained the result of his meeting with Habib and Brown. Because the opposition also did not approve of Carter's plan, which would obviously undermine South Korean national security, Lee promised Park that he would express his antipathy toward the pullout plan to Habib.<sup>139</sup> The US official reported Lee's thoughts to the US Congress, just as Park had anticipated.<sup>140</sup> That is, at first glance, the opposition groups challenged Park who seemingly agreed with Carter. But, indeed, they sided with Park and Vessey, both of which sought to stall the plan.

In addition, Carter's pledge was also rejected by Japan, America's most important partner in East Asia. South Korea and Japan shared their information about American policy making processes and cooperated to frustrate the pullout plan. It was the Japanese government that first requested of the White House to provide compensatory measures to South Korea. This was the result of close consultation between Seoul and Tokyo. The Japanese Premier, Fukuda Takeo, continuously demanded Jimmy Carter give up his plan in May, when the meeting between Park and Habib was held.<sup>141</sup> Washington was not able to disregard Japanese opinion light-heartedly. Because of Fukuda's insistent requests, the White House had to put the compensatory package on the agenda even before the ROK broached the compensatory options.<sup>142</sup>

Finally and most importantly, the military movement of North Korea got rid of the fundamental rationale of the Carter pledge, "South Korea can repulse North Korean attack without US ground troops." The DPRK built a formidable Panzer corps while encouraging the US president to push his plan. Before facing the stiff opposition against his pledge, the US president had maintained good relations with Kim Il-sung, because Pyongyang welcomed Carter's withdrawal plan and made a consistent effort to reassure him. Since Carter had come into office in November 1976, Kim had sent him a personal letter, through Pakistan, to congratulate the new president. Moreover, in February 1977, North Korea expressed its intention to avoid conflict with Washington, to pursue peaceful reunification of Korea, and to have direct talks with the US. Even though Carter could not have a direct contact with Kim because the North Korean Premier rejected the participation of the Blue House, he lifted travel restrictions for US

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<sup>139</sup> Cho, Kabje, *op. cit.*, 154.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> "Japanese Debate Continues on Troop Reduction in ROK," 1 Mar, 1977, Carter Withdrawal of US Troops from Korea – Dep. Of State Documents-3, Box 1, Oberdorfer Korea Collection, NSA and Kamiya, Fuji, The United States Presence in the Republic of Korea as Foreign Policy: Withdrawal Decision and its Repercussions, Translated in Japan Echo 4, no. 3 (autumn 1977): 94.

<sup>142</sup> See interviews with David Blakemore in Lee Chaejin and Sato Hideo, *US Policy Toward Japan and Korea: A changing Influence Partnership*, (New York: Praeger, 1982), 107.

citizens going to DPRK and invited Pyongyang's UN representative to an official US reception.<sup>143</sup>

Yet Carter remained silent about the intelligence report on the North Korean military build-up. In order to materialise his pledge, he tried to hide the information and did not inform Congress. However, in June, the CIA and the Joint Chiefs of Staff reported their findings on North Korean armed power to the Senate without prior notice to the State Department. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the US National Security Advisor, outlined the desperate situation to President Carter on 10<sup>th</sup> June:

We get conflicting reports of how the Senate session went this afternoon. After Phil Habib's opening statement, Senator Case apparently read from notes of a CIA briefing On the Korean threat. As he related it, the CIA briefing was extremely pessimistic, raising serious questions about the wisdom of your policy. The CIA briefing took place a few days ago and was based on the intelligence assessment that was part of our PRM effort. Apparently, CIA had not informed State that they had briefed the Committee nor of the Committee's reaction.<sup>144</sup>

Regardless of being subject to strong criticism for his plan in Congress, and the betrayal of the intelligence agency, President Carter did not immediately delay his schedule. In his letter to the ROK president, he repeatedly emphasised that the withdrawal of ground forces would be carried out as scheduled. The US president announced that, the US Secretary of Defence Harold Brown, would discuss the plan with Park soon.<sup>145</sup>

Unfortunately, for the impatient US president, he was unable to pass his bill before Harold Brown's meeting with Park. While the legislature had many reasons for maintaining US ground forces in the ROK, Carter was unable to present Congress with any convincing rationale for his plan. His only valid justification was the reminder that the "troop withdrawal is my campaign pledge."<sup>146</sup> On 21<sup>th</sup> July, Brzezinski eventually concluded that it was impossible to secure the legislative support without significant changes to the original plan. Regarding this

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<sup>143</sup> For US-DPRK contacts, see "Contacts and Communications with North Korea," Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski, 28 Feb, 1977, secret (declassified 1996); and Douglas J. Bennett Jr., Draft Letter to Rep. Leicester Wolff, 28 Apr, 1978, secret (declassified 1996), quoted in Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*

<sup>144</sup> "Korea Troop Withdrawals: Brown/Habib Testimony," 10 June, 1977, Korea. Republic of. 5- 6/77, Box 43, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material. Country File, JECL.

<sup>145</sup> "Letter, from J. Carter to Park Chunghee," 21 July, 1977., Korea. Republic of, President Park Chunghee 2/77-12/78, Box 12, Brzezinski Material. President's Correspondence with Foreign Leaders File, JECL.

<sup>146</sup> "Meeting with South Korean Foreign Minister Park Dongjin," Memo from Brzezinski to Carter, 8 March, 1977, Korea. Republic of. 5- 6/77, Box 43, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material. Country File, JECL.

disappointing situation in Washington, the US National Security Advisor suggested Carter should re-consider the draft of the pullout.<sup>147</sup>

Yet this concern was not reflected in Harold Brown's meeting with Park. The US Secretary of Defence delivered Carter's pullout scheme. The final phase of the pullout would be carried out in 1982. Park did not directly oppose Carter as he had planned.<sup>148</sup> However, he and other ROK leaders were well informed about the protracted conflict between the US Congress and the White House.<sup>149</sup> Needless to say, Park did not believe that Carter could persuade the US legislature so easily, and he pretended to agree with the US president. It was clear that the Park-Vessey connection and their strategy effectively eliminated Carter's support from Congress in 1977.

In short, Park frustrated the Carter administration's ambitious Korean policy in its first year, which ended with deep scepticism of his political capabilities. The differences between the US military in the ROK and the US president effectively bogged down the withdrawal of US ground forces. Park was able to take advantage of the split among the American lawmakers, and mobilised almost every party related in the new US policy - even including his opposition in South Korea and the Japanese government - to stop it.

However, not all of Carter's efforts were ineffective. As discussed earlier, the Park regime felt serious pressure regarding the human rights issue, which had been all but ignored before Carter had moved into the White House. Indeed, the South Korean president mobilised illegal and/or immoral measures, such as bribery of US Congressmen and mobilisation of ROK public servants for his presidential campaign and election. And although his actions were generally tolerated by Johnson, Nixon, and Ford, they were not by Jimmy Carter. In this sense, the very existence of the *Yusin* constitution that justified Park's lifetime tenure and draconian rule, which limited the political freedom in South Korea, eventually became Carter's main target within South Korean policy.

In 1978, the barrage of criticism from the US over the South Korean dictatorship began. Now, Carter saw another chance to realise his withdrawal pledge, and Park was not able to repel the offensive as easily as he had in 1977. The US president identified the flaw in his negotiations with Park, the separation between pullout and human rights. As the South Korean citizens started to resist their leader enthusiastically, Carter simply changed his priority from the

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<sup>147</sup> "Congressional Reactions to Our Korean Policy," 21 July, 1977., Korea. Republic of. 7- 9/77, Box 43, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material, Country File, JECL.

<sup>148</sup> "Brown/Park Conversation Re Ground Forces Withdrawals and Compensatory Measures," 27 July 1977, Carter Withdrawal of US Troops from Korea -2, Box 1, Oberdorfer Korea Collection, NSA.

<sup>149</sup> "The withdrawal of US forces (reduction): the discussion in US Congress," 1977 Class Number, 729. 23 US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.



pullout, to the morality of South Korean politics. Ironically, despite this change in his priority, the Carter's withdrawal plan finally began to gain more support both in the US and South Korea. In the second round of Park-Carter discussions, Park faced a serious dilemma between the strength of his dictatorship and security of his country. Along with the determined challenge from the US leader, recent reinforcement of North Korean ground forces deteriorated the stability of South Korean security. Finally, the ROK president brought about a new breakthrough in neutralising both the American pressure and the North Korean threat, a proposal for another round of inter- Korean talks and ROK-US summit meeting. Park tried to prevent the US pullout from South Korea and minimise his acceptance of Carter's human rights recommendations with these arrangements.

### <3> The Road to the Summit Meeting, January 1978 to May 1979

Because of the heavy emphasis on the pullout issue, human rights in South Korea were not discussed as seriously as the withdrawal scheme in 1977. Even Jimmy Carter, who raised the profile of those two issues in US politics, definitively separated them after Park had accepted Carter's pullout policy. Simply put, the American decision sounded unconditional, regardless of the moral perspective of the Park regime.<sup>150</sup> This turned out to be a serious mistake by Carter because Congress misunderstood the fact that the President had tried to ignore Park's despotic rule in order to rush his plan. As we discussed in the previous chapter, Park Chunghee paid more attention to human rights concerns in Washington, rather than the withdrawal issue, because he was convinced the US ground forces could not be transferred over night. Indeed, Carter had a hard time managing the pullout plan in 1977, and did not properly use the US ground forces in the ROK as leverage to press for an improvement of the South Korean human rights record.

Yet the democratic and liberal challenge to Park's dictatorship in South Korea gained strength after 1978. As time went by, ROK citizens became increasingly unsettled with their president, whom would not stand for re-election. For instance, the student protests that were directed against the government quickly attracted supporters: while there were thirteen such cases in 1976, the frequency had increased to twenty three in 1977, and reached thirty one in 1978. Two-thirds of these movements were held around 18<sup>th</sup> May - the day on which the ROK held an election for representatives of the National Council for Unification the political body that chose the president - and 6<sup>th</sup> July, the day on which the NCU elected Park as the ninth

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<sup>150</sup> "Human Rights: Meeting with President Park," 7 May, 1977, Korea. Republic of. 5- 6/77, Box 43, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material, Country File, JECL.

president of South Korea.<sup>151</sup> This situation encouraged Jimmy Carter to effectively promote the retreat plan as leverage to press for progress human rights issue, and the withdrawal card started to show influence on South Korean politics. Until January 1979 when the US Congress found a decisive reason to stop the plan, the US president successfully promoted his idea in political circles. In order to address security concerns in the US Congress about the retreat, the US leader guaranteed that the pullout of US ground troops would be carried out in a manner which preserved the military balance on the Korean Peninsula. This approach facilitated the passing of the bill for compensatory measures for South Korea, “not for Park but for the security of the ROK and East Asia.”<sup>152</sup> His stubborn efforts finally made Park consider that the pullout plan could be realised, and would seriously threaten national security. In January 1979, Park proposed a ROK-US summit meeting to the US president. Carter eventually changed his focus on South Korea from the pullout plan, which was almost impossible to implement, to human rights. He used the withdrawal policy to check the inhumane rule of his counterpart in Seoul.<sup>153</sup>

In addition, in order to prepare for a possible retreat of US forces, the South Korean leader considered to reduce instability by engaging in inter-Korean talks - as he had done before 1972. He attempted to open a new round of negotiations with North Korea in early 1979. This effort, however, was very disappointing due to Pyongyang's indifference toward bilateral negotiations, which had already turned out useless for the North Korean goal, ‘the retreat of US forces from Korea,’ during their first contact. Due to the distinct gap between South and North Korea, Park's efforts to reduce tensions did not produce any significant result on this occasion. Clearly, because he could not ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula, the ROK leadership had to prevent the US troop withdrawal at any cost. Consequently, Park had no choice but to accept Carter's request for improving the human rights conditions. The two issues were discussed simultaneously in contentious talks between two the presidents in June 1979. These political deals changed South Korea's policy toward the US and North Korea before the ROK-US summit took place.

On the first day of 1978, Park briefly mentioned the most important political events in South Korea: he hinted at two national elections to be held that year. One: to choose delegates for the National Conference for Unification; the other, to elect representatives for the National Assembly.<sup>154</sup> According to the *Yusin* constitution, the NCU, chaired by the South Korean president, elected the next president of the ROK. In this way, Park had won the presidential vote

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<sup>151</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 197.

