

Sustainable Development in the Korean Peninsula

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I. Introduction

Restoring trust and communication between the two Koreas is a prerequisite for the sustainable development in the Korean peninsula, when we consider a number of failures in negotiations and policy implementation between them. At the early dawn, July 11, 2008, a 53-year-old South Korean woman wearing a skirt and strolling alone at the beach of the Mt. Keumgang Tourism Resort area in North Korea was killed by two gunshots from North Korean soldiers. After the incident, the North Korean authority simply stated that the woman had crossed over into the military operation area at the beach and handed over the dead body without giving any details on the circumstances such as the exact time and place of the incident and the existence of urgency requiring an immediate shooting without warning. South Korean government, of course, could not accept this horrendous situation and asked for a joint investigation for the killing. But North Korea refused to accept any joint probe and denounced such a request. In response, South Korean government and people got so angry and decried this nonsensical behavior of North Korea. The trust level between the two Koreas got into zero and all the communication channels between them got frozen. Since then, the incident indulged in a labyrinth and the 10-year-old Mt. Keumgang tourism project has been suspended (Chosun Ilbo 2008). This unresolved mystery clearly shows the level of trust and communication between the two Koreas and gives us an opportunity to check the stark reality the long-standing separation of the two Koreas has brought about. The fundamental cause of this stalemate, however, is much deeper than they appear in an ideological, historical and political sense.

Human ideologies originated from outside of Korea have led once one-minded-people into incommunicable two different kinds of peoples in the Korean peninsula. At the end of World War Two, North Korea occupied by the Soviet Union set up a military-oriented state based on the communist ideology, whereas South Korea under the auspice of the United States initiated a capitalist-oriented country based on the democratic ideology. The concept on human rights between the two countries has differed since then. While South Korea views that humans have incalculable and inalienable human rights, North

Korea considers humans as merely an instrument for building a communist society based on materialism. South Korea is never able to let even one person's life go without a proper "process" of justice under the rule of law, whereas North Korea can kill government officials or anybody without giving them a proper chance of defense, if they are believed to make serious mistakes or proved to be against the communist rules, regulations, or ideology under one-man dictatorship.

The ideological division over 60 years in the Korean peninsula resulted in not only the disruption of trust and communicable minds among people in both countries inherited the same language and culture for near 5,000 years but also the devastation of the nature and environment once proudly called as the sam-chul-ri-keum-su-gang-san, or "the 733-mile land of embroidered rivers and mountains." The two Koreas got into the most destructive modern warfare in 1950 and the competitive and antagonistic nature of the two Korean governments exploited and victimized the environment in their respective course of industry-first and military-first development policies after the war. They considered the value of environment and nature either a secondary one or an irrelevant factor for a continued and sustained human development, even though South Korea has succeeded in a massive reforestation project since the end of the war.

The lack of trust and communication caused by the ideological division between the two countries has turned human and natural environment of the entire Korean peninsula into a dire situation. The two Koreas' contiguous natural eco-system was severely damaged by poverty and deforestation in North Korea and by urbanization and industrialization in South Korea resulted in a serious hurdle for a sustainable development for both countries.

The question now is in what ways can the two Koreas regain the high level of trust and communication overcoming the ideological division or difference which has been the root cause of all malaises in the Korean peninsula. This paper aims to suggest several policies to South Korea that will help to rebuild trust and communication between the two Koreas so that they can find a route to reconciliation and harmony resulting in a sustainable development in the Korean peninsula.

II. Causes of Environmental Degradation in the Korean Peninsula

A. The Korean War

As its communist ideology dictated, North Korea used the massive military power to unify the Korean peninsula resulted in a total devastation of the Korean environment. As “Night swallowed the sun as the fish swallowed Jonas” (Yang 2011), Korea, the Land of the Morning Calm with embroidered rivers and mountains, was engulfed by the North Korean Communist forces backed by the Soviet Union and China in 1950. The 3-year Korean War, the first modern warfare in the Korean peninsula, destroyed almost everything--forests, mountains, fields, roads, bridges, cities, etc.--in an unprecedented way. The reason for its total destruction is not difficult to understand when we look at the sequence of the war starting with the massive attack from North Korea mostly armed with the Soviet Union armaments to the southern-most end of South Korea, followed by a world-scale counter-attack by the 16-nation United Nations forces headed by the United States to the northern-most end of North Korea, and the Chinese forces’ full-scale intervention into the war leading to the bloodiest stalemate around the waist of the Korean peninsula (Cumings 1990).

