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TRENDS IN THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION OF THE KOREAS SINCE THE LAST INTER-KOREAN SUMMIT

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ABSTRACT: This Article concerns relations between the Korean states after the second inter-Korean summit. The evolution of inter-Korean relations can be divided into periods that mirror the nature and specific character of cooperation and rivalry of the two Koreas. Inter-korean dialogue cover the issues of a unification dialogue and an economic and cultural cooperation; it is worth noting that all the mentioned areas of cooperation overlap. Ever since the Sunshine Policy initiated by President Kim Dae-jung, it has become apparent that one of the main obstacles to the unification of the Koreas is the economic gap; therefore, increased economic cooperation was to be sought. Despite the failure of some economic projects, owing to the economic initiatives and increased cooperation, the Korean states have strengthened mutual trust. The Republic of Korea has become the second largest DPRK's trading partner after China.

KEYWORDS: Republic of Korea, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Politics, International Law, Inter-Korean Summit Pyongyang '2007

The evolution of inter-Korean relations can be divided into periods that mirror the nature and specific character of cooperation and rivalry of the two Koreas. Since their establishment in 1948, the Korean republics had not maintained any relations until 1961. The dialogue was initiated no earlier than in the 1970s (Buczek 2010: 87–88).

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Mutual relations between the Korean states cover the issues of a unification dialogue and economic and cultural cooperation; it is worth noting that all the mentioned areas of cooperation overlap. Ever since the Sunshine Policy initiated by President Kim Dae-jung, it has become apparent that one of the main obstacles to the unification of the Koreas is the economic gap; therefore, an increased economic cooperation was to be sought. Since then, economic cooperation has been considered a vital component of unification.

The period between the 1970s- 2000 was marked by mutual distrust and unilateral declarations that rather served a hidden political agenda and fuelled the confrontational nature of bilateral relations (Burdelski 2004: 92).

Two inter-Korean summits (2000 and 2007) initiated a dramatic change in mutual relations, such as the recognition of statehood, subjectivity under international law and a new trade and investment opening. Even the DPRK propaganda was not able to overlook the substantial economic assistance from South Korea, which, from then on, ceased to be presented by the North Korean propaganda as a country of poverty and backwardness (Myers 2011: 52).

A closer look at the bilateral agreements and cooperation initiatives that occurred in and after 2007 should help answer the question to what extent the last summit of the Korean leaders influenced the nature of relations and the rapprochement between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

On 2 October 2007, Pyongyang hosted the summit of the two Korean leaders: President of the Republic of Korea Roh Moo-hyun and Chairman of the National Defence Committee Kim Jong Il. During the meeting, President Roh called for the promotion of peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and to the initiate a gradual abolition of barriers dividing the Korean states, which underlie the Koreans' misery (NN, Arirang 2007).

It was the second summit gathering the heads of state, thus it is often likened to the previous 2000 meeting. Besides the significance and the venue (the capital of the DPRK), the two summits varied considerably. During the 2000 summit, the North-South Joint Declaration (Pyongyang 2000) was signed which paved the way to regular talks between the representatives and special committees of both Korean states. It also resulted in the signature of bilateral agreements on exchange and cooperation aimed to create conditions that would facilitate reunification. The second summit concluded with the adoption of the Declaration of Peace (Declaration on the Advancement of South-North Korean Relations, Peace and

Prosperity), but the weight of this document is yet to be assessed from a long term perspective.

Like in the case of the 2000 meeting, the pre-summit period was marked by increased expectations with the cooperation of the Korean states. UN Secretary-General, Korean Ban Ki-moon, stated that "...such meetings offer a great opportunity to promote peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and inter-Korean reconciliation" (Ban Ki-moon 2007: 1).

Yet, the outcomes of the 2007 meeting are assessed unevenly. Critical assessments were common, yet even sceptics admit that the meeting had its positive sides. The expert on North Korea from the University of Canberra, Leonid Petrov, is of the opinion that the DPRK, during the meetings with the U.S. and the six-party talks, showed readiness to make concessions, so the summit is likely to bear fruit rather than fall into oblivion with its hollow slogans (NN, Rzeczpospolita 2007).

The main criticism centres on the poor timing. According to observers, the decision on having the summit at the end of the term of office of President Roh Moo-hyun was Kim Jong Il's game aimed at obtaining the promise of financial aid and make the meeting to be considered a prestigious event, which would translate into a political success (Frank 2007). The DPRK leader's concerns were justified as, due to the South Korean rotating system, the new president might take a negative stance on the selfless financial assistance to the DPRK (Wolejko 2013).

