The Sunshine Policy and its Aftermath

Youngho Kim (Department of Political Science, Sungshin Women's University)

I. Introduction

The Kim Dae-jung administration's sunshine policy represents a paradigm shift in South Korea's policy toward North Korea. The traditional paradigm was the containment of North Korea based on the defense alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea. During his presidency the containment policy was replaced by the proactive engagement policy to induce gradual changes of the North Korean regime through reconciliation and economic cooperation. His presidency experienced the North Korea's naval provocations in 1999 and 2002. The emergence of the Bush administration with reservations on the sunshine policy and suspicion of the Agreed Framework created strains on US-ROK alliance. Yet the sunshine policy was pursued without interruption until the end of his presidency. The dispatch of the special envoy to find a peaceful solution for the North Korea's nuclear standoff in January 2003 represents last-minute efforts to rescue the engagement policy. The next administration cannot be free from the legacies of the sunshine policy. Indeed, President-elect Roh Moo-hyun is expected to carry on the former administration's engagement policy toward North Korea.\(^1\) Critical assessments of the theoretical backgrounds and the achievements of the sunshine policy will help the Roh Moo-hyun administration to devise and implement its new policies toward North Korea.

The Kim Dae-jung administration also raises theoretical questions in pursuit of the sunshine policy. One of the most important issues is the announcement of the policy to dissolve the Cold War structure on the Korean peninsula the administration considers one of the barriers to improving inter-Korean relations. The dismantling of the structure can be identified as one of the primary objectives of the sunshine policy. Lim Dong-won, one of the strategists of the administration, enumerates the contributing factors for dismantling the Cold War structure: inter-Korean rapprochement,

\(^1\) Korean Herald, December 20, 2002.
cross-recognition of North Korea by the US and Japan, and a removal of North Korea's weapons of mass destruction. Despite the historic inter-Korean summit of June 2000, the administration has failed to make North Korea abandon its nuclear weapons program as testified by North Korea's pursuit of the secret uranium-based nuclear program and its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The failure to address the North Korean nuclear issue becomes a barrier to the realization of the cross-recognition formula. The more important problem lies in the administration's failure to articulate the concept of the Cold War structure on the Korean peninsula and devise specific strategies to achieve policy objectives.

This paper begins by analyzing the theoretical underpinnings beneath the powerful rhetoric of the sunshine policy. We are hindered in critical analysis of the policy by being overpowered by the rhetoric. Critical analysis will be made to see to what extent the Aesop's parable can be applicable as an analogy in explaining the reality of North-South Korean relations. Secondly, the paper will explain why the Kim Dae-jung administration focuses on the dismantling of the Cold War structure in its policy toward North Korea. The Cold War structure is part of the Cold War system which consists of actors and structure. In the inaugural speech President Kim announced the abandonment of the policy of unification by absorption. The logical conclusion is that the Cold War system on the Korean peninsula has to be dissolved by the changes in the structure. Yet the end of the Cold War on the global level took place as a result of the demise of the Soviet Union. This paper will argue that there exist theoretical and practical misconceptions in the administration's policy of the dismantling of the Cold War structure. The paper will develop the concept of dual anarchy to define one of the most important elements of the Cold War structure on the Korean peninsula. The concept will be used to assess how accurately the sunshine policy conceptualizes the reality of the Cold War system on the Korean peninsula. The paper will conclude by evaluating the impacts of the sunshine policy on the regional security environment and providing some policy proposals.

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II. Critical Assessments of the Rhetoric of Sunshine and its Policy Implications

The analogy of sunshine takes a cue from the famous Aesop's fable on "the North Wind and the Sun." The gist of the story is that the sun wins the North wind in the dispute about who could first strip a traveling man of his clothes. While the cold wind makes the traveler more tightly wrap his garment than before, the warmth of the sun makes him take off one clothe after another. In the analogy the sun represents the Kim Dae-jung administration's policy of embracing and engaging the North to open and reform its closed society. The wind represents the traditional policy of containing the North to prevent it from initiating another Korean War.

The sunshine policy is an attempt to achieve gradual and peaceful change of the North Korean regime through exchanges and economic cooperation. The policy derives from the premise that the traditional containment policy proved to be an ineffective way to reform the North isolated from international society as the cold wind failed to make the traveler take off his clothes. The exposure of the North to sunshine is expected to change its centralized command economy and throw away its aspiration to reunify the country by force of arms. Although the speed of reform of the North Korean regime depends on the intensity of sunshine, the ultimate aim of the sunshine policy is to induce North Korea's openness to international society and the abandonment of its long-standing desire to communize the Korean peninsula.

