

**A critical geopolitical approach to “The New Economic Map on  
the Korean Peninsula”: Investigating the construction and  
discursive practices of a South Korean geostrategy**

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### Authorization to Submit Thesis

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## Abstract

This study presents a case study in the construction and discursive practices of geostrategy in statecraft. The ‘New Economic Map on the Korean Peninsula’ (NEM) is considered as being formed in the broader historical context of South Korea rather than as a product of the present Korean administration. A long-standing geopolitical discourse of South Korea has defined the Korean Peninsula as a place of risk/opportunity positioned between land and sea powers. Such a discourse contextualizes the Peninsula as the site of the ideological confrontation during the Cold War. However, successful economic development and the reinforcement of the economic connectivity in East Asia during the Post-Cold war period have recontextualized the Peninsula as a land of new opportunity. This type of geopolitical discourse backgrounds geopolitical conflict and foregrounds geoeconomic cooperation in the construction and discursive practices of the geostrategy. Even though the political partisanship in South Korea adheres to opposite perspectives regarding political engagement with North Korea, all parties agree with the geopolitical hope involved through the economic cooperation with North Korea. First, I consider how critical geopolitics is increasingly concerned with the economy in the discursive practices of statecraft and historicize the NEM by reviewing the works of the Korean elites. Then, I analyze the discourses circulated in the Korean media around a series of events in the Korean peace process, presenting how geopolitical and geoeconomic discourses and logics resonate with the ones of the NEM.

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## **Dedication**

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## **Statement of Contribution**

Chapter 3 was published in *Political Landscapes of Donald Trump* (Routledge, 2020). The first author is Dr. Steven M. Radil who is an assistant professor in the Department of Economics and Geosciences at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Background

President Moon Jae-in who took office in May 2017 turned the hostile policy toward North Korea by the previous two conservative presidents into the conciliatory policy led by the previous two progressive presidents. His policy to North Korea is the so-called ‘Sunshine Policy 2.0’ (Hung 2017) or the ‘Moonlight Policy’ (Park 2017) that is made by his last name. The point of the Sunshine Policy led by the progressive administrations appropriates a story of Aesop’s fable. This is to say that as a man takes off the coat through sunlight, South Korea should open North Korea through the conciliatory policy. This policy targeted North Korean leadership, which felt threatened by the collapse of communist countries that had supported their rear after the Cold War (Levin and Han2003). President Kim Dae-Jung held the summit with Kim Jung-il who was then-North Korea leader and advanced several economic and nationalist projects such as Kaesong Industrial Complex, Mt. Kumgang tourism, and the meeting of the divided family in 2000. President Roh Moo-Hyun had a summit with Kim again and attempted to maintain the Six-Party to stop the Nuclear and Missile tests of North Korea in 2007. This process was opposite from the previous policy toward North Korea. Even though President Roh Tae-woo announced Nordpolitik (Northern Policy) in 1988 and mitigated the hostile attitude, North Korea was still the enemy of South Korea and the economic cooperation and conversation were not imaginable. During the Kim Young-Sam administration (1993-1997), the relationship with North Korea remained estranged. Although the Sunshine Policy didn’t prevent the North from testing nuclear and missile weapons, the Sunshine Policy is seen as a turning point to mitigate the conventional military tension on the Korean Peninsula and shift the public discourse that was very aggressive to North Korea (Levin and Han 2003).

However, the situation in a time when Moon was inaugurated was totally different. North Korea considerably advanced its ability to nuclear and missile weapons, and accordingly, the previous conservative administrations had gradually closed the talk channel with North Korea since 2010. Corresponding to North Korea’s nuclear and missile tests, South Korea started with the US taking seriously the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), which brought out the harsh opposition of China to the South (Tiezzi 2016) North Korea did execute the Fourth Nuclear Test in January 2016 and test the ‘Kwangmyongsong-4’ that is an intercontinental ballistic missile in early February 2016. Accordingly, South Korea ordered all companies in Kaesong to withdraw. North

Korea immediately announced a statement that all South Korean companies and people in Kaesong must withdraw. After the Fourth Nuclear Test, North Korea seemed to have a capacity to complete nuclear weapons and ICBM. It inspired the geopolitical conflict around the Korean Peninsula. President Trump ridiculed Kim Jung-un as a 'rocketman' and denounced that North Korea would face 'fire and fury' (Zeleny et al. 2017). Correspondingly, Kim also ridiculed Trump as 'lunatic' and 'dotard'. It was a famous case of the conflict between Trump and Kim in 2017. The Sunshine Policy renewed by Moon seemed to be surreal in this circumstance. As a result, such a geopolitical conflict around the Peninsula reached its peak at Kim's announcement that North Korea completed the test of the ICBM with nuclear weapons to reach the US mainland. The Korean Peninsula in the first year when Moon took office was in a series of tensions between the South and North and the US.

But, in early 2018, the situation became reversed as the South, the North, and the US had several talks, especially summits between Trump and Kim. At first, South Korea quickly organized the unified sports team of Ice Hockey with North Korea and invited North Korea and the US high-ranked officials to PyeongChang Olympics in South Korea. Even though they canceled the proposed meeting, South Korea tried to make a positive atmosphere for the possibility of talks with North Korea and mediate the meeting between both sides. After PyeongChang Olympics, South Korea delivered the letters to reopen the talk between the US and the North in the middle of both sides. Moon and Kim held on the summit and adopted Panmunjom Agreement at the end of April. Following this summit, Trump and Kim held on the summit in Singapore in June and announced the agreement based on the Panmunjom Agreement (White House 2018). South and North agreed with the inter-Korean disarmament at Pyeongyang in September of the same year (Korean Ministry of Unification 2018). Trump and Kim held on the second summit in Hanoi in February 2019, but this meeting reaffirmed both sides have a big discrepancy in the exchange between the mitigation of international sanctions and the reduction of nuclear weapons and ICBM (Borger 2019). Even though the South, the North, and the US have an unexpected meeting at Panmunjom on July 1st, the attention of the US to North Korea has become decreased, and the Korean peace process remained an impasse.

During the last several years, the role of South played in the relationship between Trump and Kim has received less spotlight from all media around the world than the relationship between Trump and Kim. Korea's role is beyond the nationalist ambition for re-unification that will build on a unified nation-state. And it is parallel with the increased concern of Korean people about the economic gap between two systems with the decreased sense of national bond (Park 2009). In South Korea, President Moon invented the 'driver's seat theory' that is developed from 'Korea as a Balancer in Northeast Asia' in the Roh Moo-hyun administration. This theory was an expression that South Korea

would be willing to lead to the Korean issue more actively than before. It appears as playing a role to mediate the talk between Trump and Kim. Why does he want to be a driver? In particular, this thesis notes the ‘New Economic Map on the Korean Peninsula’ (NEM). In other words, the behavior of the Korean government to mediate between the US and the North is to realize the NEM. I regard the NEM as a kind of ‘geostrategy’ (e.g. Brzezinski 1997), which requires the spatial reconfiguration of East Asia as well as the Korean Peninsula. The NEM pursues to reduce the inter-Korean economic gap through the economic cooperation that can create spatial fix (Harvey 1982) and then advance the Korean peace process.

However, I argue that it is not a creative initiative of President Moon, but the comprehensive expression of the Sunshine Policy and further the long-standing geopolitical vision inherent in South Korean society. My study examines the genealogy of the NEM in the history of South Korea, and then analyzes the unfolding of the Korean public opinions around the NEM which is the present Korean government’s main initiative toward North Korea. By doing so, I don’t delimit the NEM to the one-time policy of the Korean government but take into account it as a product of the geopolitical imagination around the Korean Peninsula. It implies that beyond the success or failure of the NEM, South Korea will pursue the advance of the Korean peace process rather than the subordination to the binary grammar of the Alliance under the polynomial equation of East Asian politics in its statecraft. In the time that I am writing my thesis, East Asia is, after Joe Biden took office to the US president, very rapidly returning to the form of its traditional geopolitics, which reassigns the East Asian countries in a binary way (Dalton 2021). I conclude with the geopolitical implication that the framework of the classical geopolitics to divide East Asia as allies or enemies is not available to the understanding of the dynamic of the Korean geopolitics and the Korean peace process is now not a variable but to be a constant in East Asian politics. Finally, I describe the limitations of my study and suggest the potential themes to strengthen and expand the findings.

