Window of opportunity for a New Détente: “Tight Link Strategy” of Moon Jae-in Administration and ROK–DPRK–US triangle

Kyungwon Choi
Faculty of Foreign Studies, Tokoha University, Shizuoka, Japan

ABSTRACT
Regarding North Korea’s denuclearization and peace-building on the Korean Peninsula, South-North Korean dialogues used to be secondary to the United States (US) and Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) negotiations. There were frictions between the two. However, this situation changed on the road to the US-DPRK summits in Singapore on June 12, 2018, and in Hanoi on February 26, 2019.

From the perspective of a “détente as a policy,” this paper will define the Moon Jae-in administration’s policy as a “Tight Link Strategy” and examine how South Korea was trying to connect the South-North Korean dialogue and the US-DPRK negotiations tightly.

The “Tight Link Strategy” has two aspects: one is that it made a new way to a “Fourth Détente” on the Korean Peninsular. Through this strategy, President Moon Jae-in was able to cooperate with Chairman Kim Jong-un for an integrated policy to obtain concrete results on denuclearization and peace-building at the US-DPRK summit. The other aspect is that the “Tight Link Strategy” contained a risk: if US-DPRK negotiation stagnates, the progress in the South-North Korean dialogue will become difficult as well. This risk became a reality after the failure of the US-DPRK summit in Hanoi and caused the stagnation of South-North Korean relations.

The Moon Jae-in administration will probably try to change its “Tight Link Strategy” policy. South Korea is now trying to expand its policy space toward North Korea by promoting individual tourism to North Korea, and the railway-road connection project between South and North Korea. At the same time, he will have to avoid possible friction with the United States for policy coordination toward North Korea and use a “Loose Link” between South-North Korean dialogues and US-DPRK negotiations.

1. Introduction
With the end of the Cold War in 1991 and the first Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) nuclear crisis in 1993, the issues of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program and peace-building on the Korean Peninsula have become the core issues in resolving the regional conflict. During this process, South–North Korean dialogues have
often become secondary as the United States (US) and DPRK negotiations have taken precedence. This is because North Korea has been focused on negotiations with the US. Meanwhile, the Republic of Korea (ROK) was concerned that its exclusion from decisions on denuclearization issues and peace-building would not only undermine its policy leadership but also hinder its security. The Kim Young-sam administration (1993–98) had made South–North Korean dialogue a prerequisite for US–DPRK negotiation and even deterred talks between the US and North Korea.\(^1\) In the 2000s, the progressive Kim Dae-Jung administration (1998–2003) and the Roh Moo-hyun administration (2003–2008) emphasized the development of South–North Korean relations and sought to expand their North Korean policy independently,\(^2\) despite the friction it would cause with the United States. This has not only made difficult the US and ROK cooperation on the North Korean nuclear issue but has also hindered the promotion for a consistent policy.\(^3\)

However, this situation changed on the road to the US–DPRK summits in Singapore on June 12, 2018, and in Hanoi on February 26, 2019. South–North Korean dialogue was not a prerequisite. No conflict or friction resulted between the summits and the South–North Korea dialogue. The Moon Jae-in administration did not put the South–North Korean dialogue and US–DPRK negotiation in rivalry, and has actually played a role in setting the stage for the US–DPRK negotiations. The leaders of South and North Korea were able to cooperate for an integrated policy to obtain concrete results on denuclearization and peace-building at the US–DPRK summit. In this way, both talks became linked and created the “Détente of 2018”.

From the perspective of “détente as a policy,”\(^4\) first, I will define the Moon Jae-in administration’s policy as a “Tight Link Strategy”: a strategy that tries to tightly connect the South–North Korean dialogue and the US–DPRK negotiations. With this analysis concept, I will examine why the Moon Jae-in administration has chosen the “Tight Link Strategy” and how South–North Korean dialogue and US–DPRK negotiation have actually been “linked tightly”. Second, this paper will add an analysis of the pitfall that befell President Moon Jae-in as the “Détente of 2018” entered a new phase due to the stagnation of South–North Korea relation following the failure of the 2nd US–DPRK summit in Hanoi in February 2019. Third, I will examine how the Moon Jae-in administration sought to turn the “tight link” between South–North Korean dialogue and US–DPRK negotiations to a “loose link”.

2. The “Fourth Détente” on the Korean Peninsula

The “Détente of 2018” is the fourth Détente after the “Détente of 1972,” the “Détente of 1991,” and the “Détente of 2000.” All four Détentes are specific historical periods that mitigate military tensions between the two Koreas, through concrete policies promoted by the two countries. From the perspective of “détente as a policy,” the “Détente of 1972” and the “Détente of 1991” are simply reactions to the changes in the international order, such as the rapprochement between the US and the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) in the early 1970s or the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s. On the other hand, the

\(^1\) Oberdorfer and Carlin, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 228–32.
\(^2\) Lee, *Kalnal wie Pyeonghwa*, 249–60.
\(^3\) Jun, “Critical Review of and Lessons from the Nuclear Negotiations with North Korea for Twenty Years,” 209–10.
\(^4\) Stevenson, *The Rise and Fall of Détente*, 6–7.
“Déntente of 2000” after the first South–North Korean summit and the “Déntente of 2018” had been carried out deliberately by the two Koreas with the purpose to create regional order through relaxation of tension. Among others, the “Déntente of 2018” has two characteristics: First, South and North Korea formed a policy fusion to ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula through policy initiatives. Second, the Moon Jae-in administration promoted a “tight link” between South–North Korean dialogues and the US–DPRK negotiations.

Historically, the core issue around the Korean Peninsular have been maintaining the balance of power among great powers such as the US, the Soviet Union, and the PRC as well as a system for co-existence between South and North Korea. Following the sudden increase in conflicts between the US and the Soviet Union after World War II, the two countries sought to avoid a direct confrontation on the Korean Peninsula by “deterring war through division,” and both withdrew their military forces from the Korean Peninsula. However, this failed to prevent tensions and conflicts between South and North Korea, and as a result of the Korean War, bilateral alliances were formed: the military alliances formed between the US and South Korea (1953), PRC and North Korea (1961), and the Soviet Union and North Korea (1961). Each functioned as a mutual deterrent, resulting in a divided system⁵, in which an all-out war became impossible. The policy of “discouraging war through mutual deterrence” was working.