The traditional containment strategy was predicated on the belief that it is very difficult to induce the changes of the North Korean regime by means of outside influences or cooperative incentives from the South or international society. The external behavior of North Korea is motivated by the internal logic of the totalitarian political system with the personality cult of the father and the son unprecedented in the history of Communism. The regime is permanently mobilized for war. The best way to deal with the regime is a patient and long-standing effort to prevent it from deviating from the intended courses of the containment strategy until the totalitarian system decays and mellows from inside. Even when the regime is at the last stage of its collapse watchful eyes cannot be relaxed because the regime does not die with its body lying in bed. The selective engagement policy can be pursued only when the...
convergence of mutual national interests dictates to promote peaceful coexistence and defuse a crisis. Cases in point are the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula of 1992 and the Agreed Framework of 1994. The differences between the containment and sunshine policies are salient in that the latter is optimistic in promoting the change of the regime by using cooperative measures.\textsuperscript{5}

The long pursuit of the containment policy before the Kim Dae-jung administration has prescribed a back-breaking assignment for the nation and become a source of dissatisfactions because of the recurrent antagonistic interactions between the two Koreas. Intermittent inter-Korean exchanges are not successful in solving the tragedy of separated families. The widespread famine in the North aroused humanitarian concerns in the South, forcing the administration to pursue a proactive engagement policy. The benign neglect of the containment policy failed to curve the North Korea's secret attempt to develop nuclear weapons programs. These factors contributed to the emergence of the sunshine policy.

The sunshine policy is more rational than the rollback strategy which seeks to precipitate the collapse of the North Korean regime regardless of the tragic consequences of another Korean War. Yet the analogy of the North to a traveler is too\textsuperscript{4} naive and idealistic. In contrast to the traveler who has limited means to cope with the cold wind and sunshine, North Korea has its own capabilities to defend itself against outside pressures. It possesses huge conventional military forces and the potential capabilities for the weapons of mass destruction. If total emasculation of North Korean power resources is impossible, the second best strategy is to make the North susceptible to outside influences by greatly limiting rooms to maneuver.

The long-standing exposure to sunshine may force the North to gradually change its confrontational policies against the South and become a normal member of international society. The sunshine policy is lacking in articulating specific policy measures to prevent the North from hiding under the shadows of the trees and into the caves. As the traveler is forced to walk along the roads without any protection like trees and caves, strategic conditions need to be created to make the North to be exposed to sunshine.

\textsuperscript{5} The distinction between the containment and sunshine policies is similar to that between the Riga and Yalta axioms in the tradition of US policies toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War period. The sunshine policy fits in with the Yalta axiom which underlies détente in the history of US foreign policy. See Daniel Yergin, \textit{Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War} (New York: Penguin, 1977), p. 11.
Under these conditions, the objectives of the sunshine policy can be achieved. Despite its powerful rhetoric, analogical reasoning underlying the sunshine policy does not accurately reflect the reality of North-South Korean relations and remains a wishful thinking without operational strategies. In the case of President Kim the analogy of sunshine is used for justification and advocacy of unrealistic policies rather than analysis of specific policy options.\(^6\)

Unilateral concessions and financial aid for the North based on the belief in its benign intentions are not enough to induce the intended changes of the sunshine policy. A delicate combination of sunshine and containment is necessary in achieving its objectives. The containment strategy is essential in limiting rooms for maneuver to the North and coralling it to a position from which it cannot escape. The traditional deterrence system and solid alliance cooperation are facilitating factors in implementing the sunshine policy. Yet the Joint Declaration of the inter-Korean summit of 15 June 2000 failed to reflect the concerns of the United States and Japan about the issues of North Korea's weapons of mass destruction and missiles. The omission of the issues may undermine alliance cohesion necessary for the successful implementation of the sunshine policy. The June declaration stands in sharp contrast to the DPRK-Japan\(^5\) Pyongyang Declaration of September 2002 which underscores the importance of solving the nuclear and missile issues.

