Great Powers’ Engagement Policies Towards the Two Koreas in the Early 1990s

-Political Solidarity vs Strategic Partnership-

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Introduction

Despite the end of the Cold War in Europe, the great powers (US, Japan, China, the Soviet/Russia) failed to complete the task in Northeast Asia. They were leery of the new environment because the sources of insecurity—arms race, ideological confrontation, and territorial disputes—still existed in the region. Under this circumstantial fact, on the one hand, countries sought to reduce their insecurity by preventing or lessening external threats. On the other hand, their foreign policy focused on national interests, such as economic benefits in China and Russia, regional security in the US, and the new military role in Japan. To achieve the goals set out the Korean peninsula, the great powers engaged in inter-Korean affairs by employing the balance of power strategy. The logic behind their engagement was that states seek allies to prevent the other from expending its influence or to counter threats from each other. The two Koreas were dealt with through two broad types of balancing: balancing managed by military means for specific military ends and balancing managed by political means conducted at an opponent’s image and legitimacy.

In the early 1990s, South Korea’s rapprochement with the Soviet and China derived from the belief that among the great powers it was better to align with the weaker side because its balancing behavior escalated the new member’s influence.
within the alliance. By contrast, bandwagoning was chosen by North Korea relying on the belief that a state facing an external threat will ally with the most threatening power. For North Korea, it was chosen for defensive reasons, as a means of preserving one’s independence in the face of a potential threat. Thus, there were specific issues and disputes that could force them to augment their differences on easing tensions on the Korean peninsula and establishing peace in Northeast Asia. Mediation is usually regarded as a set of activities that a mediator performs to facilitate settling a conflict.iii However, this diversity degenerated the tendency toward inter-Korean détente into antagonistic relations in the early 1990s.

The two Koreas showed their good faith to end antagonism and build the foundations of peaceful coexistence and ease tension during the High Level Talks (1990-1992). All other reconciliatory moves culminated in the Basic Agreement between them. In contrast, both the Koreas posed cynical attitudes towards the other side’s strategic calculation that arose during the negotiations which aimed at taking advantage of the other’s weakness in economic or military capabilities. The cooperation was vulnerable to many internal and external factors. This paper examines the external factors that influenced the semblance of inter-Korean cooperation during the same period. These ‘external factors’ will be confined to the unification issues of the great-
powers’ foreign policies, strategic calculations and their impact on inter-Korean relations. Accordingly, the important questions addressed here are as follows: Why and how did the great-powers engage in inter-Korean affairs? And how did their balancing conducted by military and political means serve to make the inter-Korean detente more difficult?

Theoretical Approach to Making Alliance: Balancing and Bandwagoning

Propositions on Balancing and Bandwagoning

Although balancing remains an ambiguous concept, it means “the creation or aggression of military power through internal mobilization or the forging of alliances to prevent or deter the territorial occupation or political and military domination of the state by a foreign power or coalition.” Balancing can be broken down into two categories, such as appropriate balancing and overbalancing (or inappropriate balancing). With regard to balancing behaviour, a realist view insists that balancing of forces in a system of checks and balances is regarded as a universal principle for all pluralist societies. According to this view, states form coalitions to protect themselves from states or alliances whose superior capabilities could pose a threat. In addition, states always act to increase capabilities, replace essential actors by elevating a
previously nonessential actor (i.e., a weaker power), and treat all essential actors as acceptable potential allies. The evidence supports these hypotheses.

In Northeast Asia, balancing beliefs through military alliances have been a recurring theme since the Cold War started. In particular, the balancing hypothesis was popular with statesman seeking to legitimize ideological competition between liberalism and totalitarianism. In the rivalry structure of the two triangular relationships (China, North Korea, Russia vs Japan, South Korea, US), US made efforts not only to contain the Soviet but also to intimate both Japan and South Korea into its bilateral alliance system. As US normalised its relationship with China, however, an ideological preference of making alliance seemed to be less important. This situation also supports the hypothesis that statesmen will exaggerate the degree of ideological alignment among both their allies and their adversaries.

According to Schweller, bandwagoning is one of the types of nonbalancing. The policy of bandwagoning is prudent and rational because the state is able to avoid the costs of war by letting others defeat the aggressor. In addition, the states do bandwagon with a superpower because they perceive their well-being as inextricably tied up with the economic policy of the hegemony. In that, specific states as potential balancers bandwagon with the super power not because they seek to overturn the
established order but because they perceive themselves as benefiting from the status quo and, therefore seek to preserve it.\textsuperscript{vii} The Sino-US strategic partnership is a key example that illustrates this tendency. Chinese politicians will not compete with the US until they increase their aggregated power sufficiently.