The tensions among these bilateral alliances have eased thanks to the improvement in relations between the US and PRC in the early 1970s; both had been in a military conflict during the Korean War. The US and PRC shared the common goal of stabilizing the Korean Peninsula, and the two have aimed for a “cooperation-based war deterrence” that seeks “joint action.” In the short term, the US and PRC would exert influence on their respective allies, South Korea and North Korea, to prevent conflict. The long-term objective was to convert the cease-fire agreement into a peace agreement and to establish a system to maintain stability in regional politics.⁶ However, although the US and PRC succeeded in localizing the conflict on the Korean Peninsula preventing an all-out war, the peace-building goal could not be achieved. This exposed the limits of the US–PRC “joint action” which is still ongoing. The two countries shared the goal of stabilizing the Korean Peninsula, but could not agree on the policy⁷

South and North Korean began a dialogue in 1972, following the changes in US–PRC rapprochement. However, since “competition between the regimes” was strongly defining both parties’ positions, neither one of them had the intention of ensuring co-existence. North Korea, which was in a position of dominance, accepted the Déntente tactically and strategically to unsettle South Korea, while South Korea was concerned that the Korean peninsula issue would be treated as a “transaction” between the US and PRC, weakening US military presence. South and North Korea sought to improve their relationship as a response to the US–PRC rapprochement but it did not lead to substantial ease of tensions between the two Koreas. The limits of a passive response to changing international politics became apparent.

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⁵Okonogi, “The Domestic Roots of the Korean War”.
⁶Lee, Mikan no Heiwa, 337–9.
⁷Choi, “Chosenhanto no Anteikanimuketa Beityu no Mosaku,” 75–83.
In 1991, following the changes in international affairs after the end of the Cold War, South and North Korea simultaneously joined the United Nations and entered into the “Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation Between South and North.” It was very advantageous to create a system of co-existence between South and North Korea, but there was no trust between the two countries. South Korea achieved democratization and economic development before the end of the Cold War, succeeded in normalizing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union (1990) and PRC (1992), and changed the structure of the conflict during the Cold War. On the other hand, North Korea was fearful of being absorbed by South Korea in the wake of the collapse of the socialist bloc and the changing international community, which included the unification of Germany. In an effort to survive, North Korea began full-scale nuclear development to strengthen deterrence. Additionally, North Korea focused on negotiations with the US that excluded South Korea on the issues of denuclearization and peacebuilding. The nuclear crisis was eased by “The Agreed Framework” between the US and North Korea on October 21, 1994. North Korea, then, sought talks with only the US to build a peace-system on the Korean Peninsula, hoping to isolate South Korea. The Kim Young-sam administration took initiative and proposed the “Four-party talks” on April 16, 1996, as a way to overcome North Korea’s unwillingness to negotiate directly with South Korea. Thus, the South–North Korean dialogue and the US–DPRK negotiation were perceived as conflicting. I think we can say from this point of view that the “Détente of 1991” was the beginning of a new conflict.

Once the George W. Bush administration took the office in 2001, it argued that “The Agreed Framework” was too generous toward North Korea. The Bush administration demanded North Korea to accept the inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) two years ahead of schedule, which was initially scheduled to be done at the same time as a significant portion of a light-water reactor would be delivered to North Korea. In response to the Bush administration’s tough policy, North Korea approved a uranium enrichment nuclear program in October 2002, removed fuel rods from a nuclear reactor that had not been in use since the 1994 Agreed Framework, and began extracting plutonium. This was the start of the second North Korean Nuclear Crisis. President Bush, who tried to avoid direct negotiations with North Korea, told the President of PRC, Jiang Zemin, that if North Korea continued to develop nuclear weapons, it would not be possible to stop Japan from developing nuclear weapons, and that he would consider a military strike on North Korea if this was not resolved. According to Bush, PRC’s role was indispensable for a peaceful solution to the North Korean nuclear issue. PRC held a Six-party talks with the US, ROK, DPRK, Japan, and Russia, and these countries looked for ways to denuclearize North Korea, facilitate appropriate measures by the countries involved, and transform regional conflicts.

In this way, while the international community continued to deal with the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue, both the Kim Dae-jung administration and the Roh Moo-hyun administration had a will to achieve a co-existence with North Korea and held South–North summit. These progressive administrations further developed South–
North relations by actively promoting economic cooperation through the tourism business of Mt. Kumgang and the Kaesong Industrial Complex. In the “Dé.tente of 2000”, the emphasis was placed on the positive impact on regional politics due to improved South–North Korea relations from the perspective of “dismantling the Cold War structure.” President Roh Moo-hyun believed that progress on South–North Korea relations could lead to regional stability. While frequently coordinating with the US government which had tough policies toward North Korea, his administration focused its efforts on the development of South–North Korea relations.

In comparison, the Moon Jae-in administration emphasize resolving the nuclear issue through US–DPRK negotiations. President Moon concluded that South–North coexistence could only be achieved by advancing US–DPRK negotiations on denuclearization, lifting international sanctions on North Korea, and advancing the development of the North Korean economy through South–North economic cooperation. To achieve this, President Moon Jae-in and Chairman Kim Jong-un set the agenda at the South–North Korean dialogue to prepare for the US–DPRK negotiations. The “fourth Dé.tente of 2018” on the Korean Peninsula was born as a result of this policy shift. The change in the existing trends opposing South–North Korean dialogue to US–DPRK negotiations enabled a series of “cooperative games” among the US, DPRK, and ROK.

Moreover, when thinking about the “Dé.tente of 2018”, we should pay attention to the fact that Kim Jong-un visited PRC three times, while the South and North Korean leaders met in Panmunjom in April and May 2018, and the US and North Korea leaders met in Singapore in June. All of which stand out as other aspects of the regional stabilization process. To a certain extent, this is due to PRC’s presence, which is one aspect of the balance of power between the US and PRC. The North Korean issue is one of the few areas for cooperation amid the frictions between the US and PRC. Therefore, PRC did not interfere in the cooperative games among the US, DPRK, and ROK. This is likely because US–DPRK negotiations were expected to reduce the presence of US forces in South Korea, if the denuclearization of North Korea progressed and a peaceful structure was built. If negotiations between the US and North Korea failed, North Korea would have to increase its reliance on PRC. Thus, the structure of the “Dé.tente of 2018” was formed: PRC following the link between South–North Korean dialogues and US–DPRK negotiations.

3. The link between the South–North Korean dialogue and US–DPRK negotiation

3.1. The road to the first US–DPRK Summit in Singapore

Despite maximum pressure from the Trump administration, North Korea conducted its sixth nuclear test on September 3 2017. On November 29 of the same year, North Korea announced that it had developed a new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), the “Hwasong-15,” which was theoretically capable of reaching the continental US in what it claimed was a “historic feat of rocket construction by a major power that strengthens the State’s nuclear capability.”