### **Research questions and methodologies**

This thesis investigates the construction and discursive practices of the ‘New Economic Map on the Korean Peninsula’ as a contemporary Korean government’s geostrategy. I focus on two questions. Firstly, how does the NEM form in the context of history? NEM as a kind of foreign policy is a response of South Korea and the Korean elites to the changing international circumstance (Dijkink 1996). This is to say that it is a geostrategy to maximize national interest while perceiving

the shift of the geopolitical and geoeconomic circumstances. However, it is a contemporary product of the geopolitical and geoeconomic discourse, logic, and practice long developed by the Korean elites, beyond the national initiative of the Moon Administration. Therefore, the working of the NEM should be interpreted in the broader historical context. Basically, the geopolitical discourse about the geopolitical location is the main source for geopolitical and geoeconomic logic and practice (ÓTuathail and Agnew 1992). The understanding of geopolitical location considers the international circumstances. In particular, I intersect the shift of geopolitical circumstance with the economic development of South Korea. South Korea is normally regarded as one of the developmental states. Cold War divided the trade partner of South Korea depending on the political ideology, but the Post-Cold War redrawn the map of Korean trade by advance the economic tie within Asia.

Based on this background, I examine how the Korean elite, mainly geographers understood the geopolitical and geoeconomic circumstances and suggested national initiatives to maximize national interests. It is achieved by reviewing the works the Korean elites produced. A range of the works is from a first geography textbook after Korean independence, “Introduction to Joseon Geopolitics: Past, Present, and Future” (Pyo 1947) to the several articles that provide the understanding of Korean geopolitics and suggest the national initiatives and their logics. The Korean elites raised geoeconomic cooperation rather than geopolitical conflict to calculate national interests and propose national plans depending on the international circumstance surrounding the Korean Peninsula. These kinds of geopolitical and geoeconomic discourses and logics are embodied in the NEM. As a result, I expect that the NEM backgrounds the fear from the geopolitical conflict but foregrounds the hope from the geoeconomic cooperation. By doing so, it pursues to recover the connectivity with the Asian Continent.

Secondly, how does the public discourse on the policy toward North Korea resonate with the statecraft of South Korea? The NEM frames the ‘state maneuvering’ of South Korea to advance the talk between Trump and Kim, the circulation of public discourse around the NEM transformed the security traditionally emphasized into the expectation about economic cooperation and growth. While both Koreas have had an irreconcilable relationship reminding the Korean people of political ideology, they have repeated political conflict and cooperation historically since the 1972 South-North Joint Statement. However, what is overlooked is economic cooperation. It was behind the conventional military confrontation and the dispute around the nuclear and missile tests of North Korea. The inter-Korean economic cooperation is the main element to explain the geopolitics of the Korean Peninsula since the 1990s (Doucette and Lee 2015; Lee 2016; Chi et al. 2019; Park and Paek 2019). It resonates with the increased attention of critical geopolitics about the economy (For

example, Sparke 1998; Coleman 2005; Cowen and Smith 2009; Moio and Passi 2013; Lee et al. 2018; Lee 2020). In this sense, geopolitics and geoeconomics should be considered together in observing the discourse surrounding the political issues on the Korean Peninsula. So, I depend on the theoretical framework about how critical geopolitics considers economy in understanding the geopolitical discourse. In particular, the political partisanship in South Korea influences the perspective to look at North Korea. Normally, conservatives used to emphasize geopolitical conflict while progressives have paid attention to geoeconomic cooperation (Lee 2015). The relative emphasis of geopolitics and geoeconomics based on political partisanship is inherent in the Korean statecraft to North Korea. Considering this background, I catch the geopolitical and geoeconomic discourses circulated by the Korean conservatives and progressives.

More specifically, I analyze the recurrent discourse within the five major daily newspapers that reflect on political partisanship. The conservative newspapers are *Joseon Ilbo*, *Joongang Ilbo*, and *Donga Ilbo*, and the progressives are *Kyunghyang Ilbo* and *Hangyoreh*. I examine how the articles in these newspapers understood, interpreted, or analyzed the major events about the Korean peace process from early 2017 to late 2018. Shortly, I expect that the conservatives emphasized the concerns about the South Korea-the US alliance and the Korean security, while the progressives amplified the possibility of peace and economic opportunity. Even though both sides have a big discrepancy to approach the North Korea issue, both sides share the point that the realization of the NEM will bring the capitalist benefit to South Korea in common. Therefore, the Korean peace process came to be suspended after the Hanoi meeting, but it is a reason that South Korea will not stop it.

## **Chapter 2: Historicizing the ‘New Economic Map on the Korean Peninsula’: from geopolitics to geoeconomics**

### **Introduction**

The military and political conflict between the two rival Korean states on the Korean Peninsula had been at a high level since the sinking of the South Korean navy ship Cheon-an by North Korea in 2010 and the associated ‘May 24’ economic sanctions imposed by the South on the North in response to the attack. However, the Trump administration’s outreach to North Korea that began in 2016 managed to reduce the tensions on the peninsula and resulted in several joint meetings between the US, South Korea, and North Korea between 2016 and 2018. While the public attention on those meetings has been predominantly focused on reducing the nuclear threat from North Korea, the relationship between Trump and Kim Jong-un, or Trump’s volatile politics in the realist perspective, the remarkable role of South Korea and the Moon Administration played between the US and North Korea has been ignored or limited. The motivation of the South’s engagement for the US-North Korea negotiation comes to the fore in the New Economic Map on the Korean Peninsula (NEM), a Moon administration policy that attempts to shift the South-North relationship from ‘geopolitical fear’ to ‘geoeconomic hope’ to restore some of the economic opportunities between the two states that existed prior to the Cheon-an attack (Radil and Lee 2021). South Korea’s policy objective has been to use the NEM for “peace and trade – not [political] unification” (Dudden et al. 2018) and to open North Korea’s economy to more international investment by the South.

The New Economic Map is an example of a ‘geostrategy’ employed by states in the international system to pursue their foreign policy objectives (e.g. Brzezinski 1997). Geostrategy is a realpolitik notion that states should have ‘integrated and comprehensive strategies’ for rivals and allies that take into account both ‘history and geography’ (ibid, 50-51) and both geopolitics and geoeconomics are inherent in a geostrategy. In this tradition, geopolitics indicates the logic of and practices to control territory while geoeconomics means efforts to gain economic benefits across that territory. The entanglement of the geopolitical and the geoeconomic is considered a core element of realist thought in international relations (Luttwak 1990; Gelb 2010; Blackwill and Harris 2016) and the interplay of the two is notable in the case of the NEM.

The corpus of critical geopolitics literature recognizes the importance of geoeconomics to understanding global geopolitics. Especially, numerous authors point out that geoeconomics

contributes to the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of state power in the post-Cold War period (Sparke 1998; Cowen and Smith 2009; Moisio and Paasi 2013; Lee et al. 2018; Lee 2020). In East Asia, territorially-based geopolitical conflict is still prevalent between numerous states (for example, China-Taiwan, South Korea-North Korea, and South Korea-Japan), but economic integration and trade networks between these same states are also copresent. In this sense, Lee (2020: 4) argues that it is impossible to understand the region without reference to both “the lingering impacts of the Cold War structure and the legacies of developmental states which have still influenced various spatialities in East Asia.” In the case of the NEM, geopolitics simultaneously co-exists with geoeconomics and the policy is a response to the back-and-forth patterns of inter-state conflict and cooperation between the two Koreas based on territorial and capitalist logics, practices, and discourses.

The NEM was initiated by President Moon who took office in 2017 but is a contemporary expression of a deeper geopolitical vision of South Korea that has been historically formed. Even though the NEM is mostly concerned with using North Korea as a kind of ‘spatial fix’ (Harvey 1982) for its own economy, it also reflects on the changed geopolitical and geoeconomic circumstances in East Asia. In Brzenskian terms, the NEM is a figurative ‘roadmap’ or overarching strategy that South Korea is using to pursue its own geopolitical and geoeconomic objectives, strategies, and effects regarding North Korea within changing international circumstances. In this vein, this study argues that the South’s statecraft toward North Korea after the demise of the Cold War has relied heavily on geoeconomic logic, practice, and discourse to pursue its own capitalist economic development, while during the Cold War period, territorially-based geopolitical conflict was the dominant paradigm. However, until the Trump administration, the South’s pursuit of a geostrategy through geoeconomics had stood in contrast with the US’s geopolitical strategy toward East Asia (e.g., Cronin and Lee 2018). This regional disconnect between the two allies reflects the distinct history and geography of South Korea as an export-driven developmental state.

To explore these issues, this paper historicizes the NEM, tracking how the geoeconomic hopes of South Korea for better economic gains have offset conventional geopolitical fears over North Korea. It will be accomplished by investigating how Korean elites understand the geopolitical and geoeconomic circumstances around the Korean Peninsula and drew on that understanding to advise strategies for national initiatives. Historically, many Korean elites accepted an imported geopolitical metaphor of ‘the Korean Peninsula’ as a kind of crucible between land and sea powers in the region and translated this into an acceptance of Korea as being in a constant ‘crisis’ or a kind of tug-of-war between outside powers (e.g., Pyo 1947; Im 1969 1972; Yu 1989; 1993; 2010; Hwang



1999; Kim 2019). This kind of discourse fed and shaped both the geopolitical and geoeconomic logics and practices for the geostrategy of South Korea (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992). However, the logic and practices for overcoming the vulnerabilities of South Korea or the Korean Peninsula have shifted over time from the geopolitical to the geoeconomic to some degree. This process depended on the reterritorialization of South Korea for better capitalist development in the context of globalization. In the process, the geostrategies of South Korea still draw on the idea of the Korean Peninsula as vulnerable but have foregrounded ‘geoeconomic hope’ as well as backgrounded ‘geopolitical fear’ (Sparke, 2007). This finding has geopolitical implications for the Korean peace process in the statecraft of South Korea.

