

▶ Chapter 7

Future Scenarios for the Korean Peninsula as Depicted by South Korea

—South Korea’s Risk Perception and Expectations of Japan

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[Key Points]

- The risk that South Korea perceives is the threat to the peace of the Korean Peninsula posed by North Korea’s military provocations, and the risk of greatest concern from a medium- to long-term standpoint is what is termed “sudden change in North Korea.” South Korea must pursue the formation and phased expansion of a Korean Peninsula community, seeking to guide positive change in North Korea through coexistence in the short- to medium term, while aiming to go beyond coexistence and achieve unification of South and North Korea in the medium to long term.
- A unified Korea must aspire to be a peaceful nation and welfare state based on democracy, a market economy, and the rule of law, as well as achieving denuclearization before unification and aiming to be a non-nuclear state after unification. A unified Korea must aspire to “open nationalism,” which pursues peaceful coexistence and mutual prosperity with other ethnic groups, as well as aiming to become a military, security, and economic middle power that upholds universal and international norms.
- The process of achieving a unified Korea led by South Korea would be smoother if carried out with the cooperation and support of Japan and the US; the cooperation and support of China and Russia, with which South Korea has close economic and diplomatic relations, will also be required. Cooperation between a unified Korea and Japan would fundamentally be the best way to resolve the long history of discord between them, so Japan should be aware of the important role that this could play in the development and peace of Northeast Asia, especially the development of the North Korean region.



Key Data

The Evolution of the South Korean Government’s Unification Plans

Administration	Unification Plan
Chun Doo-hwan	Korean People Harmony Democracy Reunification Program (January 22, 1982)
Roh Tae-woo	Korean National Community Unification Formula (September 11, 1989)
Kim Young-sam	National Community Unification Plan (August 15, 1994)
Kim Dae-jung onward	Continuation of the National Community Unification Plan (August 15, 1994)

Source: Ministry of Unification of South Korea.

The future that South Korea aspires to create for the Korean Peninsula, with particular reference to the North Korea issue, can be examined from two perspectives: the short-term aspects and the medium- to long-term aspects. Consequently, the discussion in this chapter is divided into three: (1) South Korea’s risk perception and approach to risk management; (2) South Korea’s aspirations; and (3) the direction of cooperation with Japan.

1. South Korea’s Risk Perception and Approach to Risk Management

The risk that South Korea perceives is the threat to the peace of the Korean Peninsula posed by North Korea’s military provocations. The military tensions on the Korean Peninsula that began in August 2015, when soldiers from the South Korean army were injured by wooden-box land mines planted by North Korea, developed into a highly volatile situation, as the incident was followed by the resumption of anti-North propaganda broadcasts by South Korea, the firing of an anti-aircraft shell by North Korea and the return of fire by South Korea, and a North Korean declaration of a “quasi-state of war.” The path to a solution was found as a result of “two-plus-two” high-level North-South talks in which the South Korean presidential security advisor and unification minister met with the director of the General Political Bureau of the Korean People’s Army and the secretary

of the Workers' Party of Korea (who was also director of the United Front Department). This problem stemmed from the acute military confrontation between North and South Korea that has continued for the last 70 years, which means that military clashes could break out once more on the Korean Peninsula at any time.

One could say that the risk of greatest concern to South Korea from a medium- to long-term standpoint is what is termed "sudden change in North Korea." Commentators have suggested that Kim Jong-un has not yet consolidated his power to the extent that Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il did, and this is interpreted to mean that instability in North Korea is greater than before. Accordingly, some have expressed concern about the potential for sudden change in North Korea. Korea is concerned that sudden change in North Korea could directly destabilize the situation in Northeast Asia, due to the anticipated disruption to South Korean society, as well as the immense burden and intense confusion involved in bringing the situation under control. Here, the term "sudden change in North Korea" signifies a situation involving the collapse of the North Korean regime within a short period of time due to mass uprisings of the North Korean people and rebellion against key members of the elite, resulting in the loss of control over the populace and adverse impacts that extend to surrounding nations.