The crisis reached its climax due to North Korea’s...
brinkmanship. However, Chairman Kim Jong-un, through his New Year’s Remarks on January 1, 2018, made clear his intention to follow the path of appeasement and announced his plan to send athletes to the Pyeongchang Olympics, as requested by President Moon Jae-in. After that, Chairman Kim sent his sister Kim Yo-jong to South Korea from February 9 to 11, and he proposed a South-North summit meeting. Then, he asked the special South Korea envoy visiting Pyongyang from March 5 to 6, to transmit to the US, his proposition for a US–DPRK summit meeting.

On March 8, 2018, after receiving the first message from Chairman Kim Jong-un delivered by the South Korean President’s special envoy, President Trump agreed to hold a US–DPRK summit. The content of this message was: (1) if the security of our regime could be guaranteed, there would be no need for nuclear weapons, (2) to have candid talks to discuss the issues of denuclearization and normalization of US–DPRK relations and (3) strategic provocations, such as nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches, would not be resumed as long as the talks continue. Using the Pyeongchang Olympics as an opportunity, South–North Korean dialogue took precedence, which created an environment suitable to hold a US–DPRK summit. If the Moon Jae-in administration had not intervened aggressively, the US would not have been able to determine North Korea’s intentions or respond to any negotiation, especially as the international community’s concerns about North Korea’s nuclear ambitions were increasing.

The US–DPRK summit, which was held as a result of South Korean mediation, differs from earlier nuclear talks in the previous administrations. First, President Donald J. Trump and Chairman Kim Jong-un took a top-down approach. In a joint statement following the US–DPRK summit, President Trump promised to provide “security guarantees” to North Korea, and Chairman Kim Jong-un expressed his determination for a “complete denuclearization.” The two leaders confirmed what each party was trying to acquire and agreed to enter into negotiations. After the summit, when working-level negotiations came to a dead end, to encourage advancement, momentum of negotiations was maintained, through, for example, the exchange of personal letters between the two political leaders.

Second, they confirmed that they would be committed to establishing new US–DPRK relations for peace and prosperity, and also reached the common understanding that building mutual trust will promote the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. They declared the importance of eliminating regional conflicts through the improvement of bilateral relations and showed that the emphasis was on building trust for denuclearization. The US–DPRK summit in Singapore implied a turnaround from tensions and hostilities between the two countries. However, at the summit in Singapore, the US requested North Korea to first file a list of all its nuclear facilities and submit a road map for denuclearization, whereas North Korea was calling for a declaration to formally end the war and for the relaxation of sanctions. Thus, the two sides remained as far apart as ever. This opposition raised the question of whether they will be able to solve the issue while avoiding a situation in which either “complete denuclearization” or “security guarantees” would take precedence.

Third, the US–DPRK summit has not been able to be held without the South–North summit. At the South–North Korean summit held on April 27, 2018, a joint statement

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12“Beicho Syuno Kaidan e Kim Jong-un, Kaku Misairu Toketsu wo Yakusoku,” Asahi Shimbun, March 9, 2018.
was announced, titled “The Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity, and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula,” which included points on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and improvement of South–North relations. At the end of May, when working-level talks for the US–DPRK summit became difficult, South–North Korean Summit was held again at the request of Chairman Kim Jong-un. In a statement to South Korean citizens to explain the outcome of the 2nd South–North Summit by Presidents Moon Jae-in, it was made clear that if Chairman Kim Jong-un decided to practice complete denuclearization, President Trump would end hostilities toward North Korea, and demonstrate a strong will for economic cooperation. The deadlock in the US–DPRK negotiations was reset once again through the South–North summit, and the 1st US–DPRK summit was held as scheduled on June 12 in Singapore. During the search for a connection between the US and North Korea, ensuring momentum in the negotiations created a virtuous cycle between the South–North dialogues and US–DPRK negotiations.

In retrospect, it seems that North Korea believed that hostile relations with the US could be resolved without improving the relations with South Korea and had persisted in that belief. As a consequence, the nuclear issue and the issue of peace-building on the Korean Peninsula had been negotiated directly with the US without allowing South Korean intervention since March 26, 1974, when North Korea sent a letter to the United States Congress. On the other hand, South Korea was worried that an improvement in US–DPRK relations without progress in South–North relations could lead to the alienation of South Korea in the building process of a peaceful regime on the Korean Peninsula and also weaken the alliance between the US and South Korea. However, the South–North dialogues and the US–DPRK negotiations, which used to be in opposition, were now linked by South Korea’s mediation.

### 3.2 “Tight Link Strategy” of Moon Jae-in administration

Following the US–DPRK Summit in Singapore, the South–North summit was planned again when working-level discussions between the US and North Korea did not progress. President Moon Jae-in visited Pyongyang in September, intending to meet President Trump at the UN General Assembly in the fall of 2018. At the South–North summit held in Pyongyang on September 18–20, 2018, the issue of denuclearization was set as an agenda item for the first time, and discussions progressed to the point where North Korea recognized the role of the South Korean government in US–DPRK nuclear talks. The joint statement of the leaders from South and North Korea stated that (1) the Dongchang-li engine test site, which is the base for the intercontinental ballistic missile, and the missile launch pad, would be permanently disposed of in the presence of experts from the countries concerned, and (2) the nuclear facilities in Nyeongbyeon would be permanently destroyed. The two countries also signed a “military agreement” to end hostile relations between the South and North, promising active expansion of South–North economic cooperation, collaboration, and exchanges in various other fields.

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13 ROK. Foreign Affairs Ministry, “Hanbando ui Pyeonghwa wa Beonyoung eul wihan Panmujom Seoneon,” April 27, 2018.
14 2018 South-North Korean Summit Preparation Committee, “Je2cha Nambuk Jeongsang Hoedam,” May 27, 2018.
15 Kim, Chosenhanto Reisen to Kokusaiseizi Rikigaku, 157–60.
16 ROK. Unification Ministry, “2018 Pyeongyang Jeongsang Hoedam Gyeolgwa Seolmyeong Jaryo,” September 20, 2018.
Chairman Kim Jong-un promised to visit Seoul in the near future, demonstrating the progress of South–North Korean relations.

The US welcomed the outcome of the South–North Korean summit and resumed its negotiations with North Korea, which had been suspended. While the US–DPRK relationship had reached a deadlock, the South–North Korean summit clearly played a role in driving forward the US–DPRK relations. In other words, the groundwork leading to the US–DPRK summit in Hanoi was laid by President Moon Jae-in’s visit to Pyongyang. It was found jointly by South and North Korean leaders through policy fusion. This could be called the “Tight Link Strategy” of the Moon Jae-in administration.

Another aspect to note is that the regularization of a South–North Korean summit would help build a peace regime and promote coexistence between the two countries. Standing in front of 150,000 people during his visit to Pyongyang in September, President Moon Jae-in described himself as the “President of the South” and ended 70 years of hostilities. He gave a speech about opening up a new future for the people, together with Chairman Kim Jong-un. They acknowledged each other’s systems and gave the impression that a cooperative relationship had begun.