B. The Cold War

The scar of the war could not be fully healed even after near 60 years of the war because of the continued tense division of the land under the “Cold War” ideology. The war ended up with a military armistice on July 27, 1953, not a permanent peace treaty among the adversaries, by setting up a military buffer zone, the 2.5 by 155 mile Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), that has divided the Korean peninsula until now. After this hot war, the two Koreas have staged the most frigid Cold War through the fierce ideological competition (Cumings 1990). The military security has been the primary concern for both North and South Korean governments. There have been numerous instances of espionage, military infiltrations, artillery and submarine torpedo attacks, and even ax killings by the North Korean army (Oberdorfer 2001).

The extreme political and military tension under the ideological Cold War prompted the two Korea to take abnormal development courses at the expense of environment. South Korea took the course of the fastest capitalist development with the export-oriented economic policies, whereas North Korea took the direction of the staunchest communist development with the isolated military-first policies.

C. South Korean “Economy-First” Policy

The competitive Cold War mentality in South Korea caused unstoppable growth-only policies. South Korea, which has been able to maintain a military power balance against North Korea under the Joint Security Treaty with the United States ratified in 1953, focused on a rapid economic development. There was an insurmountable animosity toward the communist North Korea that caused such an agony in human life including millions of separated families between the two countries. Better economic life probably was the only way to compensate for the people’s detrimental loss during the war.

South Korea’s economic success, however, brought out environmental degradation despite some material betterment in human life. South Korean government’s development policy supported by its hardworking people has successfully transformed South Korea into one of the fastest growing economies with its *per capita* GNP reaching over \$22,000 by 2011 from \$81 in 1960 (ChosunBiz 2012). But the rapid industrialization resulted in the loss of natural habitats and the increase of air and water pollution. Large numbers of native species of plants, birds, animals, particularly larger animals were already extirpated due to continued habitat destruction and pollution (Lee *et al.* 1994).

Korea has been an important breeding area for many species of birds. In addition, it is a funnel that provides important wintering grounds for many rare, endangered bird species. A historical analysis of the bird species in Korea between 1910 and 2009 reveals that more than one third of migratory bird species declined during the past one century, including at least 24 out of the 50 globally endangered bird species such as Black-faced Spoonbills and Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes (Moore 2011). According to a report published by the National Institute of Biological Resources, several species of duck have made the largest decline including 81% decline in Mallard over 15 years. Other major species include: 57% decline in Black-naped Oriole over 16 years; 49% in Tree Sparrow; 47% in Common Pheasant over 15 years; 33% in Eurasian Magpie; and 27% in Barn Swallow over only 11 years (NIBR 2010).

D. North Korean “Military-First” Policy

North Korea’s assumption on the Korean War relative to the United States imperialism is astonishing. Although it is obvious that North Korea started the Korean War on June 25, 1950, the war had already begun by the United States when it occupied the southern

half of the Korean peninsula after World War Two from the North Korean perspective. Furthermore, North Korea does not recognize the official existence of South Korea and its government established in 1947 through a free election under the auspice of the United Nations. While South Korea expects an official apology from North Korea about the war, North Korea seems to take the demand as a nonsense because it argues that the war was intended to liberate South Korean people from the US imperialism and blames the US for all the human loss and devastation and not being able to reunify the Korean peninsula (Cumings 1990).

North Korean Cold War mentality has been much stronger than South Korean one because of the expansionist communist ideology. North Korea has kept the “military-first” policy maintaining the world’s 4th largest standing army out of its 21 million population along with tanks and artilleries, deadly chemical and biological arsenals, and the capacity to develop nuclear weapons, which are necessary to execute its original goal of unification by force based on the fundamental communist ideology. There seem to be only strategic or tactical delays of such an attack because of internal economic malaise as well as external factors such as South Korean preparedness for war backed by the US military forces (Perry 1999).

The North Korean regime which was unable to complete its original mission of reunification by force had to take an unusual step to maintain its legitimacy through “Juche” (self-reliance) ideology, when its former communist allies such as China and Russia established a formal diplomatic and economic relationship with the United States. North Korea has not been able to keep up with the globalization of the world economy, which has been under the US hegemony. Its economy has become more and more paralyzed under the “Juche” ideology and could not sustain even the basic subsistence for its own people when China and Russia were no longer able to subsidize enough food and fuel (Hunter 1999).