As such, South Korea is trying to guide and support North Korea in achieving change that will ensure a soft landing through reform and opening up to the rest of the world. At the same time, it is covering all bases by making thorough preparations to ensure that any sudden change in North Korea would lead to unification.

When it comes to the North Korean issue, South Korea must pursue peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula in the short term and the unification of the Korean Peninsula (the benefits of which should far outweigh the costs) in the medium to long term. In the short term, South Korea must achieve peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula by managing North Korea via dialogue, exchange, and cooperation, handling it in such a way as to curb its military provocations toward its southern neighbor. In the medium term, South Korea must achieve coexistence with North Korea and prepare for unification by institutionalizing multifaceted exchange and cooperation programs and guiding North Korea toward reform and opening up, in order to minimize the costs of unification, while maximizing the benefits. In the long term, having formed a North and South Korean community, the goal is not merely to achieve institutional and physical unification, but to create a unified Korea in which the citizens of both North and South Korea enjoy the same quality of life. In other words, South Korea must pursue the formation and phased expansion of a Korean Peninsula community, seeking to guide positive change in North Korea through coexistence in the short to medium term, while aiming to go beyond coexistence and achieve unification of North and

South Korea in the medium to long term.

2. Aspirations for a Unified Korea

In the unification process, South Korea should adhere to the principles of independence, peace, and democracy. The unification process must be carried out gradually and peacefully under South Korean leadership, and cooperation with neighboring countries must be secured in this process. Based on the principle of respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, a unified Korea must make a declaration of coexistence and cooperation with neighboring countries, without fail.

Figure 1 The Evolution of the South Korean Government’s Unification Plans

Administration	Unification Plan
Chun Doo-hwan government	<p>The Unification Formula for Harmony and Democracy (January 22, 1982)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic principles: Independence, democratic procedures, peaceful methods • Unification process: Form a unification Council (composed of representatives from North and South)→ Free national referendum→ Confirm and declare draft of the constitution→ Hold general election in accordance with the constitution, form government
Roh Tae-woo government	<p>The Unification Plan for One National Community (September 11, 1989)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic principles: Independence, peace, democracy • Unification process: Adopt a Korean Community Communique through an inter-Korean summit→ Form a Korean commonwealth (Recover a national community)→ Hold a general election in accordance with the constitution of the unified country and form a governing structure • Future of a unified nation: A democratic country where freedom, human rights, and happiness are guaranteed
Kim Young-sam government	<p>Unification Formula for the Korean National Community (August 15, 1994)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic principles: Independence, peace, democracy • Unification process: Reconciliation and cooperation → North-South Union → Hold a and fair general election in accordance with the new constitution, and

	<p>achieve unification of the people and the nation simultaneously</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future of a unified nation: An advanced democratic country where freedom, welfare, and human dignity are upheld
<p>Kim Dae-jung government</p> <p>Roh Moo-hyun government</p> <p>Lee Myung-bak government</p> <p>Park Geun-hye government</p>	<p>Continuation of the National Community Unification Plan (August 1, 1994)</p>

Source: Ministry of Unification of South Korea.

Web page: <http://eng.unikorea.go.kr/content.do?cmsid=1786>

South Korea must aspire to a mode of unification that encompasses distinctive values based on universal values, avoiding a mode of unification, ethos, and values that place excessive emphasis on the special nature of the Korean Peninsula. The term “universal values” means the establishment of democracy, a market economy, and universal human rights, aiming to create a welfare society and contributing to regional stability and prosperity, as well as world peace. At the same time, a unified Korea must also encompass the distinctive values of the Korean Peninsula, in the form of the development of the unique culture and history of the Korean people.