<sup>152</sup> Ma Sangyoon and Park Wongon, *op. cit.*, 127.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> *DongaIlbo*, 18<sup>th</sup> January, 1978.

in December 1972, and expected a successful re-election six years later. The problem was that he was the sole candidate. The NCU was designed and firmly controlled by Park, which implied that the president was de facto 'elected' by himself. He maintained the appearance of a democratic system but never allowed any critical debate about his rule. Since the Communist threat had increased after the fall of Saigon, ROK citizens did not seriously question this wartime structure until the mid-1970s. After all, it was Park himself who failed to resolve the inter-Korean conflict. The fear of war in South Korea gradually waned and thus could not be expected to sustain Park's lifetime tenure for much longer. People started to argue that the political system at the time was just a tool to legitimise and perpetuate Park's dictatorship.<sup>155</sup> Consequently, he increasingly lost his political base. Thus, in this context, the 1978 election for NCU delegates was a very sensitive issue. In his new year's speech, Park did not touch upon the NCU election scheduled for July of that year. However, Park Chunghee's careless suppression of both of his direct critics, and groups who opposed the prevailing decision-making process provided Carter with hints for his war against Park.<sup>156</sup>

Meanwhile, Carter's bill was not seeing any progress. The US Congress, the military, and the CIA had forced him to make a major change in his draft. In April, the US president revised his plan: he decided to withdraw only one combat battalion from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division on schedule, but keep the other two battalions in the ROK until 1979. Yet, he still urged the legislature to enact the authorization for military assistance for the ROK.<sup>157</sup> Unfortunately for Carter, his efforts toward his policy did not have any noticeable impact on South Korean politics. The US legislature had already lost its interest in the pointless discussions surrounding the bill, and kept rejecting it without any further presidential consultation. Carter's nervousness affected by his antagonists in Congress was well reflected in his reply to Park's letter. In this letter, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> May, Park expressed his gratitude for American help in ensuring the safe return of passengers of a Korean Airline flight, which had accidentally landed on Soviet territory on 21<sup>st</sup> April.<sup>158</sup> Carter tried to hide his difficulties in Washington and emphasised ongoing progress of the pullout plan. More importantly, however, he did not forget his remarks on political freedom in South Korea.

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<sup>155</sup> Ahn Cheolhyun, *The Korean Modern Political History (Hanguk Hyundae Jeongchi'sa)* (Seoul: Saeroeun Saramdeul, 2009), 163.

<sup>156</sup> It is possible that Park was not willing to remind the presidential election because he did not want any criticism on his sole candidacy.

<sup>157</sup> "Statement of the President," Jimmy Carter Library, 21 Apr, 1978, Korea, Republic of. 10/77- 12/78, Box 43, National Security Affairs- Brezezinski Material Country File, JECL.

<sup>158</sup> Interestingly, Park's letter was rather short, one and half paged. And he only mentioned the incident of Korea Airline aircraft and appreciated to US for its negotiation with USSR. However, he did not make any remark on other bilateral issues. See "The letter from ROK President to US President Carter, 3 May 1978", The presidential letter exchanges between President Park Chunghee and US President Carter, 15 Feb 1977- 6 Mar 1979, Class Number 722.9 US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

While the internal affairs of your government are not my direct concern, you are aware of the American people's strong commitment to the rights of the individual. I am confident that you will find your society and government strengthened by the free interplay of ideas, and I look forward confidently to further steps in the next few months along the road of political evolution and freedom on which you are embarked.<sup>159</sup>

The US president might have indicated his concern on the last NCU and upcoming presidential election in the organisation. It is noteworthy that Carter did not address the progress of his pullout bill, but commented on the democratic environments in South Korea. Clearly, he started to use this moral concern as leverage on the military discussions and tried to deflect further criticism from Congress, which had questioned the moral aspects of economic and military support as a form of the compensatory measures of the US pullout.

Moreover, he also tried to facilitate his retreat policy through his contact with Pyongyang and diplomatic efforts with other Communist states. Kim Ilsung first suggested bilateral talks between the DPRK and the US through Josip Broz Tito, the Yugoslav leader. In his letter mentioned above, Carter indicated that he rejected Tito's proposal and promised he would not talk with Kim outside the presence of ROK representatives. But he also urged Park to seek negotiations with North Korea in order to reduce the tensions on the Korean Peninsula. In a nutshell, both North Korea and the US agreed on a three-party dialogue including South Korea.<sup>160</sup> Coupled with his mentioning of South Korean political freedom, Carter's negotiation with Pyongyang made the US legislature re-consider the withdrawal bill.<sup>161</sup> In any case, with the presence of Seoul's representative, the peace negotiation between Washington and Pyongyang was a useful justification for the pullout of US troops from South Korea.

Despite Carter's diplomatic manoeuvring, the South Korean president totally ignored the American leader. As far as bilateral talks between the US and North Korea were concerned, Park did not expect Carter to take a risk. He was aware of Tito's suggestions to Washington from late March. On 31<sup>st</sup> March, Park had lunch with journalists and stated his opinion about the

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<sup>159</sup> "The letter from US President Carter to President Park, 25 May 1978," The presidential letter exchanges between President Park Chunghee and US President Carter, 15 Feb 1977- 6 Mar 1979, Class Number 722.9 US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> "Proposed Letter to Congressional Leadership on Korean Troop Withdrawals Planning," 1978. 7.19., Korea, Republic of. 10/77 – 12/78, Box 43, National Security Affairs – Brzezinski Material. Country File, JECL.

talks. He said that the ROK did not need three-party talks, and that such a negotiation format would lead South Korea toward the same destiny of South Vietnam.<sup>162</sup> In his letter to the US president in June, Park expressed his unwillingness to join tripartite talks and suggested that North Korea was not sincerely interested in the resolution of inter-Korean problems. Moreover, he did not remark on the election or democratic concern in South Korea.<sup>163</sup>

Park was re-elected on 6<sup>th</sup> July with 2577 out of 2578 votes by the electoral college of NCU.<sup>164</sup> This absurd rate of 'yes' vote and public resistance toward the authoritarian way of election enraged Carter. Evidently, he did not send any congratulatory message to the ROK president. Park, though, did not previously take Carter's hostility very hard. Since he had been able to frustrate the US leader in 1977, he held strong confidence both in his own capacity to rule and his feeling of current national security. Now, though, the ROK president did not conceal his animosity toward Carter. On 30<sup>th</sup> September, he denied the speculations over a future US visit during a press lunch. According to Park, Carter suggested a summit meeting if the Blue House set free Kim Daejung and other opposition leaders in 1977. The South Korean president added that he did not want to visit the US because he 'hated' Carter.<sup>165</sup>

However, Carter was more stubborn than Park thought. In spite of his lengthy struggle with the US Congress, Carter firmly held his position to make good on his pledge. On 26<sup>th</sup> September, the president finally gained congressional support for his promise to provide military aid to Park, and the legislature subsequently passed the *International Security Assistance Act of 1978*. Although this law originally aimed at authorizing US arms transfers to Turkey for American policy toward the Eastern Mediterranean region, it could be applied to the South Korean case as well.<sup>166</sup> In his letter to Park, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> November, the US leader expressed his pleasure in proceeding with his plan.<sup>167</sup> The South Korean leadership adopted the opinion that, at that point in time, no one could stall Carter's plan. Park did not want to give up the US land forces in return for his previous 'non-disagreement' stance, and in his reply to Carter, he requested talks with the US leader to discuss mutual concerns.<sup>168</sup> Based on his previous statement 'I do not

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<sup>162</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 203.

<sup>163</sup> "The letter from ROK President to US President Carter, 8 June 1978," The presidential letter exchanges between President Park Chunghee and US President Carter, 15 Feb 1977- 6 Mar 1979, Class Number 722.9 US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>164</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1978.

<sup>165</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 208.

<sup>166</sup> "Proposed Letter to Congressional Leadership on Korean Troop Withdrawals Planning," 19 July 1978., Korea. Republic of. 10/77- 12/78, Box 43, National Security Affairs- Brezezinski Material. Country File, JECL.

<sup>167</sup> "The letter from US President Carter to President Park, 2 Nov 1978," The presidential letter exchanges between President Park Chunghee and US President Carter, 15 Feb 1977- 6 Mar 1979, Class Number 722.9 US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>168</sup> "The letter from ROK President to US President Carter, 22 Nov 1978," The presidential letter exchanges between President Park Chunghee and US President Carter, 15 Feb 1977- 6 Mar 1979, Class Number 722.9 US,

want to go to US because I hate him', his invitation to Carter implied a significant change of mind.<sup>169</sup> He was desperate and needed to persuade President Carter to keep US ground forces in South Korea.

The normalization between the US and the PRC further heightened Park's anxiety. On 15<sup>th</sup> December, the US president sent another letter to Seoul emphasising his diplomatic achievement to Park.<sup>170</sup> President Carter did not stop agitating his counterpart in South Korea, as just one week later, he conveyed his congratulatory message for Park's inauguration for his new presidency and suggested a meeting on December, 23<sup>rd</sup>.<sup>171</sup> The ROK leader worried that Carter's diplomatic success and the East-West reconciliation trend had encouraged the pullout proponents in Washington. He presented his thoughts regarding the recent Sino-US normalization and its impact on inter-Korean relationship to Carter:

[...] It is my hope that the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and the "People's Republic of China" and the accompanying improvement in dialogue between the two countries will contribute to reducing tension and enhancing peace in the Asian and Pacific region. [...] However, what keeps me concerned is that we may fall into an error of overestimating the role of China and of underestimating the impact of diplomatic and military manoeuvres of the Soviet Union in our area. I am also concerned over the attitude of North Korea, which may find some disadvantage in the current efforts of China to cultivate closer and friendly relations with the United States and other Western powers. [...]<sup>172</sup>

The ROK leader was certainly concerned about the impact of an improved US relationship with China. Park worried that Carter might want Beijing to rebuild its diplomatic relationship with Seoul and use Chinese influence on Pyongyang in order to reduce the tension

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Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>169</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 208.

<sup>170</sup> "The letter from US President Carter to President Park, 15 December 1978," The presidential letter exchanges between President Park Chunghee and US President Carter, 15 Feb 1977- 6 Mar 1979, Class Number 722.9 US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>171</sup> "The letter from US President Carter to President Park, 23 December 1978," The presidential letter exchanges between President Park Chunghee and US President Carter, 15 Feb 1977- 6 Mar 1979, Class Number 722.9 US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea. This message did not really aim to congratulate Park since he did not dispatch any American politician to the inauguration ceremony. The United States president did not want to be considered to support immoral South Korean regime. See Kang Junman, *Hanguk hyundae'sa sanchaek (The journey in Korean modern history)*, vol. 3 of 1970s' series, (Seoul: Inmul, 2002), 178- 80.

<sup>172</sup> "The letter from ROK President to US President Carter, 13 Jan 1979," The presidential letter exchanges between President Park Chunghee and US President Carter, 15 Feb 1977- 6 Mar 1979, Class Number 722.9 US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

on the Korean Peninsula. This scenario would have provided perfect conditions to promote a pullout policy. Yet the Chinese Vice-premier, Deng Xiaoping, who visited the US in January 1979, rejected Carter's proposal for direct talks between the PRC and South Korea. Even worse, he refused to push Kim Il-sung, since the PRC feared losing its influence over the DPRK, just as the USSR had before.<sup>173</sup>

Despite Park's concern, Carter's efforts for US relations with China did not produce any political impact on the pullout scheme. Deng did not want to destabilise the Chinese footing in North Korean politics due to Sino-Soviet split.<sup>174</sup> In 1978, the PRC promised to provide economic aid to the DPRK and keep a good relationship with Kim Il-sung in order to keep the Soviet Union in check. Clearly, it was Kim who could change the balance between Beijing and Moscow in East Asia. Even though North Korea was more likely to rely on China than the USSR, it could change its primary patron relatively freely. For this reason, during the UN general assembly in September 1978, Beijing supported the North Korean idea, stating that 'the Korean problem must be settled by Koreans, and the US forces must leave from the Korean Peninsula.' Furthermore, Moscow which had lost much of its influence on Pyongyang, started to make friendly gestures toward South Korea. The Soviet representative called South Korea by its official name, Republic of Korea, for the first time ever in the UN assembly.<sup>175</sup> This Sino-Soviet rivalry staged on Korea blocked the direct influence of those patrons of Pyongyang. Deng, therefore, was reluctant to make any move that could deteriorate his relationship with Kim. Consequently, Carter's diplomatic relations with Deng did not produce any breakthrough regarding a lasting peace in Korea, and did not contribute to his withdrawal policy as he expected.