The dire North Korean economy was detrimental to not only its people but also the natural environment. The chronic famine in the early 1990s led to a huge number of people’s death from hunger and malnutrition and the severe shortage of food and fuel caused a massive deforestation of hills and mountains in North Korea.

III. Policy Options for Rebuilding Trust and Nurturing Communication

The ideological division between the two Koreas caused the Korean War, the Cold War, and the subsequent economy-first and military-first policy resulting in severe environmental degradation in the Korean peninsula. In order to reverse the trend, we need to restore trust and communication between the two Koreas which are solid enough to overcome the conflicting and competitive ideological Cold War structure. Rebuilding trust and communication requires a true dialogue suspending all the assumptions caused by ideologies, revealing all the differences, and finally leading to the original subconscious oneness as one Korean people who inherited thousands of years of the same culture and language (Bohm 1996).

The question, then, is how we could put the two Koreas on the same table to have the true dialogue with an open mind. This paper proposes that we send North and South Korean people including teenagers to hills and mountains in North Korea to plant seedlings together. While doing the tree-planting together, they can also plant saplings of trust and let them grow. After a successful launch of the tree planting program in North Korea for at least 3 years, we suggest both Koreas to initiate the open conservation of the Korean DMZ which has been kept aside as no-man's land for near 60 years and became the nature sanctuary for many species of animals and plants. South Korea with its more economic power should take proactive actions in supporting the two policies with no conditions attached.

A. North Korean Reforestation

South Korea can play a leading role in North Korean reforestation because of its own wonderful experiences of reforestation. South Korea's current environmental situation is much better than that of North Korea because of the two prominent policies initiated during the era of military and industrial dictatorship of President Park Chung-Hee. One is the Green Belt policy for more than 400 square kilometers (about 4% of Korea's total landmass) set up around the metropolitan Seoul and 13 other major cities in 1971. The ring-shaped greenbelts surrounding the major cities helped limit the excessive sprawl of urban growth (Kim S.W. 2010). Ironically, the political dictatorship helped maintain the policy very strictly. The other is the massive national reforestation policy urging literally every citizen to go to hills and mountains and plant a sapling on the national arbor day. After decades of planting, South Korea became one of most successful cases of reforestation emerging as the fourth most forested country after Finland, Japan and Sweden among OECD member states in terms of the ratio of forests compared to the size of the nation (Kim 2011).

Experts who participated in the 2011 UNCCD (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification) in South Korea observed that about 3 million hectares of North Korean forests have been destroyed in the last several decades and suggested that at least half of them need to be restored immediately to maintain a minimum sustainability (Kwaak 2011). Lee Don Koo, South Korean Minister of the Forest Service, who joined the UNCCD, said that the current size of the North Korean forests is estimated to be about 5.7 million hectares which has been reduced more than 30% from 8.2 million hectares in 1990. This figure of huge deforestation proves the massive starvation and shortage of fuel in North Korea since the early 1990s (Kim 2011).

North Korea's severe deforestation situation, however, is a golden opportunity for South Korea to build trust with its communist neighbor in many ways. The tree-planting project in North Korea is an ideologically neutral project helping to rehabilitate the ecosystem and increase the biodiversity. It is also politically and economically neutral program since the aid cannot be diverted for military purposes. There is not much worry about technological transfer in the reforestation project, even though South Korea has gathered ample theoretical and practical knowledge of reforestation through its successful implementation of the national tree-planting program for more than 4 decades.

Most important, people in both Koreas can a chance to overcome ideologies through the tree planting process. Participants would get a lesson from nature and build up deeper understanding among themselves while planting trees together. South Korea must take an immediate action for North Korean reforestation program to build trust and improve understanding and communication between the two countries.

B. The Open Conservation of the Korean DMZ

After a successful completion of the 3-year-massive reforestation program in North Korea rebuilding trust and understanding, South Korea should take its initiative in turning the closed nature of the DMZ conservation into an open state of conservation so that the DMZ's nature can be diffused into the entire Korean peninsula. The Korean DMZ shows us a window of opportunity to rehabilitate Korea's natural heritage since it contains many in-situ species of plants and animals which have been extirpated in other parts of the Korean peninsula, and provides a natural open space for building trust, understanding, and communication among people in both Koreas.