Concerning a country’s bandwagoning behavior, Walt insists that the weaker powers are more likely to bandwagon than the stronger ones for two reasons: they are more vulnerable to pressure, and they can do little to determine their own fates.\textsuperscript{viii} In addition, it is said that states are more likely to bandwagon when useful allies are unavailable, for they face the threat alone if they choose to resist.\textsuperscript{ix} The case of bandwagoning can be seen in North Korea’s collaboration with US on the issue of its nuclear development program from 1993 to 1994. For North Korea, both Beijing and Moscow’s rapprochement with Seoul in 1990 and 1992 was a vital factor that led the country to worry about a lack of security conviction from its traditional allies. Pyongyang’s propensity to bandwagon with Washington was based on ultimately on the hope that such a step would moderate Washington’s aggressive intentions. In 1994, North Korea fulfilled the goals of its bandwagon strategy through the DPRK-US Geneva Agreement. It implies that Pyongyang’s bandwagoning behavior was associated with the Clinton administration’s appeasement policy.
As a rare example of bandwagoning, North Korea’s realignment qualifies for several reasons. Among them, probably the most important condition was North Korean perceptions of US intentions after Kim Il-Sung’s death. As a new leader, Kim Jong-Il was apparently convinced that the US attitude toward Pyongyang could be radically changed if North Korea were more forthcoming on its nuclear row. Although scholars have generally failed either to frame their beliefs or to evaluate their accuracy, there are five variations that impact on how countries will select their alliance partners.

**Aggregate Power**

In Walt’s hypothesis on balancing, it is said that all else being equal, the greater the threatening country’s aggregate power, the greater the tendency for others to align against it. In contrast, the hypothesis on bandwagoning is that the greater a state’s aggregate resources, the greater the tendency for others to align with it. As with aggregate power, proximate threats can cause balancing or bandwagoning because the great powers have the capability to either punish enemies or reward friends. For example, South Korea and the Soviet against Japan and North Korea in 1990, and China and South Korea against North Korea and US in 1992 supports this tendency. US aggregate capability played a vital role for bandwagoning that might provide rewards
for Pyongyang’s collaboration with Washington on the non-proliferation issue.\textsuperscript{xii} The Pyongyang regime refused to resume inter-Korean dialogue on denuclearization while DPRK-US talks were held. Concerning this fact, Pyongyang’s bandwagoning behavior derived from its perception that the concessions from US would be much more than those of South Korea.

**Geographic Proximity**

Due to the fact that the ability to exert power declines with distance, states that are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away.\textsuperscript{xii} Therefore, neighboring countries are less likely to be allies than are countries separated by at least one other power. Crucial examples include China and the US against the Soviet Union in the 1960s, and the inter-Korean conflict during the Cold War period. The opposite logic of this balancing is that the nearer a powerful state, the greater the tendency is to align with it. Even though Sino-Russia strategic partnership against the Japan and US alliance supports this tendency, a variable of geographic proximity seems to be less important in Northeast Asia in the post-Cold War period.
Offensive Power

The immediate threat that offensive capacities pose may create a strong incentive for others to balance. However, balancing is not likely to occur when one’s allies may not be able to provide assistance quickly enough. In that, countries close to the superpower can not do anything but bandwagon because balancing alliances is simply not viable. For South Korea, both its lack of faith in the US security guarantee and North Korea’s military capabilities were constraints that led the country to seek a channel for inter-Korean cooperation in the security area. For North Korea, its emphasis on the peace treaty with the US during their high-level talks (1993-1994) was affected by its security fear of the US military presence in the South.

Aggressive Intentions

Perceptions of aggressive intent seem to play a crucial role in alliance choices. For example, the changing perceptions of North Korea on NPT in 1993 helped the creation of multilateral cooperation among China, Japan, Russia, US and South Korea. It implies that all five states will oppose North Korea only if North Korea is aggressive and threatens regional order. Under this circumstantial fact, if North Korea’s intention can not be changed by it allies such as China and Russia, either the South or the North
as a vulnerable state is likely to become a victim. To avoid this situation, the states are likely to balance with others.

Ideological Solidarity

Alliances were the product of a correspondence in laws, customs, and habits of life among states. According to the assumption of ideological solidarity, the more similar the domestic ideology of two or more states, the more likely they are to ally. In contrast, certain types of ideology cause conflict and disagreement rather than solidarity and cooperation. Particularly, it is supported by the hypothesis that the more centralized and hierarchical the movement prescribed by the ideology, the more conflictive and fragile any resulting alliance will be. Despite of this paradoxical result in international politics, some evidences supports the assertion that ideology has played a vital role for countries to join alliances in Northeast Asia in the 1990s.

The records show that when states’ domestic system and governing ideology has changed, they should seek different allies and alliances even though an alliance entails significant costs. For example, China’s rapprochement with South Korea can be explained by the correlation between ideology and alliance formation. When the new generation of Chinese politicians took power, it tended to make new alliance partners with South Korea.
Meanwhile, China’s communist solidarity with North Korea became weakened. This situation implies that the impact of ideology on superpower commitments may be gradually declining. Thus ideological preference emphasized in the past seems to be less important in the future. The history of alliance formation in Northeast Asia confirms that states are usually willing to ignore ideological preferences when strict fidelity to them would be costly or dangerous. The lesson from the North Korean nuclear row suggests that ideological alliances will be rather fragile if they are subjected to serious conflicts of interest among the members.

