

**EAST ASIA'S DIVIDED NATIONS:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

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Four countries/region emerged from World War II to be christened “divided nations”: East and West Germany, North and South Korea, North and South Vietnam, and China and Taiwan. This is to say that they were once politically, culturally and linguistically united and that a sizable constituency regretted and opposed that “loss,” longing for “reunification,” not only as a national policy but often as a personal or familial recovery. Thus the “divided nation” model is inherently teleological, assuming political reunification to be an ultimate teleological end-goal. India and Pakistan are in a quite different category—although once united, their previous status was not that of a nation-state but a colony of Great Britain, and although their division (on religious, not ethno-linguistic grounds) was contested at the time the two had three or four wars (depending on how one counts the Kargil affray) and there is no longer any interest in reunification; Singapore and Malaysia are similar in the sense that though once part of the same British colony (Malaya) they split shortly after decolonization for political reasons and the relationship has since cooled, with little lingering interest in reunification. Divided nations, then, are those countries which, despite a joint history and shared culture, were split by the global ideological cleavage between the superpowers and their “camps” after World War II and remained divided thereafter by a combination of international and domestic factors. Having been at least to some extent split by the Cold War cleavage, the end of the Cold War constituted a critical juncture for them in the sense that new options were now open to decide their national identities untrammelled by the ideological frameworks and corresponding international alliance networks that previously subordinated the issue to bloc solidarity.

As the Vietnam case was decided in the latter part of the Cold War and the two German states promptly reunited upon its conclusion, only two nations/regions remained divided thereafter, and both were Asian: the China-Taiwan split and the North-South Korean case. And this is hardly coincidental, for at least two reasons. First, in three of the Asian cases ideological identities were reinforced by a highly destructive civil war at the outset based upon those opposing ideologies. In the Chinese and Vietnamese cases, civil war preceded division, while in the Korean case it came in its wake. Except in the Vietnamese case, where war resolved the issue, leaving the victorious half free to resocialize the losing half in its image (or force dissidents to emigrate), this left a legacy of bitterness and suspicion that has complicated reunification efforts thereafter. Second, the Cold War ended more ambiguously in Asia than in Europe, leaving four of the world’s five socialist states intact: China, the DPRK, Vietnam, and Laos. Some of these adjusted successfully to the collapse of the Iron Curtain, gaining hybrid vigor through the adaption of features of market capitalism. This surviving socialist rump has continued to provide identity and material support for the socialist half of the divided nations.

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The purpose of this paper is to review and analyze the origins and reasons for the continuing division of China and Korea in comparative perspective. Inasmuch as the end of the Cold War introduced new possibilities to reconstitute national identity, the focus will be on the post-1989 period. It consists of two parts. The first consists of a chronological review and preliminary assessment of the progress of reunification efforts in China and Korea since the end of the Cold War. The second consists of a structural comparison of the two cases, focusing particularly on the continuing impediments to reunification.

Progress since the Cold War

Approaches to reunification have been frequently and variously categorized, but here we reduce them to three: (1) coercive reunification by armed invasion (as in the Vietnamese case) or coercive bargaining backed by overwhelming superior force; (2) peaceful socio-economic integration in the course of which one side collapses and the stronger side essentially absorbs the weaker (as in the German case); and (3) reunification by mutual consent (e.g., Deng Xiaoping's "one country two systems" formula retaining a "high degree of autonomy," as in the Hong Kong and Macau cases. These are ideal types, and in reality (as we shall see) they may be mixed. We begin with the China-Taiwan case and then proceed to the two Koreas.

Taiwan and China—The Chinese claim to Taiwan (and Taiwan's claim to be part of China) is both historical and ethno-linguistic. Some mainland historians claim Taiwan has been part of China since the beginning of the Sui dynasty (598-618), yet official dynastic histories as late as the Ming made no reference to Taiwan in the section on administrative geography (the *dilizhi*, which comprehensively lists all provinces, prefectures, sub-prefectures, and counties of the Ming state), so it seems plausible to assume it was then an outlying frontier region. By the 13th century there were however a significant number of Chinese settlements on the island, where fertile virgin land and mild climate attracted economic migrants. The island was also host to various European imperialist interests (in 1622 the Dutch drove out some Spanish settlers and established a colony). A rebel named Cheng Chengong (better known as Koxinga) famously established a "pirate" garrison near Tainan in the name of the defeated Ming, but the Qing subdued this nominal rebellion and established sovereignty in 1683, finally turning the island into a full province in the late 19th century. Taiwan was then annexed by Japan upon China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 and remained a colony until 1945, when it was returned to China. The Nationalists, having brutally reestablished Chinese sovereignty in 1945-49 on behalf of the Republic of China, retreated to the island upon losing the civil war in 1949 with the declared intention of reversing that outcome at the first opportunity. Meanwhile, the PRC fully expected to "liberate" the island as soon as they had consolidated control of the Mainland, thereby completing the revolution and ending a "hundred years of humiliation" (*bainian guochi*, including the "unequal treaty" of Shimonoseki in which Taiwan was ceded to Japan). Although Taiwan's fall was anticipated in view of the balance of forces, Chinese intervention on behalf of the DPRK in the Korean War in November 1950 precipitated the intervention of the US in support of the Nationalists, indefinitely postponing both sides' plans to bring the civil war to a definitive conclusion. And for the first three decades of Taiwan's existence, while the two respective leaders of the civil war remained at the helm, warlike conditions essentially continued: the Nationalists invoked martial law, invoked anti-communism to legitimate authoritarian rule and the prosecution of political dissent, promising vaguely

to “recover the Mainland” (*huifu dalu*). Beijing precipitated two cross-strait crises in 1954-55 and 1958 by threatening an invasion of the offshore islands still occupied by Taiwan and bombarding the islands with artillery, continuing desultory bombardments (mostly propaganda leaflets) until January 1979. Taiwan throughout this period continued to represent all mainland provinces in the (largely inactive) National Assembly, just as both the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Congress (CPPCC) and the National People’s Congress (NPC) still included delegates nominally representing Taiwan. The ROC government represented “China” in the United Nations (including the Security Council) and in most foreign embassies, enforcing a “one China policy” by breaking diplomatic relations with any country that recognized the PRC. Since the Cold War, the issue of unification and the future national identity of the island has become a salient issue in both regions. Both sides have contrived strategies (either publicly declared or classified) for reunification and established institutions dedicated to that end. All but some two percent of the Taiwanese are ethnic Han Chinese, speak a local dialect of Mandarin, and observe Chinese ceremonial rituals. In sum, the Chinese claim that Taiwan is part of China is historically quite strong and indeed no other state has sought to contest it, including Japan and the US. The strongest counterargument has been rather that in view of its somewhat checkered past Taiwan is “independent”—a claim that is inherently tenuous as it pits Taiwan alone against a much larger and more powerful state.