The recent revelation that $200 million was secretly transferred to Pyongyang days ahead of the June summit by the Hyundai Merchant Marine is criticized as a checkbook diplomacy to buy the summit without domestic consensus. The transfer of secret funds belies the claim that the sunshine policy puts emphasis on transparency and domestic consensus. The financial aid to the North should have been provided in the form of governmental loans as suggested by President Kim's Berlin declaration of March 2000. The secret transfer signifies the lack of confidence on the part of the administration in mobilizing domestic consensus for massive financial aid to the North. The secret fund scandal also testifies that the increase in interdependence between the two Koreas does

not always contributes to the amelioration of antagonistic relations because the scandal becomes a volatile issue of contention in South Korean domestic politics.\(^7\)

**III. Definition of the Cold War Structure on the Korean Peninsula**

The dismantling of the Cold War structure on the Korean peninsula is presented as an important objective of the sunshine policy to promote a change in the systemic parameters of North-South Korean relations.\(^8\) The Korean peninsula remains an isolated Cold War island despite the fact that the Cold War on the global level has already ended as a result of the demise of the Soviet Union and its empire in Eastern Europe. The sunshine policy is a proactive effort to overcome the abnormal situation and make a breakthrough in the impasse of both North-South Korean relations and North Korea's relations with the United States and Japan. The premise that the collapse of the North Korean regime was imminent was not realized although the euphoria for reunification was high in the wake of the crumbling of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Witness to unexpected durability of the North Korean regime after the death of Kim Il Sung makes it necessary to create an international environment conducive to reforming North Korea.

Lim Dong-won, the architect of the sunshine policy, identifies some important factors for promoting the dissolution of the Cold War structure: inter-Korean rapprochement, the realization of cross-recognition, and a removal of North Korea's nuclear weapons programs.\(^9\) The cross-recognition formula was originally proposed to stabilize the division of the Korean peninsula through diplomatic normalizations among the two Koreas and the neighboring great powers. The Nordpolitik of the Roh Tae-woo's administration was designed to put pressure on the North by normalizing diplomatic relations with North Korea's communist allies. North Korea dropped its long-standing “one Korea policy” under heavy pressure of the Nordpolitik and agreed to simultaneous admission of the two Koreas to the United Nations in 1991. External recognition of North Korea’s sovereignty by being a member of the United Nations contributed to the

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diminution in the possibility for the death of the North Korean regime.10

In contrast, the Kim Dae-jung administration seeks to fully realize the formula by encouraging the United States and Japan to normalize its relations with the North. The formula can be construed as a temporary measure to create the international environment conducive to the implementation of the sunshine policy. Nonetheless, the realization of cross-recognition is not tantamount to the dissolution of the Cold War structure because it can be seen as an extension and strengthening of the structure superimposed on the peninsula by the two superpowers at the beginning of the Cold War.

The inter-Korean summit of 2000 is a great feat on the road to inter-Korean rapprochement which can contribute to turning the vicious cycle of hostile interactions between the two Korea into the benign and cooperative cycle. Yet the Joint Declaration of the summit does not involve specific measures regarding tension reduction and confidence building. It does not involve any specific agreement on concrete measures to guarantee North Korea's compliance to both the inter-Korean and international agreements which prevent it from developing weapons of mass destruction. North Korea sought to procure centrifuge-related materials in large quantities from Pakistan in11 1999 to develop a secret uranium-based nuclear weapons program before the summit. North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons may bring about a change in the Cold War structure on the peninsula. The change is not the result the sunshine policy intends to achieve because it is detrimental to South Korea's national interests.

The behavior of North Korea cannot be simply dismissed as a betrayal of the spirit of the summit. There exist structural constraints which hinder the North from abandoning the nuclear weapons program. Despite the claim that the dismantling of the Cold War structure on the peninsula is one of the most important objectives of the sunshine policy, its strategists fail to define the structure and identify structural constraints.12 The Cold War structure is part of the Cold War system on the peninsula which is composed of

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12 For an attempt to define the structure, see Chung-in Moon, “The Sunshine Policy and Ending the Cold War Structure: Assessing Impacts of the Korean Summit,” Ending the Cold War in Korea: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2001), pp. 302-305.
actors and the structure.\textsuperscript{13} The formation of the structure results from the interactions among actors. Once the structure is formed, the behavior of actors is constrained and limited by the operation of the structure.

