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## The Danger of the Sunshine Policy

Man-won Ji\*

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Previous governments' North Korea policies have been based on the principle of reciprocity, which has allowed them to deal with the North by taking alternately the two measures of "wind" and "sunshine." It is surprising, therefore, that the new government has announced that it will consistently and unconditionally pursue a sunshine policy, in defiance of the principle of reciprocity.

While this idea may look progressive, it is in reality a dangerous and unreasonable policy that may hurt ourselves. If we consistently take a sunshine policy even when the North sends a submarine to our coast, makes a military move, and hits us on the cheek, then the North will begin to wonder whether "this incredibly generous uncle is a man of naivete or of hidden intention."

Assume for a moment that the North thinks that the South is a naive uncle. The North will find it difficult to resist the idea of a military attack against the South, which it has been dreaming for long years. The North will be as joyful as Hitler was when he met Chamberlain. Now assume that the North thinks otherwise, and sees some hidden intention behind the South's generosity. The North will shake its fist in anger, saying "We should knock down the South before we collapse."

What is the sunshine policy, anyway? In a TV debate, the Presidential adviser for national security explained it in the follow-

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ing way: "There are two different groups in North Korea today. One is a group of political elite wishing to maintain the existing system, and the other is ordinary residents. The former group will never change whatever policy measures we take. Thus we must target the latter for opening and reform. That was how Germany was reunified." The North's official authority must have had access to this program. While the President denies the intention of "a reunification by absorption," his assistants and staff members are declaring such an intention in public. The idea is to gradually open up the North Korean society and people, alienate them from the political elite wishing to maintain the system, and use this people power for reunification just as Germany did.

The North's officials must have been really angry when they listened to what the South's national security officials had to say on the sunshine policy. They might have said, "The South is trying to stir up our residents. Why don't we make a first move and alienate the South's residents from the government?" The submarine incidents on June 22, 1998, and on July 12, 1998, might be acts of retaliation, reflecting such anger on the part of the North's officials.

For the past 15 years, North Korean submarines had been in the South's territorial waters for a number of times. Yet, they had never been detected until recently. In the last two years, they were caught three times. It signifies that the North is accelerating their infiltration activities for gathering combat and military information.

Opening is a poison to Kim Jong-il. It is clearly stipulated in North Korea, therefore, that "opening is an act of destroying our own-style socialist system." Kim Jong-il will never take whatever gifts we give in exchange for the existing system and more importantly his life. It is for this reason that the problem of separated family members cannot be solved. It would be an illusion to think that Kim Jong-il would compromise on this matter in return for some fertilizer. No matter how much aid we give to the North, it will take only the aid, and not allow the wind of reform to spread to the

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people. If the wind of reform spread wide enough to endanger the Kim Jong-il system, what would he do? He would attempt a military attack. If he were bound to die, he would try to become a hero who would have accomplished the national goal of reunification. Moreover, he firmly believes that he could destroy the South's military in three days. His belief might have been reinforced by the way the South handled the successive submarine incidents.

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The North Korean submarine that appeared on our east coast last June was all by itself. The South Korean military could not take firm control over such a small submarine, however. While the Blue House absurdly appraised the military, military leaders were busy defending themselves, saying "In fact, it is almost impossible to detect a submarine. How could we watch over the entire sea?" This statement must have been conveyed to the North's officials, who then could have interpreted it as "Now you can send submarines without worrying about being caught." Perhaps that is why they sent another submarine in July. No military leader in the world, except for South Korean military leaders, would make such a foolish statement right in front of the enemy. One cannot help questioning the basic integrity of the South's military leaders. How could we dare to put forward the sunshine policy with such a weak military posture?

North Korea might reason in the following ways. First, the South Korean military does not exist. Second, the South Korean society will soon fall into a state of chaos, due to mass lay-offs and the government's inability to prevent them. Third, the North should stir up the South Korean people for a revolt against the government. Fourth, even if some spies get caught, the South's new government is not likely to make a fuss about it as they cannot desert the sunshine policy at once. Fifth, when the South Korean society as a whole turns into an anarchic state, then the North should take over it.

## Aiding the Enemy is Tantamount to the Act of Benefiting the Enemy

The fact that North Korea has received a herd of cows from the South does not mean that it will embrace the wind of opening. It is merely trying to get as much material aid as possible without endangering the existing system. The North will take more cows and even pigs. It will ask the South to construct infrastructure in areas separated from its people. It will build factories near the armistice line, and use electricity coming from the South. It will take all the money while completely cutting off contacts with North Korean residents.