While during the Cold War the two “Chinas” expressed a commitment to reunification, the instruments whereby this was to be achieved (by both sides) were coercive. This generated a propaganda war and a security dilemma as each side reaffirmed its commitment to the international ideological split that divided them and rationalized internal repression and heavy arms budgets in terms of that ideological-security threat. The post-Cold War period has been marked by the shift from coercive reunification to more indirect and (qualifiedly) peaceful tactics. The new pattern has been one of steadily mounting trade and investment resulting in gradual economic integration coupled however with a political relationship that has alternated between “freeze” and “thaw.” The period from 1988-1995 was one of “thaw,” followed by the 1995-2005 period of political “freeze,” and from 2005 to the present by “re-thaw.” With the exception of the 1995-1996 missile crisis the resort to violence or coercive persuasion has been abandoned (though the threat remains).

The post-Cold War pattern was initiated by the PRC with the historic launch of the “three direct links” and “one country two systems” formulae in 1979 and 1981 respectively, which offered Taiwan peaceful reunification with a high degree of autonomy. Deng Xiaoping was encouraged to make this offer by the terms of the January 1979 normalization with the US, in which the latter agreed to break diplomatic ties with Taiwan. The response of the Chiang Ching-kuo regime to “three links” was “three nos,” (“no contact, no compromise, and no negotiation”) which were officially maintained until Chiang’s death in 1988. Despite this refusal Beijing maintained its offer, and trade and tourism from Taiwan to the Mainland gradually gathered momentum toward the end of the decade, going through Hong Kong to avoid violating the continuing governmental prohibition of “direct links.” This period was marked by a halcyon atmosphere of “mainland fever” (*dalu re*), as both polities emerged from long periods of perceived oppression, China from the Cultural Revolution and Taiwan from the Chiang dictatorship. Taiwan ended martial law and abandoned the principle of retaining “thousand year” representatives of the mainland provinces in its legislative bodies,

finally acknowledging that it no longer controlled these provinces with a statement that it did not actively challenge Chinese sovereignty over the Mainland but only over Taiwan and adjoining offshore islands. The Mainland did not reciprocate this acknowledgment, insisting on sovereignty over Taiwan under the one-China principle, ironically even inducing Taipei to rescind its disclaimer of mainland sovereignty in 2008. Trade took off dramatically and investment soon followed, stimulating still more trade; some industries were attracted by the China market, while others adopted China's cheap labor pool to manufacture for export, exploiting the price advantage afforded by China's cheap currency. Taiwan did not join the post-Tiananmen sanctions imposed by the OECD countries and even lobbied the US to end the sanctions; Taiwan foreign direct investment (FDI) began to pour into China, replacing withdrawn Western capital. Though there were isolated attempts during Chen Shui-bian's tenure to force partisan "green" Taiwanese investors like Hsu Wen-long to disavow outspoken pro-independence views, for the most part China avoided politicizing the mutually profitable economic relationship, with the result that it continued to grow in politically good times and bad.¹ By 2010, 70% of Taiwan's FDI was in China and Taiwan businesses operated more than 100,000 enterprises on the Mainland.

Despite the explicit mainland hope that functional integration would facilitate unification, the relationship between economics and politics has not been automatic or predictable. In 1994-1995, the relationship took an abrupt downturn when Beijing, in immediate response to ROC President Lee Teng-hui's quest (in the context of campaigning in the island's first popular presidential election) for wider (specifically American) diplomatic recognition, launched a series of missile "tests" just off Taiwan's commercial ports, while the People's Liberation Army (PLA) staged amphibious landing maneuvers off the Fujian coast. Though these demonstrations of resolve prompted flight capital and other signs of panic in Taiwan, the US responded by sending two carrier fleets into the vicinity of the Taiwan Strait and Lee Teng-hui won the election convincingly. Lee returned to office less interested in mollifying Beijing and more interested in mobilizing Taiwanese nationalism. Beijing tried to get the relationship back on track by inviting Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) Chair Koo Cheng-fu to the Mainland in late 1998, but the following spring Lee again snubbed Beijing by asserting that China and Taiwan were both "states" with a "special" relationship (*liang guo lun*, two states theory), prompting the cancellation of Wang Daohan's scheduled return visit. Thus this exercise in coercive diplomacy was generally deemed unsuccessful; the outcome was however sufficiently ambiguous for Chinese threats to continue for a brief period. Beijing again intervened in the 2000 presidential election, publishing a White Paper on Taiwan indicating a vague deadline for reunification talks and publicly warning against electing the wrong candidate; despite these warnings Beijing's least favored candidate, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate Chen Shui-bian, won against a divided KMT. Underlying this anti-China electoral backlash were two structural factors: first, on the Mainland, the welcome mat laid out to Taiwanese tourists, traders and investors was hedged from the outset by the never retracted threat of violence. Second, in Taiwan, politicians (particularly "greens"), noting China's called bluff, were increasingly inclined to apply salami tactics to Beijing's "redlines." Electoral engineers discovered a latent division between "Taiwanese" (*benshengren*), the overwhelming popular majority whose ancestors had been living on the island since the Ming, and

¹ See Scott L. Kastner, *Political Conflict and Economic Interdependence across the Taiwan Strait and beyond* (Stanford, Calif.: University of Stanford Press, 2009).

“Mainlanders” (*waishengren*), who had migrated to the island upon the defeat of the KMT in 1949. Politicians found ways to politicize this split to foster anti-mainlander sentiments conflating the KMT with the PRC and thereby promote an emerging sense of Taiwanese national identity. The Chen Shui-bian presidency encouraged this emerging consciousness in education, political culture and other realms of public discourse, using it to win a reelection against a reunited KMT in 2004.

Thus although the first steps toward peaceful reunification basked in the glow of Taiwanese democratization, democracy proved to be a fickle ally. True, Beijing’s recurrent threats of force did not endear Taiwan’s electorate to the prospect of reunification, and China’s reluctance to follow through may not even have deterred ardent independence advocates, but they may have motivated the US, unwilling to become engaged in another war, to pressure Chen to moderate his rhetoric (which anyhow exceeded his political capability). Beijing however learned from its setbacks, and after the 2000 election retreated for the most part to dignified silence in response to DPP rhetoric. After the narrow reelection of Chen in March 2004, Beijing revised its blanket no-contact policy in favor of a more nuanced policy mixing sticks with carrots. In his May 17, 2004 statement, then Chinese President Hu Jintao made overtures to Taipei on resuming negotiations for the “three links,” reducing misunderstandings, and increasing consultation. In March 2005, the Anti-Secession Law was passed by the National People’s Congress, legalizing “non-peaceful means” in response to any declaration of independence in Taiwan. Yet the anti-secession law drew China’s “redlines” somewhat more permissively by prohibiting secession rather than demanding reunification within a defined time frame. It also for the first time authoritatively committed Beijing to negotiations on the basis of equal status between the two sides and refrained it from imposing the “one China” policy as a precondition for talks, while quietly disclosing that the “1992 consensus” would be an acceptable interpretation of “one China”. The CCP then increased contacts on a party-to-party basis with the KMT, appealing to their history of “united fronts.” These contacts culminated in the 2005 Pan-Blue visits to mainland China, including meetings between Hu and then-KMT chair Lien Chan in April 2005 and subsequent meetings with People First Party (PFP) chair James Soong. And when Chen Shui-bian reversed course and resumed his symbolic drive for independence by suspending the National Unification Council and National Unification Guidelines in early 2006, Beijing expressed opposition but avoided threats of force, relying on the US to rebuke Chen for violating the “five nos” he had made after his election in 2000 and again in 2004. By thus lowering the temperature of cross-strait relations and depriving the DPP of an obvious mainland threat to inveigh against, Beijing contributed to the KMT’s landslide electoral victory in both legislative and presidential elections in 2008.