### **The New Economic Map on the Korean Peninsula (NEM)**

The New Economic Map on the Korean Peninsula (NEM) is a geostrategy that renews the Sunshine Policy led by former President Kim Dae-Jung (1998-2002) and Roh Moo-Hyun (2003-2007). Its underlying geopolitical discourse is that the Korean Peninsula is in-between land and sea powers. President Moon Jae-In emphasized that South Korea has to overcome the geopolitical vulnerability of the Korean Peninsula at his address in 2019:

“...In geopolitical terms, no other country in the world is surrounded by four major powers as we are. When Korea didn’t have much clout and was deemed insignificant, the Korean Peninsula was also cast to the periphery of the continent and ocean and was even reduced to an arena where global powers competed. This is the history that we had to endure. However, if we build a strong nation, we will be able to play a leading role in upholding peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia, connecting the continent with the ocean. We must turn our country’s geopolitical position into a strength.” (Cheong Wa Dae 2019)

The main narrative of the NEM is encapsulated as a slogan of ‘peace and economy’ to connect the geopolitical and the geoeconomic. This is to say that South Korea should design a national plan to reduce geopolitical threats and improve geoeconomic benefits. Moon detailed his idea to the NEM



Figure 1: The New Economic Map on the Korean Peninsula  
(Source: the Korean Ministry of Unification November 30 2020).

that connects South Korea first to North Korea and then to the rest of Asia. To this end, the NEM requests the resumption of economic cooperation with North Korea that was suspended following the sinking of the Cheonan in 2010.

“...If there is progress in the North Korean nuclear issue and if appropriate conditions are met, my Administration will draw a new economic map on the Korean Peninsula. We will freshly connect the South and the North, which have been disconnected by the

Military Demarcation Line, with an economic belt and establish an economic community where the two Koreas can prosper together. (...) South and North Korea will prosper together as a bridge connecting the Asian mainland and the Pacific.”  
(Cheong Wa Dae 2017)

The NEM attempts to ‘restore’ the connectivity and strengthen the economic integration with North Korea and the Asian Continent beyond North Korea. It requests a spatial fix for South Korea through the building of infrastructure in both states using South Korea capital. The NEM includes three economic belts (Figure 1): ‘Pan East Sea Economic Belts’ to link the east coast of Korea to Russia; ‘Pan Yellow Sea Economic Belt’ to link the west coast of Korea to China; and ‘DMZ economic belt’. By doing so, it expects to “lay the foundation for unification, job creation, and higher economic growth through inter-Korean economic cooperation” and “develop the Korean Peninsula into a hub of economic cooperation in the region by pursuing an economic community in Northeast Asia” (Korean Ministry of Unification website February 08 2021).

However, the geoeconomics of the NEM is in tension with the geopolitical reality of the Korean Peninsula. East Asia is still suffering from nationalist political ideologies as well as the military threat of North Korea (Lee 2020). Cronin and Lee (2018) note that the NEM project of South Korea to restore connectivity with China and Russia through North Korea could improve the

possibility of the expansion of China's Belt and Road Initiative into Northeast Asia as well as reduce the influence of the US to engage in this region. But they also recognize that the contemporary geostrategists of South Korea are required to consider not only their traditional allies but also China for trade dependency and North Korea for security. It implies that the NEM is a product of the complicated calculation to the change of geopolitical and geoeconomic circumstances around South Korea. In its historical context, I note that South Korea, which is a developmental state depending on export and import, experienced a rapid shift around the Post-Cold War.

### **The territorial reconfiguration of South Korea in the post-Cold War**

The developmental state is the main framework to understand the history of South Korea's statecraft and economic development following independence after World War II (Luedde-Neurath 1998; Minns 2001). This conception foregrounds government-led plans to drive economic policies to facilitate the economic development of the East Asian countries since the 1970s. In South Korea, a series of Five-Year Economic Development Plans are typical examples. These plans were based on selecting and subsidizing the manufacturing companies for export which are called 'chaebol' such as Samsung, Hyundai, Daewoo, LG, Hyosung, and so on. As a result, it led to the remarkable economic growth called 'the Miracle of Han River' in a way that emulates the previous strategies of the Western countries (Reinert 2007). The US was never in favor of this way the South Korean state engaged in the market but allowed it because the US wished the stability of South Korea to maintain its frontline of the Cold War in this region (Glassman 2011; Glassman and Choi 2014).

The key strategy of South Korea in the 1970s and 80s was to expand the export of manufacturing products to other countries. The early main economic partners were the developed countries such as Japan, the US, Germany, France, Belgium, and Italy, the emerging Asian countries including Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and the natural resource-rich countries such as Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Canada, and Kuwait (Korean Customs Service Statistics Nov 30 2020) considering the trade statistics by countries. In 1970, the trade-to-GDP ratio is above 50 % and comes to increase up to over 60 % in the 1980s. On November 30 in 1964 first Day of Export, President Park Jung-hee said to celebrate the achievement of 100 million dollars in export as follows: "because all countries in the world mark the fierce competition to pioneer and expand markets with the trend of trade liberalization, the government will subsidize you with effective policies to cope with the circumstance of international economy" (Korean Presidential Archives February 8 2021). On the fifteenth Day of Export, he once again said as follows: "We overcame all hardship and challenge in

the face of the Oil Shock in 1973 and the communization of Indo-China Peninsula in 1975. Only South Korea has maintained high economic growth. (...) Under the principle of reciprocal equality, the government will focus its diplomatic ability on contributing to peace and prosperity by expanding trade and promoting economic and technological cooperation with many countries around the world” (Korean Presidential Archives February 8 2021). The national strategies in the economic development of South Korea were sensitive to the change of the geopolitical and geoeconomic circumstances. However, all economic partners to South Korea were within the capitalist First World and non-aligned Third World rather than the communist Second World. Geopolitics helped to map the trade of South Korea throughout the Cold War.

Since the end of the 1980s, South Korea faced radically new geopolitical and geoeconomic circumstances. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, China and Vietnam adopted the transition to a capitalist system, and many Second World countries altered their political ideology that prevented South Korea from diplomatic relationship and trade. In parallel with this trend, South Korean conglomerates began to increase direct investment and export to these countries. In 1988, President Roh Tae-woo announced the ‘*Nordpolitik*’ or ‘Northern Policy’, a push to establish diplomatic ties with communist countries in the Asian Continent (Korean Presidential Archives, February 08 2021). Different from the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics that communist countries

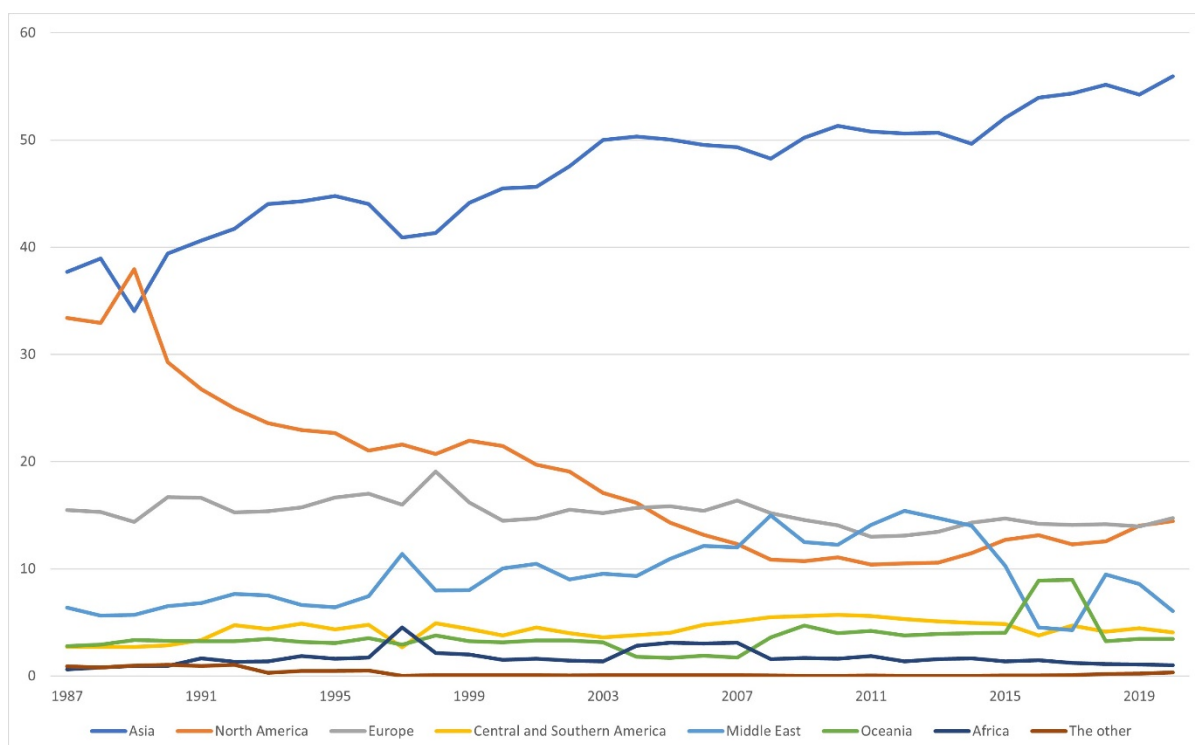


Figure 2: The ratio of the trade by continents in South Korea (source: Korean International Trade Association November 30 2020).