In short, balancing behavior is provoked by the desire to keep what one has. Thus its aim focuses on maximizing security and maintaining the status quo. In contrast, bandwagoning behavior is motivated by greed and benefit. It intends to maximize power by revising the existing order. Historical records illustrate that the fate of the Korean peninsula has been determined by either the predominance of one nation or a balance of power between two nations competing for that control. In the 1990s, the great powers met another opportunity for maintaining the status quo through engaging in inter-Korean affairs. The great powers claimed that they would act and perform to settle inter-Korean conflict. Some mediating services were provided by a nation designated as a mediator, but some were provided even by a representative of one side.
in the dispute. This situation implies that the mediator roles of the great powers are not as highly institutionalized. What follows will be a consideration of the mediator roles between the two Koreas.


The Bush administration held the DPRK-US talks on January 22, 1992. It was based on the idea of ‘Three Way Talks’ between the US, North and South Korea. The motive for its talks with the North was its determination to implement a non-proliferation policy in the Korean peninsula. Indeed, as a result of these talks, Pyongyang signed the Nuclear Safeguard Accord with the IAEA on January 30, 1992 as well as the Joint Nuclear Control Committee with South Korea on March 18, 1992. In terms of the US’s role as mediator, the outcome of the talks indicated that the US’s engagement policy helped to bridge the two Koreas’ different views on denuclearization in the Korean peninsula which led to both Koreas’ efforts to strengthen their cooperation in economic and security areas. It appears that the US’s mediation role was successful in balancing military capability between the two Koreas.
However, in November 1992, the US’s mediation role in denuclearisation in the Korean peninsula faced a new phase that might change its impartial and consultant role. Pyongyang’s boycott of inter-Korean talks gave rise to the new phase. The reason behind Pyongyang’s boycott was its intention to discuss the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons and troops from South Korea through direct US-DPRK talks. Pyongyang believed South Korea’s stance was determined by US’ status as high military command in the South. Given this, North Korea claimed that US should participate in the ‘Tripartite Talks’ so as to create the tendency toward the peaceful reunification. This situation meant that there would be a serious challenge to the US’ leverage role in Korean affairs if US-DPRK talks dealt with sensitive security issues in South Korea.

After North Korea announced its decision to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in March 1993, US entered directly into the field of conflict and decided to hold direct talks with North Korea on denuclearization. From June to July 1993, indeed, the Clinton administration participated in the US-DPRK high level talks on the nuclear issues, such as replacing the North’s graphite moderated reactors with light-water moderated reactors and accomplishing IAEA safeguards. Throughout the negotiations, Washington expected to seek a clue for solving North Korea’s nuclear development programme. However, Washington’s expectation faced a difficulty when
Pyongyang attempted to link the end of ‘US-ROK Team Spirit’ military exercises with the freezing nuclear development in North Korea in November 1993. North Korea’s demand for US’ concession of ‘Team Spirit’ brought about the deadlock of the US-DPRK talks. This was because US was reluctant to deal with the matter under the deadlock of inter-Korean talks. To overcome the deadlock, Washington and Pyongyang used an intermediary. The Clinton administration sent the former US President Jimmy Carter to Pyongyang. Carter played a key role in providing the North Korean leaders with information regarding Washington’s intentions as well as suggesting alternatives to their positions. Carter brought Kim Il-Sung an offer Pyongyang to freeze its nuclear development programme in return for opening the possibility of discussing Pyongyang’s demands through a resumption of a US-DPRK High-Level Talks. Particularly, the intermediation of Carter contributed to facilitate the conclusion of US-DPRK agreement in Geneva in October 1994.

In addition, Carter played an important role in arranging the summit talks between the two Koreas in July 1994 even though the summit meeting did not occur because of Kim Il-Sung’s sudden death. Washington’s willingness to continue the US-DPRK talks showed that the US had changed its basic position on ‘Three Way Talks’ among US, North Korea and South Korea. The change in the US strategy was a factor
that affected the characteristics of the US mediation role as well as the two Koreas’
good faith in collaboration.

In terms of its role in balancing overall power between the two Koreas, the
Clinton administration showed an ambivalent position. On the one hand, this was
because the US provided multiple concessions for North Korea in the economic,
security and diplomatic areas in order to stop North Korea withdrawing from the NPT.
On the other hand, South Korea remained its traditional security ally. This controversial
feature of the US’ role caused South Korea’s concern that the US’s concessions to
North Korea would strengthen the Pyongyang government’s capabilities in economy,
security, and foreign relations. The appearance of South Korea’s growing suspicion
meant that the Clinton government’s engagement policy was not compatible with its
role as a mediator between the two Koreas. There were a number of factors that affected
the impartiality of the US mediation role.