Moreover, although Carter could pass the bill for compensatory measures following the US pullout, the US president did not gain support for his ultimate goal, the withdrawal bill, itself. In practice, he eventually faced the most serious challenge from Congress. The most important justification for Carter and his new South Korean policy was that this reduction programme be "carried out in a manner which preserves the military balance on the Korean Peninsula."<sup>176</sup> However, President Carter and his officials in the executive branch concealed a CIA report indicating military superiority of the DPRK over the ROK.<sup>177</sup> This information was leaked out,

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<sup>173</sup> Deng's statement was publicised by the White House Office of the Press Secretary on 29<sup>th</sup> December, 1996. Quoted in Lee Chaejin, *op. cit.*, 91.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> "Comments on Korean problem," UN General Assembly, the 33th. New York, 19 September, 1978 – 21 December, 1978, vol. 3, 731.21; and Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea, "Improvement in the ROK-USSR relations, 1978," Class Number, 722.2 UR, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>176</sup> "Letter, from J. Carter to Thomas P. O'Neill," 20 July, 1978, Co 82-1. 1/20/77 – 1/20/81, Box Co-41, White House Central File – Subject File, JECL.

<sup>177</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 101- 103.

however. In early January, 1979, Samuel S. Stratton, the Chair of the Investigations Subcommittee, and Robin L. Beard, the ranking Minority Member in the US Congress, requested the release of the CIA report on the updated estimate of North Korean military power after they had come across such information in the January issue of *Army Times*. Stratton and Beard found one article in the issue stating that Pyongyang had 600 manoeuvrable battalions, “more than double of the South Korean total.”<sup>178</sup> But there were more serious statements that the two Congressmen could not ignore: the article argued that this information was presented to “key Congressional committees in secret session”... and “the new estimates have been confirmed by the CIA.”<sup>179</sup> Although Stratton and Beard were briefed on some military issues involving the Korean Peninsula in 1977, they were unaware of this specific intelligence report.

In their letter to Carter, the angry Congressmen demanded the president share the CIA’s findings as soon as possible and delay the discussion on the pullout plan.<sup>180</sup> This “*Army Times*” scandal nullified Carter’s efforts for his Korean policy in 1978, so that the discussion on the withdrawal bill returned to the starting line. The NSC members considered this scandal as a good opportunity to stop their president’s reckless action. In his interview with a South Korean journalist in 1987, Brezezinski said that no one in the White House agreed with Carter about his pullout plan at the beginning, even though he could not reject his president’s policy due to his status.<sup>181</sup> Brezezinski replied to Beard, that he understood the viewpoint of Congress, and promised to consult with the legislature.<sup>182</sup>

On 22<sup>nd</sup> January, President Carter had to issue another order to the NSC. Based on the new executive order, the decision makers needed review the change in the military power between the two Koreas, and seek out diplomatic ways to reduce tension on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>183</sup> Frustratingly for Carter, the withdrawal plan was delayed again, and almost fell through, because many members of Congress felt he had deceived them. He had to hold further troop withdrawals.<sup>184</sup> Carter’s threat, and the realization of the pullout policy, was not as serious as the ROK leader had feared.

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<sup>178</sup> “Letter from Samuel S. Stratton and Robin L. Beard to J. Carter,” 3 January, 1979, Co 82-1, 1/20/77- 1/20/81, Box CO- 41, White House Central File – Subject File, JECL.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> *Chungang Ilbo*, 20<sup>th</sup> October 1987

<sup>182</sup> “Letter, from Z. Brezezinski to Robin L. Beard,” 15 January, 1979, Co 82-2, 9/1/78- 12/31/79, Box Co-41, White House Central File- Subject File, JECL.

<sup>183</sup> “Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC-45,” 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 1979, JECL. <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/prememorandums/prm45.pdf>.

<sup>184</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr., *Massive entanglement, marginal influence: Carter and Korea in crisis*, (Washington: The Brookings Institution: 1999), 28- 29; Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 103; and Ma Sangyoon and Park Wongon, *op. cit.*, 130.



The problem, however, was that Park could not exactly understand how the Sino-Soviet rivalry affected inter-Korean affairs, nor how the “*Army Times*” scandal was serious enough to frustrate Carter. First, Park did not believe that Moscow really wanted to improve its relations with him. In the UN general assembly, the USSR neither supported nor opposed the DPRK’s motivations, even though it referred to South Korea as the Republic of Korea. The Kremlin seemed reluctant to drop Pyongyang easily. The KCIA was also cautious toward this Soviet approach, as it argued that the friendly Soviet attitude toward South Korea might only be a bluff for the benefit of North Korea, rather than a sincere effort for rapprochement with Seoul.<sup>185</sup>

Secondly, the ROK government did not know that Carter was unable to manage the retreat bill any longer. According to Kim Jeongryeom, the Park regime was not aware of that most or all of the White House officials disagreed with the President until Brezizinski exposed the fact in 1987.<sup>186</sup> In Park’s understanding, the US government review of the pullout policy just delayed the schedule, but could not really erase the plan on the list of presidential pledges to be upheld. Therefore, he had to prepare for the US withdrawal, and stop the US president by himself, if necessary.

So, in January 1979, Seoul proposed the summit meeting to Washington once again. While preparing for the ROK-US summit and a possible US retreat from its soil, the South Korean leadership began to consider another option to shore up national security. It tried to reduce the North Korean threat through another round of inter-Korean talks. On 19<sup>th</sup> January, Park suggested negotiations aiming for a mutual non-aggression pact. He promised that he would not prevent the withdrawal of US troops if North Korea agreed to his terms. The South Korean leader considered that at this rate, Carter would make good on his pledge. As a safeguard, the mutual non-aggression pact was essential to maintain national security for the ROK.

Pyongyang, though, saw through Seoul’s intentions, and was not so naïve as to lose its initiative in the inter-Korean affairs. On 23<sup>rd</sup> January, the central committee of the United Democratic Front of the Fatherland responded positively to Park’s proposal, indicating it would like to welcome talks with Seoul if they could put an end to hostilities in the DMZ. However, Pyongyang also wanted to involve oppositions and other anti-government parties in South Korea, along with the ROK government in this dialogue. Kim Ilsung’s response to Park soundly illustrated his view that this contact must be the platform for “all Korean peoples,” rather than just the political elites. The UDFFL was the only branch of the DRPK Labour party who did

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<sup>185</sup> “Improvement in the ROK-USSR relations, 1978,” Class Number, 722.2 UR, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>186</sup> Kim Jeongryeom, *op. cit.*, 464- 465.

not have any practical authority for inter-Korean affairs. Moreover, the DPRK representatives for the negotiations between the two Koreas were not government authorities, but members of UDFFL.<sup>187</sup>

Essentially, Kim Ilsung did not have any intention to help Park reduce the impact of an American retreat. The inter-Korean meeting became pointless due to a lack of authority bestowed upon the North Korean representatives: both sides met three times on 17<sup>th</sup> February, 7<sup>th</sup> March, and 14<sup>th</sup> March, but the most significant issue they discussed was to organise a South-North table tennis team for the world table tennis championship.<sup>188</sup>

Consequently, Park did not contribute to reducing tensions between the two Koreas. Because of his pointless efforts in the inter-Korean dialogues in early 1979, Park became more desperate for the summit meeting with Carter, scheduled to take place in that summer.<sup>189</sup> He believed that he must stop the US pullout at any cost. For this, Park was even willing to seriously discuss human rights issues with Carter, because he considered that to be less harmful to his rule. Carter also wanted to meet Park but did not intend to discuss his pullout policy with him. Rather, the US leader attempted to encourage Park to join three-party talks among the two Koreas and the US in order to revive congressional support for the bill. Moreover, he wanted to discuss the human rights issue in South Korea.<sup>190</sup> In short, the two presidents had totally different agendas for their summit meeting in June and July 1979, and were reluctant to address their counterpart's key concerns.

This difference, however, ultimately resulted in their dramatic compromise. Carter's continuous quest for a withdrawal bill and the dynamic international movement in East Asia profoundly changed the dynamics of the Park-Carter conflict. Thanks to the challenge of the US military and Congress toward their president in 1977, the ROK government expected the demise of the pullout plan in 1978. However, the US president did not give up his intentions. Even though he suffered a serious setback and embarrassment as a consequence of "*The Army Times*" scandal in January 1979, his commitment and diplomatic efforts to improve relations with the PRC and North Korea put Park under pressure. The ROK president attempted to reduce the North Korean threat in order to prepare for the potential retreat of US land forces. However, the disappointing result of inter-Korean talks in early 1979 greatly complicated the South

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<sup>187</sup>According to ROK Foreign Ministry, the ROK conceived that North Korea refused to manage the inter-governmental talks. See "President Park Chunghee's proposal to inter-Korean talks, 1979," Class Number, 726.3, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> "Pourparler," US President Jimmy Carter's visit to Korea, 1979, vol. 1 Class Number, 724.12US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>190</sup>"Reports of summit meeting," US President Jimmy Carter's visit to Korea, 1979 vol. 3 Class Number, 724.12US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

Korean leader's task to bolster national security. Park's position in the pullout issue totally changed: the South Korean president now clearly emphasised the importance of US troops for ROK national security and was willing to accept Washington's request for the improvement of human rights to some extent. Despite his diplomatic efforts, however, Park's readiness for concessions regarding the human rights issue further encouraged the public resistance toward him after the summit meeting. Eventually, the 62-year-old president of South Korea met his end because of the public's aspirations for democracy in October 1979.

#### (4) The ROK-US summit meeting and end of the Park regime: the birth of a new Northern and foreign policy

The summit meeting marked the beginning of the end of Park's rule, since it catalysed the protest actions of ROK citizens further and, at the same time, divided the political elites.<sup>191</sup> Washington pushed Seoul to consider a more lenient rule. Park's concessions inspired his domestic enemies who already harboured a strong antipathy toward him due to economic and social reasons. First, since mid- 1970s, the ROK government had faced violent protests of manual labourers complaining about their poor working conditions. In this situation, the second oil shock threw the economy into turmoil, and strengthened the existing anti-government sentiment. The global economic downturn had a devastating effect on the South Korean economy. Many companies shut down due to dramatic increases in operating costs, and a lot of workers lost their jobs and/or salaries. This economic depression resulted in intensifying the existing antipathy toward Park, whose long-term rule had been justified by stellar performances in the two key areas of economic development and national security.<sup>192</sup> Moreover, the Park regime wrongly assumed that their harsh punishment of protesters was essential to keeping the integrity and stability of the ROK economy and blocking the rise of any leftist ideology. In fact, this draconian approach only sparked adverse chain reactions: the brutality of security forces in quenching public protests drew attention to Park's image as a despotic leader, which led to encouraging student protests.<sup>193</sup> The political opposition joined this anti-Park trend. Under their new leader, Kim Youngsam, the *New Democratic Party* supported demonstrations of manual labourers and students. Inspired by Washington, the democratic resistance became stronger and brought down the dictatorship as well as its foreign policy mantra: "anticommunism".

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<sup>191</sup> Park Wongon, *op. cit.*, 25.

<sup>192</sup> Bruce Cumings, *op. cit.*, 378.

<sup>193</sup> Bruce Cumings, *op. cit.*, 375.

Upon deciding to meet with Park Chunghee, Jimmy Carter asked him to consider the human rights situation. One of the important justifications for the pullout policy was that the US, as a matter of principle, refused to support dictatorial regimes, and Carter did not want the US public to regard this summit dialogue as giving any kind of political support for the unpopular and undemocratic Park regime. Clearly, the US president intended to use this opportunity to improve his influence on South Korea and facilitate both the pullout of ground forces and the furthering of human rights.<sup>194</sup>

The US public perception of this summit discussion did not differ from his expectation. For instance, in March 1979, 37 American missionaries in the ROK sent a letter to Washington and called for Carter to cancel the upcoming summit. They argued that since the Park regime had lost popular support, the Park-Carter meeting could be misunderstood as American backing of the regime.<sup>195</sup> Once the Blue House found out about the opposition movement run by American missionaries on its territory, its activities were suppressed and its participants expelled.<sup>196</sup> This South Korean action worsened American concerns even before the summit meeting. Following this, through the US ambassador to ROK, William Gleysteen, Carter attempted to push Park toward significant action in the human rights field, e.g. to release political prisoners.<sup>197</sup> However, Gleysteen, the successor of Richard Sneider, disagreed with the President. Gleysteen argued that Park would not take any suggestions for political freedom in his country before having direct talks with Carter.<sup>198</sup> As both camps agreed to hold a summit dialogue in June and July, this American pressure became meaningless.

Despite Park's indifference to American requests, however, the democratic situation in South Korea changed, and the resistance toward Park gained in strength. At the *New Democratic* Party convention on 30<sup>th</sup> May, Kim Youngsam won the election for the chairmanship against the incumbent Lee Cheolseung. As a hardliner of South Korea's main opposition party, Kim declared his victory with his ambition to restore democracy in South Korea.<sup>199</sup> Park did not want Kim to be elected. But it did not go Park's way. Kim started to encourage the democratic resistance toward the dictatorship. In a nutshell, Park suddenly had to face two enemies, Carter and Kim, both of whom shared the same ambitions for South Korean democracy.

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<sup>194</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr, *op. cit.*, 39.