boycotted, the 1988 Seoul Olympics became a stage symbolizing the mitigation of the East-West confrontation. By the end of the decade, South Korea had established official diplomatic ties with China, Russia, the Commonwealth of Independent States (made up of former Soviet states), Vietnam, and Mongolia, and they all became economic partners of South Korea. In the process of expanding into new international markets, South Korea also gained an advantage over a now more isolated North Korea. The trade network of South Korea expanded into post-communist countries, especially China, Russia, and Vietnam, beyond the geopolitics of the US-South Korea alliance. Figure 2 describes that in the trade of South Korea, as much as the decreased importance of North American countries, especially the US, the Asian countries have been important trade partners of South Korea.

Despite the expansion of the South's economic network and the new shape of the emerging economic bloc within the East Asian region, the official transnational organization for the economic cooperation of this region did not fully compare to the regional blocs such as the European Union, North American Free Trade Agreement, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. China, which has developed its economy based on the export (Hung 2015), became already one of the major trade partners of South Korea since the 1980s and Russia also became one of the main economic partners since 1993 (Korean Customs Service Statistics November 30 2020). Nevertheless, the remarkable US-Korea-Japan alliance, the lasting ideological conflict between South and North Korea as a legacy of the Cold War, and the nationalist conflicts have shaped the geopolitical tension to prevent East Asian countries from making a comparable trade bloc in this region (Kang 2007; Emmers 2009; Cha 2010). The South's power to pursue economic benefits through transnational networks continues to co-exist with the power of geopolitical conflicts. Therefore, the intellectuals of South Korea have shifted to a geostrategy that considers geoeconomics to maintain and expand its economic development and geopolitics to cope with the tensions between East Asian countries.

### **From geopolitics to geoeconomics**

Japan utilized the geographical term 'Korean Peninsula' or 'Joseon Peninsula' for labeling Korea since the late 19th century (Kang 2015). Korea didn't use this kind of concept until then. The importance of the geographical term 'peninsula' is that it delimits the geopolitical imagination to South Korean people that the Korean Peninsula is 'in-between' communist and liberalist blocs and land and sea powers historically and politically (Chi 2013). Japan imposed this kind of geopolitical discourse on the Korean people to justify its fierce colonial ruling (Shim 2013). In other words, the

discourse claimed that the Korean Peninsula has a geopolitical ‘destiny’ to always be invaded and controlled by great powers; in this way, Japanese occupation was framed as a reasonable behavior to help the Korean people and to protect from Western imperialism. Chi (2013) described this discourse as the ‘Destiny of [the] Peninsula’. Many Korean intellectuals have made efforts to overcome this kind of environmental deterministic geopolitical discourse but rather than fully deconstruct it, they often interpret it oppositely. For example, Im (1969: 40) argues that “the land of Korea has been recognized as an important site, with not economic but strategic value” and “remains a key area to the two camp’s defenses, Communist’s Eastern and America’s Western”, during the Cold War. Kwon (1991: 253) states that “our nation has a specificity of the Peninsula” “to have been constantly invaded from the external powers”. Moreover, Yu (2010: vii) argues that “the characteristic of the peninsula has high accessibility from land and sea powers” so the people in the Peninsula can have high openness to catch the migration of people and the flow of culture. In this version, the Korean Peninsula can be a new opportunity for Korea rather than a limitation.

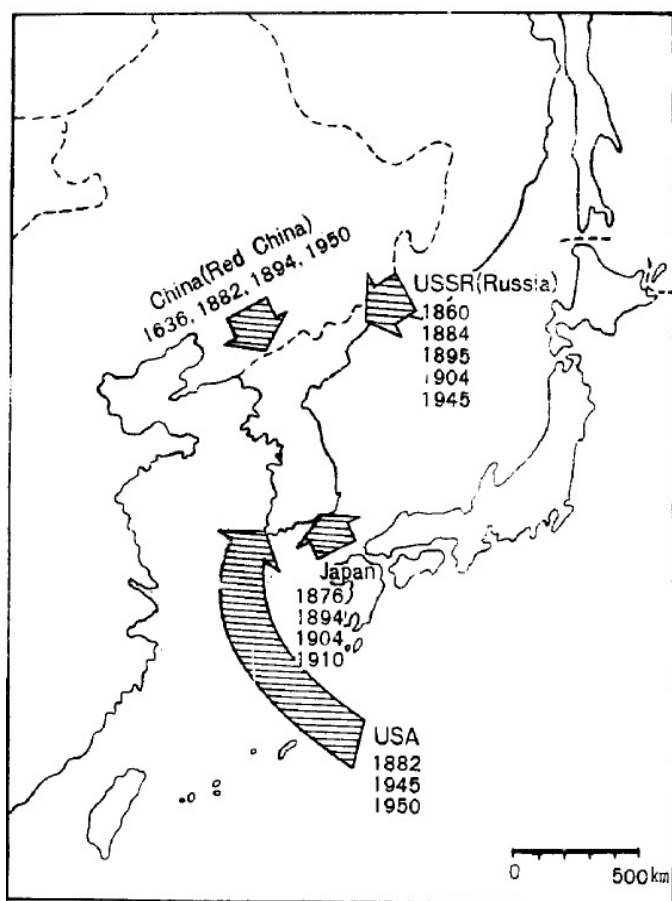


Figure 3: The summarized history of the modern Korean geopolitics described by Im (1969: 37).

I note that the “Introduction to Joseon Geopolitics: Past, Present, and Future” by Pyo Hae-un (1947) attempted to re-interpret the geopolitics of Korea differently from Imperial Japan. Pyo defined Korea as a ‘buffer independent state’ because Korea had both political characteristics of land and sea in its relative location (Oh 2015). Pyo’s work rationalized Korea as an emerging independent state and presented the typical geopolitics of environmental determinism for the time because he argued that the geographical environment of the Korean Peninsula between the Asian Continent and the Pacific Ocean determines the unique characteristic of Korean and Korean people. It is a contradictory attempt that appropriates the colonial discourse by Imperial Japan and

then interprets it in a way to encourage the unique identity of Korea.

Im (1969) in his article “A study of special variation in Korea” published in the Journal of the Korean Geographical Society adopted most of Pyo’s perspectives and similarly defines Korea: the peninsula to include risk/opportunity and isolation/bridge between land and sea; the center of East Asian countries; and its characteristic as sea power traditionally. Figure 3 shows his geopolitical imagination. He interpreted modern Korean history as the conflict between land and sea powers. He appropriates the Japanese discourse to Korea, but he tries to conceptualize the Korean Peninsula as a geographical unit to have the futuristic potential being both sea power and land power. Also, he argued that the Korean Peninsula is a very attractive place the great powers want to occupy historically. In this sense, Im (1972) said that the Armistice line which was imposed by great powers interrupts the unique identity of Korea and makes the Peninsula a stage of the unstable balance between liberal and communist camps. This geopolitical discourse emphasizes the lasting crisis during the Cold War following the previous Korean history and vindicates the possibility of development in the upcoming future on the foundation of environmental determinism.

Around the Post-Cold War, the existing geopolitical discourse creates different kinds of geopolitical and geoeconomic logics and practices. Yu (1989) defined ‘Korean territory’ in a new way, which is presupposed to be bounded space but with the interaction with external space. He reconceptualizes the Korean Peninsula as ‘a center of Asia-Pacific area’ from ‘a peninsula at the Eastern edge of Eurasian Continent’, arguing that Korean people must take away a negative attitude to ‘our territory’. He considered globalization and the reduction of ideological conflict in the world. In this sense, he suggested that by assuming unification in near future, South Korea should make a plan to build up railroad and highway to connect the Asian Continent with the Pacific Ocean. His suggestions are very similar to the NEM that tries to strengthen connectivity with the Asian Continent through infrastructure.