If the US–North Korea relationship evolves and Chairman Kim visits Seoul and stands in front of Seoul citizens as the “Supreme Leader of the North,” as declared in the South–North Joint Declaration, this would be a big turning point in building a relationship of coexistence between the South and North.

President Moon Jae-in inherited the North Korean policy from the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations, which were progressive administrations, and when he was a presidential candidate, he had clearly stated his intention to restore South–North Korean economic cooperation and channels of dialogue, which had been suspended during the administrations of Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye. The Moon Jae-in administration set “peace and prosperity of the Korean Peninsula” as the goal of its North Korean policy, and “South-North Reconciliation and Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula” as its strategy. In particular, with regard to denuclearization, the first step was to achieve a “nuclear freeze” and reach the goal of a nuclear disarmament agreement in 2020, and the administration presented “Comprehensive Denuclearization Negotiations,” which promote both the denuclearization of North Korea and the establishment of a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. The essence was to promote negotiations on building a peace regime depending on the progress of denuclearization so that a peace agreement could be reached once complete denuclearization was achieved, and to have a road map to ensure its stable progress. Along with the establishment of such a peace regime, the “Economic Design of the Korean Peninsula and the Implementation of Economic Unity” was also promoted. The goal was build an economic cooperation belt between the two countries linking the east and west coasts of the Korean Peninsula and to lay the foundation for economic unification. After completing the joint development policy between the North and South, the administration plans to cooperate with Russia.

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17 ROK, Blue House, “Uri Minzok eun Hamkkae Salayahapnida,” September 19, 2018..
18 Moon and Moon, Daehanminguk i Musneunda, 183–91..
19 Advisory Committee on National Political Affairs, Moon Jae-in Jeongbu ui Snyeon Jeongbu Plan, 130–6..
While the progressive administration has actively promoted exchange and cooperation between South and North Korea, conservatives saw it as providing unilateral support for North Korea, and they criticized that this has let North Korea’s nuclear program to progress. In addition, since the administration was trying to maintain stable South–North Korean relations through dialogue with North Korea, some accused the Moon Jae-in administration to lean toward North Korea’s side and being pro-North Korea. It should be noted, however, that unification nationalism, which seeks a way for a unified Korean peninsula, is at the root of the progressive administration.

In retrospect, South–North summits have always been realized under the progressive administrations of Kim Dae-jung, Roh Moo-hyun, and Moon Jae-in. “The June 15th South-North Joint Declaration” was adopted between leaders of South–North Korea on June 15 2000. In its declaration, President Kim Dae-jung and Chairman Kim Jong-il acknowledged that there were common elements between the South’s proposal for a confederation and the North’s proposal for a federation of the lower stage to achieve reunification and agreed to promote reunification in that direction. In addition, it was clearly stated that this would be achieved through a “balanced development of the national economy through economic cooperation and by stimulating cooperation and exchanges in civic, cultural, sports, public health, environmental and all other fields.” During the Roh Moo-hyun administration, the Kaesong Industrial Complex, a symbol of economic cooperation between South and North Korea, was opened. In this way, the progressive government in South Korea had a strong sense of nationalism and developed policies that emphasized peaceful coexistence and unity with North Korea.

The Moon Jae-in administration has followed the same trend for its North Korean policy as the former progressive administrations. However, it should be noted that its characteristics are different from those of the previous progressive administrations. Both Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-hyun’s administrations believed that if the relationship between South and North Korea improved, it would be possible to bring stability to the region in East Asia, as well as to US–DPRK relations and other bilateral relations. For this reason, although they concentrated on the development of South–North Korean relations, they did not direct diplomatic efforts into mediating US–DPRK negotiations. It can be said that they stayed within the area of South–North Korea relations. However, looking back, even if the relationship between the South and North were improved, the nuclear issue could not have been resolved unless the US and North Korea acted together. South Korea reiterated the Bush administration’s rejection of the 1994 Framework Agreement on the issue of denuclearization of North Korea that was endorsed by the former Clinton administration and went through the bitter experience of seeing North Korea’s “frozen” nuclear program start moving again. The Moon Jae-in’s administration has begun mediating between the US and North Korea by first linking South–North Korean Dialogue and US–DPRK negotiations, based on the experience of the Kim Dae-jung administration and the Roh Moo-hyun administration. They estimated that without President Donald J. Trump’s commitment, there would be no effective way to solve the South–North Korean problem.

While this tight link between the South–North Korean dialogue and the US–DPRK negotiations could lead to economic cooperation and military confidence-building

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2018 South-North Korean Summit Preparatory Committee, “6wol 15il Nambuk Gongdong Seoneon,” June 15, 2000.
measures between South and North Korea, it also involved risks. If US–DPRK negotiations stagnate, the progress in the South-North Korean dialogue would become difficult as well. This risk became a reality after the failure of the 2nd US–DPRK summit and caused the stagnation of South–North Korean relations. Nevertheless, the Moon Jae-in administration took this risk and chose for the tight link strategy. When President Moon took office in May 2017, the military provocation from North Korea was reaching its peak, and the level of the international community sanctions against North Korea had been strengthened. It was a situation where there was no possibility to achieve any results simply by improving relations and cooperation between South and North Korea. If South Korea falls into a situation where international criticism arises, saying that South Korea is only regarding South–North relations, there would be no way to promote relations with North Korea, and it would follow into the footsteps of the preceding progressive administrations. Despite being criticized by the domestic progressive parties, the Moon Jae-in administration moved in steps with the US policy toward the North Korea and did not rush to reopen the Kaesong Industrial Complex and the Mt. Kumgang tourism business. In this way, the Moon Jae-in administration found a way to link South–North Korean dialogue and US–DPRK negotiation, rather than choosing either of them. President Moon, thus, played a role in creating a forum for US–DPRK negotiation through policy fusion with Chairman Kim Jong-un. We can say that the Moon Jae-in administration’s “Tight Link Strategy” has opened up a new Détente on the Korean Peninsula.

4. Failure of the 2nd US–DPRK summit in Hanoi

Stephen Biegun, the US Special Representative for North Korea, visited Pyongyang on February 6–8, 2019, and said that the working-level talks for the US–DPRK summit in Hanoi had been productive. The details of the talks were not disclosed, but his speech at Stanford University a few days earlier reflected the US’s approach to the second summit. Representative Biegun had stated that the US–DPRK summit in Hanoi would include discussions on the concrete agreements to implement the Singapore Joint Declaration and the US countermeasures for the destruction of the Punggye-ri nuclear test site, the Dongchang-li missile engine test site, and the Nyeongbyeon nuclear facility. North Korea closed the Punggye-ri nuclear test site after it collapsed following an explosion, as a preemptive measure on May 24 2018, although verification issues remained. North Korea has also indicated its intention to close the Dongchang-li missile launch pad and engine test site at the South-North Summit in September 2018.