First, as the IAEA reports on nuclear facilities in North Korea indicated, there
was no urgent need for the US to engage on the issue of the nuclear development
programme in North Korea. In terms of the real motive, there is speculation that the
US wanted bilateral talks with Pyongyang in order to collect information about the
Ballistic Missile Capabilities in North Korea. Indeed, Washington knew that in late
May 1993 North Korea had successfully tested a nuclear-capable missile, the Ro Dong 1, with a range of about 600 miles, and that it would press ahead with its nuclear program. This implied that the US’s acceptance of North Korea’s proposal for holding direct talks in June 1993 was closely linked with North Korea’s missile programme. Given this situation, the goal of the Clinton administration’s engagement policy was to achieve non-proliferation of conventional arms based on its calculations about its national security interests. Here, as a mediator, the Clinton administration should have discussed with South Korea the reality of the nuclear issue in North Korea while holding negotiations with Pyongyang. In June 1993, South Korea disclosed its sceptical attitude towards the paradox of North Korea’s ‘Tripartite Talks.’ This was because Pyongyang urged the US-DPRK talks on the nuclear issue whereas it refused to resume inter-Korean talks. President Kim Young-Sam showed cynicism about Pyongyang’s policy, stating that:

We have a vivid memory of the Korean War. Given this past memory and current North Korean policy, I think we should prepare fully for the possibility of military conflict. The Korea nuclear issue is far from being resolved. Further
talks (US-DPRK nuclear talks) are expected over the next few weeks, but
there’s little hope for any quick breakthrough.\textsuperscript{xxvii}

Seoul’s cynicism about North Korea’s policy and US-DPRK talks meant that the US
engagement policy was a factor that led to the strengthening of antagonism between the
two Koreas.

Second, in order to further its interests in the non-proliferation of conventional
arms, the US changed its position on South Korea’s proposal for mutual inspections of
nuclear facilities between the two Koreas. In January 1992, before the IAEA completed
its inspection of the nuclear facilities in Nyongbyon, at the first official meeting with
North Korea on nuclear issues Washington proposed that ‘pilot inspections’ between the
North and the South must be implemented.\textsuperscript{xxviii} However, the US changed its attitude to
this after the IAEA’s inspection was accomplished in 1992, indicating that the US was
likely to demote the issue of mutual inspection to secondary status at the US-DPRK
High-Level Talks. In November 1993, Washington dropped the issue of mutual
inspection at the second US-DPRK High-Level Talks altogether.

The background to this rested on the different attitude of Washington and Seoul
to mutual inspections. For Washington, the implementation of mutual inspection meant
that the US needed to accept not only North Korea’s nuclear strategy but also South Korea’s suggestion that this should happen. Pyongyang proposed that ‘access to Nyongbyon be traded for all facilities (including US military bases) in South Korea whereas Seoul demanded mutual inspection based on a one-to-one party basis of civilian facilities and military facilities. The US was likely to prefer Pyongyang’s suggestion because it would have more chances to examine suspicious sites. The failure to fully carry out mutual inspections indicated that the withdrawal of the US nuclear weapons from South Korea was not verified by North Korea. Here, Pyongyang’s acceptance of the US’s suggestion that mutual inspection be dropped at the third round talks was a symptom of their compromise which resulted in the paralysis of the Joint Nuclear Control Committee which the two Koreas had agreed to implement.

Third, during the US-DPRK nuclear talks, the US provided some benefits to the Pyongyang government. Washington gave concessions to Pyongyang, such as the cancellation of Team Spirit and the opening up of a liaison office, and these were rewarded by the freezing of nuclear development in North Korea at the third round of US-DPRK talks in August 1994. The problem that arises here rested on the fact that South Korea did not want to provide such a concession in the military field. President Kim confirmed, when stating Seoul’s position to the first US-DPRK nuclear talks in
June 1993, that “I also do not think the United States should make any further concessions to North Korea.” Furthermore, Washington dropped its preconditions, such as the resumption of inter-Korean talks and the completion of special inspections of unreported nuclear facilities, in return for its cancellation of TS. The incompatibility between Seoul’s expectations and the US’s concessions to North Korea implied that US mediation was not based on an impartial and advisory role in relation to the two Koreas. The emergence of the controversy over the US’s policy created doubts about the real objective of US’s mediation.

This argument can be supported by the final agreement between Washington and Pyongyang in Geneva on October 21st, 1994. The US’ main gain from the Geneva agreement was North Korea’s promise to freeze its nuclear development program and Pyongyang’s commitment to the US’s NPT policy. In return, North Korea was rewarded with multiple concessions as a result of its ‘package deal’ strategy that aimed at fostering simultaneous economic, diplomatic, and security gains through US-DPRK nuclear talks. This asymmetrical outcome meant that the US achieved its strategic goals of non-proliferation in Northeast Asia even though the US’s comprehensive aid to Pyongyang was controversial given that its military assistance to Seoul remained.
As examined above, all three considerations affecting the degree of ambivalence in the US’s attitude towards the two Koreas were derived from its calculations of the benefits of US-DPRK direct talks. Under these strategic calculations, the US’ engagement policy caused South Korea’s mistrust of its mediation role in Korean affairs. South Korea’s mistrust of US-DPRK direct talks led to mistrust of the US-ROK political solidarity as well as antagonism between the two Koreas. In this sense, the US’s engagement policy on denuclearisation was a factor that led to the change of the two Koreas’ good faith about cooperation to cynicism.