1) The Closed Nature of the DMZ

On April 2, 2012, I was able to get to the vivid scene of the division of North and South Korea within the army unit of the Cheorwon area in the Civilian Control Zone (CCZ) just below the DMZ. I was surprised that it took only 2 hours from Seoul to get to the tense area by car. My identification was checked by the guard soldiers before getting into the CCZ area. While driving into the CCZ, I was excited to see the dense forests with many unknown flowers within the CCZ. I was not allowed to take any pictures, but I could immediately sense that the eco-systems were very well protected without any signs of inadequate developments except the warning posts of landmines hanging on the loosely-connected barbed wire fences. Soon I was kind of concerned when I heard that there was a shooting incident on this road by North Korean special army unit infiltrators in early 1980s. The escorting South Korean soldiers said that two infiltrators were killed by South Korean special search unit in the mountain, but two other North Korean soldiers were fled back to North Korea.

I was guided into the army unit which directly confronts with North Korean army unit with only 2 kilometers away. I got to the river which comes from North Korea and the DMZ and saw a bridge, which is the Mt. Keumgang Electrical Railway Bridge constructed in 1926 at the border of Cheorwon as part of the railway stretching to Naekeumgang Station in North Korea. The bridge has not been used for nearly 60 years since the end of the Korean War and was renamed as “Bridge Disconnected.” Now, this bridge symbolizes the stark reality of the division between North and South Korea. This bridge was designated as the 112th Registered Cultural Property on September 4, 2004.

The soldiers who escorted me strictly regulated the direction of my camera toward the southern side in order not to instigate North Korean soldiers. I was able to take two photos. I sensed that birds and fish could freely cross over the DMZ, while humans are in a constant confrontation. I strongly hoped that someday we could reconnect the rail bridge to Mt. Keumgang.



Mt. Keumgang Electrical Railway Bridge, Cheorwon, South Korea



Guidepost for Mt. Keumgang Electrical Railway Bridge, Cheorwon, South Korea

2) Value of the DMZ

The Korean DMZ is an ironic development out of miserable human mistakes. As an expert depicted, the Korean DMZ became an “accidental paradise” for animals, birds, plants, and flowers (Matthiessen 1996). The DMZ’s nature has been regenerated by itself from the total destruction of the war. We can see the nature’s resilience power (Dubos 1990). The DMZ is waiting to be embraced by humans to utilize as a symbol for nature restoration and reconciliation between human and nature. Out of a total devastation of the Korean War, “a pure spirit grows beneath the skin of stones” in the DMZ. All the animals and flowers look to us, humans, and wish that we learn a lesson from the nature (Yang 2011).

The DMZ and adjacent CCZ (Civilian Control Zone) stretches the 250 km (150 miles) length of the Korean peninsula and varies from 5 to 20 kilometers (3 - 12 miles) wide. The zone is traversed by five rivers and includes rich matrices of forests, wetlands,

prairies, bogs and estuaries. Between Mt. Keumgang and Mt. Seorak, there is near primary forest vegetation, consisting of large tracks of unbroken forests and grass lands.

The DMZ is home to over 1,200 plant species; 2,700 wildlife species including Asiatic Black Bear, Amur leopard, lynx and the rare Amur Goral. Hundreds of bird species are found here including globally endangered the Black-faced Spoonbill, Red-crowned and White-napped Cranes and Black Vulture; and over 80 fish species, 18 being endemic. These species represent over 2/3 of those found in Korea. Hundreds of bird species migrate through the DMZ going to and from Mongolia, China, Russia, Vietnam, Japan, the Philippines and Australia. Some 10% of the world's cranes winter on the Cheorwon Plain in the DMZ (Kim 1997).

Especially, scientists confirmed the existence of about a dozen of beautiful and elusive Amur leopards, of which only 30 are known to have survived in Russia. Some patrolling South Korean soldiers also report only the footprints of tigers in the DMZ because tigers are very elusive and vigilant (Onishi 2004). Tigers have been the symbol of Korea and were used as a mascot for the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics. They have also been cherished by the Korean people as a protector from evils for a long time in history. They are regarded as gentle in the minds of Korean people, but not too gentle for aggressors. I very much hope that tigers will keep their status in the Korean peninsula.