Moreover, he conceptualized ‘Northeast Asian Rim’ as a state bloc of East Asian countries (Yu 1993). He mapped his idea as figure 4. In a functionalist term, like China, North Korea, and post-soviet countries provide labor and resource, and South Korea, Japan, and the US provide technology and human resource, this ‘Rim’ can create bigger synergy and South Korea can work as a ‘merging area’ between land and sea. East Asia should construct economic cooperation rather than political conflict, but South Korea has to observe and manage the conflict with North Korea and the North’s poor economic status at that time. He argues to foreground the Yellow Sea on the Western side of the Korean Peninsula because of the transnational cooperation with neighboring countries, especially

China. Yu's arguments and suggestions were responses to the post-Cold War and the economic development of South Korea.

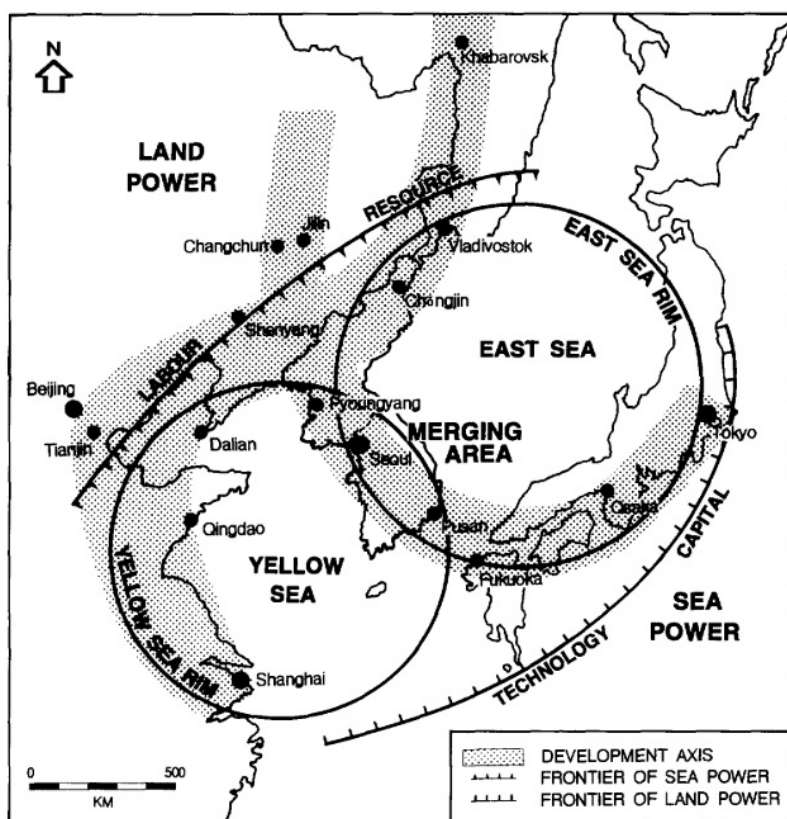


Figure 4 The mapping of the Northeast Asian Rim (source: Yu 1993: 317).

In the Post-Cold War era, geoeconomics has gradually come to be ‘commonsense’ to set up foreign relations with neighboring countries. Announced by the Korean government in 1992, the Third National Territorial Plan (1992-1999) includes some strategies, such as the start of the economic cooperation in the inter-Korean borderland, the building of transportation for the inter-Korean cooperation, and the population and national territory management for post-unification, for a goal of the making of national territory for unification. The plan reflected on the three principles of the 1991 Basic Inter-Korean agreement, ‘rapprochement’, ‘non-aggression’, and ‘exchange and cooperation between both Koreas (Korean Ministry of Unification North Korea Information Portal February 8 2021).

President Kim Dae-Jung who took office in 1998 suggested a new ‘Sunshine Policy’ that embodies geoeconomic logics and practices: ‘no longer tolerate armed provocation; no damage and merge North Korea; start feasible plans for cooperation as soon as possible’ (Korean Presidential Archives February 8 2021). In 1993, Lee Won-Jong who was then-Seoul mayor suggested a concept



of BESETO that is a sort of ‘urban belt’ to connect Seoul with Beijing and Tokyo (Joongang Ilbo 1994). According to his explanation, under the new international order in the 1990s, Korea, China, and Japan should share the high development experience, the rich natural resource and labor, and the high manufacturing ability respectively. It also resonated with the functionalist explanation of Yu (1993). The Seoul Institute, a city government-sponsored think-tank, proposed the construction of infrastructure to connect between cities in East Asia (Joongang Ilbo 1994). Connectivity was one of the main geoeconomic discourses, logics, and practices to secure peace and improve the economy.

In this process, China became a prominent economic partner to South Korea. Other East Asian countries would also attempt to make economic cooperation with South Korea because ‘the economy of the emerging industrial countries such as Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong already grew up enough as much as no longer need to depend on the US economy and the ‘excuse of the US engagement to East Asia was decreased for the demise of the Cold War’ (Lee, 1997). In a similar view, Kim (2001) argues to advance the Pan-Yellow Sea urban network and Lee (2007) notes East Asian (historical) oceanic network because the inter-state conflict in this region already turned into the space of flow and network. China became a top trade partner to South Korea in 2004. The rise of China in the geoeconomics of South Korea encourages not to divide East Asian countries but to codify South Korea to be a part of the East Asian network or economic bloc. In this sense, Yu (2010), who later became an ambassador to China, said that China became virtually an ally to South Korea in terms of economy, arguing to shift the past geopolitical conflict into geopolitical rapprochement. It is reaffirmed in the Fourth National Territorial Plan in the same way: ‘inter-Korean integration’ and ‘the integration with East Asian region’.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

The debate so far presents that by the development of the transnational economy within the East Asian region and the change of the trade partners as its response the construction of geostrategy in South Korea has shifted from geopolitical conflict to geoeconomic cooperation. But it does not mean that geopolitical conflict prevalent in East Asia has disappeared. Instead, the economic development of South Korea has constantly required the economic ties with the neighboring countries. So, it backgrounds geopolitical conflicts and foreground geoeconomic cooperation between East Asian countries. The ‘geopolitical metaphor’ that represents the Korean Peninsula as a field of conflict between great powers is inherent in such geostrategy. It was translated into

geopolitical fear in a time when ideological conflicts were remarkable, but the successful economic development created the geoeconomic desire for better capital accumulation. The NEM is a geostrategy to maximize geoeconomics, which is an initiative to turn geopolitical fear into geoeconomic hope and prompts spatial fix on the Korean Peninsula. The ambition to realize the geostrategy and the long-standing geopolitical vision contributed to the action of the Moon administration played in several summits between Trump and Kim.

The shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics in the Korean elite discourse resonates with the public discourse in terms of North Korea. While the concern of the Korean public has been away from reunification with the emotional connection faded away, the nationalist goal that will achieve the unified nation-state has gradually been replaced with the desire for better capital accumulation (Park 2009). On one hand, Korean people still recognize the geopolitical threat from North Korea, and the Korean conservatives have corresponded with it. On the other hand, Korean progressives after the gain of democracy have acquired the support of the Korean public through the geoeconomic discourse, logic, and practice the peace process with North Korea can bring economic benefit. Despite such a difference in the means to control North Korea, both have otherized North Korea in common: as the 'objective of geopolitical absorption' or as 'geo-economic object' (Lee, 2015). The important is that regardless of whether South Korea succumbs to or cooperates with North Korea, many elites agree that geoeconomics with regard to North Korea can make an opportunity for South Korea to grow its economy (Radil and Lee 2021).

Ultimately, the current geoeconomic discourse transcends the political parties in South Korea. Therefore, we should expect that the Moon administration will continuously push forward the NEM, and the next administration, whether it is conservative or progressive, will not change the big picture of the NEM. As the geoeconomics of South Korea needs a close relationship with North Korea to increase economic connectivity with China and Russia (which are hostile to the US), South Korea will make all these countries players in the Korean peace process. Now that the US-China trade war has come to the fore for several years, the Korean peace process and the success of the Korean geostrategy will not be easy. However, South Korea is likely to keep pushing for peace under the rationale of economic opportunity.

## **Chapter 3: Peace for prosperity? The geopolitics of the Korean peace process**

### **Abstract**

The politically divided Korean peninsula has been described as the setting of the final echoes of the Cold War. The high point during this period was a summit in 2000 between President Kim and his Northern counterpart Kim Jong-Il. The failure of the Sunshine Policy to produce tangible results also contributed to the election of the conservative Lee Myung-Bak and Park Geun-Hye governments in South Korea, who both advocated a harder approach to the North. The competing issues at stake ahead of the summit foreshadowed the complications awaiting each government. From the United States' perspective, the core issue was the security threat posed by the North's combination of nuclear weapons with ballistic missiles. In the broadest sense, critical geopolitics is concerned with how the foreign policy of states rests on a myriad of taken-for-granted assumptions about the relationships between space and power in international politics.