China

China held a mixture of “skeptical” and “euphoric” perspectives on the new international circumstances in Northeast Asia. This ambivalent view led the country to adopt a contradictory approach to the two Koreas. On the one hand, China promoted economic relations with the USSR and South Korea in line with its positive response to cooperation and an atmosphere of reconciliation in international politics. For China, its perception of economic development was a key motive that brought about strategic partnership with the Soviet and South Korea. On the other hand, China maintained political solidarity with North Korea as its view about that military confrontation
between the US and the Soviet Union in this region had not changed. A prime objective of its conciliatory behavior was to ease tensions and bring about regional peace.

However, a point to be made here is that China’s moves towards South Korea provoked the mistrust of North Korea on the purpose of the normalization. This was a negative effect of China’s efforts for mediating the two Koreas. It meant that there was a structural incompatibility in China’s dual approach to the two Koreas. The contradiction in China’s policy stemmed from the legacy of China’s mutual agreement with North Korea in July 1961 and its normalization with South Korea in August 1992. China’s cooperative relations were clarified in 1961 by the ‘Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between People’s Republic of China and North Korea.’ In the treaty, China agreed on automatic military assistance in the Korean peninsula: “In the event of one of the contracting parties being subjected to armed attack by any state or several states jointly and thus being involved in a state of war, the other contracting party shall immediately render military and other assistance by all means at its disposal (Article 2).” In addition, China conceded on consolidating socialist solidarity that “Neither contracting party shall conclude any alliance directed against the other contracting party or take part in any bloc or in any action or measure directed
against the other contracting party (Article 3).” Beijing’s emphasis on solidarity in the treaty meant that China’s support for Pyongyang’s policy of reunification would be continued.

However, under the changing international scene of détente in the post Cold War period, China also adopted a cooperative policy with South Korea. China’s approach to Seoul implied that Beijing modified its policy of unilateral ties with North Korea. In 1992, indeed, China concluded ‘Diplomatic Normalization with South Korea’ and agreed on key points that might be incompatible with its previous agreement of 1961 with North Korea. Among the points of incompatibility, the vital one was that China would not use military action against the contracting parties. China agreed with South Korea on the principle of mutual non-aggression in the second part of the 1992 Joint Communiqué. China’s promise on non-aggression with South Korea was incompatible with the Article 2 promising automatic military assistance to North Korea. Given the uncertainty of achieving the non-aggression between the two Koreas, China’s military strategy to the two Koreas was problematic because it might stimulate mutual distrust between the two Koreas as well as their mistrust over the objective of China’s dual approach to Korean dispute.
China’s foreign policy towards the two Koreas derived from its strategic calculation about the need to balance economic benefits and political solidarity. Since the mid-1980s, Chinese foreign policy for the two Koreas focused on pursuing the dual benefits. The background of this dual policy derived from the key principle of its national development strategy whereby it would separate economic from political matters. With this principle, China maintained separate ties with the two Koreas – economic ties with the South and political ties with the North. In the meantime, China wished to see a stable North Korean Communist regime. China strengthened the stability of the Pyongyang Communist regime by increasing economic aid to North Korea after the collapse of the Soviet Union. China’s ambivalent position stemmed from its foreign policy that aimed to enhance its national strength by promoting diplomatic relations with all neighboring countries. In carrying out the goal, to Beijing, peaceful coexistence between the two Koreas was a vital consideration because it could prevent the country from outside military intervention. China’s good faith in mediating between the two Koreas was determined by its role for balancing the capabilities of the two Koreas. Given this, the outcome of the Chinese dual policy was not always useful for the development of inter-Korean relations. This was because the two Koreas’ response to the dual policy was far from identical. For example, for South
Korea, the normalization of its relations with China represented an achievement of its Northern Policy which aimed to produce peaceful coexistence. Seoul’s calculation about its reconciliation with Beijing was to use the role of China to give it leverage over North Korea.

In contrast, North Korea showed cynicism about the Sino-ROK normalization due to its belief that Seoul’s Northern Policy aimed at isolating North Korea from its traditional tie with China. The existence of North Korea’s mistrust meant that Chinese engagement policy failed to bring about confidence of both Koreas in its dual approach. This was because Sino-ROK strategic partnership affected North Korea’s perception of political solidarity in its relations with China. The dual policy of China could not fulfill the two Koreas’ expectations about China’s role at the same time.