“Tiger

a tiger
is like a
butterfly,
thought
the
tiger,

here today,
gone tomorrow

he is like a
bird—a hawk,
forever

vigilant

he is even
a little
like an
elephant,

ponderous
& basically
gentle,

said a
younger
tiger.

i only meant it” (Yang 2011).

Animals and plants in the DMZ are probably talking about humans outside of the DMZ and feel sorry about animal and plant species that have been extirpated in other parts of the Peninsula. They may wonder about human’s greed and ideological bigotry that has led the eco-systems into devastated and dire situations. They may ask whether or not humans also could be an endangered species in the future with its continued greed and confrontation.

Migratory birds make a wonderful nesting ground within the DMZ, while beasts such as tigers cannot go in and out of the barbed-wire fences of the DMZ. But these mammals need more space to survive. I envy the freedom of birds that make a winter resting area of more than 1000 white-naped cranes within the DMZ. I wish the birds can teach me how to “move on.”

“From The Keeper of the Flocks

Rather the flying bird, leaving no trace
Than the going beast
Making the earth with his track.

The bird flies by and forgets
(As is only right). The beast
Where he no longer is
(And is therefore no use)
Marks that he was there before
(Which is also no use).

For to remember is to betray
Nature, since the nature of yesterday
Is not nature.
What has been, is nothing.
Remembering
Is failure to see.

Move on, bird, move on, teach me
To move on”

Translated from the Portuguese by Thomas Merton (Yang 2011).



Shape of the DMZ in the middle of the Korean Peninsula
http://www.dmzforum.org/whatwedo/Field_Projects24.php



The most valuable area for conservation in the DMZ linking Mt. Keumgang and Mt. Seorak: http://www.dmzforum.org/whatwedo/Field_Projects24.php

3) Open-conservation Strategy

The Korean DMZ offers an excellent model for transboundary nature reserves for building trust and nurturing communication that transcend antagonistic ideologies. An official at the Ministry of Environment in South Korea confirms that the government is preparing for a master plan for conservation of ecology in the DMZ along with a sustainable development plan in the bordering regions in cooperation with the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Administration. He suggests that an education of local residents near the DMZ be essential for the successful implementation of the plan (Interview 2012). I'd like to suggest that both Koreas turn the DMZ into a transboundary nature reserve in which only eco-friendly activities such as scientific research and a limited eco-tourism and cultural interaction for trust-building are allowed. Trust-building activities include youth and corporate outdoor training programs and facilities such as wilderness living, high ropes, rock climbing, rafting, canoeing, rappel, treasure hunts, and blind- trust walk in the woods.

IV. Rebutting Various Counterclaims of Values and Policies

Human ideologies split human minds into pieces which are in constant discord and confrontation leading to the fiercest war, the coldest long-standing war, and devastated lands. Either one of the ideologies cannot fully replace the other. People should discard the assumption that either one should overcome the other in order to complete an ideal world. We need a true realization of humans' subconscious oneness transcending the ideals of each ideology. In order to reach the goal, we need non-ideological measures to rebuild the trust and communication in the Korean peninsula which has two hearts, North and South Korea. I am sad that "my love has a double heart." I want the Korean peninsula to be transformed into a "singlehearted" land.

"The thundercloud fills meadows

The thundercloud fills meadows with heavenly beauty,
Gardens with plants, embroiders plants with petals,
Distils from its own while pearls brilliant dyes,
Makes a Tibet of hills where its shadow falls,
San'a of our fields when it passes on to the desert.
Wail of the morning nightingale, scent of the breeze,
Frenzy a man's bewildered, drunken heart.
Now is the season lovers shall pant awhile,
now is the day sets hermits athirst for wine.

Shall I sulk because my love has a double heart?
Happy is the whose she is singlehearted!
She has found me a new torment for every instant
and I am, whatever she does, content, content.
If she has bleached my cheek with her love, say: Bleach!
Is not pale saffron prized above poppy red?
If she has stooped my shoulders, say to them: Stoop!
Must not a harp be bent when they string it to sing?
If she has kindled fire in my heart, say: Kindle!
Only the kindled candle sends forth light.
If tears rain from my eyes, say: Let them rain!
Spring rains make fair gardens. And if then
she has cast me into the shadow of exile, say:

Those who seek fortune afar find it the first” (Yang 2011).

I will wholeheartedly love a unified Korean peninsula with one people and one nature living in harmony and reconciliation.