### **Introduction**

In the summer of 2018, Singapore hosted the first ever bilateral meeting between a sitting US President and the leader of North Korea. On the day of the summit (June 12), President Donald Trump and North leader Kim Jong-Un initially met privately and then later again with expanded delegations with an aim to reach agreement on issues concerning US-North Korea relations, the North's relations with South Korea and, most centrally from the US point of view, the North's nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programs. Although South Korean officials were not officially part of the summit, the South played a significant role in making the summit a reality, acting as a go-between to deliver an invitation to the White House just weeks earlier. During the summit, Trump and Kim signed a joint statement "to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula ... [and] to work towards the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula." The next day, Trump proclaimed that the summit was a success, tweeting that "[t]here is no longer a Nuclear Threat from North Korea" (Sullivan 2018).

Although Trump's claims about denuclearization were later contradicted by other US government officials and other parties and a second summit in Vietnam in February 2019 failed to produce any additional agreements about denuclearization, the Singapore summit was remarkable for several reasons. First, no other similar meeting had ever been arranged over the course of the nearly 70-year history of US involvement in Korean politics. Second, just seven months before, North Korea had successfully launched a new ballistic missile estimated to be able to reach the west coast of the US and much of Europe. Third, during the period of the North's missile test, Trump had engaged in an extraordinary series of threats toward Kim. In short order, Trump threatened to rain "fire and fury" down on the North, belittled Kim as "Little Rocket Man," and stated that North Korean leaders "won't be around much longer" in a series of remarks throughout 2017 (Keneally 2018). In sum, US and North Korean interests seemed completely incompatible in late 2017 and yet, just a few short months later, the Trump administration had its first and, to date perhaps only, foreign policy success.

Although the Trump administration's foreign policy has received considerable media attention relative to North Korea, scholarly engagement with the specifics of US-Korea relations under Trump has lagged. And where scholars have considered the issue, it has largely yielded a focus on the bilateral relations between the US and North Korea, neglecting the South's role in this process. To help fill these gaps, we consider how the issues connected to the Singapore summit and the broader inter-Korean peace process were represented within the South Korean news media. We do this from the perspective of critical geopolitics, examining the popular political discourses circulating in the South Korean news media concerning the US, Trump, the summits, and South-North relations. We find that traditional geopolitical discourses concerned with the territorial security of South Korea are competing with alternative discourses about the potential for economic growth and cooperation with the North.

Our argument unfolds as follows. First, we describe the recent history of the politics of the Korean peninsula, with an eye for moments that have characterized the overall context of South-North relations. We then describe our theoretical framework and apply it to interrogate the popular discourses circulating about the peace process in South Korea. We discuss the shifting concerns associated with the process, particularly how they varied by alignment with partisan politics. Lastly, we conclude with a discussion of the implications of our findings for the peace process and the geopolitics of the peninsula.

## Overview of the peace process

The politically divided Korean peninsula has been described as the setting of the final echoes of the Cold War (Armstrong 2014). The two Koreas share a common history, language, and culture, and yet politically, one is an internationally isolated nuclear-armed Marxist-Leninist regime while the other is a liberal democracy with an advanced capitalist economy and a long-standing military alliance with the United States. As such, the Korean people exist in parallel but territorially separated political and economic worlds. Nevertheless, over the past 40-plus years, both states have ostensibly yet slowly moved to put an end to the Korean Cold War and to normalize relations with each other. Important first diplomatic steps toward a peaceful peninsula were the 1972 South-North Korea Joint Statement and the 1991 Inter-Korean Basic Agreement, both of which created opportunities for cooperation and exchanges between South and North (Levin and Han 2002).

Following the end of the Cold War elsewhere, relations between the Koreas have repeatedly vacillated between periods of relative cooperation punctuated by moments of open conflict. Most notably, the Kim Dae-Jung administration in South Korea (1998-2002) advanced its so-called ‘Sunshine Policy’ (햇볕정책) in an effort to lay groundwork for peace and, eventually, reunification. The high point during this period was a summit in 2000 between President Kim and his Northern counterpart Kim Jung-Il. This meeting, the first Inter-Korean Summit, yielded an agreement to “assure [the] peaceful coexistence between the two Koreas on their way to the formation of a completely unified Korea” (Ministry of Unification 2019). The process also led to several tangible examples of cooperation between the two governments, such as allowing Southern tourists to visit the Mt. Kumgang cultural site in North Korea, establishing exchange visits for separated families, connecting separated railway lines, and most notably, establishing the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) as a joint economic venture between the two Koreas (Son 2006). The South’s pursuit of peace continued through the Roh Mu-Hyun administration (2003-2007) and in 2007, President Roh and Kim Jung-Il held a second Inter-Korean Summit in Pyongyang, signing a declaration calling for the formal end of the Korean War (Kim 2008).

These efforts at cooperation have been juxtaposed with moments of intense conflict (Michishita 2009). Although there are too many events to detail here, notable acts of aggression by the North prior to the Sunshine Policy period included the attempted assassinations of Presidents Park Chung-Hee (1974) and Chun Doo-Hwan (1983), the 1978 kidnappings of a prominent movie actress and film director, the 1987 bombing of a South Korean airline in 1987. Numerous other hostile acts occurred during the Sunshine policy period, including repeated incursions by Northern soldiers across

the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) into South Korea, instances of sniper fire across the DMZ and naval skirmishes along disputed maritime boundaries. A side effect of these repeated conflictual events was to erode the South Korean public's confidence in the potential for the Sunshine Policy to produce meaningful change and to strengthen the conviction within conservative circles in South Korea that military force was the only sensible political option to deal with the North (Levin and Han 2002).

The Sunshine Policy era reached a de facto end with the first successful test of a nuclear weapon by North Korea in late 2006. Then-U.S. President George Bush's infamous 2002 speech that labeled North Korea as part of a global "axis of evil" foreshadowed the breakdown of the pursuit of peace. In 2003, North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), culminating in the 2006 test detonation (Perry 2006). During this period, the so-called 'Six Party' talks began around North Korea's emerging nuclear program until negotiations finally collapsed in 2009, when North Korea conducted its second nuclear test (Buszynski 2013). In parallel with its push toward nuclear weapons, the North also advanced its missile capabilities during the Six-Party talks period (Niksich 2014). From 2005 to 2009, the North conducted several missile tests in the region, including a failed satellite launch in 2009. Missile tests increased in frequency in the following years, with at least 10 more tests occurring between 2012 and 2016. Although subject to numerous international economic sanctions since its withdrawal from the NPT, North Korea had managed to develop stable short and medium-range missiles by the end of 2016. Over the same period, it also engaged in three additional nuclear weapons tests (one in 2013, two more in 2016).

The failure of the Sunshine Policy to produce tangible results also contributed to the election of the conservative Lee Myung-Bak (2008-2013) and Park Geun-Hye (2013-2017) governments in South Korea, who both advocated for a harder approach to the North (Kim 2008). However, in late 2016, Park was impeached and later removed from office for her role in an influence-peddling scandal. New elections in 2017 returned progressive leadership to South Korea for the first time since the Sunshine Policy period and President Moon Jae-In quickly opened the possibility of normalized relations with the North. At nearly the same time, Donald Trump's election promised significant changes to US foreign policy.

Since his election, President Moon insisted that North Korea could participate in international society (Heo and Yun 2019) despite yet another nuclear test by the North in late 2017. That test prompted Trump to state about Kim that "Rocketman is on a suicide mission" (BBC 2017). Accordingly, Moon pressed forward with the idea of facilitating between the US and North Korea and directly met with Kim Jung-Un three times in 2018 with another meeting planned for later in 2019. These meetings yielded several agreements, notably about reducing the military presence along the

DMZ and restoring cooperation at the KIC (Heo and Yun 2019). At the same time, the Trump administration rapidly shifted away from its harsh ‘Rocketman’ rhetoric after the delivery of the North’s summit invitation. Ahead of the summit, Trump famously described his detente with Kim this way: “And then we fell in love, okay? No, really - he wrote me beautiful letters, and they’re great letters” (Rampton 2018).

The competing sets of issues at stake ahead of the summit were captured nicely by the political cartoonist in Figure 5. From the US perspective, the issues were entirely focused on the security threat posed by the North’s combination of nuclear weapons with ballistic missiles. For the North, this was an opportunity to break the stranglehold of economic sanctions. Ultimately, the summit yielded only a commitment to continue to work toward building “a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula” (White House 2018). The second summit, held in Saigon in February 2019, failed to even reach this level of agreement as, in Trump’s own words, the US delegation “had to walk away” from the North’s demands for economic relief.



Figure 5: A political cartoon in the New York Times captured President Moon's role as facilitator between Trump and Kim and the different issues at stake for the summit (Heng 2018).

