

V&S Digest

The following are abstracts of papers appearing in this issue of 『Vision & Strategy』.

Improving Inter-Korean Relations


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The unification policy of South Korean authorities has followed changes in the internal and external environment. Through the 1970s and 1980s, when the extreme antagonism between the two Koreas began to ease, each side proposed its own method of unification according to their respective principles. The Socialist Bloc 's reforms in the late 1980s, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 provided an opportunity for the two Koreas to build a foundation for peaceful coexistence, joint prosperity, and eventually reunification. In the 1980s and 1990s North Korea began to experience political and economic difficulties, and the establishment of permanent peace on the peninsula became an issue linked with the regime 's very survival. The increasing economic gap between South and North Korea also helped legitimize efforts towards reunification. In 2000, South Korea 's GNI, per capita GDP, and trade surplus figures were 27, 13, and 170 times larger than those of North Korea.

From the early days of President Kim Dae Jung 's regime, the government showed unusually high interest in inter-Korean relations. The government 's reconciliation and cooperation policy towards North Korea aimed at creating an " actual unification " with free travel and peace on the peninsula before the onset of legal and institutional reunification. These efforts to improve relations resulted in the Inter-Korean Summit in June 2000 as well as six Ministerial level talks. In addition, the policy provided opportunities for economic cooperation.

However, inter-Korean relations have not always proceeded smoothly. The worsened domestic political situation, as well as the passive attitude of North Korea, have been obstacles preventing the continued improvement of relations after the June 2000 Summit. At present, the South Korean government needs to work towards a permanent relationship of reconciliation and cooperation with the North.

Results will not be achieved without effort and both Koreas need to work for reunification. First, South Korea needs to fulfill the promises of President Kim 's Berlin Declaration and the Inter-Korean Summit. An especially urgent task is the ratification of the four agreements related to economic cooperation adopted at the November 2000 working level talks for South-North economic cooperation. Also, by treating the isolated North in a friendlier way, South Korea needs to gain the North 's trust. Finally, and most importantly, the South Korean government needs to maintain its " Sunshine Policy " and cooperate with the US to improve North Korea-US relations. 

Trend of Globalization and Korea 's Response


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The WTO, founded in 1995, is an international organization with enough legal influence to overrule even national sovereignty. If a country violates the goals of the WTO system, a country 's economy cannot be protected by national sovereignty. The WTO system requires Korea to once again re-adapt. While GATT regulations focused on manufactured goods, made numerous exceptions for agricultural products, and left the finance and service sectors unrestricted, the WTO demands the complete opening of not only manufactures and agricultural products but also services and intangible assets such as intellectual property rights.

Furthermore, the advanced countries, led by the United States, are promoting globalization and unlimited competition. Globalization refers to a union of nation states such as the European Union, and taken further, the aggregation of these superstates under a world government to form a world state. The EU has nearly become a superstate, with a multinational society, union of states, a common economy, and a common market. Meanwhile, the US has barely emerged from the stage of nation state, national economy, and participation in international markets to form a rudimentary bloc with Canada and Mexico in NAFTA. The US 's advocacy of globalization is an effort to gain economic and political supremacy based on its unrivalled military strength, and this pursuit of a Pax Americana is resulting in resistance from other countries.

Despite this, it is clear that globalization will be the final stage in the development of human society. Meanwhile, Korea has not yet even realized a loose economic union (such as a free trade area) with its neighbors. Even when including North Korea, Korea is a relatively small country with only 70 million people, and a GNP of 500 billion dollars. Sandwiched between China, with a population of 1.3 billion, and Japan, with a GNP of 4 trillion dollars, Korea would not be able to compete individually with large, advanced economies such as the US and EU.

Therefore, Korea should go beyond narrow nationalism and quickly form an economic union with China and Japan, starting with a common market. Forming an Asia-Pacific Regional Union in the shortest time possible is the only way to check and balance relations with future regional blocs of Europe, the Americas, and the Islamic region. 

Improving Cultural Competitiveness for Korea 's Long Term Development

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The world is becoming increasingly multi-cultural. Through a process of refinement, each country is using its culture, which is the result of a long development process, as a source of national competitiveness. This cultural competitiveness is not limited to the cultural domain, but is an important factor in determining quality of life in all sectors, including the economy and politics.

The Korean government has a strong understanding of cultural competitiveness and intends to develop it. This is shown by the Ministry of Culture 's unprecedentedly high budget, the support of culture through cultural promotion agencies, and spending by regional governments to publicize their local cultures. So far, however, it is uncertain whether these efforts have yielded any clear results. The fact that a viable and concrete alternative to materialistic values has not been proposed indicates that the efforts to promote culture still have a long way to go. There are several reasons for the current situation. First, there is a tension between capitalism and humanistic values. The development of capitalism has resulted in an amoral mentality that allows any action if it brings profit. Second, the relationship between the consumer and creator of culture has become centered around satisfying the desires of consumers rather than intelligent exchange. Third, there is a lack of cultural self-sufficiency.

To gain cultural competitiveness, Korea needs to first determine its perspective regarding the elements of culture. In this respect, Korea should find an appropriate point of connection between high culture and popular culture. Second, standards for the adoption of culture need to be acquired based on a national understanding of cultural phenomenon. Third, the short and long term goals for the promotion of culture should be connected with Korean ideals.

Cultural competitiveness cannot be developed merely by turning cultural assets into commodities. Instead of such a direct approach, a more basic strategy is needed to put Korea on the vanguard of world culture.

This basic strategy consists of viewing culture as the expression of the human mind and sentiments, and as a field of creativity in life. Also, a group movement is needed to spread the highly developed style of art into a broader public. Finally, a balanced perspective is needed in the exchange of Korean and foreign culture, and this can be helped by appropriate ties between the artistic and commercial sectors. It is important to base Korean culture on life experience in Korea. **V&S**

Brain Drain from Science and Engineering

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Statistics show that young people are avoiding the science and engineering fields. In the percentage of high school students who applied to the science fields was 43.4% in 1997, but only 26.9% in 2002. Also, a recent study showed that only 20% of middle school students hope to enter the science fields.

In the 21st century information era, the key to competitiveness is the creation and application of new knowledge, and science and technology are main factors in creating new knowledge.

The biggest reason for the avoidance of science and engineering is low compensation. According to a recent survey of university and graduate students in science and engineering, 87% stated that the biggest reason for the unpopularity of these fields was low compensation and an uncertain future.

A second reason is relatively low social position. While graduates in science and engineering account for about 50% of workers who are university graduates, these people are sparse in Korea's leadership positions, accounting for only 8% of lawmakers, 16% of civil servants above the 3rd level, and about 26% of company directors.

The third reason for avoidance is uncertain employment. During the 1997-98 financial crisis, private companies reduced their research staff by 14.6%.

A fourth reason is the downward standardization of high school education, underdeveloped science education in middle and high school, and students' avoidance of difficult subjects such as math, physics, and chemistry.


To overcome the avoidance of science and engineering and to foster talent, a few measures can be suggested. First, the government needs to abolish undergraduate law and medical schools, and replace them with professional graduate schools.

Second, exemption from military service should be expanded for science and engineering students, which would help attract top talent to these fields.

Third, programs for gifted science students should be strengthened. The university entry system should be revised to allow gifted science students into KAIST or Seoul National University without an entrance exam.

Fourth, the curriculum of science and engineering university education should be revised to meet the demand from business and research centers, while facilities should also be improved.

Fifth, to promote research in the basic sciences, and create stable jobs in these areas, national research centers should be created.

Finally and most importantly, the public perception of science and engineering should be adjusted and a clear vision should be adopted. 

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