Based on these circumstances, it is clear that the main purpose of the US–DPRK summit in Hanoi was to discuss the destruction of the Nyeongbyeon nuclear facility. Biegun also spoke about the disposal of the enriched uranium facility, the declaration of a complete list of nuclear assets. However, his view was that these were not urgent policy issues, but rather additional issues that could be handled after the disposal of the Nyeongbyeon nuclear facility. Another noteworthy point is that Biegun referred to the end of the war on the Korean Peninsula and expressed the US’s position on this issue.

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21"Beigun Pyeongyang Hoedam Gyeolgwa Gongyu," MBC News, February 9, 2019.
22"Full text of US Special Representative Steve Beigun’s speech on North Korea at Stanford University," January 31, 2019.
The Moon Jae-in administration envisioned economic cooperation between South and North Korea, namely, resuming the sightseeing activities at Mt. Kumgang and restarting the Kaesong Industrial Complex, if the US–DPRK Summit in Hanoi were a success. In a telephone call with President Trump on February 19 2019, President Moon explained his plan to use South Korea’s economic cooperation as an appropriate measure to drive North Korea’s denuclearization measures. He said that if President Trump wishes, he was prepared to play a role in the South–North Korea rail and road connection or South–North economic cooperation projects, which would reduce the burden on the US. While avoiding the sensitive phrase “easing sanctions,” he used South–North economic cooperation as a diplomatic card to drive North Korea’s denuclearization and tried to exclude the sightseeing of Mt Kumgang and the restarting of the Kaesong Industrial Complex from the sanctions. He highlighted the relatively feasible railway-road link, although it also required the approval of the UN Sanctions Committee.

Moon Chung-in, the Special Advisor to the President Moon for unification, proposed that for the denuclearization measures, North Korea should completely destroy the Nyeongbyeon nuclear facility instead of just freezing it. He stated that the steps taken by the US toward these measures, would be crucial, and predicted that the extent to which sanctions could be lifted would be an important issue. He pointed out that the permanent destruction of the Nyeongbyeon nuclear facility would be the first step toward reversing what seemed to be an irreversible situation and positioned it as a condition for the resumption of the Mt. Kumgang tourism business and the restarting of the Kaesong Industrial Complex. Special Advisor Moon emphasized that “Kim Jong-un promised the disposal of Punggye-li, Dongchang-li, and Nyeongbyeon, and if this is realized, it will be a matter of “Nyeongbyeon plus alpha.” It is not enough to only freeze these programs; specific steps must be taken to reduce and dismantle these facilities.”

As we can see from the statements from Representative Biegun and Special Advisor Moon, these were the outlines of North Korea’s denuclearization measures and corresponding measures taken by the US, as stipulated in the joint statement of the US–DPRK Summit in Hanoi.

At the opening remark before the 2nd summit on February 27, Chairman Kim said to President Trump that “he thought it was a period of more trouble, effort, and patience” than he had expected, and highlighted the difficulties of negotiations before the implementation of the Singapore Joint Declaration. Chairman Kim also commented on a reporter’s question before the extended summit meeting on February 28, saying that “both parties welcome the establishment of a liaison office,” which suggested that an agreement had already been reached.

However, the US and North Korea could not bridge the gap between North Korea’s denuclearization measures and corresponding measures by the US, which resulted in the failure of the two leaders to reach an agreement although further discussions were held after the one-on-one summit, going an hour and a half beyond schedule, but an agreement could still not be reached. Immediately afterward, President Trump held a press conference and stated that an agreement could not be reached because the measures for

23ROK. Blue House, “Han Mi Jeongsang Tonghwa Gyeolgwa gwanryeon Seomyeon Briefing,” February 20, 2019..
24Hankyoreh Sinmun, February 27, 2019.
25“Beicho Syuno, Vietnam de Trump Kim Jong-un no Ugoki” Asahi Shimbun, February 28, 2019..
26“Kim Jong-un: Pyeongyang Mi Yeonraksamuso Hwanyoung, Trump: Joeun Aidia,” JoongAng Ilbo, February 29, 2019.
the Nyeongbyeon facilities were insufficient and that he knew there were larger facilities and called for additional action from North Korea on these facilities. In other words, he called for measures to be taken for uranium enrichment facilities as the “Nyeongbyeon plus alpha.” He added that North Korea’s wish was to have the sanctions imposed on it lifted altogether. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said, “the facilities in Nyeongbyeon are important, but missiles, warheads, and weapon systems remain. There are many factors we do not know about,” and he clarified that he had urged North Korea to submit a declaration on its nuclear inventory.

In response to the US’s explanation, North Korea held a press conference, which was unusual, and explained how the agreement had not been reached. Minister of Foreign Affairs Ri Yong-ho refuted Trump’s statement and stated that North Korea sought only a partial – not complete – lifting of economic sanctions. He clarified that among the five economic sanctions imposed between 2016 and 2017, North Korea had proposed to only remove items affecting the private economy and people’s lives. Ri also explained that they knew that it was difficult for the US to lift sanctions regarding the military, so they requested a partial lifting of sanctions. Moreover, he highlighted the significance of the permanent and complete destruction of the nuclear material production facility in Nyeongbyeon, describing it as “the widest range of denuclearization measures we can take, given the current level of trust between the DPRK and the U.S.”

Actually, the content of the summit meeting had already been agreed to at the working-level discussions. Then, what caused the breakdown of the summit? Since the 1st summit in Singapore, the US and North Korea had been discussing the declaration of the end of the war and declaration of nuclear facilities, but because of the stalemate of the negotiations, an agreement was sought by shifting the issues to the destruction of the Nyeongbyeon facility and the lifting and easing of sanctions. It had seemed that the officials had reached an agreement wherein the US would take the corresponding action if North Korea dismantled the Nyeongbyeon facility. However, at the summit, President Trump called for further denuclearization measures. Clearly, the request by the US to denuclearize uranium enrichment facilities other than the Nyeongbyeon nuclear facility and to submit a list of nuclear facilities, which North Korea had been resistant to, was unacceptable to North Korea. It is likely that President Trump, conscious of criticism at home and abroad for giving too many concessions to North Korea and in light of the domestic political situation in the US arising from the President’s alleged misconduct, set the bar too high for the North Korean side to accept, and thus, an agreement was not reached.