<sup>195</sup> "Letter from 37 US Missionaries on Summit Meeting," Telegram from American Embassy in Seoul to Secretary of State, 23 March, 1979, Department of State, Don Oberdorfer Files, Box No. 3, Dept. of State, Telegram, 1979

<sup>196</sup> "ROK representation on missionaries' letter," Telegram from American Embassy in Seoul to Secretary of State, 24 March, 1979, Department of State, Don Oberdorfer Files, Box No. 3, Dept of State, Telegram, 1979.

<sup>197</sup> "Human Rights and the Summit," Telegram from Secretary of State to American Embassy in Seoul, March 31, 1979, Department of State, Don Oberdorfer Files, Box No. 3, Dept. of State, 31 March 31, 1979.

<sup>198</sup> "Carter/Park Summit," Telegram from American Embassy in Seoul to Secretary of State, 9 April, 1979, Don Oberdorfer Files, Box 2, Carter- Park Summit in 1979.

<sup>199</sup> *Dongailbo*, 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1979.

In June, the US president still kept his pullout pledge in mind although his advisers considered how to stop processing the pullout plan. On 7<sup>th</sup> June, Cyrus Vance, the Secretary of State, convened a meeting of the Policy Review Committee in order to discuss the withdrawal policy. The committee suggested that the White House should consider diplomatic measures for a peaceful and pivotal role in East Asia, to pave the way for the future pullout of US forces. Yet the committee's main idea was to stop processing the pullout plan, as at that precise moment it was not realistic, due to strong resistance from Congress. Specifically, they thought Washington should request Seoul increase defence spending and improve its political freedom in order to stabilise the Korean Peninsula.<sup>200</sup> However, the US president did not give in. He hoped that planned peace negotiations between Seoul, Pyongyang, and Washington would revive his pullout bill in Congress, and ordered the US embassy in Seoul to discuss this topic with Park.

The US ambassador, William Gleysteen, was worried of further estrangement between the two allies before the summit talks.<sup>201</sup> The South Korean officials opposed the idea of tripartite talks. Seoul feared Washington would sell it in the very same way that brought down Saigon. Interestingly, though, the South Korean president said that he would agree to consider it 'only if the US is willing to stop the discussion on the withdrawal.'<sup>202</sup> Probably, Park also did not want the tripartite talks but did not reject US proposal for his meeting with Carter in July.

However, South Korea's positive response did not make any impact on the decision of Carter's advisers. The NSC made a unanimous recommendation that the US president suspend further reduction of US troops from South Korea.<sup>203</sup> Simply put, the US president could not revive his pullout bill with the tripartite card. Without any fruitful result in their pre-summit negotiations, both leaders met in late June.

Due to their mutual hostility, the summit talks between two presidents were not smooth from the start. On 29<sup>th</sup> June, Carter arrived in Seoul via Tokyo where he had attended the G7 meeting. He just shook hands with Park - who had waited for him more than two hours due to a delay of Carter's flight - and directly headed to his residence on the US army base.<sup>204</sup> Park Dongjin, the ROK Foreign Minister, testified that although both leaders shook hands, their first meeting was very awkward.<sup>205</sup> They appeared to be preparing for the "quarrel" expected for the

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<sup>200</sup> "PRC Meeting on PRM-45 Thursday, 7 June, 1979", Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski from Nick Platt, 6 June, 1979, National Security Council, DDRS.

<sup>201</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr., *op. cit.*, 42- 43.

<sup>202</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr., *op. cit.*, 43- 44.

<sup>203</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr., *op. cit.*, 44.

<sup>204</sup> *Kyunghyang sinmun*, 30 June, 1979; William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr., *op. cit.*, 46.

<sup>205</sup> Park Dongjin, *Gil un Morodo Tut un Hana: Park Dongjin hoegorok [Our journey is long, but our goal is same: Park Dongjin memoir]* (Seoul: Dongapress, 1992), 227.

next morning. This interpretation was no exaggeration: according to Gleysteen, their meeting was one of the most terrible summit meetings he had ever attended.<sup>206</sup>

Gleysteen, who wanted to restore the ROK-US relations through this meeting, was very disappointed with the serious and warlike atmosphere. Both stubborn leaders did not listen to the other. It was Park who started the battle. Through the US ambassador, Carter's aides had requested Park not to talk about the pullout plan, which was on the verge of termination in the US Congress. Gleysteen clearly delivered the American intentions to Kim Yongsik, the ROK ambassador to the US. However, Park just ignored it. The withdrawal agenda was his sole interest in meeting with Carter. Without any explanation for the process of summit talks, for 45 minutes including time for interpretation, the ROK president lectured why the withdrawal of US troops was not conducive for maintaining security on the Korean Peninsula, in East Asia, and the Capitalist block in general.<sup>207</sup> The US president, who was attending an unexpected lecture, was angry. During Park's torturing oration, the angry American leader passed a note to Vance, "If he goes on like this much longer, I'm going to pull every troop out of the country."<sup>208</sup>

After having a short break, both presidents had a private dialogue. Extremely annoyed by Park's lengthy lecture, Carter flatly stated that he rejected Park's demand to cancel the withdrawal scheme and was not willing to make any promises. He also argued that South Korea should increase its defence spending to balance the military capabilities between the South and the North. Park responded that he needed time to increase allocated additional funds for the military. Facing the South Korean's determined words, Carter moved on to discuss human rights issues. He demanded from Park to lift his Emergency Decree no. 9 that banned any discussion and criticism of the *Yusin* Constitution.<sup>209</sup> Regarding this political freedom issue, Park calmly said that he would carefully consider Carter's advice, even though he could not lift the decree due to the continuous threat from North Korea.<sup>210</sup>

Their first meeting had accomplished nothing to reduce animosity or establish agreement. In retrospect, it was a huge mistake by Park to provoke Carter. However, the US president also made a mistake: despite his many demands he ignored the South Korean's first

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<sup>206</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr., *op. cit.*, 47.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Don Oberdorfer's interview with Nicholas Platt, the former NSC expert on Asia, quoted in Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 106.

<sup>209</sup> After the collapse of Saigon in 1975, Park declared the decree and argued that South Vietnam was defeated due to Communists' anti- government actions. This decree legalised the punishment to any anti- Park or anti- government action in South Korea.

<sup>210</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr., *op. cit.*, 47; "Carter-Park Summit in 1979," Memorandum of Conversation, 5 July, 1979, Don Oberdorfer Files, Box 2, , 1978- 79; and "Reports of summit meeting," US President Jimmy Carter's visit to Korea, 1979, vol. 3 Class Number, 724.12US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

priority, to stop the withdrawal plan. As the Policy Review Committee and NSC suggested, Carter considered stopping his plan, which was on the verge of termination in the US legislature, even before his summit meeting.<sup>211</sup> However, he was too angry to negotiate with Park. As a result, their first dialogue became an emotional quarrel rather than a rational discussion. Both leaders completely lost sight of why they had convened a summit in the first place. Moreover, after talking with Park, Carter had a meeting with Kim Youngsam, chairman of the main opposition party, for thirteen minutes, three minutes more than the original schedule. Because Carter and Kim talked about the negative aspects of Park's regime, this extensive meeting time also heightened hostilities between the two summit parties.<sup>212</sup>

Immediately after finishing the first day of the summit, Carter held an agitated discussion with his aides in the limousine en route to the US ambassador's residence. The US President was very angry with his counterpart in Seoul who seemingly did not understand the purpose of his visit. For this reason, the US ambassador to Seoul was the main target of Carter's criticism. Gleysteen was severely scolded for his poor performance in communicating with the Blue House. The American president urged his aides to formally deliver his demands, which he had already made, to Park that day to the Blue House.<sup>213</sup> Vance and Gleysteen immediately talked with South Korean officials about what they could offer to the Blue House and what they wanted in return. In this ministerial meeting, both camps finally managed to maintain a rational discussion. This time, they reached an agreement without rapidly.

Vance then dropped a hint to the ROK government on how to soothe Carter: he provided a list of political prisoners in South Korea and requested their release. On 1<sup>st</sup> July, before the US leader's departure, Park promised to increase its defence spending to 6% of GNP and said that he "understood" Carter's concern on the human rights issue.<sup>214</sup> The US president was willing to pay for the South Korean favour. In his last meeting with Park in the afternoon of 1<sup>st</sup> July, Carter also promised that he would seek for a "satisfying conclusion" on the pullout policy that took into account Park's demands.<sup>215</sup> According to the joint communiqué, announced the same day, both camps additionally agreed to have three-party talks along with Pyongyang.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr, *op. cit.*, 46- 48. Regarding the PRC meeting, see "PRC Meeting on PRM-45 Thursday, 7 June, 1979", Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski from Nick Platt, 6 June, 1979, National Security Council, DDRS.

<sup>212</sup> Park Wongon's interview with Park Chanjong, the member of NDP at that time, on 12 August, 2007. Quoted in Park Wongon, *op. cit.*, 25.

<sup>213</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr, *op. cit.*, 48- 49.

<sup>214</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr, *op. cit.*, 49.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> "Joint Communique between His Excellency Jimmy Carter President of United States of America and His Excellency Park Chunghee President of the Republic of Korea," 1 July, 1979, Japan, Korea, Hawaii, 6/23/79 – 7/4/79 (2), Box 107, Staff Offices. Press. Granum, JECL.

The atmosphere at the farewell after the summits was totally different from the first meeting between Park and Carter. Both leaders went to the airport in the same limousine and had a private talk. Carter even conveyed his Christian idea to Park.<sup>217</sup> On 5<sup>th</sup> July, via the US embassy, Seoul sent a message to Washington that it intended to conduct the release of 180 political prisoners in line with Carter's request. On 20<sup>th</sup> July, President Carter announced that the US government had suspended the discussion on the withdrawal policy.<sup>218</sup>

Many scholars have argued that this summit meeting meant the end of Carter's two pledges for South Korea, and the US president had failed to push Park to change his domestic politics and anticommunist policy. Based on the joint communiqué, which only includes one section for human rights among 21 articles, it is considered that the US failed to establish moral politics in South Korea. Especially, the communiqué appeared to emphasise the mutual cooperation between Seoul and Washington in the military and economic fields. Lee Samsung, Kim Bongjung, and Donald S. Spencer criticised the summit dialogue as an elaborate show to hide Carter's failure in negotiations.<sup>219</sup> Because the Blue House had a negative idea on three-party talks and fundamental change in the inter-Korean relations by the diplomatic measure, even after the announcement of joint communiqué, this argument partially makes sense.<sup>220</sup> However, this interpretation is not exact.

First of all, as Park Wongon indicated, the joint communiqué, announced publicly, could not reflect the details of South Korea's sensitive information that it would release its political prisoners and promise concessions in its domestic politics. In fact, the yield of the Park regime encouraged their antagonists, who believed Washington supported them.<sup>221</sup> Moreover, in contrast to the American concern on the summit talks, negative public opinion in South Korea about the Park regime did not change. It became worse due to the economic hardship that abounded, and Park's ineffective and harsh rule. Because of the second oil shock, many companies enacted worker lay-offs or stopped paying wages. As a result, the labour movement consisted of very large numbers. The Blue House suppressed it with an iron fist, but, at the same time, sparked protests of students who questioned necessity for differences between Park's

<sup>217</sup> Park Wongon's interview with Park Chanjong, the member of NDP at that time, on 12 August, 2007. Quoted in Park Wongon, *op. cit.*, 25.

<sup>218</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr, *op. cit.*, 50.

<sup>219</sup> Lee Samsung, *Kwangju Hagsal, Miguk-singunbu'eui Hyunjo'wa Gongmo [The Kwangju massacre, the Cooperation and Conspiracy of US-the ROK New Military Regime]*, Vol. 13 Collections for 5. 18 Kwangju democratic movement. (Kwangju: the Kwangju History Compilation Committee, 1988): 679; "Carter Ingwon woegyo'e daehan jaejomyeong [Rethinking Carter's Human Rights Diplomacy]." vol. 10, American History Research (1999): 202; Donald R Spencer, *The Carter Implosion: Jimmy Carter and the Amateur Style of Diplomacy* (Ann Arbor, Praeger, 1988), 54.

<sup>220</sup> "Three-Party Talks (the government meeting among South and North Korea and US)," Class Number, 726.23US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>221</sup> Park Wongon, *op. cit.*, 27.



*Korean-style* democracy and Western-style democracy. Before Park's death in October, the massive student and labour protests erupted in the major cities of ROK.<sup>222</sup> In this situation, the new NDP leader, Kim Youngsam, sided with workers and students.