The ultimate value of oneness with harmony and reconciliation in the Korean peninsula, however, is challenged by multi-faceted counterclaims which are largely based on selfishness, misunderstanding, myopic views, negative and pessimistic procedural concerns, improper priorities, and no clear vision.

A. Motivation-based Counterclaims

Some people counterclaim that we should not make any attempt to reunify the two Koreas especially on the side of South Korea. They are so much concerned about the unification-related costs subsidizing North Korea such as food assistance, social welfare, unemployment benefits, housing cost, social infrastructure, and even foreign debts. In addition, they argue that there would be additional social costs caused by regionalism and social stratification between the two Koreas. They say that the maintenance of the division system is in the best interest of South Korea (Lee T. 2010).

The divisionist view, however, does not take into account the two important factors, that is, the current division cost and unification benefits. Because of the division, the two Koreas are spending unnecessarily excessive military costs including a huge waste of young human resources for a long period of mandatory military services. North Korea maintains the 4th largest standing army out of around 23 million population. The military tension caused by the division puts a bad impact on foreign investments in both Koreas. In addition to the division costs that can be eliminated through reunification, there are unification benefits such as better country credit risk leading to more foreign investments, increasing tourism, use of huge underground resources in North Korea, reduction in transportation cost to China and Russia, and an easy gas supply from Russia. While these economic gains are measurable, there are also much bigger immeasurable benefits of human integration. How can we measure the value of reuniting thousands of separated families for nearly 60 years? The integration of humans along with the nature will begin the precious sustainable development in the Korean peninsula.

B. Process-based Counterclaims

1) Military Option

Some ultra-rightists in South Korea argue that while they agree on the need for reunification of the Korean peninsula, it can be only achieved through preemptive military strikes which are also considered as a proper revenge for the attack from North Korea in 1950. They do not believe that any measures for trust-building and better communication will lead to peaceful reunification. South Korea will be fooled by the communist North Korea's long-term strategies and short-term tactics of reunifying the Korean peninsula by the military forces.

In early 1990s when North Korea was believed to develop nuclear weapons, South Korea and the United States considered preemptive air strikes against major North Korean military facilities including its nuclear arsenals. But the military option could not be implemented because of the expected innumerable human casualties. More than 70 percent of over one million North Korean army is deployed nearby the North Korean DMZ along with hundreds of long-range artilleries directly aiming for more than 20 million people of the Seoul metropolitan areas in South Korea. There are dozens of highly skilled North Korean infiltration units armed with diverse chemical and biological weapons that can be immediately dispersed into South Korea through unknown routes or underground tunnels in the DMZ. Also, North Korean submarines units of small or medium sizes are reportedly equipped with very effective torpedoes. Under these circumstances, any types of military confrontation with highly effective modern weaponry could lead to a total devastation of people, cities, and natural environments in the Korean peninsula. Therefore, the means of military option should never be considered because its consequences are unimaginable and unbearable for both Koreas (O'Neill 2003).

2) Economic Option

The most prevalent assumption by academics and policy-makers in South Korea is that the collapse of the North Korean economy would lead to the demise of the North Korean state. They doubt the process of trust-building with North Korea, and argue that we further need to ban all types of international trades and monetary transactions with North Korea, let alone any interactions of cultural, environmental, and sports activities.

North Korea, however, has been and still is under very strict economic sanctions for at least 20 years by South Korea, the United States and its allies. North Korean regime survived the most traumatic economic difficulties putting millions of its people to death out of hunger. The assumption simply proved to be wrong and ungrounded.

There has been a unique ideological development in North Korea. In addition to the Communist ideology, Kim Il Sung, the founder of North Korea, was revered and indoctrinated as literally a “father” of all North Korean people especially after the Korean War in early 1950s. Actually, thousands of the war orphans were raised by the North Korean government after the war. By the 1990s the majority of the North Korean population was under the strict one-man rule and the brainwash and political propaganda of the “Juche” (self-reliance) ideology (Hunter 1999). Even under the severe economic hardships, they cannot blame their “father” for any wrongdoings which is also culturally indoctrinated by the Confucian tradition. In the same sense, North Korean people accept the moral justification of the hereditary transition of political power to its third generation. Thus, the assumption that economic hardships would lead to political collapse is totally ungrounded in the North Korean situation.