President Trump, on the other hand, never placed blame on Kim Jong-un at subsequent press conferences. He has stated that the US is not considering strengthening economic sanctions and that Kim has promised no further nuclear tests or test missile launches. He also stated that joint military exercises between the US and ROK would be suspended. Although the schedule for the next summit had not yet been set, President Trump has emphasized that his relationship with Chairman Kim was very good and has

27. Beicho Syuno, Goi Itarazu Seisai Jenmen Kaizo to Hikakuka, Hetatari Kongo no Kosho, Hutomei,”Asahi Shimbun, March 1, 2019.
28. “Kitachosen Gaisyo ga Sinya ni Kaiken, Trump no Hatsugen ni Hanron,” Asahi Shimbun, March 1, 2019.
29. Kazianis, “The Siren Song of North Korean Denuclearization,” 87–9.
made clear that the gap between the two countries’ positions would be filled through working-level negotiations.

North Korea also held a press conference and outlined the points they were dissatisfied with in the US’s explanations, but did not criticize the US response. North Korea indicated that the two countries would have controlled dealings and would continue to seek ways to resolve issues through dialogue. In particular, North Korea declined to comment on the “plus alpha” from the US side probably because if they were disclosed, there might be a need to include the “plus alpha” in the agreement at the next stage of negotiations.

5. The breakdown of the link between the South–North dialogue and US–DPRK negotiation

5.1. North Korea’s policy review

The failure of the US–DPRK summit in Hanoi was not simply a failure of the US and North Korea negotiations. It also meant the failure of the South–North Korean dialogue as well, since the agenda for US–DPRK negotiations had been set by the South–North dialogue, as mentioned above. In response to the situation, on March 1 2019, President Moon Jae-in, in commemorative remarks on Korean Independence Day, made proactive comments about the US–DPRK summit in Hanoi, saying that “long-term dialogue and increasing mutual understanding and trust was a meaningful development,” and commending President Trump’s “will and optimistic outlook for sustainable dialogue.” He pledged that the South Korean government “will work closely with the US and North Korea and work to ensure a complete conclusion of the dialogue between the two countries.”

However, due to the failure of the US–DPRK Summit in Hanoi, prospects for Mt. Kumgang’s tourism business and the Kaesong Industrial Complex dimmed, and the concept of a South–North railway connection, which was nothing more than a commitment to continue to promote diplomacy as an intermediary, disappeared. The integration of South-North leaders’ policies to advance negotiations between the US and North Korea through the dismantling of the Nyeongbyeon nuclear facility could not be realized due to the failure of the US–DPRK summit meeting in Hanoi. The South–North dialogue had clearly met an insurmountable challenge.

North Korea has begun to fine-tune its existing policy and direction, while confirming that it would continue negotiations. The North Korean leadership’s new policy was decided at the Workers’ Party of Korea’s politburo meeting on April 9 2019 and the central committee meeting, then discussed and announced at the Supreme People’s Assembly on April 11–12. Several important issues were discussed there. First, criticism of the American negotiating behavior. Contrary to Secretary of State Pompeo’s explanation of the Hanoi talks, Chairman Kim Jong-un said that North Korea had gone into the meeting after thorough preparations, with a “strategic decision” ready. However, all that the US brought to the table was “unrealizable plans”. He claimed that “US-style dialogue

30ROK. Blue House, “Je 100yunyone 3.1Jeol Ginyeomsig Ginyeomsa,” March 1, 2019.
31Kim Jong-un “Hyeon Dangye esoeui Sahejjuui Geonseol gwa Gongwaguk Jeongbu ui Daenaeoe Jeongchaek e Daehayeo,” Rodong Sinmun, April 13, 2019.
of unilaterally pushing its demands does not fit” the DPRK constitution, and that “its current political calculation method should be disposed of, and new methods should be used”.

The second issue was to prepare for prolonged US–DPRK negotiations and to implement a policy of self-rehabilitated economic construction. Therefore, Chairman Kim claimed, “we must pour our energy into not letting sanctions defeat us, to deal a serious blow to the adversary who judges us wrongly.” In his policy speech on April 12, he described his policy as self-rehabilitation, as a means of shattering the ambitions of the US which wants to “disarm firstly and then overthrow the regime.”

Third, Chairman Kim Jong-un demanded South Korea to fully implement the Panmunjom Declaration and the Pyongyang Joint Declaration. Instead of acting as an “arbiter” or “promoter,” he emphasized that South Korea should “be a party that defends the interests of the nation.” In addition, he blamed the indiscriminate action of belligerent military officials conducting joint military exercises between the US and South Korea as well as the arrogant hostile policy of the US and demanded that they must be eliminated. Chairman Kim Jong-un asked for separation of the South–North dialogue from the US–DPRK negotiation.

On the other hand, Chairman Kim Jong-un did not give up on US–DPRK negotiation even after the Hanoi talks’ failure. He expressed his trust in President Trump and said, “If the United States approaches us with the right manner and offers to hold a third North Korea–US leaders’ summit with a certain methodology that can be shared with us”, he would be open to the talks, adding that DPRK “will be patient until the end of this year and wait for the US to make a resolute decision.” He said that he would talk with President Trump again and hopes for a top-down agreement on the content and method of “gradual denuclearization” that had not been agreed in Hanoi.

On June 30, Chairman Kim Jong-un held a brief talk with President Trump, who visited Panmunjom on the way home from the G20 Osaka meeting, and agreed to resume negotiations at the working level. After the failed Hanoi talks, the leaders of the US and North Korea shared their fears that US–DPRK negotiations would be disrupted. However, the two countries could not bring the gap closer at the working-level meeting held at Stockholm on December 4–5, 2019, which was supposed to prepare the 3rd US–DPRK summit. North Korea vowed to take an unspecified “new path” if the US do not show concessions before the end of the year. North Korea provided political justification for the economic and security policies, and set their direction for 2020, at the ruling Workers’ Party’s 7th Central Committee held on December 28–31, 2019. In the report about the Central Committee, Chairman Kim stressed the need to strengthen internal forces in the face of sanctions from the international community, anticipating the long-term stalemate between the US and North Korea. Due to the stagnation of the US and North Korea relations, he had no choice but to emphasize on self-reliance once again. There was no mention of the relations with South Korea.32

32“Joseon Rodongdang Jungangwiwonhoe Je7gi Je5cha Jeonwonhoeui e gwanhan Bodo,” Rodong Sinmun, January 1, 2020.
5.2. Chain of stagnation in South–North Korea and US–DPRK relations

The “tight link strategy”, between the South–North dialogue and the US–DPRK negotiations, pursued by the Moon Jae-in administration, included some risks from the outset: US–DPRK negotiations’ progress on security assurance and denuclearization could lead to economic cooperation and military confidence-building measures between the South and North Korea, but conversely, the stagnation of the US–DPRK negotiation would make South–North dialogue difficult as well. This risk became a reality after the failure of the 2nd US–DPRK summit in Hanoi, resulting in the stagnation of South–North Korean relations. South and North Korea had envisaged the resumption of the Mt. Kumgang tourism business and the reopening of the Kaesong Industrial Complex on the premise that the US–DPRK summit would be successful. The Moon Jae-in administration’s policy, which linked the South–North dialogue and the US–DPRK negotiation, could not avoid the pitfall of being contingent on the US–DPRK relation.