His anti-Park spirit enraged the Park regime. Despite numerous attempts of the ROK government to eliminate Kim from the political arena, the democratic leader never stopped his resistance toward Park. Because he believed that Carter had successfully pushed Park to improve South Korean democratic environment during the summit talks, Kim appealed to Washington for support to his democratic movement. During his interview with *The New York Times*, Kim publicly demanded Washington to put additional pressure on Park:

[...] Whenever I tell American officials that only by public and direct pressure on Park can the U.S. bring him under control, they say that they cannot interfere in the domestic politics of South Korea," he said. "This is a phony theory," he continued. "Doesn't the U.S. have 30,000 ground troops here to protect us? What is that if not interference in domestic affairs?"<sup>223</sup>

Regarding the fierce condemnation of the Park regime by Kim and the opposition movement, Gleysteen indicated that those antagonists expected Washington to force Park to yield more. He confirmed that the summit meeting had, in fact, undermined Park's rule.<sup>224</sup> Indeed, the US ambassador had continuously conveyed Carter's concerns about the recent upheavals in South Korea and criticised Park for his political violence against Kim Youngsam and other people whom Carter had met during his visit to Seoul. On 27<sup>th</sup> September, Washington delivered a strong message to Seoul: during his meeting with the ROK Foreign Minister, Richard Holbrooke, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, said that the White House would stop providing loans to the ROK because of Park's brutal repression of opposition groups.<sup>225</sup> Nonetheless, infuriated by the provocative actions of the young chairman of the NDP, Park decided to eliminate his political opponents from the political arena once and for all. This strong response revived the Carter distaste towards him. After Park cancelled Kim's membership in the National Assembly on 4<sup>th</sup> October, the White House summoned Gleysteen to Washington. The South Korean leader stated that it was impossible to tolerate any more

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<sup>222</sup> Bruce Cumings, *op. cit.*, 379.

<sup>223</sup> *The New York Times*, 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1979.

<sup>224</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr, *op. cit.*, 51.

<sup>225</sup> Cho Kabje, *Park Chunghee*, vol 13, 103; William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr, *op. cit.*, 52.

protests.<sup>226</sup> Despite their dramatic reconciliation only two months earlier, both governments resumed their conflict. Even though Park had released the political prisoners, as Carter had demanded, he did not stop the harsh punishment of his critics, which led to a deterioration of human rights conditions in South Korea. Without any doubt, ROK-US relations were worse than before the summit meeting.

Park might have believed that the anti- government movement would not last long and could be reined in only using strong measures. He anticipated that his enemies would be further encouraged if he ruled as leniently as Carter had requested. Yet Kim Jaekyu, who was in charge of quelling the protests, felt the limits of violent repression and took American recommendations seriously. The KCIA director was under pressure from the endless row of student rallies protesting Park's dictatorship. Before he was sentenced to death for murdering the ROK president, Kim clearly demonstrated the differences between him and Park regarding the response toward the protesters. He wanted to accept the American requests for moral consideration for political criminals and to improve the ROK-US relationship.<sup>227</sup> However, Park ignored his opinion. Clearly, because Carter had already stopped discussions on the withdrawal of US ground forces from South Korea, the ROK president did not see any benefit for additional concessions in the international context.

Kim Jaekyu feared for his future. He knew what had happened to his predecessors who had gotten into conflict with Park. For instance, he ordered Kim Jaekyu to kill Kim Hyungwook, who had criticised the president and had a vast knowledge of Park's secrets.<sup>228</sup> Even though there was no clear evidence for the reasons why he murdered Park, the rebellious officer might have worried about Park's severe punishment because of his failure to quell the protests. As the president kept reprimanding him frequently, the KCIA director was extremely angry with Park, with whom he had attended the Army Academy.

On 26<sup>th</sup> October, Kim Jaekyu killed Park.<sup>229</sup> In some sense, the democratic resistance and the ROK-US split acted together to finish Park's regime. Kim stated later that he had killed Park to ensure the revival of South Korean democracy and the restoration of ROK-US relations.<sup>230</sup> And he also argued that the US embassy signalled that Washington would condone

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<sup>226</sup> "Report to the President from Secretary Brown, The White House," Memorandum for the Secretary of State, , 20 October, 1979, DDRS.

<sup>227</sup> Ahn Dongil, *10.26 Eun Sala Itta [The 10.26 Incident is Still Ongoing]*, (Seoul: Random House Chungang, 2005), 85-86.

<sup>228</sup> Kim Hyungwook was the second KCIA director under the Park regime.

<sup>229</sup> Ahn Dongil, *op.cit.*, 84.

<sup>230</sup> *Kyunghyang sinmun*, 20<sup>th</sup> May 1980.

Park's removal from office.<sup>231</sup> Considering his comments during the trial, Kim might have believed that the South Korean public, and Carter, could protect him from being prosecuted by the remnants of Park's regime. However, the KCIA director made two important miscalculations: first, he himself had been a senior member of the regime and had directed the brutal suppression of the protesters. For South Korean citizens, his assassination was the result of a power struggle that led to rebellious action. The US president, the self-proclaimed advocate of moral politics, was not able to protect the murderer. Secondly, and even worse, he failed to dominate South Korean politics since the ROK military quickly learned what happened in the night of 26<sup>th</sup> October. Chun Doohwan who took over supreme command of South Korea's military quelled the chaos on the streets. Kim was arrested and executed in May 1980, six months after he had shot Park. Over the following months, other high-ranking members of the regime were replaced.<sup>232</sup>

The demise of South Vietnam opened a new era of South Korean history. The subsequent fluctuation of American policy toward the ROK undermined the stability of the Park regime and eventually contributed to its end. After Saigon had collapsed, Park had questioned the reliability of American support. Especially after 1973, South and North Korea revived their mutual hostilities. The pullout of US forces from Vietnam then alarmed Park. The Blue House had to find ways to maintain national security to compensate for the withdrawal of US units.

Until 1976, Seoul struggled to bolster its national security by pursuing a nuclear weapons program. Washington detected this desperate effort in early 1975. Ford and Kissinger considered that the South Korean development of nuclear missiles would unsettle the military balance in East Asia by encouraging nuclear proliferation in the region. Under strong American pressure, the Blue House halted the development, but demanded the American commitment to South Korea. For this request, Ford moved forth on his doctrine and guaranteed the US intervention in the inter-Korean conflict. He confirmed this after the axe murder in the DMZ by supporting Park in punishing North Korea. As Pyongyang did not challenge this joint ROK-US retaliation, Park was assured of the viability to maintain national security with the American power. Although it is highly doubtful that the Ford administration accepted Park's Cold War

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<sup>231</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr., *op. cit.*, 58- 59. In his book, the former US ambassador, Gleysteen, negates Kim's argument. But he indicated that Kim misconstrued his words on South Korean political development. In September 1979, during his conversation with Kim, Gleysteen spoke of two concerns, "one was the danger of growing political polarization, which could seriously divide the nation and create political instability. The other was the ability of the current constitution and political institutions to ensure a peaceful transition of power."

<sup>232</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, vol 13, 269.

mindset, the progress of operation Paul Bunyan in the DMZ suggests that Ford aimed to assure American commitment to the security of US/East Asian allies after the fall of South Vietnam. Coupled with ROK-US nuclear discussion, the inter-Korean military conflict and US intervention in the early post-Vietnam era re-confirmed the United States' role in South Korean politics and South Korea's Cold War confrontational strategy against communists.<sup>233</sup>

Yet as Jimmy Carter took over the Oval Office, the partnership between Seoul and Washington was seriously questioned, and Park Chunghee faced his worst crisis ever. Carter's pullout plan of US ground troops threatened the foundation of South Korean security and its aggressive policy toward the DPRK. The new US president's emphasis on humanitarian rule in the American ally states provided a strong justification to his policy toward Seoul which had been infamous for its despot and immoral political contact to US politicians.<sup>234</sup> However, because South Korea cancelled its nuclear plan in 1976, it lost a powerful leverage for its negotiation with the United States. Even worse, the South Korean elites did not seriously consider the moral aspect of their rule. Without any doubt, South Korea became the model case of new US foreign policy.

Until early 1978, Park was able to prevent the passage of the bill in the US Congress using the cooperation of US military commanders responsible for South Korea. However, Carter did not give up his plan. The White House's persistence pushed the Blue House to consider a deal concerning the human rights issue. For Park, who failed to ease tension on the Korean Peninsula through his talks with Kim Il-sung, the US land forces were essential for national security. Despite their mutual dislike, Park and Carter agreed on a summit dialogue in order to attain their respective political interests. During the meeting in June and July 1979, Seoul and Washington narrowed their gap, agreed to suspend the withdrawal plan and improve the human rights conditions in South Korea.<sup>235</sup> Without any doubt, Park was pleased to keep the US forces essential to his confrontational policy toward Pyongyang. Yet he underestimated the encouraging influence the ROK-US talks had on the South Korean pro-democracy movement.

In South Korea, the summit meeting incited public resistance toward the Park regime which had already been fierce due to an economic downturn following the second oil shock.<sup>236</sup> Many of Park's enemies were convinced that Carter had successfully conveyed the American moral concerns to the ROK president during their summit meeting. They expected that the White House would push Park to agree on further democratic changes if they persistently

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<sup>233</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 83.

<sup>234</sup> Lee Chaejin, *op. cit.*, 99.

<sup>235</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr, *op. cit.*, 49.

<sup>236</sup> Bruce Cumings, *op. cit.*, 379.

challenged his authoritarian rule. The president, however, continued to suppress his critics, which reignited hostilities between him and Carter.<sup>237</sup> Park did not consider that he had no leverage to nullify Carter's pressure on his rule and tried to keep both his political power and US forces in South Korea. The serious tensions between the Park regime and ordinary people, and between Seoul and Washington sparked dissent among the political leadership and eventually motivated Park's assassination. Park's two-decade –long rule, in which he had persistently tried to resist the global trend towards democracy and détente, were abruptly brought to an end by the bullet of his own subordinate.

Park's unexpected demise triggered the revival of South Korean democracy and its reconciliation with the communists. During his tenure, he continued to keep his own Cold War mindset in spite of frequent, and often unexpected, changes of his main diplomatic partners, the US presidents. As such, his foreign policy, including his approach toward the North, reflected the global political changes and domestic democratic challenge he faced. The mutual mistrust between Park Chunghee and Kim Il-sung, coupled with Park's aspiration for absolute power, prevented the sincere reconciliation between the two Koreas. Needless to say, the collapse of the communist bloc was the decisive factor for the normalization between South Korea and the communists, including North Korea, during the 1990s. Nonetheless, we cannot negate that the end of Park's dictatorship, and his conflict with Kim Il-sung, accelerated the end of Cold War in East Asia. Indeed, the fiercest period in the Cold War history of South Korea was closed in the late 1979.

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<sup>237</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr, *op. cit.*, 51.

## Conclusion: South Korea's Northern and General Foreign Policy in the Late Cold War

Park's death opened a new era of South Korean history. The ROK entered a transitional period, transformed itself into a civilian regime and started to consider its relationships with the communist powers in earnest.<sup>1</sup> Even though another military official, Chun Doohwan, staged a coup in December and delayed this trend, liberals, encouraged by the collapse of the Park regime, vigorously struggled to institute a democratic government and worked towards the normalisation of relations with the communists. In an unexpected turn of events, the American reluctance to prevent the establishment of a new military regime after Park's demise resulted in the rise of an anti-US sentiment across South Korea.<sup>2</sup> Carter was criticised by the South Korean public for not stopping Chun's coup, and not punishing him for the genocide he conducted in Kwangju.<sup>3</sup> Carter's successor in the White House, Ronald Reagan, invited Chun to Washington in January 1981. For South Koreans, Reagan's decision sounded like the American recognition of another Park Chunghee.<sup>4</sup> In some sense, the US lost its role as guardian of South Korean democracy. The fury of South Korean citizens directed at their new military regime, and the US, further undermined the basis of Chun regime and the Cold War ideology in South Korea. Chun Doohwan, who mimicked Park, ended his tenure in the late 1980s. Then the ROK returned to holding direct presidential elections.

In terms of diplomacy, South Korea initiated relationships with communist countries due to fading global Cold War tensions and a new ideological discourse in its society. The Chun regime prepared to establish relations with the USSR, and its successor, Roh Taewoo, finally normalised ROK-Soviet relations in 1990. In 1992, President Kim Youngsam established diplomatic relations with the PRC, and Park's old rival, President Kim Daejung, dramatically improved the inter-Korean relations with his liberal *sunshine* policy. Clearly, the collapse of the communist bloc was decisive for reducing tensions on the Korean Peninsula, and helped South

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<sup>1</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, (Washington: Basic Books, 2002), 116.