The response of the KMT to Beijing’s new Taiwan policy was positive but cautious, cognizant of the drift since the early 1990s of domestic public opinion away from reunification. Rather than confront this drift directly, current Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou sought to freeze the identity battle and shift popular attention to the economic performance of the government. His strategy was to skirt “future nation preference” issues, court the middle-road voter who cared less about the name of the country than concrete performance, and count on support from the pan-Blues as captive voters. In this way, Ma attempted to redefine Taiwan’s politics by shifting its main dividing issue from national identity to the economy. The corruption case against Chen Shui-bian was a late-breaking windfall for the KMT that underscored its claims of the DPP’s managerial

incompetence with juridically supported allegations of high-level corruption. Since the 2008 landslide victory of the KMT in both legislative and executive elections, the new Ma administration lost no time in pursuing reconciliation with the Mainland along the lines already anticipated in the 2005 pan-blue visits to the Mainland, justifying this departure from his campaign rhetoric by arguing that improved cross-strait relations would dramatically improve the island's economy. In his inaugural speech, Ma issued "three nos"—no unification, no independence, no war [*butong, budu, buwu*] to reassure the electorate, maintaining a discreet silence about the ultimate destination of cross-strait rapprochement beyond working toward a peaceful and prosperous working relationship. He would move from the easy to the hard, he said, from economic issues to political issues, anticipating a future (but frequently postponed) discussion of a cross-strait peace treaty. The cap was lifted on Taiwanese trade and investment with the Mainland, which had never been very effective anyhow, and Chinese investment on Taiwan was for the first time permitted. The SEF-Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) negotiating forum was reconvened, alternating visits between Beijing and Taipei, and by December 15, 2008 the two sides had formally implemented the "three direct links," facilitating Chinese tourist visits of nearly two million in the first two years as well as improved trade and investment prospects. Negotiations resulted in 15 cross-strait agreements, culminating in the summer of 2010 an Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement, which reduced bilateral trade barriers and opened the way for Taiwan to negotiate analogous trade agreements with various Southeast Asian countries. Future possible goals include negotiation of a full preferential trade agreement, moving from there to a peace treaty and perhaps eventual discussions of terms for reunification (though the latter is not publicly mooted). The impact of these developments has been economically positive, stimulating Taiwan's swift rise from the global financial crisis to positive GDP growth in 2009-2010, though the unemployment rate remains relatively high and there are some indications that the improvement of per capita income has been skewed to the upper middle and upper classes. But positive political feedback has been slower to materialize. The public opinion ratings of the Ma administration have remained tepid while the DPP made a quick and vigorous recovery from its loss and corruption scandal, improving its performance in the 2010 mayoral elections of Taiwan's five largest cities. Yet just as Ma declined to run on national identity in 2008, the DPP in 2010 did not broach the issue of ECFA or cross-strait rapprochement. Thus the political implications of the cross-strait "rethaw" remain cryptic—though the issue will clearly be joined in the 2012 presidential election.

The Two Koreas—The two Koreas have an even more persuasive claim to a historical "one Korea" than the two Chinas. No divided nation (including China, Germany, and Vietnam) was previously united as an independent political entity so continuously or so long as Korea. For two millennia of history Korea had been united ethnically and linguistically, and from A.D. 668 until 1910 it lived under the same rule in the same territory, with the same language, race, customs, and history. This national identity remains strong today, despite the many political impediments to restoring it—though there are indications of a perceptible diminution in support for reunification among the younger generations.² Among our three approaches to reunification, the North has consistently endorsed the first (coercion), legitimating this as a continuation of the

² Recent polls indicate that support for reunification among South Koreans aged 25-35 was only about 40%, while it grew stronger for each decile of older citizens. Males are also less supportive of reunification (60% in favor, 40% indifferent) than females (73% support and 60% oppose).

revolution that brought about the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) in the North; the South has alternated between the other two options (absorption and socio-economic integration by mutual consent).

The DPRK's policy has been to seek reunification without what it sees as outside interference, aiming to establish a "Federal Republic of Koryo," and it has from the outset and consistently thereafter placed a higher priority on reunification than the South.³ The unification goal was incorporated into the fundamental documents of both party and state. The preamble to the charter of the KWP states that "[t]he present task of the [KWP] is to ensure the complete victory of socialism in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the accomplishment of the revolutionary goals of national liberation and the people's democracy in the entire area of the country." Nominally South Korean delegates were ensconced in the national legislature. Although the DPRK's seat of government has always been Pyongyang, the DPRK constitution from the outset stipulated that "the capital of the Democratic Republic of Korea shall be Seoul." Although it has from time to time been willing to engage in negotiations and has also attempted to mobilize revolutionary support in the South, when neither of these availed the North has been prepared to resort to violence. The Korean War was essentially an attempt to achieve reunification by force, and had it not been for the unanticipated intercession of the US this might well have succeeded. While in the initial post-war period the North, like the South, was preoccupied with domestic reconstruction (only two buildings remained standing in Pyongyang at the end of the Korean War), in the following two decades it launched a massive military buildup aimed at achieving decisive military superiority. In the early 1960s, the Korean People's Army (KPA) manpower was thought to have been just over 300,000; by the late 1970s the KPA was approaching the million mark, backed by a high and steadily rising share of economic output devoted to defense readiness. But the North has refrained from a second invasion, shifting from frontal assault to the use of commando raids, political assassinations, abductions and other irregular tactics.

Despite facing an increasingly troublesome partner, South Korea's interest in reunification, largely quiescent during the Cold War, has since resurged. The country has also been more varied and innovative than that of the North, not only because of its increasingly dominant economic position but because concurrent democratization has made its policies reflect the temporal vagaries of local electoral constituencies, the business cycle, and other such stimuli. The South's approach has alternated between the second two options (peaceful engagement and gradual integration by mutual consent), with little serious attention given to reunification by force, even after the South's military capabilities began to outstrip those of the North. The only serious consideration of the use of violence arose in response to the North's threat to withdraw from the Nonproliferation Treaty in pursuit of nuclear weaponry in 1993, and that was initiated by the US, not the South, over Seoul's strenuous objections. There are several reasons for the South's abjuration of violence, possibly including some version of democratic peace

³ For example, while the North has consistently advocated a relatively centralized "federation," the South has preferred a more loosely affiliated "confederation." Jong-Yun Bae, "South Korean Strategic Thinking toward North Korea: The Evolution of the Engagement Policy and Its Impact upon U.S.-ROK Relations," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (March/April 2010), pp. 335-355.

theory.⁴ But the most decisive factor is no doubt the fact that a rather high proportion of the South Korean populace lives in Greater Seoul, well within the range of North Korean artillery fire; should war occur, even if North Korea would eventually lose (as it probably would), the South would incur prohibitive losses.