The meeting of leaders concluded in the signature on 4 October 2007 of the Declaration on the Advancement of South-North Korean Relations, Peace and Prosperity. The scope of the document covers almost all areas of the relations between the Koreas (Declaration on the Advancement of South-North Korean Relations 2012). It consists of eight points:

- 1. The South and the North shall uphold and endeavour actively to realize the June 15 Declaration.
- 2. The South and the North shall transform inter-Korean relations into ties of mutual respect and trust, transcending the differences in ideology and systems.
- 3. The South and the North have agreed to closely work together to put an end to military hostilities, mitigate tensions and guarantee peace on the Korean Peninsula. with this end in view, their respective Ministers of Defence shall meet in Pyongyang in November to discuss measures to guarantee security and cooperation in joint projects.

- 4. The South and the North both recognize the need to end the current armistice regime and build a permanent peace regime.
- 5. The South and the North have agreed that it is necessary to expand economic cooperation, facilitate the undertaking of joint projects and create a special "zone of peace" including Haeju and its vicinity, along with the common fishing zone and special economic zone.
- 6. The South and the North have agreed to facilitate exchange and cooperation in the field of history, language, education, science and technology, culture, arts and sports in order to foster a common history and outstanding achievements of Korean culture.
- 7. The South and the North have agreed to actively promote humanitarian cooperation projects, expand the reunion of separated family members and their relatives and promote exchanges of video messages. The South and the North have agreed to actively cooperate in the case of emergencies, including natural disasters.
- 8. The South and the North have agreed to increase cooperation to promote the interests of the Korean people and the rights and interests of overseas Koreans on the international stage. The South and the North have agreed that their highest authorities will meet frequently for the advancement of relations between the two sides.

Relative to some of the decisions taken at the summit, in late 2007 several bilateral agreements were signed.

On 16 November 2007, the Agreement was concluded on the implementation of the Declaration on the Advancement of South-North Korean Relations, Peace and Prosperity. It was signed during the first round of talks of the two prime ministers on 14–16 November in Seoul. The document comprises eight lengthy articles (Seoul 2007a).

The introductory part includes narration and a preamble. The preamble reads that the Declaration of Peace takes the South-North to the next level and creates a solid foundation for peace and reunification.

The most important provisions of the body of the document address the question of reunification. In accordance with Article 1, the South and the North by referring to the idea of "resolving the question of reunification independently", as worded in the 15 June 200 Declaration, agreed that they would seek to focus mutual relations directly on reunification. To this end, they will take measures to make the day of 15 June a holiday commemorating the onset of a new era of reconciliation, prosperity and unity, and for the purpose of reunification, they

will seek to adapt legal and political mechanisms. They will also create a "special peace and cooperation zone in the West Sea" and establish a special economic zone in the area of Haeju harbour¹.

As regards to economic cooperation, specifically to restore the road and rail connections, it was decided that for the shared use and transport facilitation between Seoul and Sinuiju, the Kaesong-Pyongyang motorway will be redeveloped along with the Kaesong-Sinuiju railway in 2008.

The final provisions contained in Articles 7 and 8 determine further discussions between the prime ministers, the amendments, effects and entry into force of the Agreement.

Another bilateral agreement, signed on 6 December 2007 in Seoul, was the Agreement on the first meeting of the Joint Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation Committee (Seoul, 2007b). The document is made up of ten articles. The signatories were: Kwon O-kyu – Chairman of the Committee for the Republic of Korea, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, and Jon Sung Hun – Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Committee for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The preamble refers to the conclusions of the summit and the aforesaid agreement. In accordance with Article 1, the parties agreed to hold talks in a sub-committee of inter-Korean railway cooperation in Kaesong. The purpose of the talks was to determine the scope and directions of the renovation of the Kaesong-Sinujiu railway section. It was also decided to establish cooperative complexes for shipbuilding in Anbyeon and Nampo (Article 2).

The provisions relating to the industrial complex in Kaesong² are contained in Article 3. The South and the North also undertook without delay to resolve any technical issues that may emerge in connection with its development. The parties also agreed (Article 3) to appoint and manage a sub-committee of the inter-Korean cooperation in the use of raw materials. They decided to develop cooperation in agriculture and fishery for their mutual benefit.

A new issue addressed in Article 6 was to start cooperation in health, medicine and environmental protection. For this purpose, it was decided to hold the first meeting of the sub-committee for health, medicine and environment in Kaesong.

¹ Compare with art. 5 Declaration on the Advancement of South-North Korean Relations, Peace and Prosperity.