A unified Korea must adopt democracy as its political system, market economics as its economic system, and the rule of law to guarantee human rights and freedom. Historical experience has taught us that in the real world, democracy is the political system that is best able to realize the tenets of liberalism. In a market economy, a mechanism called a market, which operates autonomously, independent of any authority, functions at the heart of the economy; market economies have been more successful than any other economic systems in improving humanity’s standard of living in concert with the tenets of liberalism and democratic political systems. Along with these, the universal principles of the rule of law, which include the equal application of the law to all citizens and guaranteed human rights and freedom, are values that a unified Korea should aim to achieve.

Moreover, a unified Korea must aspire to be a peaceful nation and a welfare state. A permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula is the true prerequisite for overcoming its division, so the goal of a

unified Korea must be to become a peaceful nation, with denuclearization and the formation of a Northeast Asian peace community as sufficient conditions for this. At the same time, it must aim to be a welfare state that improves the quality of life of all its members, whether in the north or south of the country.

A unified Korea must be based on East Asian culture and contribute to the prosperity of East Asia as a whole. As a unified Korea would not only have borders adjoining China and Russia, but also occupy a geopolitical space in which it was linked with the USA and Japan across the sea, it could serve as a mediator in coordinating the interests of continental and maritime powers. A unified Korea should not interfere in the domestic affairs of neighboring countries and should avoid exclusionary East Asian regionalism, while still maintaining the region's ideological balance. Among its neighbors, particular care will be required in regard to China over concerns that it might come under pressure if a unified Korea becomes the yardstick for Western human rights, democracy, and freedom by which China is measured.

A unified Korea must achieve denuclearization before unification and aspire to be a non-nuclear state after unification. The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula must be achieved by rendering the nuclear facilities developed by North Korea unusable before dismantling them. It would be fair to say that the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue and the unification of the Korean Peninsula are inseparably linked; it will be hard for neighboring countries to accept a unified Korea with nuclear capabilities, so the North Korean nuclear issue must be resolved either before unification or during the unification process. While continuing with the peaceful use of nuclear energy under international norms, a unified Korea should promote a policy of nuclear disarmament and become a successful model state as humanity progresses toward a nuclear-free world. Along with its regional neighbor Japan, which is already a nuclear-weapon-free state, a unified Korea could even promote efforts to establish a Northeast Asian Nuclear-free Zone.

A unified Korea should aspire to "open nationalism," which pursues peaceful coexistence and mutual prosperity with other ethnic groups. It must be cautious about using nationalism as a tool of domestic politics and prevent the emergence of ultranationalism by expanding intraregional political, economic, social, and cultural exchanges and networks. A unified Korea must pursue openness, ensuring that it does not exert any influence on the emergence of Korean nationalism in other parts of the globe, especially neighboring countries. It must seek to resolve any intraregional territorial disputes peacefully, on the basis of international norms and international law, refraining from any emotional approaches involving appeals to ethnic sentiment in regard to such issues.

A unified Korea must conquer the desire to be a bloc pursuing the balance of power and should aspire to be a military, security, and economic middle power that upholds universal and

international norms. After unification, the military conflict between North and South Korea will have been eliminated, so the country must undertake appropriate disarmament and maintain transparent security and defense policies. Through its unification, Korea must serve as a catalyst for halting the arms race and firmly establishing peace in Northeast Asia, by removing factors contributing to competition between the USA and China. To ensure that the security framework within the region does not lead to animosity and rivalry, a unified Korea should undertake constructive, forward-looking, rational diplomacy appropriate to a middle power. While maintaining its traditionally friendly relations with the USA and Japan after unification, it will also need to develop its relationship with China. A unified Korea should serve as a hub linking continental powers with maritime powers in multilateral networks of major countries within the region, including US-Korean, US-Chinese, US-Chinese-Korean, Japanese-US-Korean, and Japanese-Chinese-Korean frameworks.