During the 1988-1998 decade (i.e., under the presidencies of Roh Tae-woo and Kim Young-sam), as the economic conjuncture in the North fell to new depths, the preferred approach in the South became one of peaceful absorption. This represented a departure from Cold War confrontation, including the first arrangements for aid, trade and talks with the North. There are three likely reasons for this shift. First, the Kwangjoo incident gave rise to a *minjung* movement in South Korea that was far more critical of the American role in Korea and willing to take a more sympathetic look at the North's position.⁵ Second, the reunification of the two Germanys gave rise to an early diagnosis that the crisis was systemic and that the entire communist bloc could collapse, permitting a swift and easy reunification of Korea on roughly the same terms. Finally, the DPRK did in fact come very close to collapse, with GDP growth plummeting to an average negative five percent per annum and incurring mass starvation from 1990 to the end of the decade, evoking a wave of humanitarian sympathy in the South.

Roh Tae-woo signaled the shift to peaceful reunification in his February 1988 inaugural address, asking the North to “accept that dialogue, not violence, is the most direct shortcut to ending division and bringing about unification.” And the years 1990-1992 witnessed a progression of state-to-state contacts that were extraordinary for the divided Korean peninsula. Those included eight official meetings at the prime ministerial level; the formalization of an agreement on “Reconciliation and Non-Aggression” and the initiation of a DPRK-ROK document on mutual nuclear inspections; and a five-day visit to the ROK by a DPRK vice premier who toured South Korean industries and discussed avenues of possible economic cooperation. In 1992 Roh introduced the important Korean National Unification Formula (KNCU), which aimed at the gradual establishment of a national “community” as a precondition for formal reunification. The sixth round of the regularly scheduled prime ministerial meetings culminated in February 1992 in the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, as a result of which all American tactical nuclear weapons were withdrawn from Korea by December 2001. Roh's Nordpolitik (modeled after Brandt's Ostpolitik) was aimed at eliminating the North's isolation by opening relations with Pyongyang while simultaneously undertaking diplomatic normalization with both of its patrons. As he put it in his July 1988 ‘Declaration in the Interest of National Self-Esteem, Unification, and Prosperity,’ South Korea was “willing to cooperate with North Korea in its efforts to improve relations with countries friendly to us, including the United States and Japan; and in tandem with this, we will continue to seek improved relations with the

⁴ Certainly there is little appetite among South Korean taxpayers for an offensive war against nonproliferation or even for unification. This would not be orthodox democratic peace theory, however, which proscribes only wars between democracies, not war between a democracy and a nondemocratic regime. Throughout much of its existence the Republic of Korea's claim to democratic status was also dubious.

⁵ See Hyun-Wook Kim, “Domestic Events, Ideological Changes and the Post-Cold War US-South Korean Alliance,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (December 2009).

Soviet Union, China, and other socialist countries.”⁶ But because Roh’s diplomatic efforts proved more successful than Pyongyang’s, Nordpolitik improved Seoul’s options without alleviating Pyongyang’s isolation. Seoul gained recognition from the (then) Soviet Union in 1990, joint admission (with Pyongyang) to the UN in 1991, and diplomatic recognition by China in 1992. Kim Young-sam’s presidency (1993-1998), though also essentially premised on peaceful absorption of a collapsed DPRK, was to some extent thrown off stride by the 1993-1994 nuclear crisis, which tended to revive Cold War tensions. Kim was so upset by the American tendency to negotiate the nuclear issue bilaterally with Pyongyang without regard to the ROK’s unification policies (or indeed, its security interests) that he gave unification policy top priority, outranking nonproliferation or (hypothetically) even alliance commitments.

From 1998 to 2008 the ROK shifted from an approach that presumed eventual absorption of a failed state to one based on gradual socio-economic integration by mutual consent. This shift occurred for at least three reasons: First, despite mass starvation and comprehensive systemic failure the DPRK defied early expectations of a collapse. Second, by this time the exorbitant costs of the German model had become clear, exciting doubt in the South over whether they could afford immediate reunification. Third, South Korea was engulfed in the Asian financial crisis and forced to accept a huge bailout from the IMF to salvage its own economy. Under these circumstances, absorption of a bankrupt DPRK no longer appeared realistic. The new approach, quickly dubbed the “sunshine policy” in reference to the Aesopian fable, was inaugurated by Kim Dae Jung in his inaugural address, in which he promised not to try to “undermine or absorb North Korea.” This represented a major step toward eliminating ideological and national identity differences as a prerequisite to unification. The new approach was premised on two assumptions: the separation of politics from economics and the principle of flexible reciprocity. Both were designed to insulate economic integration from political disputes.⁷ And indeed, over the next decade, lubricated by some 200 inter-Korean political talks and two summit meetings in Pyongyang, 42 inter-Korean agreements were signed between the two Koreas—17 during the Kim Dae Jung administration and 25 during the Roh Moo-hyun administration. A joint venture was set up to facilitate tourist trade to Mt. Kumgang and the Kaesong Industrial Complex was jointly established near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) to draw upon South Korean capital and low-wage North Korean labor. Inter-Korean trade increased: By 2002 the ROK had become the DPRK’s second largest trading partner after China, and by 2008 it claimed over a quarter of the North’s external trade.⁸

⁶ Roh Tae Woo, 1993. ‘July 7, 1988 Declaration in the interest of national self-esteem, unification, and prosperity’ (1993), as cited in James Cotton (ed.) *Korea under Roh Tae Woo: democratization, Northern Policy, and inter-Korea relations* (UK: Allen and Unwin), p. 317.

⁷ See Samuel S. Kim, “The Rivalry between the Two Korea’s Inter-Korean Rivalry Conceived and Applied,” unpublished paper, 2010.

⁸ Inter-Korean trade began in 1988 and 2002; the ROK became the DPRK’s second largest trading partner after China. The Soviet Union had during the Cold War been the DPRK’s leading trade partner, but that sharply diminished after 1991 when the Russian Federation recognized the ROK and shifted trade from socialist planned to capitalist cash basis. Sixty percent of the DPRK’s export trade in 2002 consisted of trade with just three top trading partners: China (21%), the ROK (21%), and Japan (18%). But Japan’s share of DPRK trade declined from 20% to less than 10% after 2004, when the abductees became a cause célèbre. By 2008, China (40%) and South Korea (26%) as two top trading partners comprised 66% of Pyongyang’s total trade, with Japan’s share having virtually vanished (0.1%).