**The Soviet Union/Russia**

The change in Moscow’s attitude toward Northeast Asia was initiated by Gorbachev’s Vladivostok Declaration in July 1986, which stated that the main goal of Soviet foreign policy in Asia was to promote diplomatic relations and security cooperation with Asian countries. The USSR’s initiation of diplomatic relations with South Korea in 1990 was a significant outcome of the new foreign policy. This was
because Moscow aimed to take on the role of mediator in any future settlement of the Korean conflict. This policy was confirmed by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnaze, when he stated that the Soviet Union would make efforts to ease tension in the Korean peninsula. However, Moscow’s desire to bridge the differences between the two Koreas faced a serious challenge from North Korea’s skeptical view of Moscow’s friendly moves to the Seoul government. North Korea’s skepticism about Moscow’s mediation policy was closely related to its fear that the development of Moscow-Seoul relations would damage traditional Pyongyang-Moscow ally system. There were some contradictory features of Moscow’s foreign policies over the two Koreas that encouraged Pyongyang’s fear of losing solidarity between Moscow and Pyongyang.

In the USSR-DPRK Treaty of 1961, Moscow agreed on automatic military action for North Korea’s security: “In case one of the contracting parties becomes the object of an armed attack by some state of a coalition of states and as a result find itself in the state of war, then the other contracting party will immediately render it military and other assistance with all means at its disposal (Article 1).” Moscow’s friendly position was maintained until September 1990.
However, in September 1990, Moscow changed its basic stance on Korean affairs when it concluded normalization with South Korea. Moreover, Gorbachev signed a joint declaration with the Roh government that affected its traditional tie with North Korea. In December 1990, Moscow agreed on the principle of non-aggression, that is “Inadmissibility of the threat or use of force, of providing one’s own security at the expense of the other states.” In the light of Moscow’s security guarantee for the two Koreas, it appears that Moscow adopted a dual approach to Korean affairs, maintaining its traditional tie with North Korea while it made an effort to open up a new partnership with South Korea. In providing concessions to both Koreas, Moscow showed that the country is interested in its role as mediator by suggesting multilateral talks for a peace settlement in the Korean peninsula.

For the Soviet Union, the idea of formulating a multilateral security system for political order and Confidence Building Measures in East Asia was a key method to solve military confrontation in the Korean peninsula. This perspective continued under Russia’s new political system in the post-Cold War era. Russia agreed to conclude a ‘Memorandum on Bilateral Military Exchanges’ at the Roh Tae-Woo and Yeltsin meeting in November 1992 in Seoul. This Memorandum was a symbol of Russia’s strategy to engage in the resolution of military conflict in the Korean peninsula.
This was because Russia intended to enhance its status as an intermediary who would assist the two Koreas in searching for mutually acceptable solutions. To achieve this goal, Yeltsin emphasized the need for a mechanism of multilateral negotiations. Yeltsin’s view was based on the idea of a ‘multilateral security cooperation system’ initiated by the previous regime. In the Moscow-Seoul agreement, ‘2+4 talks’ among the two Koreas, China, US, Russia and Japan was regarded as a relevant measure for creating a peace settlement. Moscow’s emphasis on security cooperation with the US and China was a useful idea in terms of initiating multilateral talks for easing tension on Korean peninsula and promising peace settlement in Northeast Asia. In its proposal, Russia hoped to escalate its role of close consultant like the two great powers in Korean affairs.

In terms of the Yeltsin government’s engagement policy, the Roh government had showed its understanding of the Moscow-Pyongyang agreement in 1961, stating that “We hope that while Moscow will further develop its relations with us, it will also maintain its traditional ties of friendship with North Korea.” This was because Seoul accepted the fact that Moscow’s policy was derived from its strategy of resolving domestic economic problems, continuing arms reduction, and searching for new partnerships. In the Basic Treaty between South Korea and Russia, the two countries
agreed to pursue 15 point to achieve multiple cooperation in economic, security and military fields. For South Korea, the 15-point agreement was a symbol of great achievement for Northern Policy that would guide future relations between the two countries in the post-Cold War period.

However, for North Korea, Moscow’s security cooperation with South Korea was a fatal threat to its traditional political and security tie with Russia as well as its unification strategy. According to the Military Armistice Agreement of 1953, technically, the two Koreas were in a state of war. According to the manifesto of Korean Workers Party, Pyongyang regarded the other side as an adversary to be defeated even though the High-Level Talks(1990-1992) were held. This is why North Korean Foreign Minister, Kim Yong-Nam urged his Soviet counterpart, Eduard Shevardnaze, before Moscow normalised with South Korea, stating that “The Soviet Union, together with the US, is responsible for the division of Korea after World II. If the Soviet Union establish diplomatic ties with South Korea, it will bring nothing good to anybody, either in view of the relaxation of tension on the Korean peninsula and peace and security in the Asia Pacific region, or in view of the interest of the Korean and Soviet people.” In particular, Russia’s change of position on Moscow’s automatic military assistance stimulated North Korea’s critics on a new partnership
between Moscow and Seoul. Pyongyang accused Moscow of changing its attitude drastically towards South Korea after the end of Cold War from hostility to friendliness. Yeltsin’s attitude towards the issue seemed to be a fatal blow for Pyongyang to worry about loosing a traditional ally. He confirmed Moscow’s position as below.