Even though North Korean residents are our brethren, North Korea is clearly our enemy. The fact that the North is our enemy can be testified by the tension along the armistice line and the enormous amount of budget we spend for defense every year. "The act of aiding the enemy" is clearly against military principles. It creates great confusion when the President orders our soldiers to watch out the North for 24 hours a day while he is aiding the North. If the government helps the enemy, why cannot people and even soldiers help the enemy? Therefore, it will be no longer a crime to benefit the North by the act of spying. All the spies in jail should be released, and they will do their jobs overtly in the South Korean society. The public's concern for national security will be gradually weakened. The indolence and corruption within the military will increase.

If we want to aid the North economically, then we must first change our relationship with the North from that of animosity to that of amity. It means changing the whole system that determines the North-South Korean relations. The major reason why the relations have been colored by animosity is the insistence on reunification. If it is guaranteed that neither will attempt a reunification, then the North and the South could be good neighbors. As long as the road leading to reunification remains open, the road leading to the North's military attack is also

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open. That is why the North's submarines continue to move around under the sea.

For the past fifty years, the North and the South have continued to cry out for reunification. When the North cried out loud, the South got tense, and vice versa. Reunification leads directly to tension. For the past fifty years, we have clearly seen how reunification can block peace on the Korean peninsula.

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### **Reunification or Peace?**

For most of us, reunification meant primarily "a political reunification," which we thought could be accomplished by a peaceful means. Unlike Germany, however, this seems impossible in Korea. One can think of two different models of peaceful reunification.

One is the model of reunification by absorption, and the other that of reunification by agreement. Many people are dreaming of reunification by absorption in Korea. They are looking forward to a critical time for reunification by absorption, such as the spread of mass revolt in North Korean society followed by a state of anarchy. This is nothing but a day-dream, however. When the North Korean society gets chaotic, its military and police will be heavily armed. In order to take control of the collapsing North, then South Korean military would have to cross the armistice line. This would mean a war with the North Korean military. Neighboring countries would not approve of the crossing.

In general, economic difficulties may destroy regimes, but not states. If states fell down due to poverty, there would be no states

left in Africa. When North Korea becomes chaotic, someone like Park Chung-hee will rise to the occasion and restore order. It would be naive to think that he would give the newly ordered North to the South Korean government. Thus reunification by absorption would not be so simple and easy. The new government has declared several times that it has "no intention for reunification by absorption," but it is not really a matter of intention, but a matter whose possibility is highly questionable.

Then, would it be possible to achieve a peaceful reunification by an agreement between the North's political elite and the South's? It would be impossible within the next 100 years. For the past half century, South Korean politics have been colored by extreme conflicts between government parties and opposition parties. They have never been able to reach a genuine agreement.

Not being able to cooperate with the opposition party, how could the South Korean government cooperate with the North Korean elite in completing highly political and complicated tasks for reunification, such as selecting a single leader representing the whole nation, and devising a new legal system. It would be as unlikely as seeing rain in the Sahara desert. Reunification by an agreement would be one hundred times as difficult as reunification by absorption.

In sum, reunification of Korea, whether by absorption or by an agreement, seems impossible. As long as South Korea continues to cry out for this unlikely goal, North Korea will not give up its intention of "reunification by force." Between reunification by absorption and reunification by force, the latter has a greater chance than the former.

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## Let's Change the System of North-South Korean Relations

There is no way we can achieve reunification peacefully. Peace and reunification exist in separation. They are like two rabbits running in different directions. We must choose one, and only one. If

we choose peace, we should be engaged in arms reduction talks with the North, and change the picture of the armistice line. This can be achieved by dialogue and compromise. Peace, but not reunification, can be made through bargaining. Choosing peace, the South's military and the North's military can be good allies. Choosing reunification, however, they cannot help being enemies to each other.

The current government must take an offensive approach based on new thinking. It must declare the following to the North and to the world: "Reunification cannot be achieved by intention. It may come to us someday while the North and the South live on the principle of peaceful coexistence. Therefore, the two sides must desert their reunification policies, and be recognized as two independent states, each with its own sovereignty. This can be achieved by changing the existing system. Thus we propose that the armistice line be transformed into a border line and that both the North and the South reduce their military manpower to 100 thousand under UN inspections."

If North Korea does not agree to this proposal, it will have to suffer from international isolation. It will receive no food aid from international society. Instead of trying to solve such a fundamental problem, the government is acting as if it is dying to aid North Korea, thus weakening the public's consciousness for national security in the process. ■■■

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