² Kaesong is a city located just a few miles from the Korean Demilitarized Zone.

The South and the North agreed that a sub-committee should be set up for the inter-Korean economic and institutional cooperation in order to discuss and promote environmentally friendly investment as well as institutional mechanisms, entries, exits, stays and customs transactions, repayments and damages resulting from commercial disputes. The first meeting of the sub-committee was scheduled for April 2008 (Article 7). The parties decided to agree on various means of cooperation for the fostering of exports and investment.

The closing part of the document contains provisions on entry into force (through the exchange of documents and performance of internal procedures) of changes and amendments to the agreement (by common consent in any form). It was also determined that the next meeting of similar significance would be held in Pyongyang in the second half of 2008.

With regard to the establishment of a special zone of peace and cooperation in the West Sea, on 29 December 2007 in Kaesong, the Korean states signed an Agreement on the first meeting of the Committee for the Advancement of the Creation of a Special Zone of Peace and Cooperation in the West Sea.

The agreement is made up of six articles and was signed by: Baek Jong Chunhead of the delegation of the South, counsellor of the National Security Bureau of the Republic of Korea, and Pak Song Nam- head of the delegation of the North, Minister of Environmental Protection (Gaesong 2007).

The preamble alludes to the provisions of the Declaration of Peace from the 2007 Pyongyang Summit and the implementation agreement from the meeting of the prime ministers. The procedure governing changes and amendments to the agreement and its entry into force was decided as in the agreement discussed above³.

Pursuant to Article 1, the South and the North agreed to support the development of a special economic zone in Haeju, in connection with the extension of the industrial complex in Kaesong. They also agreed on the need to jointly manage and use the port of Haeju, as required by joint national interest (Article 2).

With regard to the cooperation in fishery, it was decided to fish together as soon as possible after the delineating of: a joint fishing zone and a zone of peace under inter-Korean military talks among army generals and hold the meetings of the sub-committee for joint fishing in the first half of 2008.

 $^{^3\,}$ Compare with art. 10 Agreement at the first meeting of the Joint Committee For Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation.

In accordance with the provisions of Article 4 of the Agreement, the South and the North agreed to a gradual and shared use of the estuary of the Han River and discuss the relevant problems during the meetings of a special subcommittee in the first half of 2008. The states scheduled the second round of talks for the first half of 2008.

The dialogue carried out in the areas of economy, politics and society was intended to reduce the developmental gap between the South and the North⁴ so as to diminish to the greatest extent possible the economic burden which stands in the way of reunification (Bober 2012b: 22). The cost of unification, as in the case of Germany, would encumber the South Korean taxpayers: the greater the economic difference between the Koreas, the greater the tax burden. Of importance are also the social differences (Lee 2005: 1–3); therefore, it is so crucial in the inter-Korean dialogue to undertake exchange projects, social initiatives and cultural cooperation, etc.

The economic cooperation between the South and the North has already brought tangible results. Beginning with 1994, the commercial exchange between the Koreas had begun to grow; the Republic of Korea had already been the third largest trading partner of the DPRK after China and Japan, in spite of the then existing barriers in communication, accounting and legal standards and dispute settlement procedures⁵. Today, these issues have been regulated in a number of agreements and understandings, yet the progress of cooperation still depends on the good will of the parties.

The cooperation between the Koreas made North Korea enter a path of gradual change in 2000. The DPRK began to introduce multi-sectoral market rules, which helped legalize the existing "black market;" the role of trade in the management of the centrally planned economy grew, and a number of special economic zones were established (Kaesong, Kumgang-san, Shinuiju). These reforms have a significant impact on the long-isolated North Korean society: along with the cooperation and South Korean goods in the shops came elements of Western culture: restaurants, cafés, bars, swimming pools, computer games, telephones (NN, Korea Policy Review 2006).

⁴ Differences in economic development between the Koreas have begun to grow since the 80s XX., see also, A. Bober, *Standardy życia i sytuacja ekonomiczna Korei Północnej*, "Management and Business Administration. Central Europe" 1/2012 (108), p. 22.

⁵ Compare with Ministry of National Unification Republic of Korea, *Peace and Cooperation. White paper on Korean Unification.* Seoul 1996, p. 149, 155.

19 December 2007 saw presidential elections in the Republic of Korea (Lee Myung-bak, 2007). The newly elected president was Lee Myung-bak (sworn-in on 25 February 2008); he promised the revival of the South Korean economy. This was of significance for the process of reunification because the new Korean leader declared the Sunshine Policy ineffective. Some experts believed, however, that Lee Myung-bak would not abandon it but merely introduce modifications. The president made it clear that further cooperation with the North is contingent upon the suspension of the nuclear weapons programme; wich he spoke about during his campaign.