### **Critical geopolitics and the peace process**

In the broadest sense, critical geopolitics is concerned with how the foreign policy of states rests on a myriad of taken-for-granted assumptions about the relationships between space and power in international politics. The applications of this concern vary widely, but a continuing theme has been the exploration of “how the world is [geographically] structured and acted on by political agents” (Agnew 2013: 29). By implication, critical geopoliticians have focused on an engagement with the language and analysis of ‘texts’ to uncover these understanding and structurings. ‘Texts’ have a broad meaning in critical geopolitics and refer to any type of communicative event, written or spoken, including the visual aspects of communication: gestures, images, films, maps, and so on.

By way of example, consider Sparke’s (2007) analysis of then-U.S. President George Bush’s infamous 2002 ‘Axis of Evil’ speech, which linked North Korea, Iran, and Iraq, stoking fears of cooperation between these very different geopolitical agents against a common enemy in the United States. The speech drew connections between these states on the basis of shared enmity to the U.S., serving to erase the very real differences between them (such as the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, the lack of connections between North Korea and the others, and so on) so as to imagine a new space of opposition to the U.S. and its presumed role as a global leader in defending democracy. The speech simultaneously drew on discourses about a “new sense of insecurity after 9/11” and an “older Cold War geopolitical imagination of a nuclear-armed evil empire” to inform Bush’s call for a new war (2007: 341). The ‘text’ reflected geopolitical discourse for a geopolitical purpose and contributed to the widespread public support for the U.S. Congress’s subsequent declaration of war on Iraq later in 2002.

From its earliest inception, critical geopolitics has interrogated the foreign policy of states and the class of political elites involved in carrying them out. In this tradition, the texts to be examined are often speeches by government officials, governmental documents or reports, and so on. Over time, this concern has broadened to include what is called ‘popular geopolitics,’ or the processes by which understandings about world politics are expressed within and shaped by various forms of popular culture, including films, print magazines, music, and the like (Dodds 2007). An important sub-theme that we leverage for our analysis is a concern for geopolitical discourses circulating within news organizations, which are often indivisible from the foreign policy of states enhancing, contesting, and sharing geopolitical events, claims, and ideas (Gruley and Duvall 2012). We use this understanding to focus our analysis on several key news organizations in South Korea as they are



central to the dissemination and reproduction of important discourses regarding the Korean peace process.

One additional concern that informs our analysis that bears mentioning is the role of economics in geopolitical discourse. Critical geopoliticians have long argued that economic issues are part of larger ‘geo-strategic’ discourses operating at various scales around the territorial state (Cowen and Smith 2009) and the economy is a self-evidently central theme of much statecraft and foreign policy. Luttwak (1990) coined the term *geo-economics* to capture how economic power aids statecraft and it has been an important lens for geopoliticians. For example, Mercille (2008) explored the *geo-economic* logics at the center of US foreign policy during the Vietnam War, insisting that economic aspirations were one of the main motives for US policymakers. Sparke (2007) proposed a dual framework of geopolitics and *geo-economics* to show how fear about supposed Iraqi weapons of mass destruction on the one hand, and hope about reconnecting Iraq to the global economy on the other both contributed to the US invasion in 2002. Salient to the politics of Northeast Asia, Lee et al. (2018) also presented a dialectical construction of geopolitics and *geo-economics* as part of the hegemonic competition between the US and China.

The distinction between geopolitics and *geo-economics* merits explanation. As Sparke (2007: 340) states, geopolitical discourses are often fear-based and simplified “understandings of ‘us’ and ‘them’” that are associated with politics that emphasize spatial strategies of state security. These politics involve not just the demonization of others but the sundry territorial practices designed to partition, separate, isolate, or remove the source of such fear. The Trump administration's denouncement and jailing of immigrants at the US-Mexico border is a reasonable example. In contrast, Sparke associates *geo-economics* with hope-filled imaginations that run toward the optimism of a world fully connected through a globalized and neoliberal free market economy. This yields a decidedly different form of politics, one focused on “networks not blocs, connections not walls, and transborder ties instead of national territories” (2007: 340).

Considering both geopolitical and *geo-economic* discourses can be useful to examine the view about North Korea in South Korea. For example, Lee (2015) argued that South Korean conservatives have emphasized North Korea for “geo-political absorption” as it is too dangerous to exist as a separate political space while liberals have considered North Korea as a “geo-economic object” that holds opportunity to further the economic growth of South Korea. Furthermore, Doucette and Lee (2015) showed that the development of the KIC was based on simultaneously competing discourses of political antagonism and economic cooperation with North Korea. In other words, discourses of security and economics were the basic filters that influenced policy making in South Korea.

Moreover, the existence of North Korea has served as the primary and ongoing point of distinction between partisan (conservative and progressive) political identity in South Korea.

We obviously expect that fear-based geopolitical discourses about security are always present around the politics of the two Koreas. But we agree with Sparke's assessment that hope-based geoeconomic discourses are part of the issue and with Lee's assertion that the South has long seen the North as a space for economic expansion. Trump himself identified this dynamic in an exchange with reporters at the Singapore summit: "They [North Korea] have great beaches. You see that whenever they're exploding their cannons into the ocean. I said, 'Boy, look at that view. Wouldn't that make a great condo? Instead of doing that you could have the best hotels in the world right there. Think of it from a real estate perspective, you have South Korea, you have China, and they own the land in the middle, how bad is that, right? It's great'" (Lim 2018). What this in mind, a fuller consideration of the geopolitics of the Korean peninsula would involve the politics of both security and economics.

### **Data and methods**

Concerns about news organizations as political agents are often reflected in the debates about the political partisanship associated with U.S. news media organizations. Documenting and assessing the partisanship of the U.S. news media has been a long-standing theme in communication studies (e.g., Patterson and Donsbagh 1996) and the partisan alignment of news organizations is not just a US phenomenon. The partisanship of privately-owned news media in South Korea is well documented with several major newspapers consistently aligned with the conservative and progressive political parties (Ha and Shin 2016)<sup>1</sup>. Further, the issue of relations with North Korea is a clear partisan divide in South Korea, something often reflected in South Korea's news media (Kyu et al. 2015).

We consider the intermingling of geopolitical and geoeconomic themes in the partisan mass media of South Korea. Based on the literature, we expect that geopolitical discourses will focus on the danger posed by North Korea while geoeconomic discourses will focus on the potential benefits from economic cooperation with the North. In keeping with the partisan media divide and the association of liberal parties with the Sunshine policy, we expect that fear-based or security-driven

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<sup>1</sup> The main two political parties in South Korea are the liberal Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) and the conservative Liberty Korea Party (LKP). The two parties comprise over 80% of the legislative seat in the National Assembly at the time of writing (242 out of 300 seats).

discourse will dominate in the conservative media while hope-based or economic-driven discourse will dominate in the liberal media.

To investigate this, we conducted a content analysis of news articles from the ‘big five’ major newspapers (*Chosun Ilbo*, *Joongang Ilbo*, *Donga Ilbo*, *Kyunghyang Ilbo*, and *Hankyoreh*) in South Korea (see Kim and Johnson 2009). These media companies represent the largest conservative (*Chosun Ilbo*, *Joongang Ilbo*, and *Donga Ilbo*, also known collectively as ‘*Chojoongdong*’) and progressive (*Kyunghyang Ilbo* and *Hankyoreh*) news outlets in the country. We sampled articles dated between 2016 and 2018 based on keyword searches (e.g., Kim 2014)<sup>2</sup>. This yielded a body of 82 articles (34 published in progressive outlets and 48 in conservative ones) that provided the data for our analysis.

By sampling from news media organizations on both sides of the partisan divide, we allowed for the potential to identify key discourses about the peace process that either transcended the partisan split or that circulated separately but in parallel within partisan confines. We then coded the articles for emergent themes concerning South Korea-US relations and issues connected to security and economics. We also coded for themes connected to Trump himself. As we discuss below, a primary finding from our analysis is a clear separation of geopolitical and geoeconomic themes between conservative and progressive media but also the noticeable growth of specific economic discourse following the summit.

## Analysis

The 2017 election of Moon Jae-In reignited political debates in the Korean media about peacemaking and raised hopes of a major policy shift toward the North as the policies of the two preceding conservative administrations (2008-2017) had undermined the ‘Sunshine policy’ efforts of the two previous liberal administrations (1998-2007). In a July 2017 speech in Germany, Moon promised that he would actively lead on peacemaking with North Korea: “my country must sit in the driver’s seat and lead Korean Peninsula-related issues based on cooperation with our neighbors” (Bae 2017). Although at time mocked by opponents in the media as not even in the ‘passenger’s seat’

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<sup>2</sup> Keywords included the closure of the Kaesong Industrial Complex (개성공단 폐쇄), the North’s nuclear program (북한의 핵무력 완성), Kim’s 2018 New Year’s speech (김정은 신년사), the 2018 first and third inter-Korean summits (제 1 차 남북정상회담, 제 3 차 남북정상회담), the US-North Korea summit (제 1 차 북미정상회담), and the inter-Korean military agreement (남북군사합의서). We reduced the initial list, excluding articles that only provide basic descriptions of an event.

during the North's provocations in 2017 (e.g., Hong 2017), the idea took hold, especially after the perceived diplomatic success of the joint South-North Olympic female hockey team fielded during the winter games in Pyeongchang in 2018. We refer to this as the 'driver's seat' discourse (한반도운전자론) as it emphasizes the necessity for the South Korean government to work directly and separately if needed from the US and others to craft a peaceful solution with the North.