Yet with the election of Grand National Party candidate Lee Myung-Bak in 2008, the forward momentum toward inter-Korean functional integration leading toward political accord was quickly lost; after reaching its acme in 2008, trade plummeted, leaving China the DPRK's main trade partner. Based on evidence that aspects of the previous functional integrationist regime (including the 2000 summit) had been underpinned by covert South Korean political subsidies and that the ostensible separation of politics and economics had been largely illusory, the new president attached demands for political reciprocity (specifically, progress in nonproliferation talks).⁹ These demands were promptly met by indignant denials and ultimatums from the North. Underlying the shift in mood were at least two factors. First was the evident failure of the "sunshine" narrative to achieve its desired effect of persuading the DPRK to adopt a more amicable posture toward the South. It seemed that instead, the North took full advantage of the separation of politics from economics to continue its nuclear and missile buildup and to resume provocations against the South. These actions posed an enhanced security threat to the South, as well as to Japan and the US. Perhaps the North never accepted the premise that economic integration could be divorced from politics: any cooperative venture, even if based largely on South Korean subventions, might be seized by the North as a hostage to extort various demands. Upon the election of Lee Myungbak, the premise was hence dropped by the South as well, and all cooperative ventures became politically conditional, making them far more difficult to sustain. Thus when an errant South Korean tourist was shot dead by a North Korean guard at Mt. Kumgang, the South banned South Korean tourism to the North and the North in retaliation began seizing South Korean assets at the site, resulting in suspension of the project. Although the Kaesong Industrial Complex remains open, both sides have cut back their stakes appreciably, placing the whole venture on tenterhooks. Second, implicit in the Kim-Roh functional integration paradigm was the hope that via mutual cooperation the North would relieve the economic crisis and stimulate further reform. This would, it was hoped, reduce the yawning socio-economic gap between the North and the South and bring their developmental trajectories into closer alignment, mitigating North Korean paranoia and *revanchisme* vis-à-vis the South. Although this hope was shared by China and even the US, North Korean attempts at reform beginning in 2002 were politically anemic, economically ill-conceived, and generally unsuccessful, leading to inflation, corruption, and (most pertinent, from the regime's perspective) loss of political control. The central government has thus since 2005 reasserted centralized control. Yet it has still been unable to run its economy successfully; by 2011 again it was facing a steadily worsening food crisis.¹⁰ Only the North's military modernization program (and indeed only in specific areas, e.g., nuclear and missile technology) has continued to make noteworthy progress.

Reunification in Comparative Perspective

The two divided nations/regions share a surprising number of similarities. Both Korea and Taiwan were Japanese colonies throughout the first half of the 20th century. Both were split by the ideological cleavage that divided much of the world into opposing blocs during the 40-year Cold War. In both cases reunification has been consistently

⁹ Alexander Vershbow pointed out the critical problems of South Korea's cash payment to the North such as the North Korean laborers' salary in Gaeseung and South Korean tourists' entrance fee at Mt. Kumgang. *Hankyoreh Shinmun* [Hankyoreh News], October 19, 2006; as cited in Bae, fn. 19.

¹⁰ See Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, *Engaging North Korea: The Role of Economic Statecraft* (Honolulu: East West Center, Policy Study No. 59, 2011).

embraced as a national objective by both halves since their division; although this was not a realistic option during the Cold War it has risen to the top of their political agendas since. Pyongyang from the outset claimed sovereignty over the entire peninsula and established its Korean People's Assembly to represent the South presumptively, thereafter pressing for a relatively centralized Federation of Koryo (in contrast to the South's preference for a far looser "commonwealth"). In the Chinese case as well, the Nationalist government in Taiwan has continued to represent all mainland provinces (including Outer Mongolia) in its National Assembly long after its physical loss of the Mainland. China has appointed Taiwan representatives to seats in both the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and the National People's Congress, and the Revolutionary Guomindang (i.e., the faction of the KMT that split with Chiang Kai-shek when he retreated from the Mainland) continues to function. Both Korea and Taiwan organized cabinet-level ministries to focus on the issue (the Ministry of National Unification in South Korea and the National Unification Council in Taiwan, though the latter was "discontinued" or "ceased to function" by the order of Chen Shui-bian in 2006). The formal constitutions of both China and Taiwan still refer to "one China," though according to the "1992 consensus" that permitted them to engage in cross-Strait negotiations they agree to disagree in their interpretation of that "China." The two Koreas, like the two Chinas (and unlike the two Germans, under Brandt and Honecker), have declined to recognize each other diplomatically (to avoid formalizing their divided status), but the two Koreas permit each other to engage in the full range of diplomatic contacts including joint membership in the United Nations, unlike the two Chinas (Taiwan, adopting "pragmatic diplomacy" in the 1990s, offered to permit this, but Beijing continues to adhere to the "one China principle," meaning it will break relations with any state recognizing Taiwan).

Yet within these parallels there are also significant contrasts. Both cases were involved in civil wars at their points of origin—but while the Chinese civil war preceded division, the Korean civil war—equally bitter and bloody—followed it. And in both cases the contingency of a reuse of force has continued to haunt reunification efforts, though this option has taken quite different forms in the two cases. In both cases, the two divided halves have both pursued competitive modernization as a way of gaining performance legitimacy and leadership in the reunification struggle, and this has in both cases resulted in asymmetrical outcomes—but again, in different ways. Finally, in both cases the international patron-client ties formed during the Cold War that divided the two nations and embedded each half in its own bloc have continued to exercise an impact on unification efforts even after the end of the Cold War released them from that embeddedness.

Force—In both cases it has been the socialist states that have continued to insist on the right to resort to force, while insisting on their preference for peaceful reunification. After all, the socialist regimes came to power through violent revolution, which continued to inform their legitimacy claims as well as their early foreign policy choices. Throughout the Maoist years, national liberation via people's war was explicitly endorsed as a solution to the Taiwan issue, and even after the shift to "peaceful reunification" during the reform era Beijing has threatened violence from time to time and steadfastly refused to forfeit its sovereign right to use it (including the nuclear option) under vaguely specified conditions. Thus in 1991-1992, even as ARATS negotiated with the SEF in Singapore under "one China" auspices, Beijing decided to construct missiles to implant (starting in 1994) across from Taiwan and tasked the PLA to prepare for the

annexation of Taiwan, and in 1995-1996 the PLA's growing capabilities were put on display to intimidate the Taiwanese electorate. Beijing has repeated its military exercises and threatening rhetoric during electoral campaigns and at other tension points since then, though much less since the rise of Hu Jintao, who seemed to have noticed the adverse effects on the Taiwanese electorate, giving rise to such populist countermeasures as the 2004 referendum.¹¹ Yet despite the improvement in cross-Strait relations since 2008, the construction of missile sites along the Fujian coast has continued. Does Beijing still cherish a covert option of achieving "one China" by force? It is problematic to infer intentions from capabilities, but to judge from the composition of China's weapons buildup, the objective seems not to be invasion—i.e., reunification by force—but the infliction of a punishment or the exercise of access denial/area denial. Punishment—raining China's 1,000-odd missiles on every conceivable target on the island—would presumably be unleashed in the event of Taiwan's declaration of independence (assuming there is some clear definition of what that might constitute). Such a blow would no doubt unleash panic, capital flight, and economic paralysis, though that alone would not necessarily lead to capitulation and national reunification. Access denial – aircraft carrier, guided missile destroyers, submarines, anti-ship cruise and future ballistic missiles—is aimed at deterring the US 7th Fleet from interfering in reunification efforts (as they did in 1996).¹² Both seem based on the premise that a shift in the local (not necessarily the global) balance power will eventually oblige Taiwan to reunite with the Mainland and the US will not dare try to stop it. Yet the short-term response to the buildup, both electorally and in terms of Taiwan's weapons acquisitions, has been to balance rather than to bandwagon. The long-term response may be to bandwagon if and when China's credible threat to the island can exact a price the US is unable or unwilling to pay to defend it, but that may take some time. In any case, Walt has shown that the decision to balance or to bandwagon is based not on relative power alone, but on the balance of threat. Power (i.e., capability) is one dimension of threat, but some measurement of intention is also inescapably relevant. So as long as China poses a perceived threat to Taiwan (and in the case of amphibious exercises and missile tests the threat is explicit), the response by Taiwan and the US will probably be to balance, and the greater the threat, the greater the balancing effort. Unless China successfully employs its coercive option, as North Korea attempted to do and North Vietnam succeeded in doing, the military component of China's strategy will discredit and frustrate peaceful reunification efforts and eventually lose credibility.¹³ The Hu Jintao regime seemed to have recognized these implications and reduced at least the level of visible threat accordingly.