This situation began as early as at the end of 2018. Following the Pyongyang Joint Statement between the South and North Korea, a working-level meeting between the US and North Korea began, but the two sides were not able to set the direction of the discussions, and the stalemate continued. Meanwhile, at the end of October, the US dispatched Biegun, a special representative for North Korea, to South Korea for close consultations, and he called for South–North Korean relations to keep pace with the US–DPRK negotiations that were being carried out within the framework of the economic sanctions. On November 20, a US–South Korea working group was launched to discuss North Korea’s policy, at the request of the US. They shared the goal of fully verified denuclearization of North Korea and held discussions on sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula, implementation of UN sanctions, and South–North Korean cooperation. This working group met frequently and acted as a symbol of close policy coordination between the US and South Korea.

On the other hand, it held the implications of restraining the Moon Jae-in administration’s policy, which had called for “conditional easing of sanctions.” Indeed, when President Moon Jae-in mentioned individual tourism to North Korea at the New Year’s press conference on January 14 2020, US Ambassador to Korea, Harry B. Harris, Jr. responded to it by saying, “in order to avoid a misunderstanding later that could trigger US sanctions or UN sanctions, it is better to run this through the Working Group.” He emphasized the need for discussion in the working group for changing the existing policy. The US Department of State also reaffirmed the principle of “coordinating and consulting through working groups to ensure that South–North Korean cooperation continues to keep pace with denuclearization.” These statements mean that the promotion of individual tourism had not been previously discussed between the US and South Korea, and it suggests that although South Korea was trying to break through the stalemate in South–North Korean cooperation without violating UN sanctions, the US was using the working group as a means to check this movement.

33United States Department of State, “Department Press Briefing,” October 31, 2018.
34United States Department of State, “U.S.-ROK Working Group,” November 20, 2018.
35“U.S. envoy calls on S. Korea to consult with U.S. about N.K. engagement,” Yonhap News(English Edition), January 16, 2020.
36“Kankoku Seikai no Harris Taisi Hihan ni,” JoongAng Ilbo(Japanese Edition), January 20, 2020.
On the other hand, North Korea, as previously mentioned, urged South Korea to thoroughly implement the Panmunjom Declaration and the Pyongyang Joint Declaration, in the policy review on April 12, 2019, after the failure of the 2nd US–DPRK Summit in Hanoi. It has continued to criticize the South Korean government’s response, by first calling on South Korea to act as an “interested party” rather than an “arbiter” or “promoter.” Maybe North Korea began to doubt the role of President Moon Jae-in who was playing a role in mediating and promoting US–DPRK negotiations. Actually, the 2nd US–DPRK Summit failed even though the dismantlement of the Nyeongbyeon nuclear facility was a plan drawn up jointly by South and North Korean leaders. Furthermore, North Korea was imposed by the US with a strict demand of “Nyeongbyeon plus alpha.” Moreover, the policy of the Moon Jae-in administration, which linked the South–North dialogue and US–DPRK negotiations, left no room for South Korea’s own policy. Thus, South–North economic cooperation, which was agreed upon in the Pyongyang Joint Declaration of South and North Korea, became difficult. As a result, North Korea asked South Korea to be more active in persuading the US and taking action to implement the agreement.

Despite North Korea’s demands, the stalemate did not change. On October 23, Chairman Kim Jong-un visited the tourist area of Mt. Kumgang and criticized the policy of his predecessor who had been dependent on South Korea for development. He expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that the Mt. Kumgang tourism business became a symbol of South–North Korean relations and was linked to the relation’s development. In addition, he ordered the removal of facilities built by Korean companies through consultation with South Korea. He rebuilt the development business, which had been neglected for 10 years, and showed his intention to proceed with development independently. Two days later, on October 25, North Korea informed the Unification Ministry of South Korea and the Hyundai Asan Company that “it would construct a new international tourism and cultural area in the Mt. Kumgang.” North Korea also demanded the removal of tourism facilities in Mt. Kumgang that Hyundai Asan had invested in. South Korea sought to consult with officials, but North Korea only sent a written notification. The business that North and South Korean leaders had agreed to resume could not make any progress as long as the US–DPRK negotiations stayed stagnant. This means that the role of South–North economic cooperation as a means of improving South–North relations and improving US–DPRK negotiations has largely vanished.

5.3. Readjustment of the Moon Jae-in administration’s North Korea policy

Since the beginning of 2020, President Moon has begun to mention that he is about to shift his policy to improve South–North relations. In his New Year’s greetings on January 7, 2020, President Moon recalled that “South–North Korean dialogue used to give precedence to the US–DPRK negotiations,” and declared that “with the stalling of the US–DPRK dialogue and given the concerns about the decline in South–North relations, there is a need to work hard for the success of the US–DPRK dialogue and to

37 “Gyeongaesheun Cheongoryeondagoja Kim Jongun Dongji kkeso Kumgangsan Gwangwang Jigu reul Hyeonji jido Hasiyeossda,” Rodong Sinmun, October 23, 2019.
38 ROK. Unification Ministry, “Bukcheuk, Kumgangsan Gwangwang Gwanryeok Jeui e daehan Dapsin Tongji,” October 25, 2019.
seek a realistic plan to increase South–North cooperation.” He recognized the problem of prioritizing US–DPRK negotiation through the policy fusion of South and North Korean leaders and the need to readjust this “tight link” between the South–North dialogues and the US–DPRK negotiations, which are the cause of the problem.

He also recalled the three principles for peace on the Korean Peninsula: war incompatibility, mutual security, and joint prosperity. He declared that while an international solution is necessary, there are also things that can be done through South–North cooperation: “We propose that we gather and hold serious discussions between the South and the North.” Specifically, if the South and North can find a realistic plan to realize a “railway-road connection project between the South and the North,” it will not only lead to international cooperation but also reopen tourism between South and North Korea. He said that it would also help revitalize tourism. It seems that the remark was made in consideration of the South–North railroad connection plan included in the sanction mitigation plan that China and Russia submitted to the UN Security Council in December 2019.