It should aim to achieve the formation of a comprehensive regional community with the participation of countries including China, Japan, Taiwan, and the USA, based on the concept of regional integration. If a unified Korea is able to make full use of its geopolitical advantage as a peninsula, it will likely emerge as the center of intraregional logistics, as it is located at the very heart of Northeast Asian air, sea, and rail transport routes. If the Korean Peninsula were to function as a hub for Northeast Asia, it could take the lead in forming an intraregional economic community, as a nation linking the continent to the ocean. The formation of a Northeast Asian economic community would benefit other countries within the region, as the development and growth of a unified Korea would go hand-in-hand with the development of China's three northeastern provinces and Russia's Primorsky Krai, as well as the growth of the US and Japanese economies. Just as South Korea, having joined the ranks of developed countries, wishes to promote growth and the development of democracy in developing countries, a unified Korea should faithfully abide by the norms and institutions of the international community and aspire to become a model nation that leads the way in eradicating irrational practices.

A unified Korea can serve as a bridge for East Asian cultural cooperation. As well as sharing a common factor as members of the Confucian cultural sphere, the various areas within East Asia have highly distinctive and unique cultural identities of their own. Moreover, East Asia's members also have in common the fact that they are on the receiving end of global issues, as a result of the region's rapid economic growth and modernization. The formation and development of an East Asian community requires not only political, economic, and military cooperation, but also cultural exchange and cooperation between the member nations. As well as enabling each country to tell others about its own unique culture, cultural exchange and cooperation can promote in-depth

dialogue through joint research into East Asian history, as well as the sharing of ancient history and the history of exchange between East Asian civilizations, thereby helping to establish common bonds and a sense of fellow-feeling. In addition, cultural exchange and cooperation could be used to explore constructive countermeasures to deal with disputes over territory and history in East Asia today. A unified Korea could help to drive forward cultural exchange and cooperation involving China, the Korean Peninsula, and Japan and foster the conditions that will facilitate more proactive East Asian cooperation that encompasses both Northeast and Southeast Asia.

This must contribute to the solidarity of civil society in East Asia, as well as to support for and the development of a unified Korea. In conjunction with top-down integration of political, economic, and military affairs, bottom-up integration led by the people of North and South Korea is essential to achieving a unified Korea. Bottom-up integration will take a comparatively long time and some degree of friction and confusion during this process will be inevitable. East Asian civil society will likely be able to offer its solidarity during this process, thereby contributing to sociocultural integration in a unified Korea. Moreover, as well as aiding the social stability of a unified Korea, this process will undoubtedly assist in establishing and developing an East Asian community from the bottom up. In addition, the solidarity of East Asian civil society will surely help to dispel the concerns of neighboring countries about the nature of a unified Korea by positioning it squarely as a civil society, as well as serving as a check on East Asian conflict and a catalyst for integration.

3. The Direction of Cooperation with Japan

The process of achieving a unified Korea led by South Korea would be smoother if carried out with the cooperation and support of Japan and the USA, with which it shares key ideals, political and economic systems, and fundamental principles; the cooperation and support of China and Russia, with which South Korea has close economic and diplomatic relations, will also be required. The USA, China, Japan, and Russia should not only guarantee the sovereignty and inviolability of a unified Korea, but also demonstrate a more active willingness to participate in the rebuilding of the North Korean region, which will require substantial financial resources. This would enable a unified Korea to mediate between Northeast Asia's maritime and continental powers, as well as contributing to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the region as a whole, thereby benefiting neighboring countries.

Cooperation between a unified Korea and Japan would fundamentally be the best way to resolve the long history of discord between them, so in this sense, Japan must be aware of and fulfill the

important role that it can play not only in the development of the North Korean region, but also in the development and peace of Northeast Asia as a whole. A unified Korea could well help to drive constructive participation by Japan in the regional community, and serve as an intermediary in the territorial and historical disputes that are a source of friction in Northeast Asia. In this respect, a unified Korea needs to state unconditionally that it will preserve the borders of China and Japan, and will not make any attempt to alter their territory. A unified Korea must actively demonstrate its desire to achieve mutual prosperity with its neighbors, leading the way to the formation of an economic community centered on the Korean Peninsula.