If this is true in the Chinese case then it is doubly true in the Korean case, where the coercive option has been far more persistently exercised. Both the North and the South were completely devastated by the Korean War, and the North has not repeated a

¹¹ On March 20, 2004, Taiwan held a precedent-setting referendum which posed two questions: whether Taiwan should acquire more advanced anti-missile weapons if the PRC refuses to withdraw the missiles it has targeted on Taiwan; and whether the Taiwan government should engage in negotiations with the PRC on President Chen's proposed "peace and stability" framework for cross-Strait interactions. The measures failed when only about 40% of the Taiwanese electorate participated in the referendum vote, a rate insufficient to meet the 50% requirement for passage under Taiwan law.

¹² See *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China* (Washington, D.C. Office of the Department of Defense, 2007).

¹³ As Talleyrand put it, "You can do anything with bayonets except sit on them."

full-scale invasion, shifting thereafter to commando-type raids, assassinations, bombings, and other such provocations. There were many of such provocations: in January 1968, North Korean commandos penetrated the Blue House in an assassination plot against the president; in August 1974 DPRK agents attempted once again to assassinate Park, instead killing his wife; in October 1983, 17 senior members of President Chun's entourage in Rangoon were killed by a North Korean bomb; in November 1987 a Korean Airlines commercial jet flying out of Baghdad exploded in mid-air killing 115 passengers; in 1996, 26 North Korean commandos infiltrated the South from an offshore submarine: and finally, in 2010, the North evidently torpedoed the South Korean frigate Cheonan and subsequently launched an artillery barrage on Yeonpyeong Island, both incidents taking place just outside North Korean territorial waters where the South had been holding military exercises.¹⁴ What is the purpose of such provocations? The most obvious answer is they are like commando operations in wartime—designed to incite revolution but failing that it is to sow confusion in the enemy ranks, to intimidate and demoralize the civilian population, to eliminate the South's outstanding leaders and otherwise pave the way for military victory. Yet any empirical evidence of progress toward achieving any of these objectives is very hard to find. Indeed the impact seems to have been generally counterproductive: as in the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, the electoral backlash against such incidents seemed to outweigh any conceivable tactic. One would think the North would over time become aware of this discrepancy between intention and effect and learn to modify its behavior accordingly (as has the PRC, in its post-2005 Taiwan policy). Some observers have suggested that provocations are a form of coercive bargaining to win aid from the South, and the fact that the North indeed experienced a sizable increase in aid and trade with both South Korea and the United States in the wake of the first Korean nuclear crisis in the 1990s lends some plausibility to this hypothesis. But is it not equally plausible that the increase in aid was not to reward blackmail but as a humanitarian response to the mass starvation that afflicted the North throughout much of the 1990s? (Of course it is also conceivable that while the South was motivated by humanitarian considerations the North perceived it as having been driven by successful blackmail.) In any event, such provocations have had diminishing marginal returns. There has been a substantial decline of aid from the West and the South since the North's nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009, leaving China virtually the sole donor. A possible reason for the adverse impact of the North's provocative tactics may have to do with the vast economic asymmetry between the North and the South. Even in strictly military terms the North has fallen technologically behind: the military superiority boasted by the North in the 1970s and 1980s was lost when overall GDP in the South so completely outdistanced that of the North, boosting the military budget correlatively. This means in effect that the provocations have become empty: the warning of more damaging attacks yet to come implicit in such provocations (e.g., Seoul to be engulfed in a "sea of fire") loses credibility, as both sides know that full-scale war would be suicidal for the North. Why then do such incidents recur? One conceivable reason is that tales of high-risk derring-do may strengthen the regime's domestic legitimacy, demonstrating the continuing efficacy of its "military first" policy.

¹⁴ The most intense period of provocations seems to be the latter half of the 1960s when North Korea was reported to have infiltrated a total of 3,693 armed agents into South Korea. For a list of North Korean provocations, see Dick K. Nanto, *North Korea: Chronology of Provocations, 1950-2003*, Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., updated March 18, 2003; also "Record of North Korea's Major Conventional Provocations since 1960s," compiled by the Office of the Korea Chair, Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 25, 2010. However I know of no systematic quantitative analysis of Pyongyang's provocations.

The bilateral impact of such incidents is of course to exacerbate North-South polarization, but this may have the useful side-effect of reciprocally strengthening the North's ideological solidarity with the PRC (particularly if and when the "enemy" is perceived to overreact). Thus China has since the nuclear tests and ensuing trade sanctions vastly increased both aid and trade with the DPRK (in technical violation of UN sanctions to which China previously agreed). Finally, it is also conceivable the provocations are deliberately designed to prevent further movement toward reunification, at least to prevent a form of reunification the North could not control. In classic balance-of-power terms, inasmuch as the North is now weaker than the South in economic and even in conventional military terms, if it hopes to "balance" against rather than "bandwagon" (or reunite) with the South, its only strategic option might be perceived to be a resort to violence.

The North's introduction of nuclear weapons to the peninsula has been the second major component of its coercive option. This acquisition was not really necessary to pose a credible defense or deterrent against ROK attack, as American tactical nuclear weapons had already been removed in 1991 and the KPA artillery trained on Seoul already sufficed to deter attack. But the advent of nuclear weapons alters the power balance in at least three ways. First, it improves the chances that the North would prevail in any bilateral conflict. Second, it makes it possible for the North to engage in "provocations" with greater impunity. Third, when the DPRK's development of a long-range delivery capability comes on stream, it will make possible North Korean nuclear power projection against other powers in the region (including Japan and US forward bases). By involving other powers as targets or as tangentially affected by this shift in the regional power balance, the essentially bilateral unification issue becomes transformed into a regional one. Reunification qua sunshine policy could be sustained in the 1990s when the Agreed Framework appeared to have resolved the nuclear issue. But in 2002 that issue reappeared in a more hostile political context, and in the six-party talks arranged by Beijing to cope with the crisis. The contradictions between the sunshine policy and the anti-proliferation regime pursued at the talks proved frustrating to both, adding to the inherent difficulty of trying to impose nonproliferation on an unwilling subject, and ultimately the sunshine policy was repudiated by its domestic constituency. Thus a failed anti-proliferation effort seems to have taken the reunification effort down with it.