A treaty of amity and cooperation was signed in 1961 between the Soviet Union and North Korea, and I believe that treaty needs further review and that a partial revision is in order. That part of the treaty that provides automatic military assistance by the other side in case either side is involved in war is no longer necessary and needs to be revised or scrapped. It is now high time for us to persuade North Korea through political negotiations to denuclearize the Korean peninsula.\textsuperscript{xlv}

Kim Il-Sung responded to Moscow’s approach to Seoul that North Korea would continue the principle of independence in its security and foreign policy.\textsuperscript{xlvi} The confirmation by North Korea was a rejection of Moscow’s consultation on its nuclear development programme. In fact, in January 1993, the North Korean Ambassador to Russia, Son Song-Pil, enunciated North Korea’s boycott of the IAEA’s nuclear
inspection while on the same day Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Georgy Kunadze, as a special envoy of President Boris Yeltsin discussed with North Korea the question of changing a bilateral military alliance agreement of 1961 between the Soviet Union and North Korea. This situation indicated that Pyongyang’s lack of conviction on Moscow’s military assistance encouraged Pyongyang’s withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Security fear in North Korea was a factor that helps explain why North Korea attempted to seek countermeasures for bridging this imbalance in security and diplomatic areas through promoting relations with US and Japan between 1990-1994.

In this sense, the failure of Moscow’s mediation role derived from North Korea’s mistrust of Russia’s increasing role in Korean affairs. North Korea believed that Moscow’s moves to South Korea resulted in an asymmetry between the two Koreas. It meant that Moscow’s intermediary role was not based on sincere purposes which could improve the relationship between the two Koreas.

Concerning Moscow’s military cooperation with South Korea, the US considered that Moscow had upset the ‘balance of power’ in Northeast Asia and the Korean peninsula. This was because Washington believed that a memorandum on bilateral military exchanges between Russia and South Korea might be a challenge to its
military ties with South Korea. Indeed, US Secretary of Defence Les Aspin reflected on the US’ veto of Moscow’s engagement policy in the region, stating that the US would continue to reduce its military strength, but would maintain the number of troops in Japan and South Korea at the current level of 100,000. From Washington and Pyongyang’s response to the drastic changes in Moscow’s foreign policy, there was a resistance towards Russia’s plan to restructure regional politics. This caused countries such as the US, Japan, and North Korea to seek appropriate measures for recovering their roles in Northeast Asia and the Korean peninsula. For example, the effective method was the emphasis on developing the relationships between US, Japan and North Korea through Washington and Tokyo’s approaches to Pyongyang in the early 1990s. However, the US and North Korea’s emphasis on the political solidarity of the communist and capitalist blocs led to the restoration of Cold War features, such as security fears, antagonism, and mistrust.

**Japan**

The Japanese government was skeptical about the new international climate because there were a number of differing national views on economic, security and military cooperation in the Asia-Pacific. Japan’s worries about uncertainty in the region
led to the government’s efforts to increase its global and regional role in allaying these uncertainty and insecurity problems.\textsuperscript{xlviii} In 1990, Japan attempted to engage in the Korean peninsula, an area that it had regarded as unstable for four decades. Japan’s moves towards North Korea was intended to prepare for normalization between the two countries which would ultimately lead to a peaceful settlement on the Korean peninsula. However, in its new policy of making new partnership, Japan’s position towards the two Koreas included ambivalent elements that would affect its traditional ties with South Korea. Seoul’s unease at Japan’s approach to North Korea made South Korea increasingly mistrust of the Japan-North Korea talks. The main reason for Seoul’s mistrust was closely interconnected with the paradox in Japan’s foreign policy over the two Koreas.

According to the Joint Declaration between Tokyo and Pyongyang in September 1990, Japan claimed that it would make efforts to assist the peaceful reunification and inter-Korean talks. However, Japan’s attitude towards the two Koreas was not that of a sincere intermediary, because its policy focused on providing economic concessions through Japan-DPRK talks. The asymmetrical feature in Japanese foreign policy was a factor that led to the difference between Seoul and Tokyo over the talks for normalization between Japan and North Korea in the early 1990s.\textsuperscript{xlix}
Japan’s collaboration with Pyongyang reflected its strategic objective of escalating its status in the inter-Korean conflict through using its economic power to provide development assistance. This situation implied that the strategic goal of Japanese foreign policy led it to pursue ‘double’ or contradictory policies regarding the two Koreas. Japan’s intention to implement the double policy encouraged South Korea as one of the disputants to believe that Japan’s policy of providing economic benefits to Pyongyang might weaken South Korea’s efforts to increase economic cooperation with North Korea. These different constructions of Japan’s new policy stemmed from Japan’s dual approach to the Koreas in terms of making agreements with them at different periods.