Leonid Petrov was right to say that the end of the Sunshine Policy would lead to an impasse in mutual relations and would mean the return of rivalry and antagonism as well as impeding the development of political and economic cooperation (Petrov 2008). This seems a well-grounded opinion, first because the new terms of cooperation were not acceptable to the DPRK, and, second, the slowing down or inhibiting the cooperation resulted in halting (at least temporarily) the talks on the reunification of the Koreas.

The events of the years 2009–2010 had a negative impact on the dynamics of the relations and the reunification dialogue. As opposed to the period of 2000–2008, only a few new documents on cooperation were signed. The North Korean party is reluctant to accept President Lee Myung-bak and his policy objectives (Bober 2012b: 24).

Despite the drawing up of new cooperation guidelines by the Ministry of Unification, based on the political strategy proposed by President Lee Myungbak, the year 2009 saw an impasse in inter-Korean relations (Ministry of Unification 2009a: 1–18).

Similarly in the domain of mutual economic cooperation, which had been seen as crucial for the reunification and political cooperation. In 2009 a recession was reported in trade exchange between the South and the North. While in 2008 the exchange ratio amounted to \$ 1,820 million, in 2009 it fell to \$ 535 million. On top of that, there was a decline in the number of joint economic projects: from 64 in 2007 to 46 in 2008 and 23 in 2009 (Ministry of Unification 2010a: 105)⁶.

In the years 1994–2008, the Mount Kumgang region, which had turned into a special tourist zone, was opened for tourists from the South. At that time, some

⁶ Compare: Volume of Inter-Korean trade [in:] www.unikorea.go.kr, and *White Paper on Korean Unification. Inter-Korean Exchange and Cooperation*, Seoul 2010, p. 105.

2 million tourists visited the area (Kightley 2012: 49). The tourist traffic stopped abruptly in July 2008 when a South Korean tourist unintentionally entered a closed military area and was shot dead by the DPRK troopers (Bober 2009a: 268). On 17 August 2009, a meeting was held between Hyun Jeong-eun (Hyundai Group CEO) and Kim Jong II; the parties agreed that the exchange of tourists would be resumed (China Daily 2009). The concluded agreement addressed the resumption of tourist traffic (Article 1), the opening up of the Baekdusan Mountains for tourist exchanges (Article 4) and the acceleration of work in the development of the industrial complex in Kaesong (Article 3) (Hyundai Group, KAPPC 2009).

In 2009 the Ministry of Unification set the unification dialogue objectives: political dialogue at ministerial level, promotion of trade exchange, resolution of humanitarian issues (exchanges of family members separated during the war), increasing public support for the policy of "mutual benefit and common good" (Ministry of Unification, 2009b).

On 28 August 2009, the South and the North signed, under the auspices of the Red Cross, the Agreement on the organization of exchange of members of separated families (Geumgang 2009). The parties agreed that in the period from 26 September to 1 October 2009, the Exchange Centre in the Mountain Kumgang region would be the venue for the reunion of separated families (Article 1). They also agreed to continue talks on the exchange of family members and on other problems relating to humanitarian issues (Article 2).

March 2010 saw the most serious maritime incident since 1953; it undermined not only political cooperation but also the security of the Korean Peninsula. The South Korean vessel Cheonan was torpedoed in the Yellow Sea – 46 of the crew died. The South Korean authorities accused the DPRK of attacking Cheonan and called for the appointment of an international commission to investigate the disaster (Caryl 2010: 16). On 20 May 2010, the commission made up of American, British and Swedish experts issued a report confirming the fault of the DPRK; consequently, the South began to demanded that the United Nations impose sanctions on the DPRK. The North Korean regime announced that in the event of sanctions it would initiate a retaliation action, including a declaration of war (NN, Azja-Pacyfik: 2010 and Wojnarowski 2013). The Cheonan vessel incident was the cause of an informal meeting of the UN Security Council on 14 June 2010. During the meeting, the representatives of the parties put forward their arguments. Although the meeting did not eventuate in firm decisions, the President of the Security Council referred to the parties of the conflict to refrain

from action that could jeopardize peace and announced a further investigation of the issue (Azja-Pacyfik 2010).