One of the most important elements of the Cold War structure on the Korean peninsula is dual anarchy which derives from the antagonistic interactions between the two Koreas on the one hand and between the two Koreas and the neighboring great powers on the other hand.\textsuperscript{14} The first aspect of dual anarchy is the anarchical structure on the peninsula level which is formed as a result of the struggle for the monopoly of sovereignty for the whole peninsula by the two Koreas and was further strengthened by the Korean War and subsequent antagonistic interactions. The existence of the contest for sovereignty means that there does not exist an overarching authority over the two Korea. The lack of a central government is tantamount to anarchy which generates the security dilemma and induces the two Koreas to secure its survival through either indigenous efforts or alliances. After the demise of the Soviet Union, North Korea has no choice but to resort to its own efforts for survival. North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programs epitomize the fact that North Korea is constrained by the pressure of the inter-Korean anarchical structure formed as a result of antagonistic interactions\textsuperscript{8} between the two Koreas.\textsuperscript{15}

North Korean nuclear programs were not intended as a bargaining chip from the beginning. In the face of outside pressures the program was converted into a bargaining chip to trade for security assurances and economic benefits from the United States and South Korea. The programs were a natural outgrowth of North Korea's attempt to enhance its security under the structural conditions of dual anarchy. North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons would tilt the balance of capabilities between the two Koreas in favor of the North, thus leading to a change in the Cold War structure on the Korean peninsula. Yet the change is not the same as that the sunshine policy intended to achieve in its announcement of the policy to dismantle the Cold War structure on the peninsula. Far from dissolving the structure, five-years pursuit of the sunshine policy

\textsuperscript{13} For the definition of international political system, see Kenneth N. Waltz, Theory of International Politics, ch. 5.
\textsuperscript{14} Youngho Kim, Tongil Hankuk u Paradigm, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{15} The second aspect of dual anarchy is the anarchical structure on the global level which is shaped by the interactions between the two Koreas and the outside world involving neighboring great powers. The second aspect of dual anarchy can be explained as anarchy in the usual sense of international
has greatly contributed to the destabilization of the structure with its failure to cope with North Korean clandestine nuclear programs.

US assurances to North Korea against the threat or use of nuclear weapons in the Geneva Agreement failed to mitigate North Korea’s concerns about its survival and security. The US-ROK alliance has to depend on deterrence by conventional forces. Conventional deterrence would be credible only if an attack by the North would be thrown back. The defeat of a North Korean attack would result in the annihilation of the regime. The long-standing demand of the North for the pullout of US troops from South Korea would be intensified even after the signing of the Agreed Framework. It was widely reported that Chairman Kim Jong Il gave verbal assurance to President Kim that US troops may stay on until Korean reunification during the summit of June 2000. In the New Year’s conference of 2001 and the televised meeting with the nation President Kim reiterated Chairman Kim’s remark on the troop issue as one of the major signs in North Korea’s policy shift made by the effects of the sunshine policy. Yet it did not take a long time that President remark was found unwarranted. In the eight-point joint declaration of the Russo-North Korean summit of August 4, 2001 Chairman Kim emphasized that US troops withdrawal would guarantee peace in the region and speed reunification talks on the peninsula.

Another problem with the Kim Dae-jung administration's attempt to dismantle the Cold War structure on the peninsula lies in its failure to assess for which side relative losses are greater under dual anarchy. One of the two Koreas which considers itself a loser will make a proactive attempt to change or dissolve the structure. It means that the losing side becomes a revisionist state against which a status quo state seeks to defend the existing structure. North Korea has appeared as a loser in the competition in terms of political democratization and economic development. North Korea's attempt to develop weapons of mass destruction and its demand for the withdrawal of US forces in Korea serves as evidence for revisionist policies to overturn the structure which is not beneficial to its survival and security. South Korea as the status quo state has less reason than North Korea for revising the existing security arrangements which underpinned economic prosperity of South Korea. If South Korea jumps on the politics.

bandwagon with the North in an attempt to change the structure, it will destabilize structural conditions under which the sunshine policy is pursued.

North Korea’s capacity to sustain itself was limited under the Cold War system on the peninsula. Once that capacity came into doubt with the stagnation of its economy and the demise of the Soviet empire, the costs of isolation were unbearable to the North Korean regime. In contrast, South Korea was never so constrained as North Korea under the Cold War system on the peninsula because the former had access to international society as testified by its successful efforts to overcome the financial crisis of 1997. The two pillars to sustain resilience of South Korea are the US-ROK alliance system and the stationing of US troops. An attempt to liquidate the Cold War structure on the peninsula would result in a removal of the two pillars. The development of strains on the US-ROK alliance at the end of the Kim Dae-jung administration results from a theoretical misunderstanding of the Cold War structure on the peninsula and a bias for the negative aspects of the structure.