<sup>2</sup> The tension between Washington and Moscow in the Middle East might have affected Carter's decision on the new military regime in South Korea. The White House did not want further destabilization of South Korea after the death of Park while facing Soviet aggression in the Middle East. See William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr., *Massive entanglement, marginal influence: Carter and Korea in crisis*, (Washington: The Brookings Institution: 1999), 63

<sup>3</sup> In fact, because of reluctance to intervening in South Korean domestic politics in the United States politics and loss of leverage, the pullout of US forces, Washington had no strong measure to check Chun. Moreover, Chun misled the ROK citizens that the White House supports him through mass media. The United States did not support the new military regime at all. And it was Carter and Reagan who spared Kim Daejung who was sentenced to death by Chun. Yet this was not highlighted due to the shock of Kwangju massacre. According to Bruce Cumings, the American lukewarm response and sponsorship for Chun (clearly forged by him) to Kwangju massacre was conceived as Carter's discordance between his words and actions by many South Koreans. This was the beginning of anti-Americanism in the ROK. Bruce Cumings, *Korea's place in the Sun* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 386.

<sup>4</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 136.

Korean diplomacy with communist countries in the late 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>5</sup>

The rise of a liberal ideology after Park's death also encouraged this *nordpolitik* diplomacy in South Korea, which had maintained an aggressive policy toward communism until the early 1980s. In short, the demise of the Park regime, which espoused anticommunism and *Korean-style* democracy, led first to another military regime in South Korea, but eventually opened the way for establishing a democratic and liberal nation later.<sup>6</sup>

This case study showed how and why the ROK defined their own concepts of the Cold War, specifically with the decision making process of its leadership in the 1960s and 70s, during the Park regime. Throughout the Cold War era, the Republic of Korea had intensely competed with its rival, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The gradual eclipse of the communist bloc in the late 1960s and 1970s, and American hardship in the Vietnam War, pushed the participants in the Cold War to join the global détente trend.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, this does not necessarily mean that all participants followed this line of thinking. More accurately, some countries did not consider that the victory or defeat of their camp decided their own destiny.

South Korea was one of those cases. Simply put, for Koreans, the end of the Cold War meant the collapse of Seoul or Pyongyang rather than the demise of ideological conflicts in the world. As such, this thesis aims to better our understanding of how Park Chunghee and his regime maintained their struggle against communists when Seoul's allies, specifically Washington and Tokyo, moved toward the reconciliation with Moscow and Beijing. As we witnessed, the Park regime considered the North Korean threat as constant. From the perspectives of the ROK elites, the goal of the DPRK's policy toward the ROK was a reunification under the banner of the Red Army. Consequently, the South Korean leadership aimed to ensure its national security and protect itself from the threat Pyongyang was posing. In this context, its efforts for peace negotiations with North Korea were another mode of war for the national security of the ROK under American and public pressure which considered that South Korea was not the exception of the global détente order. To this end, we will review the three significant driving forces of South Korea's Northern policy and related foreign policy between 1968 and 1979, the international political changes, the domestic liberal movement, the Park regime's recognition of the North Korean threat, and the influence of South Korea's foreign policy on the broader Cold War in East Asia will also be discussed.

In many cases, global issues initiated the discussion on the ROK foreign policy. The

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<sup>5</sup> For the detail of end of Cold War in South Korea, see Kang Gyuhyung, Moon Chungyin, and Odd Arne Westad, *Ending the Cold War in Korea: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives*, (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2001)

<sup>6</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 110.

<sup>7</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2005), 169- 70.

strategy and power of the Capitalist camp served as general indicators for its security in the Cold War, and mainly drove South Korea's approach toward its North Korean, and other, foreign policies. First, the ROK-US relations formed the basis of its diplomatic strategy after its liberation from Japan in 1945. As a client state of the United States during the Cold War, South Korea's diplomacy can be characterised as friendly toward America's allies, and hostile toward America's enemies, usually communists.<sup>8</sup> Yet, this relatively stable and clear policy orientation started to be questioned by the change of global environments in the late 1960s.

As we have discussed, the US foreign policy regarding its hardship in Vietnam and the Sino-Soviet split generally pushed South Korea to reconcile with the communists. However, the progression of the Vietnam War itself illustrated the risk of negotiations with Pyongyang, and hence strongly impeded the bilateral relations. Also the Japanese political and economic support for the Park administration, intended to shore up its national security, helped the Blue House maintain its anticommunist policy.<sup>9</sup>

The American hardship in the Vietnam War and its impact on ROK politics opened up a new discussion between Seoul and Washington regarding South Korea's Cold War strategy. Interestingly, the two allies differed in their interpretation of the American campaign and its disappointing progress. For Washington, its setback was geographically limited to Southeast Asia and did not undermine its standing as a global power. During and after the war, the White House generally attempted to reduce its intervention in the region. But it could consolidate its influence with its diplomatic approach toward Moscow and Beijing in the East Asia and prevent the additional conflict with communists. Otherwise, as Henry Kissinger emphasised, the US withdrawal from Southeast Asia would have undermined its credibility abroad.<sup>10</sup> As such, the South Korean elites regarded the US pullout from Vietnam as a prelude to another Korean War. The similarity between Korea and Vietnam, both nations being divided by two different ideologies, and the North Vietnamese victory despite American negotiations, reminded the South Koreans of the risk of negotiations with communists. The progress and outcome of the Vietnam War kept the ROK leadership from developing more liberal policies toward North Korea and other communist countries.<sup>11</sup> Both Koreas observed closely the victory of Hanoi over Saigon. This unexpected development encouraged Pyongyang to assume a more aggressive behaviour, and made Seoul more cautious in their bilateral relations, despite the trend of

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<sup>8</sup> Bruce Cumings, *op. cit.*, 318.

<sup>9</sup> Cho Yanghyun, "Détente Cheje Jeonhwangi'eui Hani'lgwangye [The Korea-Japan Relationship within the Structural Change of the Cold War System in East Asia: Focusing on the Case of Okinawa Reversion and the U. S. Troop Withdrawal from Korea]." *International Regional Research* 20 (2011): 74.

<sup>10</sup> Seymour Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), 46-53.

<sup>11</sup> Shin Wookhee, *op. cit.*, 272.



détente.<sup>12</sup>

But the Nixon Doctrine, and the subsequent reduction of US troops stationed in South Korea, forced Park to seek out ways to keep a strong US military presence in his country. He entered into negotiation with the Premier of the DPRK under the condition that Nixon suspended his troop withdrawal plan. Therefore, for Seoul, the goal of the first round of inter-Korean peace talks was not reunification, but the prevention of a US pullout.<sup>13</sup> In 1972, two rounds of talks in Pyongyang and Seoul, and the subsequent announcement of a joint communiqué finally culminated in a mutual agreement for peaceful reunification. Nevertheless, the real matter was definitively the presence of US military power in South Korea. In their negotiations, North Korea benchmarked North Vietnam, trying to expel US forces from the Korean peninsula, while South Korea learned a lesson from the mistake of South Vietnam and therefore tried to keep American forces within its territory.<sup>14</sup> South Korea's continued appeal for its security led to a change of the American decision, and in 1972, Washington considered the similarities between Seoul and Saigon, and attempted to soothe South Korea's feeling of insecurity. Nixon decided to stop the withdrawal of US forces after having talks with Moscow and Beijing.<sup>15</sup> This decision eliminated the most divisive issue of the inter-Korean negotiations, the US troops in South Korea. The differences between Seoul and Pyongyang concerning US military power stationed in South Korea ended their short détente in 1973.<sup>16</sup>

The collapse of South Vietnam in 1975 pulled the US back from its active movement toward détente in East Asia, partly because of the serious agitation in South Korean politics. The fall of Saigon preoccupied Park Chunghee. His intention to obtain nuclear warheads became clear in 1975, and he remained hostile toward the communists, intending to do so even in the case that the US would not keep their commitment. Without any doubt, the South Korean attempt directly refuted American diplomatic efforts for reducing the tension between the East and West, especially the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT). From the perspective of broader East Asian Cold War history, the aggressive and anti- détente decision taken by Park Chunghee implicated that the US position in the region was damaged by its withdrawal from

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<sup>12</sup> Shin Jongdae, "The Perception of the ROK on the Sino-US Rapprochement and Its Ensuing Responses," 7. Unpublished article.

<sup>13</sup> Shin Wookhee, *op. cit.*, 267.

<sup>14</sup> Korea International Cultural Association, "Nambukdaehwa: Nambukjoelwiwonhoe, Nambukjeoksibjahoedam [South-North Korean dialogue: South North Coordinating Committee and South-North Red Cross talks]," Korea International Cultural Association 2 (1973).

<sup>15</sup> "US Policy in Korea- Country Team Message", 1972. 12.10, POL 1 KOR S-US 1973, Box 2429, RG59; and "US Policy toward the Korean Peninsula", 1973. 4. 18, POL, 27-7, KOR N, 5-5-70, Box 2421, RG59, National Archives.

<sup>16</sup> Shin Wookhee, *op. cit.*, 267.

Vietnam. As the former US ambassador to South Korea, Richard Sneider, argued, South Korea became a middle power which could affect American policy in the East Asian region.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, it is highly doubtful that South Korea really attempted to reject its 30 decade-old status, that of being a client state of Washington. Park was willing to utilise his nuclear project as a negotiation card with Ford for an American commitment in South Korea in the post- Vietnam era.<sup>18</sup>

Seoul gave up on the project after a lengthy brawl with Washington in 1975 and 76 because Gerald R. Ford rejected nuclear proliferation in East Asia and reassured Seoul of continued American support for South Korea. The Ford Doctrine, the murder incidents at the DMZ in 1976, and the subsequent US-ROK retaliation with the DPRK, demonstrated how Washington sought stability for South Korea after their own failed campaign in Southeast Asia. In order to prevent nuclear proliferation in East Asia and avoid any additional loss of American influence there, Ford supported Park and his anticommunist and anti-North Korean rhetoric. Despite his conflict with Park over the South Korean nuclear issue, the US president reaffirmed his commitment to the ROK to ensure security, and thereby strengthen the basis of South Korea's hostile approach toward the North. With American backing, Park Chunghee made a reprisal attack to the North Korean side of the DMZ, and gained his first military victory over Kim Il-sung, who refrained from further military confrontation on this particular occasion.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Seoul's continuous and hostile approach to communists accelerated the eclipse of détente.

However, the US defeat in Vietnam increasingly undermined the public support for Ford's policy. Once Jimmy Carter, who advocated the pullout of the US from East Asia citing the Vietnamese debacle, became president in 1977, Park faced the most serious challenge to his anticommunist policy. Thanks to strong opposition inside the US government, Carter's plan never became reality. However, his pressure on the Park regime eventually led the demise of the Park regime and opened the discussion on diplomacy with communists in South Korea.<sup>20</sup>

The American response to the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s and 70s also intensified the liberal movement in the ROK. Generally, this setback in the communist camp limited any damage the American influence had suffered from the Vietnam War, and encouraged

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<sup>17</sup> "Review of US Policies toward Korea," Telegram 2807 from Seoul, State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE, Korea, Box 11, Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, National Security Adviser, Ford Library

<sup>18</sup> Cho Cheolho, *op.cit.* 369 ; Suh Daesuk and Koo Youngnok, *Korea and the United States: A century of Cooperation* (Honolulu:University of Hawaii Press 1984).

<sup>19</sup> Kim Jeongryeom, *op. cit.*, 445.

<sup>20</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr., *op. cit.*, 38- 76.

Washington to take the initiative for shaping the relations between the three world powers.<sup>21</sup> As described in chapter 2, the US attempted to assert its status in the region using diplomatic, rather than military, efforts. In a broad context, Nixon and Kissinger expected that a possible reconciliation between Washington and Beijing, as well as between Washington and Moscow, would reduce the threat Pyongyang posed for Seoul because they believed that the two patrons of North Korea would restrain Kim Il-sung.<sup>22</sup> Once Washington made its withdrawal plan clear in 1971, Seoul prepared to jump on this irreversible trend of global politics and attempt to change the mode of inter-Korean competition from military to diplomacy means. The ROK's bandwagon tactics were illustrated by its proposal for direct inter-Korean talks after Nixon had announced his visit to Beijing in November 1971. Pyongyang also kept pace with Beijing and accepted the South Korean proposal.