In addition, China which has an important military and economic interest in North Korea has supplied basic necessities of food and fuel to North Korea. Nowadays, China began to invest into the major infrastructure and natural resource development in North Korea in return for using a North Korean sea port in the Pacific Ocean. At the backdrop of the Chinese help, the economic sanctions turned out to be totally ineffective in terms of disabling the North Korean regime. Rather, it solidified the economic relationship between China and North Korea, which bodes ill for the future economic integration of the unified Korean peninsula.

3) Diplomatic and Political Option

Majority of people in South Korea who prefer the diplomatic and political option contend that the tree-planting project in North Korea and the DMZ conservation would not make any impact on diplomatic and political decisions, which can be achieved only through a rigorous negotiation. During the last two decades, lots of political and diplomatic negotiations tried to resolve various confrontational matters including North Korean nuclear issues. There were several major breakthroughs in terms of agreeing to put forth promising statements and documents.

However, without mutual trust and effective means of communication, such an agreement always ended up with mutual blaming for the lack of implementation and progress. In case of the North Korean nuclear negotiation, South Korea and its allies want a verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament of North Korea before considering the process of political and diplomatic normalization, whereas North Korea calls for a peace treaty ending the Korean War and economic aid before starting the gradual dismantlement of its nuclear weapons (Kim 2010). The result of diplomatic and political options only reinforces the need for building trust and communication before engaging in any types of negotiations.

C. Result-based Counterclaims

1) Pure Conservationists

Some pure conservationists argue that after all the DMZ's ecology has been preserved due to a continued military tension between the two Koreas so that any attempts to ease the military tension through trust-building in the region will make a detrimental impact on the DMZ's natural environment. These people, however, hold a very myopic view on conservation. Our goal is to turn the entire Korean peninsula into a sustainable nature of progress. We need more open conservation of the DMZ rather than a continued closed nature so that it will have an ultimate positive impact on the whole Korean peninsula. Also, we are not afford to allowing any types of military confrontation in the DMZ which will turn almost 60 years of nature sanctuary into ashes in a matter of minutes.

2) Developmentalist

Some people who are on side of development argue that the DMZ nature reserves can be a hurdle for a free flow of economy between the two Koreas. Some industrialists are already looking for lucrative businesses in the area such as bottled-water business, resources for pharmaceutical drugs, underground natural resources, etc.

We could accommodate the developmentalist's need by properly designing the nature reserve including eco-tourism and cultural activities. A prominent expert depicts the DMZ as Yosemite and Gettysburg roll into one (Lee S.H. 2010). We could allow various scientific activities and wildlife and outdoor trainings for youths and business people.

Such eco-tourism and cultural activities will further solidify the trust and communication between the two Koreas.

V. Conclusion

This paper ends with two key words—“trust” and “communication”—overcoming deep-seated ideological animosities between the two Koreas, which have been the root cause for environmental degradation deterring sustainable development in the Korean peninsula. We confirm that without the fundamental elements of trust and communication, all the previous efforts of reconciliation, engagement, agreement and negotiation have been short-lived and entered into a stalemate. Mt. Keumgang Tourism project has been permanently suspended because of the tragic death of a tourist without knowing any truth about the incident. This premature cooperative project got into trouble without any clues to resolve the problem due to the lack of trust and communication between the two countries.

It is obvious that we need to dismantle the ideologically ingrained cold war structure to have a sustained development in the Korean peninsula. There is no proper rationale to maintain the current status quo of the ideologically divided land, when we consider the division costs combined with unification benefits that overwhelm the unification costs. We need to create one Korea, but we have had enough lessons on how we must proceed it. There should be no military options no matter what considering the immensely destructive power of modern weaponry such as nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Economic sanctions have not been effective in changing the behavior of the North Korean regime because of its unique ideological and economic situations. Most important, the diplomatic and political negotiations without trust and effective communication have not been able to come up with any tangible policy results with on-going implementation between the two Koreas.

Tree planting in North Korea is a way of planting trust for both Koreas. We need to continue to grow the tree of trust before trying to engage in any other activities. Under the foundation of the tree of trust, both Koreas are able to embrace the DMZ as a symbol for nature restoration and reconciliation between them. The open conservation of the DMZ without the concertina wire fences will allow a free flow of large mammals throughout the Korean peninsula. I hope that we humans will learn a lesson from the

nature through the deliberate efforts to plant trees in North Korea.

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