On 23 April 2010, the North Korean side declared that it would take over five buildings (including the Exchange Centre for the members of separated families) owned by the South Korean government and the Korean Tourism Organization. It violated bilateral trade contracts and was contrary to international agreements. The South Korean authorities announced counteraction (Ministry of Unification, 2010b). Mutual relations deteriorated to such an extent that on 24 May 2010 the Ministry of Unification issued a notice addressed to the citizens disclosing facts about action taken against the DPRK (Ministry of Unification 2010a). The public learned that DPRK vessels were banned from entering the South Korean territorial waters, bilateral trade was suspended, South Korean citizens were prohibited to travel to the DPRK, new investment in the DPRK was suspended along with humanitarian aid to the DPRK.

Another provocation took place in November 2010 when the DPRK artillery shelled the Yeonpyeong Island located near the Yellow Sea. That event was unprecedented as it was an open attack on South Korean territory which claimed the lives of two civilians (Seo, Richburg: 2010).

The provocations in question significantly depleted the volume of trade exchange between the Koreas (Kightley 2012: 52). Despite the sinking of the Cheonan and shelling the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong, the authorities still endorsed the continuation of dialogue on reconciliation and peaceful reunification. According to a statement issued by the authorities of the Republic of Korea, the dialogue will continue in order to foster bilateral relations. The initiatives that deserve particular attention are: the DPRK's denuclearization in order to maintain peace and security, the establishment of on economic community for the Korean states and the resolution of specific humanitarian issues (Inter-Korean Relations Overview 2011). Such a policy of continuation was upheld in the document signed during the summit of the Korean leaders on 4 October 2007 and at the Pyongyang 2007 Summit.

In December 2011, the DPRK regime's mass-media announced the death of the Great Leader, Kim Jong Il. His youngest son, Kim Jong Un, became the new head of state (Kyodo News 2012).

Recent events have caused increased tensions between the Koreas; the spirit of collaboration was again replaced by rivalry and military provocation. It was a diplomatic game of Pyongyang, to get international help. On 11 March 2013, the authorities of the DPRK, in response to UN sanctions caused by the third nuclear

test, interrupted the "hot line," i.e. the emergency telephone line with the South, and declared that they waive the 27 July 1953 Armistice Agreement concluded in Panmunjom (Gale, Johnson 2013). Despite the heated political situation, the economic cooperation will, it is hoped, be just weakened for a short time. The South reports a growing demand for cheap labour from the DPRK, so it can be expected that a new agreement on economic cooperation would be signed shortly, which will be tantamount to the implementation of Article 5 of the 4 October 2007 Declaration (Bobson 2012).

To conclude, it should be noted that regular talks initiated in 2007 and continued ever since within specialized committees and at minister-level meetings concerning various trends and avenues of political and economic cooperation have been aimed to provoke the rapprochement of the two Korean states. They were follow-up initiatives of the Pyongyang 2000 summit. Furthermore, joint economic initiatives led to the exchange of information about the outside world, especially about the standard of living in the South among the Northern personnel of joint economic projects. The mounting trade exchange between the Koreas along with the growth of the black economy seem to contribute to the weakening of the hitherto airtight regime (Noland 2010). Lack of control over such phenomena by the North Korean elite would eventuate in an extremely disadvantageous situation; therefore, the North Korean regime cannot afford to open up too much and launch bold economic reforms that could lead to a political changeover (Lankov 2010).

Despite some success, a number of the provisions of the 4 October 2007 Declaration of Peace has remained unfulfilled. The Armistice Agreement has not been replaced by a peace treaty; the problem of war-separated Korean families has not been settled; no joint international policy has been pursued aimed at the protection of national interests and the rights of Koreans abroad. Because of the disagreements and political frictions, many cooperation projects have remained unfinished, for example, the special economic zone in Haeju, mentioned in the 4 October 2007 Agreement⁷.

Owing to the economic initiatives and increased cooperation, the Korean states have strengthened mutual trust. The Republic of Korea has become the second largest DPRK's trading partner after China. In 2009, that is, two years

⁷ Compere article 5 Declaration on the Advancement of South-North Korean Relations, Peace and Prosperity, Pyongyang, 4–10–2007 [in:] www.unikorea.go.kr.

after the last summit of the Korean leaders, the inter-Korean economic exchange reached \$ 1.6 billion, or 33% of the total trade exchange with all partners (Kightley 2012: 49).

Still, it should be noted that, compared with the previous period of bilateral relations marked by mutual suspicion, hostility and the lack of concrete proposals, the Pyongyang 2007 Summit proved to have been a good start towards the consolidation of political and economic cooperation between the Koreas.

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