However, the effect of this détente was temporary. Park considered that the influence the USSR and the PRC held on North Korea was not enough to contain Kim Il-sung's aggression. This concern was confirmed by the DPRK's ambush on the Blue House, and the abduction of the *USS Pueblo* in 1968. Kim Il-sung did not seek the consent of either Mao Zedong or Leonid Brezhnev before his raid on the Blue House, and neither the Chinese nor the Soviet leader intervened. Clearly, for the South Korean leadership, the Sino-Soviet conflict and their reconciliation with the US did not guarantee the real end of the Korean War. As Pyongyang aggressively demanded the total retreat of US forces from Korean soil after the announcement of the South-North joint communiqué, the ROK elites immediately rejected the American optimism on the Sino-Soviet conflict. The result was the ROK-DPRK negotiations remained inconclusive and ended quickly, despite the warming Sino-US and US-Soviet relations.<sup>23</sup>

This limited influence of both the PRC and the USSR on Kim Il-sung also made Park indifferent to potential diplomatic opportunities stemming from improved relations with the leading communist powers. During talks with Pyongyang in the early 1970s, Seoul reconsidered its relationships with other communist countries.<sup>24</sup> But this grand agenda became obsolete once the two Koreas returned to their old hostilities. The ROK elites may have believed that both of Pyongyang's patrons were competing for a North Korean allegiance. After Jimmy Carter had accomplished the normalisation of US-China relations in 1978 and early 1979, he urged both

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<sup>21</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *op. cit.*, 194.

<sup>22</sup> "Letter From President Nixon to Korean President Park," Washington, 19<sup>th</sup> May, 1972. Presidential Correspondence 1969–1974, Korea: President Chung Hee Park, 1972, Box 757, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives.

<sup>23</sup> Park Gunyoung, Park Sunwon, and Wu Seungji, "Je 3Gonghwaguk Sigi Gukje Jungchi'wa Nambukgwangye [The International Politics and Inter-Korean Relations in the Third Republic]" National Strategy 51 (2008): 86.

<sup>24</sup> "The ROK's long-term policy toward Communists, 1973," Class Number, 721.1 Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

Seoul and Beijing to establish diplomatic relations. However, Park was reluctant to talk with Deng, and Deng rejected Carter's request to intervene in the Korean conflict.<sup>25</sup>

When the Kremlin - increasingly irritated by closer North Korean ties with the Chinese - tried to approach South Korea in late 1978, ROK elites suspected the Soviets only intended to provoke Pyongyang for its competition with Beijing, and re-gain its control over North Korea.<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, since the mid-1980s, Park's successors, Chun Doohwan and Roh Taewoo had made considerable efforts to maintain good relations with both communist powers in order to resolve the Korean conflict in the name of *nordpolitik*. This diplomatic revolution in South Korean politics opened another phase of détente in the early 1990s.<sup>27</sup> Once again the limits of Soviet and Chinese influence on the DPRK became obvious, as both powers failed to restrain North Korean aggressions, e.g. the North Korean Nuclear Crisis.

The Japanese Cold War mentality also influenced the ROK's Cold War strategy, as both nations were deeply concerned about a possible American retreat from East Asia. Tokyo was sensitive to the American strategy and cooperated with Seoul in order to reduce the security threat from the communists. However, as Victor Cha clearly indicated in his volume, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle*, the cooperation between two East Asian allies was not consistent due to their mutual animosity.<sup>28</sup>

More seriously, their concept of what constituted the 'communist threat' differed. To Japan, the communist threat originated from the Soviet Union and China rather than North Korea, while South Korea considered the DPRK as its main enemy. Despite their efforts to mend fences in 1965, both the USSR and the PRC continued following different approaches toward North Korea. Japan, for instance, was unmoved by North Korea's guerrilla actions on South Korean territory in 1968. Tokyo believed that its close ties with Seoul would irritate Pyongyang and aggravate Kim Il-sung's hatred toward Korea's past imperial ruler.<sup>29</sup> Yet this idea was firmly based on the American defence commitment in the archipelago and peninsula. The US struggle in Southeast Asia undermined the rationale of its expensive role in the region while the policies of the Nixon and Carter administrations fully destroyed the neutral Japanese position between the two Koreas. The change in ROK-Japan relations was dramatic considering

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<sup>25</sup> Lee Chaejin, *A troubled peace: U.S. policy and the two Koreas*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), 91.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Sergey Radchenko, "Inertia and Change: Soviet Policy toward Korea, 1985–1991" in Tsuyoshi Hasegawa (ed.), *The Cold War in Asia, 1945-1991: Reappraisals* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press & Stanford University Press, 2010), 289-320.

<sup>28</sup> Victor Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 10.

<sup>29</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 44- 45.

their long running mutual animosity. The Japanese political and economic support for ROK security reduced the shocks of the new American policy, and encouraged South Korea to build its military power after the disappointing end of inter-Korean diplomacy.

The two East Asian nations quickly improved their bilateral relations after Nixon implemented his plan to withdraw American troops from South Korea, and proposed the Okinawa reversion to Tokyo. Both South Korean and Japanese leaders, uneasy observers of American security policy, consistently requested of Nixon to keep the US forces in South Korea without any considerable reduction. But the White House considered the withdrawal of US troops a prerequisite for negotiations with Beijing. This clear gap between Washington and its two allies in East Asia encouraged the political and economic partnership between Seoul and Tokyo.<sup>30</sup>

Both nations combined their power to maintain the regional security. Park Chunghee and Sato Eisaku, the Prime Minister of Japan, asked Nixon to keep US forces in Okinawa - which was formally returned to Japan in 1972. Sato provided generous aid to South Korea. This financial support allowed Park to initiate his ambitious economic and military plan for developing the heavy chemical and defence industry.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, Japan's economic support contributed to Park's re-election in 1971.<sup>32</sup> Although the Park regime sought consultations with Pyongyang - temporarily changing its approach toward the communists following the presidential election - Japanese assistance did not stop, and the conflict between the two Koreas soon resumed. Without any doubt, the modernisation of South Korean forces was an important prerequisite for Park's aggressive policy toward Kim Il-sung.

However, the ROK-Japan relations between 1973 and 1974 were quickly soured after Nixon cancelled his withdrawal scheme. This development demonstrated that the continued American commitment in East Asia and reconciliation between Japan and the two Communist giants eliminated the Japanese motivation to cooperate with South Korea. Japan held a strong antagonism toward Park's anticommunist rhetoric.<sup>33</sup> Sato's successor, Tanaka Kakuei, complained about the brutality of Park's authoritarian regime, and did not shy away from punishing Kim Dae-jung, a major opposition figure who was based in Japan. Conversely, following Moon Sekwang's failed attempt on Park's life, the South Korean leadership criticised Japan for its relaxed supervision of North Koreans in Japan following Moon's arrival from Tokyo to kill Park.

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<sup>30</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 69- 73.

<sup>31</sup> Kim Hosup, *Policy-making of Japanese Official Development Assistance to the Republic of Korea, 1965- 83*, PhD dissertation, the University of Michigan, 1986. 111- 51.

<sup>32</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 59- 99.

<sup>33</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 101- 121.

These two incidents may suffice to illustrate the fundamental differences between South Korea and Japan concerning the understanding of détente.

The second cooperation started after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Observing the American decision to pull out of Vietnam, both Seoul and Tokyo worried about the possible pullout from Northeast Asia as well. The new Japanese Premier, Miki Takeo, fully recognised the importance of the ROK for the peace of Japan, and was determined to restore Japanese relations with South Korea. Miki consulted with Park about their common future and reaffirmed Japanese support for US forces in Okinawa that were to be essential for South Korea as well as for Japan.<sup>34</sup> South Korea welcomed the friendly Japanese gesture and decided to consult Japan on all security issues for the Korean Peninsula and in East Asia.<sup>35</sup> Coupled with the Ford Doctrine, Japanese support for South Korean security in the post- Vietnam War period encouraged Park to pursue a confrontational Northern policy.

The second ROK-Japan détente reached its peak under the influence of Jimmy Carter's pullout plan. Although this issue did not immediately touch upon the relations between the US and Japan, Carter's popularity in Japan suffered from his troop withdrawal plan. For Japan, the American pullout from South Korea would take away a vital element of its national security framework, and could well be interpreted as prelude to an impending withdrawal from Japan.<sup>36</sup> Once Park changed his negotiation strategy and demanded prohibitive compensatory measures, Tokyo also urged Washington to accept South Korea's proposal. These complaints from its most important ally in East Asia were seriously considered by US officials and Congressmen. Japan rejected Carter's standpoint and supported the ROK in its efforts to keep the US Army within its territory.<sup>37</sup> In sum, ROK-Japan relations mitigated South Korea's security concerns under American and North Korean pressure and supported its aggressive Northern policy.

International factors dictated the general direction of South Korea's foreign policy. In general, the changes in the American Cold War strategy since 1968 had undermined the ideological basis of South Korea's aggressive Northern policy and opened up the way for inter-Korean negotiations. Yet the American defeat in the Vietnam War, and the muted American reaction to the North Korean threat, pushed South Korea to keep its antagonism toward Pyongyang and reject talks with the communist North. Japanese fear of American abandonment, meanwhile, mitigated hostilities between the two US allies.

It is true that the global détente trend contributed to the growth of the liberal South

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<sup>34</sup> Department of US State Bulletin, 8 Sept. 1975, 382- 84, especially clause 3.

<sup>35</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 142.

<sup>36</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 153.

<sup>37</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 154- 55.

Korean voice to some extent. The reconciliation among major players of the Cold War increasingly attenuated the ideological rationale of minor actors.<sup>38</sup> Yet the rise of a liberalist movement in the ROK did not coincide with, or result from, the global détente trend. First and foremost, before the Korean War, the Korean society was not ideologically homogeneous, and there had been a number of socialist movements in South Korea.<sup>39</sup> The Korean War defined anticommunism and anti-North Koreanism as the two overriding principles of South Korean diplomacy. These pervasive ideas overwhelmed any lenient view toward communists, and even justified the military rule under the Park regime. As the result of presidential election in 1967 indicated, the Park regime's mantra, "strengthen national security based on anticommunism and economic development," successfully appealed to the South Korean public.<sup>40</sup>

The liberals lost support but did not disappear. As time went by, the composition of electorates changed and South Korean citizens started to question the rationale behind the lengthy and despotic rule of Park's military regime and its foreign policy concept. Koreans born during the war tended to concur with the liberal politicians that Park's anticommunist policy did not really prevent the North Korean threat, but merely served as justification to perpetuate his rule.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, the ROK leader did not fully respect democracy and the nationalistic idea of 'one Korea.' The Park administration rarely made efforts to set its master plan for transition to democracy in the post-Park era and Korean reunification until 1970s. In what he saw as a realistic view - which is a very important premise of his diplomacy and will be discussed later - the security of South Korea was more important than democracy and national unity.<sup>42</sup> In short, Park planned 'to build the economy and national security based on anticommunism first, and then think about democracy and reunification later.'<sup>43</sup>

The public antagonism against Park's confrontational policy toward Pyongyang raised the profile of liberalists who advocated the restoration of civilian rule and the reconciliation with the communist North. The Kim Daejung candidacy in the presidential elections of 1971, marked the impressive debut for the liberalist movement. Kim's intent to engage in peace talks with Pyongyang which would also include the US, Japan, the PRC, and the USSR, earned him the respect and enthusiastic support of many young voters. Park's narrow victory over Kim Daejung

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<sup>38</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *op. cit.*, 194.

<sup>39</sup> Even Park Chunghee participated in this Socialist action. Bruce Cumings, *op. cit.*, 203.

<sup>40</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, Vol. 9. 36.

<sup>41</sup> Ma Sangyoon, *op. cit.*, 192.

<sup>42</sup> Yang Seongcheol, *Bun'dan'eu'i jung'chi- Park Chunghee'na Kim Ilsung Bi'gyo Yeongu [The Politics of Division- The Comparative Study between Park Chunghee and Kim Ilsung]*. (Seoul: Hanwul, 1987), 260; Shin Jongdae, *op. cit.*, 28.

<sup>43</sup> Park Chunghee, *op. cit.*, 145.

in the 1971 presidential elections was disappointing and led him to consider the influence of liberal thought on his domestic popularity.<sup>44</sup> Soon after the election, the president proposed inter-Korean dialogue to Kim Ilsung.

After Park indicated the North Korean aggression during the peace talks, the domestic resistance toward the Park regime became weak; and the purge of Kim Daejung from the ROK politics in 1973 further undermined the liberal voice in the Korean politics. The resumption of North Korean provocations in 1974, including Moon Sekwang's failed assassination attempt, entirely undermined the ROK public hope for reconciliation with the communist North and a peaceful reunification of the peninsula. The defeat of US and South Korean forces in Vietnam silenced discussions over the reconciliation with communists on a political level.<sup>45</sup> With regard to its post-Vietnam security measure, the Park government suppressed its liberal critics and convicted them for supporting communists. The Ford administration, which prioritised the stability of its Asian allies after the Vietnam War, kept silent on Park's purging of political enemies, and even supported Park's hostile reaction toward the North Korean provocations of 1975 and 1976. Seemingly, the domestic elements that endorsed inter-Korean negotiations in the early 1970s did not have a significant impact on South Korea's foreign policy between 1973 and 1976.