The Cold War system on the global level was shattered when the Soviet Union collapsed in the face of enormous pressures arising from US-Soviet competitions which took place under the anarchical structure. The dismantling of the Cold War system on the Korean peninsula will take the form of either the demise of one of the two Koreas or the change in the anarchical structure on the Korean peninsula. President Kim announced the abandonment of the policy of reunification by absorption. As a corollary, the administration focuses on the change in the structural aspect of the Cold War system on the peninsula. The inter-Korean anarchical structure would experience a significant change if the two Koreas agree on the pooling and sharing of sovereignty in the form of confederation and form a security community. Yet it is almost impossible for heterogeneous political systems to form a confederate state on the peninsula. The expectation for a structural change is very low so long as the totalitarian system remains in the North. The systemic change of the Cold War on the peninsula can result from either the regime change in the North or its demise. After a systemic change on the peninsula level, the reunified Korea still has to search for its own survival and security under the anarchical structure at the international level.
IV. Conclusions

Unlike the fashion and automotive designs, new policies are not always beneficial to the advancement of national interests. A new administration in democratic society is anxious to propose new policies designed to heighten the international stature of the president and appeal to the electorate. The sunshine policy is a new experiment with theoretical assumptions different from those of the former administration’s policies toward North Korea. The experiment cannot be considered successful because strategic concepts of the sunshine policy are not clearly defined and contradictions exist between its policy announcement and its actual implementation. A case in point is Lim Dong Won’s failure to insert the clause on the nuclear issue in the Joint Declaration of the summit although he recognized that the removal of North Korea’s weapons of mass destruction is a key factor for the dismantling of the Cold War structure.

The time is not on the side of North Korea. North Korea’s demand for the signing of a non-aggression pact cannot be met by the US because the US has not signed such a treaty with any other country. The Bush administration is adamant in not rewarding for North Korea’s brinkmanship and violations of international agreements. The protracted nuclear standoff is not in the national interests of the North. The North might precipitate the crisis to force the US to sit down at the negotiating table. The sunshine policy does not have any means to regain the initiative in the hands of the North. Repeated announcements of the Kim Dae-jung administration that the nuclear issue must be peacefully resolved belies the belief that the sunshine policy can reform and change the North Korean regime to become a normal member of international society.

A nuclear-armed North Korea would upset the military balance in Northeast Asia as well as on the Korean peninsula. It would pose a serious threat to the security of Japan. Japan might be tempted to acquire nuclear weapons, thus igniting a full-scale nuclear arms race with the Republic of China. The arms race would erode the global non-proliferation regime. The development of nuclear weapons by North Korea would have destabilizing effects on the Northeast Asian regional and global levels. Regional and international cooperation are essential in resolving the issue and cultivating an environment for peace and prosperity in the Northeast Asian region.

The summit meeting contributed to the increases in personal exchanges and cooperation between the two Koreas. Five sets of reunion of separated families were
held and the overland route through the Demilitarized Zone to the Mt. Kumkang is opened. Nine rounds of ministerial and diverse channels of dialogue were held to discuss trade and investment and to repair and reconnect the severed Soul-Shinuiju railroad system. Despite increases in inter-Korean contacts and exchanges, Chairman Kim Jong Il’s return visit to Seoul as promised at the summit was not realized. The return visit and the regularization of the summit would contribute to the institutionalization of on-going inter-Korean cooperation. It is a challenge for the Roh Moo-hyun administration to bring Chairman Kim to another summit meeting.

The Roh Moo-hyun administration has to find a way to revise the Joint Declaration to include a clause on the nuclear issue when the next summit is held. The administrations of Presidents Rho Tae-woo and Kim Young-sam were successful in securing commitments of the North to non-nuclearization of the peninsula in both the Joint Declaration of 1992 and the Geneva Agreement of 1994. It would not be an easy task because North Korea considers the summit declaration the monumental achievement of Chairman Kim Jong Il. The North also cites the declaration to use a pretext for the necessity of direct negotiations with the US to the exclusion of South Korea. The sunshine policy has left a legacy which is not an easy challenge for the new administration.

The concept of dual anarchy suggests that there exists a structure on the peninsula which cannot be easily overturned by either of the two Koreas because the change in the structure has direct impacts on the national interests of neighboring great powers. A prudent policy is to find a way to adapt South Korea to structural constraints and pursue a gradual change of the structure based on US-ROK alliance and international cooperation. Inter-Korean structure involves uncertainties which has greatly increased as a result of North Korea’s revisionist policies. It is the strategic challenge of the new administration’s strategists to learn wisdom to live with these uncertainties and devise prudent policies for peaceful coexistence and reunification between the two Koreas under these uncertain realities.