In 1990, Japan agreed on the eight point principles after holding talks between the coalition parties (Liberal-Democratic Party and the Japan Socialist Party) and the Korean Workers’ Party. Here, Japanese delegations from the political parties declared that “The three parties acknowledge that Korea is one and that the peaceful reunification of North-South through dialogue is in the best interests of the Korean people.”  

Japanese delegations’ agreement on the principle of ‘one Korea’ meant that Japan would support the key principle of North Korea’s unification policy. However, Japan had concluded a basic agreement with South Korea in 1965, resuming the friendly
relationship between the two countries. In Article 3, Japan had already agreed to confirm that “the Government of the Republic of Korea is the only lawful Government in Korea as specified in the Resolution 195 (III) of the United Nations General Assembly.” This controversy increased South Korea’s anxiety about Japan’s economic concessions to North Korea in the normalization talks. In January 1991, South Korea suggested that Japan needed to refer to the five principles for normalization between Japan and North Korea. A key point of the suggestion was that South Korea did not want Japan to provide economic concessions to North Korea because it would weaken South Korea’s capability in economic cooperation with North Korea.

This situation implied that South Korea linked Japan’s moves towards North Korea with the development of inter-Korean economic cooperation. Regardless of South Korea’s expectations, in July 1991, Japan concluded an agreement with North Korea that aimed at promoting exchanges and economic cooperation. The calculation behind Japan’s cooperation with North Korea came from its desire to increase its national interests of security. It was a factor that pulled the two Koreas in antagonistic relations and made continuous cooperation more difficult.
Conclusion

This paper posed two questions: Why and how did the great-powers engage in inter-Korean affairs? And how did their different views serve to make the inter-Korean détente more difficult? Throughout the examination of the great powers’ engagement policies in Northeast Asia and the Korean peninsula, seven main observations can be summarized.

First, the great powers’ perception of national interests in security and economic areas was a core reason why the great powers engaged in inter-Korean affairs by employing the balance of power strategy. In that, the lack of their preparatory actions on what to do about ending inter-Korean conflict made the inter-Korean reconciliation more difficult.

Second, the great powers implemented a mixed-strategy derived from the legacy of the Cold War rivalry structure and perception of balancing power. In the process of creating a balance between the capitalist and communist blocs, the two Koreas’ efforts to advance cooperation could not but face deadlock because they needed to consider their security which was supported and provided by opposing great powers.

Third, there was a semblance of mediation in the great powers’ engagement policies towards the two Koreas. While the great powers played mediation roles by
providing economic aid and military assistance, their different approaches caused antagonism between the two Koreas. Furthermore, the ineffectiveness of the great powers’ mediation roles can be understood through conflict stages and that the inter-Korean conflict was not in an initiative stage.

Fourth, the great powers employed the principle of separating economics and politics in order to distinguish between political solidarity and strategic partnership. This strategy reduced North Korea’s conviction to maintain China and Russia’s status as traditional allies. US’s ambivalent approach caused South Korea to begin to doubt its role as a mediator over the nuclear issue, and North Korea’s intention of settling military confrontation through inter-Korean dialogue. This shows that in the early 1990s even allies could project different policies in the security arena if their interests diverged.

Fifth, the nuclear development program in North Korea was a vital issue that threatened the stability of inter-Korean cooperation as well as increased insecurity of the regional order. In addition, Pyongyang-Washington confrontation over the issue encouraged a more complicated structure with the added feature of rivalry between democracy and non-democracy.

Sixth, there were different views among Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington on the Japan-DPRK talks for normalization and DPRK-US dialogue on the nuclear
development program in North Korea. From these we can imply that the appearance of disputes among traditional allies varies with the complicated combination of economic, political, security, and nationalist diversities in which alliance systems are changed.

Lastly, an assessment of which hypothesis, balancing or bandwagoning, is more accurate is especially vital, because each implies very different policy suggestions. In addition, not understanding the relative tendency of countries to balance and bandwagon, and what each of these entails, is dangerous, because the policies that are appropriate for one situation will be inappropriate for the other. Ultimately, the Clinton administration’s relaxed view of the North Korean nuclear row encouraged Kim Young-Sam government’s cynicism over Washington’s balancing policy. Moreover, Pyongyang’s security fear of the US military presence in the South has been a key motive for its policy of bandwagoning. The country’s bandwagoning behavior derived from its perception that the rewards from US would be much bigger than those of South Korea.
Footnotes


ix Stephen M. Walt, p. 175.

x Ibid, p. 32.


xiv Stephen Walt, p. 25.


xvi Stephen Walt, p. 40.


xxiv “Report by the Direct General of the International Atomic Energy Agency on Behalf of the Board of Governors to all Members of the Agency on the Non-Compliance of the Democratic
People’s Republic of Korea with the Agreement Between the IAEA and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea for the Application of Safeguards in Connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (INFCIRC/403) and the Agency’s inability to verify the Non-Diversion of Material Required to the Safeguarded.” *Information Circular*, International Atomic Energy Agency, April 8, 1993, pp. 1-21.


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