Development—In both cases, economic modernization has been a top national priority after recovery from the devastation of civil war, but the North and the South have split in different ways. The developmental trajectories of North and South Korea have driven them along divergent rather than convergent paths, while in the case of China and Taiwan, economic reform and opening to the outside world in the former has brought the two into a more convergent trajectory, thereby facilitating economic integration. North Korea, in contrast, which began with the help of China and the Soviet Union as an exceptionally successful centrally planned economy, is a paradigm case of the diminishing returns of "extensive growth," now left far behind by the wave of socialist reform and international economic globalization that enabled China and Vietnam to survive the demise of the rest of the communist bloc. Beginning with an early factional pluralism, the leadership of the KWP has since the purge of inner-Party opposition in 1956 monocratized power under the Kim family, becoming the socialist world's only successful dynastic personality cult. This successful power monopoly, both laterally and vertically (over generational time), may help to account for the ideological rigidity that has inhibited successful reform in the DPRK even in the face of mass starvation. This

contrasts with the normalization of succession under collective leadership and the emergence of meritocratic norms in the leaderships of both China and Vietnam. Meanwhile South Korea and Taiwan have become East Asia's most successful free-market democracies. Despite the post-Cold War decline of ideology, this has widened the political cultural differences between North and South Korea into a chasm that even those with the best of wills would find it difficult to bridge. There are also cultural differences between Taiwan and China, but cultural differences are perhaps less relevant than the differences between factory owner/manager and worker; China's urban ambience is now so culturally compatible that around a million Taiwanese have opted to live there full time. This bodes well for cross-Strait reconciliation, though there are still continuing differences over human rights and democratic values that may impede a transposition of socio-cultural convergence into formal political merger.

Asymmetry—Whether converging or diverging, developmental trajectories have led to one parallel outcome. In both cases it has resulted in growing asymmetry, which makes an important difference in reunification narratives. The economically dominant “half” typically takes the initiative as “reunification entrepreneur.” Yet developmental asymmetry in the two cases breaks down quite differently. In the Korean case, after lagging behind throughout the first several decades, the South has since the mid-1980s taken a commanding lead, becoming the world's 12th largest economy, while the North has become one of the poorest on earth, with an aggregate GDP some 3-5 percent that of the South. The Chinese case is likewise asymmetrical but in a slightly different way: whereas economic dominance (and reform initiative) in the Korean case shifted from the North to the South since the 1980s, in China the Mainland has always been militarily and geographically bigger than Taiwan. The advent of reform in 1978 has exacerbated this asymmetry: While in 1991 China's GDP was only 2.2 times that of Taiwan, by 2010 it was 13.9 times as large.¹⁵ The military balance has shifted as well, partly because even a small proportion of what would soon become one of the world's biggest economies amounted to a very substantial arms budget, and partly thanks to successful PRC diplomatic efforts to dissuade other countries from selling arms to Taiwan (by threatening to cut off access to its market). The implication of asymmetry for reunification is that the stronger half of the divided pair has a stronger incentive (and greater resources) to press for reunification than the weaker half (implicitly assuming it will dominate the reunited state, to which it can make a greater contribution, including subsidizing the weaker half), and this has been empirically true in both cases. The impact of asymmetry is most obvious in the Chinese case, where the Mainland has consistently taken the lead in reunification efforts, at first by urging violent revolution, and in the post-Mao era by launching the “one country two system” and “three links” proposals for peaceful reunification. In the Korean case, the North, economically and militarily ahead in the early period, also took the initiative in early unification efforts, while the South has seized the initiative in the post-Cold War era. But while asymmetry permits the dominant half to take the lead in reunification, expecting to lead the reunited nation, it also paradoxically reduces the weaker half's incentive to subordinate itself to such an arrangement. The extreme case of this disincentive has been for the weaker half to opt out or “split” from the unification commitment. One of the major parties in Taiwan has its origins in the Taiwan Independence movement and still rhetorically endorses that eventual resolution, to Beijing's intense annoyance.

¹⁵ According to Tung Chen-Yuan, in *Taipei Times*, August 22, 2011, p. 8. Of course in per capita terms, Taiwan is still far ahead of the PRC, and will probably retain its lead for some time.

Patronage—Another interesting difference between the two cases is the involvement of outside international patronage. In both cases, national division coincided with a civil war, as noted earlier, and that civil war entailed the intervention of outside “great powers.” There were two for both cases: the US and the USSR in the China-Taiwan case, and the US and the PRC in the Korean case. But in the Chinese case Soviet patronage soon morphed into decades of bitter antipathy, leaving only the US. Thus during the late Cold War period and since, the China-Taiwan issue has been triangular. The Korean case has remained more “balanced,” involving two foreign powers from the outset, one on each side, which have remained loyal: North Korea’s sole defense alliance is with the PRC (the DPRK-Soviet alliance lapsed upon the dissolution of the USSR), and South Korea’s sole defense alliance is with the US. To some extent these patron-client ties were animated by the client’s inability to solve the unification issue unilaterally. Thus in Korea, the US became involved in the support of the South after the July 1950 *Blitzkrieg*, and China became involved in the support of the North when MacArthur’s bold counteroffensive threatened to unify Korea under the ROK. Upon reaching a stalemate, both China and the US then participated in the armistice talks that ended the Korean War (there was no peace treaty, only a truce) and continued to support their respective “sides” thereafter: Chinese troops remained in the North until 1958, and American troops remain in the South to this day (albeit in slowly diminishing number, now ca. 28,500).

In the China case, while neither patron became directly involved, both supplied material aid and advice: the Soviet Union, having invaded Manchuria in the same week as the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, distributed weapons of the defeated Kwantung Army to the CCP, facilitating its early victory there. China and the USSR then signed a 30-year treaty of mutual alliance, but this disintegrated by the end of the first decade in disputes over a tangle of issues at the core of which was equality. The Americans sent advisors and aid to KMT forces when they were fighting the Japanese and, after a temporary strategic fallout during the civil war, resumed this support upon the outbreak of the Korean War and maintained it through much of the Cold War. This naturally became a major grievance between China and the US, though its priority has varied. The issue faded during the intensification of the Sino-Soviet dispute in 1969-1971 when Moscow threatened preemptive strikes, leading to US intervention on behalf of China. This led to the formation of a “strategic triangle” in which the US cultivated better relations with the PRC and the USSR than either had with the other. This protected China from a Soviet preemptive strike and facilitated an uneasy Sino-Soviet reconciliation, with the main beneficiary being the US, which enabled a drawdown of troops from Vietnam and (via the Nixon Doctrine) from the Asian region without fear of leaving a strategic vacuum. But it also created a triangular relationship with Taiwan, whose relations with the US came to depend on China-US relations, which in turn depended on China-Soviet and US-Soviet relations; that is, when China-US cooperation improved due to shared concerns about Soviet ambitions, US-Taiwan relations deteriorated (and vice versa). At the end of the Cold War the Soviet factor dropped out of the picture and the China-US-Taiwan triangle became autonomous, i.e., when China-Taiwan relations soured, China-US relations improved (China needed the US to discipline Taiwan), and when China-Taiwan relations improved China became more indignant about US involvement. The essential impact of triangularization on China-Taiwan unification prospects was to open an ambiguous window in the global power balance to peaceful reunification, which had previously been foreclosed. In China-US normalization the US committed itself to a “one-China policy,” subtly different but conditionally compatible with China’s “one-

China principle,” i.e., provided force is not used (which would arouse “grave concern”), reunification may occur so long as both sides agree. In terms of triangular dynamics, the opening to China both reduces Taipei’s trust in the reliability of US protection and makes Taipei more receptive to Beijing’s overtures.