In addition, at the New Year’s press conference on January 14, to overcome the stalled US–DPRK negotiations, President Moon Jae-in said that there was “a desperate need to increase South–North cooperation and promote the US–DPRK dialogue without focusing solely on the US–DPRK dialogue.” He also said that the sanctions of the international community could limit the cooperation between the North and South, but added that within the limited range, cooperation in border areas and individual tourism could be fully explored. President Moon mentioned the importance of US–DPRK negotiations, but suggested the need to promote South–North Korean cooperation. Through this, he indicated his intention to change his policy from a “tight link” between South–North dialogue and US–DPRK negotiation to a looser link.

On January 20, South Korea’s Ministry of Unification announced specific plans for individual tourism to North Korea and revealed three forms under consideration, namely (1) visits to Mt. Kumgang and Kaesong Industrial Region by dispersed families and nonprofit organizations, (2) visits by South Koreans to North Korea by way of a travel agency in a third country, (3) and South–North tourism programs for foreign tourists. Furthermore, in promoting individual tourism, it was reported that the Ministry of Unification had set priorities for direct tourism via South–North land routes, rather than via third countries. The emphasis on overland tourism has been noted because it is linked to the “South-North Rail-Road Connection Project” mentioned in President Moon’s New Year’s greetings. According to the Ministry of Unification, individual tourism should not be subjected to UN sanctions and secondary boycotts by the US do not apply to third-country companies and individuals associated with North Korea. Therefore, South Korea should be able to promote its own projects.

So far, the South Korean government has postponed the resumption of the Mt. Kumgang tourism project, considering the progress of the US–DPRK negotiations.

39ROK. Blue House, “2020 Sinnyeonsa,” January 7, 2020.
40“Jungreo, Buk Jejai Ilbu Haeje Gyeoluiuan Jean . . . Nambuk Cheoldo Doro Saeop Poham,” Yonhap News, December 17, 2019.
41ROK. Blue House, “2020 Moon Jae-in Daetongryeong Sinnyeon Gija Hoegyeon,” January 14, 2020.
42“Miguk Banbal, Bukhan Geobu, Anjeon Munje edo . . . Jeongbu, Gaebyeol Gwangwang GO,” JoongAng Ilbo, January 21, 2020.
President Moon has been waiting for a time when denuclearization negotiations would progress and economic sanctions are eased. As a consequence, the Moon Jae-in administration had not defined the Mt. Kumgang tourism project as an inter-Korean issue and no strategy to solve it had been formulated. However, as US–DPRK negotiations stagnated and no progress on denuclearization or easing sanctions had been realized, ROK began to seek a breakthrough by means of individual tourism. Given the policy of the Moon Jae-in administration is to prioritize the link between South–North dialogue and US–DPRK negotiation, it may be the first step toward a policy change. The Moon Jae-in administration’s search for the implementation of a South–North cooperation projects would continue.

6. Conclusion

The “Détente of 2018” was triggered by the Moon Jae-in administration’s consolidation of the conflicting South–North Korean dialogue and US–DPRK negotiations. Its characteristics can be summarized as follows: First, it was initiated by South Korea’s intermediary diplomacy. As a proxy for North Korea, which had lost credibility in the international community, South Korea became the bridge to the denuclearization negotiations between the US and North Korea.

Second, it was the result of a policy fusion between South and North Korea. The tensions between the US and North Korea in 2017 were reduced at the US–DPRK Summit in Singapore. This was made possible thanks to the preceding South–North Korean dialogue that set the agenda for the summit talks. North Korea’s intention to denuclearize, which was revealed at the South–North summit at Panmunjom in April 2018, was reflected in the joint statement from the US–DPRK summit held in Singapore on June 12 2018. Based on the fact that the permanent destruction of the Dongchang-li engine test site and the missile launch pad in the presence of experts from the concerned countries and the permanent destruction of the Nyeongbyeon nuclear facility were included in the joint statement from the South–North Korean summit held in Pyongyang in September 2018, the US–DPRK working-level meeting resumed and the 2nd US–DPRK summit was held in Hanoi in February 2019. It seemed as though the South–North Korean dialogue had laid the groundwork for the US–DPRK negotiations. The South–North Korean dialogue seemed to ensure the success of the US–DPRK negotiations.

Third, while this “tight link” between the South–North Korean dialogue and the US–DPRK negotiations could lead to economic cooperation and military confidence-building measures between South and North Korea, it also has risks: if US–DPRK negotiations stagnate, the progress in the South–North dialogue would become difficult as well. This risk became a reality after the failure of the 2nd US–DPRK summit and caused the stagnation of South–North Korean relations. The resumption of tourism at Mt. Kumgang and the reopening of the Kaesong Industrial Complex should have been resolved through South–North Korean negotiations, but they have now become the subject of US–DPRK negotiations. The Moon Jae-in administration envisioned economic cooperation between the South and North Korea, namely, resuming the sightseeing activities of Mt. Kumgang and restarting the Kaesong Industrial Complex, but the failure of the US–DPRK Summit in
Hanoi made South–North Korean dialogue a challenge. The Moon Jae-in administration fell into the pitfall that it had been most wary of.

I think we might say that the “tight link” between South–North Korean dialogue and the US–DPRK negotiation brought by President Moon Jae-in’s initiative has come to an end. With the stagnation of the US–DPRK negotiations and the deterioration of South–North Korean relations, the Moon Jae-in administration no longer expects to see the effects of the connection between these two negotiations: it is now trying to promote South and North Korea relations such as individual tourism to North Korea, railway-road connection project between South and North Korea. It would try to expand their policy space toward North Korea while avoiding possible frictions with the US about the coordination of the policy toward North Korea through a “loose link” between South–North dialogues and US–DPRK negotiations.

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Notes on contributor

Dr. Kyungwon Choi is an Associate Professor at Tokoha University, Japan. He received his M.A. in North Korean Studies from Dongguk University, Republic of Korea and his Ph.D. in politics from Keio University, Japan. His major is International Relations and Politics in East Asia. He is the author of “The Formation of the Japan-ROK Security Relationship: Security Crisis of 1968 and Economic Security Cooperation,” World Political Science Review, Vol.10, 2, 2014; Formation of the Japan-ROK Security Relationship During the Cold War (in Japanese), Tokyo: Keio University Press, 2014; “Japan’s Foreign Policy Toward Korean Peninsula in the Détente Era: An Attempt at Multilayered Policy,” North Korea International Documentation Project, Wilson Center, Vol.6, 2017; and “Transformation of Japan-ROK Relations: Issues Linkage Among Historical Issues, Economy and Security,” The Journal of Contemporary Korean Studies, Vol.19, 2019 (in Japanese).

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