However, in the late 1970s, the public outcry against the increasingly obvious gap between the rich and the poor stalemated inter-Korean relations, and Park's draconian rule ultimately revived the liberal voice in South Korea. The advent of the Carter administration and his criticism of human rights violations committed by the Park regime further encouraged ROK liberals.<sup>46</sup> In contrast to his predecessor, Jimmy Carter did not turn his back on the undemocratic nature of the Park administration. Park rebuffed allegations that the punishment of his critics was unfair and despotic, however, he did recognise that Carter's criticism was not entirely groundless.<sup>47</sup> As time went by, the ideological link between Jimmy Carter and South Korean Liberals improved. This encouraged opposition parties, as well as the general public, to speak out against Park's rule. Kim Youngsam's valiant challenge of Park's despotic rule was based on his idealistic connection to Carter. Indeed, it was the liberal movement, along with American influence, that led to the demise of the Park regime and changed the course of South Korean

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<sup>44</sup> Cho Kabje, *op. cit.*, 116- 117.

<sup>45</sup> Hong Seokryul, *Nixon Doctrine'gwa Park Chunghee Yusincheje* [*Nixon Doctrine and Park Chunghee's Yusin institution*]. (Seoul: Seohaemunjab, 2006), 81; Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 41- 56.

<sup>46</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr., *op. cit.*, 15.

<sup>47</sup> "The letter from President Park to US President Carter, 26 Feb 1977," The presidential letter exchanges between President Park Chunghee and US President Carter, 15 Feb 1977- 6 Mar 1979, Class Number 722.9 US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.



diplomacy.<sup>48</sup>

As indicated by existing evidence, the realistic and authoritarian nature of the Park regime had dictated South Korea's Cold War strategy and suppressed any conciliatory approaches toward the communist North after 1961. The changes in his foreign policy reflecting his consideration for nationalistic and ideological ideas did neither last long nor change the fundamental nature of his government. In fact, Park considered the international ideological conflict and South Korea's national sentiment for facilitating his 'realistic' idea and 'dictatorship'.

The fear of communism and a possible North Korean aggression was strong among South Koreans who had experienced the Korean War themselves. Based on this preconception, the Park regime prioritised national security issues, the fight against communism and economic development.<sup>49</sup> Clearly, despite Park's strong rhetoric for anticommunism, his policy was not ideologically motivated. In a nutshell, the emphasis of his policy was the defence against an impending North Korean threat and not the ideological or institutional rivalry between capitalist and Marxist thought. With regards to economic institutions, the South Korean market was tightly controlled by government authorities and did not show the typical characteristics of a capitalist state.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, his efforts to normalise relations with Korea's former enemy, Japan, for the sake of improving his standing vis-à-vis Park's present enemy, the DPRK, also was indicative of the regime's pragmatic nature.

The realistic ROK elites refused to align their domestic and foreign policy goals with the fast changing international environment of the 1970s. First and foremost, their goal was "to build national security based on anticommunism and economic development."<sup>51</sup> Despite the global détente mood in the early 1970s, the recognition of the Park regime by the DPRK and other communist countries did not bring any quick changes. Discussions within ROK government circles surrounding the inter-Korean negotiations of 1971 and 1972, clearly pointed out Park's reluctance to recognise Kim Il-sung as a diplomatic partner. Based on his view of North Korea that did not change until his death, his aim was "to build a safe nation." This implied the need to maintain the balance until the collapse of Pyongyang and other major communists. He never overlooked the North Korean threat even after he 'reluctantly' agreed to work for reunification with Kim Il-sung. Specifically, the ROK leader was sceptical that his

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<sup>48</sup> William H. Gleysteen and William H. Gleysteen Jr., *op. cit.*, 51.

<sup>49</sup> Park Chunghee, *Nara'ga Wibum Hal Tae Uchi Mokseumeul Aggiri?* [How Can I Spare My Life when My Nation is in Danger?], (Seoul: Dongsuh Books, 2005), 249.

<sup>50</sup> Bruce Cumings, *op. cit.*, 312- 326.

<sup>51</sup> Park Chunghee, *op. cit.*, 145.

indirect talks with Kim could actually resolve the Cold War on the Korean peninsula.<sup>52</sup> Through a series of dialogues, the South Korean leader intended to end the 'military conflict' in Korea, but continue his war against communists with diplomatic methods. For the realist, Park, the inter-Korean talks were the only measure for reaching a very realistic goal - the present security of South Korea rather than the road to the national dream of reunification.<sup>53</sup>

Indeed, the North Korean aggression before and after the negotiations proved Park's idea realistic to some extent. Nonetheless, his failure to resolve the inter-Korean conflict highlighted the fundamental flaws in his basic strategy. As South Korea became a middle power and developed both a strong economy and military in 1970s, these factors did little to prevent the North Korean threat. The South Korean obsession with North Korea estranged its allies further because Park had sought to extract as much aid as possible from his major allies, Washington and Tokyo. His quest for ROK security strained the alliance with the US and Japan when those allies lost their strategic interest in the Korean Peninsula. Moreover, the split with Washington deteriorated the most prominent basis of South Korean security, the American military support.<sup>54</sup> The weakened ideological link between the ROK and US mounted the sense of insecurity in the South Korean leadership, and therefore it remained conservative and aggressive toward communists.

Coupled with its realistic idea, the authoritarian nature of the Park regime also affected the South Korean Cold War strategy. This perspective makes up what the realist argument does not fully account for. The Park regime, which had come to power through a coup, constantly needed to provide valid justification for its long-term rule because its patron, Washington, and the South Korean electorate, resented the cruel and despotic government. The leadership had drawn its legitimacy from its ability to shore up national defence capabilities and protect the country from the communist threat.<sup>55</sup> This main rationale for undemocratic rule won considerable support from Washington until the 1960s which wanted the economic development and stabilization of South Korea despite its reluctance to support the despot.<sup>56</sup>

Ironically, though, the regime relied on the existence of an enemy to justify its grip on power and was reluctant to adopt the global détente to the domestic political sphere. Park's decision to dispatch the armed forces to Vietnam directly refutes the realist logic, which had

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with Kang Induk.

<sup>53</sup> Shin Wookhee and Kim Youngho, "Jeonhwangi'eui Dongmaeng: Détente Siki'eui Hanmianbogwangye [Alliance in Transitional Period: ROK-US security relations in the détente era]" Korea Political History Conference, Seoul, Republic of Korea, 7 April, 2000: 4.

<sup>54</sup> Ma Sangyoon, *op. cit.*, 191.

<sup>55</sup> Lee Jongseok, *op. cit.*, 84.

<sup>56</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 33.

served to explain his cautious approach toward Pyongyang. It was unreasonable for South Korea to dispatch a large troop contingent (approximately 320,000 soldiers) to Southeast Asia, while it faced down a strong enemy at its northern border. Clearly, thanks to its generous support for the American campaign, Washington did not re-deploy its troops stationed in South Korea to Southeast Asia.<sup>57</sup>

It is still subject to controversy why the Park regime readily engaged itself to fight in Vietnam, despite its own confrontation with the communist North. An analysis of the authoritarian rule in South Korea can explain South Korea's road to Vietnam. Park had originally intended to establish himself as the staunchest US ally and to gain more political support from his patron. Furthermore, he had attempted to export the South Korean understanding of the Cold War onto the rest of East Asia. In other words, he wanted his people to take the communist threat more seriously and become aware of the danger that the conflict between the two camps of the cold war could have on the Korean conflict as well. Until the collapse of Saigon in 1975, the South Korean president often linked the destiny of his own country to that of its ally in Southeast Asia, more than 3,000 km away and enunciated that South Korea could not be safe while South Vietnam was still in danger. The analogy was deliberately used as a pretence for persecuting his opponents who complained that Park's Northern policy did not resolve the inter-Korean conflict, but served primarily to support his dictatorship.<sup>58</sup> Once South Vietnam faltered, Park tightened laws to categorise and punish his enemies as communists or pro-communists with his "Vietnam-is-Korea" logic, stating, "Saigon was lost due to the communists in its territory rather than North Vietnam."<sup>59</sup> Ford, preoccupied by soothing the anxiety of America's remaining allies in East Asia, did not take this draconian method of Park seriously.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, Park consistently condemned the hostile nature of Pyongyang, even throughout his negotiations with Kim Il-sung. With his anticommunist rhetoric, the South Korean leader prolonged his tenure and eliminated the public election for presidency in 1972, only three months after the inter-Korean talks produced the joint communiqué for peaceful reunification. The resumption of sabre-rattling between Seoul and Pyongyang after 1973 shored up legitimacy of the Park regime and encouraged the government to hold on to its strong

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<sup>57</sup> "Brown Pledge (Additional dispatch of ROK forces to Vietnam)," 1966, Class Number, 1867, 729.13US, Diplomatic Archive, Republic of Korea.

<sup>58</sup> Hahn Honggoo, *Vietnam Pabydyeong'gwa Byeongyeong Gugga'eni gil* [Dispatching Troops to Vietnam and Militarization of South Korea], (Seoul: Changbi, 2003).

<sup>59</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1975.

<sup>60</sup> Kim Jeongryeom, *Oh, Park Chunghee*. (Seoul: Chung-ang M&B, 1997), 507.

anticommunist policy.<sup>61</sup>

Yet, in the late 1970s, as it had become increasingly clear that Park could not resolve the inter-Korean conflict and remained in power without any intention to restore presidential elections, the democratic resistance arose fiercely. Park oppressed the opposition on the grounds of his old Cold War logic. At this point, however, the new administration in Washington started to pay more attention to the moral aspects of Park's rule, and threatened to withdraw its land forces from South Korea in order to coax the dictatorship to undertake political reforms. The pressure on his despotic rule entirely destroyed the security-based logic of Park's leadership. The South Korean president maintained that human rights had to be limited for the sake of national security. In Carter's view, however, the US should not support such an undemocratic state.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, the security of the South Korea was jeopardised by the very policies that were supposed to improve it. With doubts over its legitimacy rising among the general public, Park's regime lost popular support and had to face mass protests which, eventually, if not indirectly, led to its collapse. The Park regime's demise eliminated the authoritarian nature of policy makers that sought to implant the idea of anticommunism in South Korea and opened the door for more fruitful discussions over the proper approach to deal with the communist powers and North Korea after late 1980s.

In the global Cold War perspective, however, the unexpected death of Park and thereby destabilisation of South Korea accelerated the declination of détente in East Asia. The USSR invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, which introduced the second Cold War. As Westad has argued, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan demonstrated the aggressive Soviet intention in the Third World to hard-liners in the Carter administration.<sup>63</sup> Due to South Korea's instable political ground after its prime leader's demise, Jimmy Carter completely cancelled his pullout programme in April, 1980.<sup>64</sup> After Soviet aggression resumed the Cold War, Carter did not properly check another ROK military coup, and its inhumane rule over South Korea. As such, the US president could neither reduce American intervention nor keep American credibility in East Asia.<sup>65</sup> Carter's successor, Ronald Reagan, re-assured US commitment to security of its East Asian allies

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<sup>61</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *op. cit.*, 43- 44.

<sup>62</sup> Ma Sangyoon and Park Wongon, "Détentegi'eui Hanmi Galdeung: Nixon, Carter'wa Park Chunghee [ROK-US Split in Détente Period: Nixon, Carter, and Park Chunghee]." Yeoksa Bipyeong 86 (2009): 125.

<sup>63</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War*(Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2005), 328.

<sup>64</sup> "U.S. Troops in Korea", 9<sup>th</sup> April 1980, Korea, Republic of. 1- 5/80, Box 44, National Security Affairs- Brzezinski Material. Country File, JECL.

<sup>65</sup> His stance toward South Korea's new despot even resulted in anti- American sentiment among South Korean public who did look forward US check against another dictator in the Blue House, Chun Doohwan. See Bruce Cumings, *op. cit.*, 386.

against the communist threat and resumed the war against communists.<sup>66</sup>

In conclusion, ROK diplomacy during the Cold War was influenced by the global environment, domestic political discourse, and the nature of its supreme decision-makers. Interestingly, despite its basic reliance on the US, Seoul's foreign policy agenda was not entirely based on American strategy. This thesis has demonstrated how and why the global détente was not fully materialised on the Korean Peninsula. It has also been shown that the democratic movement pushed the ROK government to enter negotiations with North Korea. Finally, the thesis has described the ROK policy-making process at the top level, which frequently resisted international and domestic pressures on its anticommunist policy, which constituted its primary ideological foundation. Until his death, Park consistently held on to his belief that no real détente could ever be achieved without the prior collapse of the communism, which of course included the DPRK. In essence, Park's stubbornness limited the flexibility and success of South Korea's foreign policy, and precluded reconciliation with the country's Cold War enemies.

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<sup>66</sup> Victor Cha, *op. cit.*, 169.

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