What is the impact of the involvement of the powers in the reunification scenario? In both cases there have been two ironical consequences. One has maintained the peace, while the second has impeded reunification. Outside involvement sustains peace only so long as the patrons want peace, of course; but since the Cold War and the growth of commercial intercourse and globalization the great powers have good reason to prefer peace unless their own vital interests are jeopardized. Thus outside involvement tends to have a pacifying effect. But it is not necessarily conducive to unification because unification involves a structural change in the international status quo and is inherently destabilizing. This underlying status quo bias is inconsistent with official rhetoric. In the Korean case, for example, both patrons have in principle endorsed reunification. But this endorsement tends to remain vague and passive, leaving concrete details to the clients who have an active interest in the issue. The patrons become actively engaged only when the two sides are on the verge of hostilities—because if war breaks out each would be treaty-bound to fight the other, which neither side wishes to do. The powers do not intervene to promote positive reunification efforts, only to protect their clients in case of security crises. In the Chinese case, the US thus became involved in the early Taiwan Strait crises over the offshore islands in the 1950s, and then again in 1996 during the missile crisis, but in both cases it carefully limited its involvement to defensive moves, refusing to authorize Chiang’s proposal to invade the Mainland during the post-Great Leap disaster for example. In the Korean case, when Kim Il Song first presented his plan to invade the South, Mao Zedong opposed it, agreeing to intervene only when the North was on the brink of collapse. The 1993-2006 nuclear proliferation crisis again invoked great power involvement, but concern over this issue eclipsed and ultimately derailed attempts at reunification via the “sunshine policy.” In the Taiwan case the counterbalancing role of the US has intensely frustrated and aggrieved the PRC, which given looming economic and military asymmetry feels that reunification on terms favorable to the Mainland would otherwise be quickly accepted and thus understandably prefers to define the issue in purely “domestic” (i.e., bilateral) terms (unless Taiwan moves toward independence). In the Korean case, outside involvement has been more balanced and thus neither the DPRK nor the ROK has seriously sought to divest itself unilaterally from outside patronage (though segments of the South Korean electorate have at times expressed a preference for that option).

Conclusions

The end of the Cold War has affected the two pairs in quite different ways. In the case of China and Taiwan, the former emerged from its crackdown at Tiananmen in June 1989 with its international escutcheon blemished and its ideological confidence shaken. The leadership was in a quandary for the following two years, as some rose to the defense of the old ideological bromides blaming Western bourgeoisie for manipulating “peaceful evolution” while the surviving reformers came under a cloud for having permitted disruptive popular unrest. Not until Deng Xiaoping’s 1992 “voyage to the south” in defense of continuing economic reform was the impasse broken: China would quietly shelve political reform and rely on strengthening proletarian dictatorship to maintain discipline over a resurgence of economic reform. This proved to be the

winning formula, and for the following two decades China experienced a sustained economic boom rarely if ever seen before. Meanwhile, Taiwan emerged from the Cold War in far better political shape than the Mainland as it proceeded to dismantle the KMT's martial law regime (i.e., dictatorship) and organize a democratic polity. Economically export-oriented growth was sustained while pushing manufacturing up the value chain into the electronic and high-tech sectors. Its public image improved by democratization, Taiwan adopted a new foreign policy of "flexible" diplomacy, seeking new allies (even among former socialist states) and lowering its criteria for recognition. As economic growth boomed on both sides of the Strait, the mutual advantages of trade complementarity became obvious and Taiwan's business elites eventually responded to the Mainland's invitation to engage in "three links" (via Hong Kong), albeit without much support for "one country two systems." Cross-Strait trade boomed in the post-Tiananmen era, and foreign investment followed. China has become Taiwan's largest (as Taiwan has become one of China's largest) trade and investment partner. The political implications of cross-Strait economic integration are not yet entirely clear. Pessimists point with alarm to Taiwan's one-sided dependency and to the dangers of mainland political blackmail or the "hollowing out" of Taiwan's industrial sector. Optimists point out that the Mainland too has benefited from the thriving economic relationship, particularly in the Pearl River Delta and southeastern coastal regions, and that political leaders have hence made very limited and cautious use of their ability to blackmail Taipei economically. Perhaps, with more balanced investment flows since the June 2010 passage of the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), China will become still more inhibited about using force against the island by concern over its sunk trade and investment costs. So far, economic integration seems at least to have contributed to a tenuous *modus vivendi*, if not yet to a heightened interest in political reunification.

Though not separated by a Strait, the gulf between the two Koreas has in contrast grown wider since the Cold War. Despite a big setback in the Asian financial crisis, the South's economy thrived in the globalizing post-Cold War context while the North, temporarily abandoned by both former patrons, spiraled into economic free-fall. The high-flying South became the initiator of new and innovative unification proposals, while the North the skeptical and paranoid respondent. Divergent developmental trajectories led to yawning North-South asymmetry, precipitating the North's compensatory focus on nuclear self-strengthening. The enhanced threat from the North set off a chain reaction that invoked the great powers to forestall it, polarized the two sides and derailed bilateral unification efforts. Although neither Korea has endorsed the Taiwanese secessionist option explicitly, given their longer and more centralized history of unity and the lack of a "sub-ethnic" split, the political ramifications of the North's actions suggest it has in effect used nuclear weaponization to opt out of the unification dynamic. Given the extreme indigence in the North there may be an elite-mass split on this issue (it is difficult to get polling data on public opinion there).

By dint of their long-term history of support for their respective halves of the two divided nations, the outside powers continue to be invoked at critical junctures in support of their clients. But they find themselves pulled in different directions in two different games. In the China-Taiwan case the triangular logic of the situation inclines both China and Taiwan to seek the support of the US, either in support of unification or to resist it, while the US seeks to play the "pivot," cultivating positive relations with both sides without alienating either (though this is difficult, as the two clients' preferences tend to

be exclusive). Growing cross-Strait commerce makes a “marriage” tempting for Taiwan while the growing cross-Strait power asymmetry raises the stakes against American intervention to prevent that. But if the game shifts from win-win commercial intercourse to balance of threat, any deal could be cancelled, forcing the US to decide whether to fight or “lose” Taiwan. In the Korean case both outside powers, finding their shared interest in nonproliferation and peace and stability undermined by a dangerously escalating inter-Korean security dilemma, are inclined to protect their respective clients first. This however further polarizes the situation, facilitating the North’s acquisition of the advanced weaponry both oppose. In a sense, China and the US are in an analogous position in the two cases but pulled in opposite directions. The logic of asymmetry implies that the stronger half may be expected to dominate a consummated reunification. This means that *ceteris paribus*, the ROK in the Korean case and China in the Taiwan case are in a position to function as dominant unifiers. This obliges both the US and China to choose between their commitment to peaceful reunification and the prospect of “losing” a client. The obvious diplomatic quid pro quo would be for China in effect to write off the DPRK to the South while the US tells Taiwan to accept “one country two systems” or whatever terms it can get from the Mainland.¹⁶ But of course such a solution, which might still have been plausible at the Treaty of Versailles, ignores the preferences of the citizenry and/or leadership of the two halves, who might well veto the deal.¹⁷ At the end of the day it is the membership of the two halves who have the greatest stake in whether their national future is reunited or remains on hold.

¹⁶ I owe this idea to my colleague Hong Yung Lee.

¹⁷ There is also the issue of bargaining equity in such a tradeoff: the “quid” of North Korea is not exactly equal to the “quo” of Taiwan.