The driver's seat discourse was the dominant theme present in the set of progressive articles, with nearly 60% of the articles referencing some version of the issue in a positive fashion (20 out of 34 articles). This mostly took the form of advocating for the Moon government to either actively facilitate dialogue between the US and North Korea, or in a few minority examples, to press forward independently with North Korea no matter the US position. A third of the articles pressed the discourse further, asserting that the US was an unreliable partner or had entirely different interests that made following the US untenable. In those versions, the US was also usually described as overly aggressive or largely only interested in using South Korea as a pawn in a larger game with China for regional hegemony.

The 'driver's seat' discourse was largely inverted in the conservative articles. A similar percentage addressed the theme (nearly 60% or 28 out of 48 articles) but in a critical fashion, with the vast majority arguing that any efforts to bypass the US in negotiations with the North would ultimately put the South Korean-US alliance at risk and that the South was too dependent on US military might to go it alone. An interesting subtheme was connected to the need for nuclear balancing on the peninsula. Several articles referred to the necessity of the US nuclear shield to protect the South while others raised the alarm of Chinese regional ascendancy if the South Korea-US alliance were weakened. In all of these versions, the South was presented as a naturally junior partner that could not go it alone in a difficult region.

In geopolitical terms, the driver's seat discourse is a simultaneously relational but inward-looking concern, casting the need for unilateral action by the South to build a new relationship with the North while raising anxieties of disrupting existing relations with the US along the way. This perhaps helps to explain the absence of another discourse about Trump himself. Of course, Trump's personality, characteristics, and his relationship to the media are common fare in US news coverage but this was not routinely manifest among the South Korean coverage as Trump himself was infrequently discussed (less than 10% of the articles). However, when he was mentioned, he was usually framed as unpredictable or volatile, or as uninterested in Korea except as a means to influence China or to resolve domestic political tensions in the US.

Security concerns for the South Korean state were at the heart of opposition to the driver's seat discourse, evoking the type of fears of foreign danger raised by Sparke (2007). While this most often focused on the risk of disrupting the South Korea-US alliance and the potential loss of US nuclear balancing against the North, a secondary concern that emerged after the September 2018 South-North summit was the prospect of the South's weakened conventional military posture. Both governments agreed to stop all kinds of hostilities, including beginning demining operations around the Joint Security Area (JSA) within the demilitarized zone (DMZ), to disarm guards within the JSA, and to demolish several guard posts along the DMZ (see Figure 6). The possibility of changes to such highly securitized spaces and the removal of obvious territorial markers of security was an open source of fear in the conservative media ahead of the agreement. For instance, an October 2018 article in *Chosen Ilbo* stated that this would herald a broader 'collapse' in security for South Korea, limiting its ability to defend itself against future Northern aggression.



Figure 6: The destruction of a DMZ guard post is shown in a photo released by the South Korean government in December 2018 (Kookbang Ilbo 2018).

Conversely, an alternative narrative aligned with the driver's seat discourse was present in the progressive media. Rather than emphasize security fears, economic opportunities for South Korea were offered as a rationale for better South-North relations. The shuttering of the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) in 2016 by the Park government suspended the last meaningful form of cooperation between South and North remaining from the Sunshine era. The potential to reopen the KIC for the benefit of Southern commercial interests was a frequently offered defense for Moon's approach. And while the potential to reopen the KIC was the most discussed economic issue, a broader economic

vision was present as well. An April 2018 article in *Hankyoreh* presented the possibility of a ‘new economic map’ in which a peace deal with the North would end South Korea’s economic territorial ‘isolation’ in two ways. First, South Korea would connect to the rest of Asia through North Korea’s rail and road networks. Second, and akin to Sparke’s (2007) and Lee’s (2015) arguments, North Korea itself could become a new space for investment for Southern interests, promising development and capital extraction opportunities well beyond the narrow spatial confines of the KIC.

The ‘new economic map’ discourse was announced in the media with numerous colorful and stylized maps. For example, the Ministry of Unification offered a basic version shown in Figure 7 below, in which a transformed DMZ would link rather than separate South Korea to the North and beyond. The map shows three economic ‘belts’ (3대 경제벨트) that capture some of the spatial imaginations embedded in the discourse. The DMZ itself is described as a belt (DMZ 경제벨트) emphasizing environment-tourism based on pristine flora and fauna, a pan-Yellow Sea economic belt (환서해경제벨트) is labeled as emphasizing industry, logistics, and distribution/transportation around the Korean west coast connecting to China, and a pan-East Sea Economic belt



Figure 7: A version of the 'new economic map' from the South Korean government's Ministry of Unification (2018).

(환동해경제벨트) proposes energy and resource transfers along the eastern coast connecting with Russia. Media organizations developed their own versions of these maps and the associated term ‘new economic map for the Korean Peninsula’ (한반도 신경제지도) was coined to signal the optimism and hope associated with Moon’s ‘driver’s seat’ approach. Interestingly, this economic optimism worked its way into some of the conservative media as well. Although the KIC was

routinely discussed as an ‘economic giveaway’ by the South that only served to support the Kim regime, some articles balanced criticism against the presumed weakening security situation with the promise for new development and investment opportunities.

### **Conclusion**

The themes present in the articles cover some well-worn ground in Korean politics, especially the partisan debates about if and how to engage with the North, how the security of the South should be managed territorially along the DMZ, and the degree to which South Korea can or should pursue its foreign policy apart from US interests. In this sense, our analysis reinforces the continued salience of the fears connected to these geopolitical issues so long as a formal peace between South and North remains elusive. It is possible that a focus on other types or forms of media might indicate alternative security discourses. However, even though we focus on conventional news media, our analysis reveals an underexplored side to the pursuit of peace which is the geoeconomic motives and imaginations at play and the hopes they have stimulated. Such hopes may help to explain what the Moon government believes is the destination that it is driving toward.

The politics of representing a space or region as a *terra nullius*, an empty land, has been scrutinized by geopolitical scholars as a common rhetorical and cartographic strategy used to build support for territorial conquest and colonial exploitation (e.g., Gibson 1999). While not applicable to North Korea in the traditional sense, the new economic map rhetoric hints at another interpretation - that of North Korea as an economic *terra nullius*, one of the last disconnected economic spaces for a global capitalist world economy. South Korean elites on both sides of the partisan divide are starting to craft an economic outline of tomorrow where the North Korean state is an economic void that they are best positioned to fill, investing in and extracting profit from. In this sense, the long-running chaebol governance system that fuses the South Korean state and its policies with the economic interests of its major corporations seems as vital and as bipartisan as ever.

But the new economic map discourse is about more than just the economic integration of the North Korean state. A largely understudied topic is the widely-held notion among South Korean economic and political elites that the South Korean state functions as a geostrategic ‘island state’ as the heavily militarized DMZ has effectively severed land connections (road and rail networks) between the South and the rest of Asia for decades. The imagination of South Korea as an island, severed not just from their countryman but from the rest of the world by the trauma of the civil war is

illuminated by a visit to Dorasan Station, the last passenger railroad stop in South Korea on the way to Pyongyang. Emblazoned on the wall of the station is a map that shows an integrated rail network that connects not just South to North but the entire Korean peninsula to the rest of Asia and Europe. An illuminated sign nearby fills in the story: once peace is achieved, the real connections begin.



Figure 8: The Dorasan Station map and sign explaining the hoped-for outcomes of a lasting South-North peace. Photo by Radil.

The second Trump-Kim summit was largely dismissed as a failure and North Korea seems to have faded as a point of foreign policy emphasis for Trump, despite the recent seizure of a North Korean cargo ship by US forces and additional missile tests by the North (Choe 2019). And yet, Moon drives on. Largely overshadowed by the September 2018 inter-Korean summit that has begun to slowly transform the DMZ was a preceding summit in April where both parties agreed to “adopt practical steps towards the connection and modernization of the railways and roads” (Ministry of Unification 2018). This might be the exact destination that Moon had in mind when he declared himself in the driver’s seat: a broader geoeconomic agenda that prefigures peace on the peninsula as but a first stop on the path to new opportunities for economic growth. To follow along with the driver’s seat metaphor, geopolitical fear about Trump’s capriciousness, US regional policy, the South Korea-US alliance, or the change in the territorial status quo in the DMZ are all in the back seat. For now, geoeconomic hopes seem to have a firm grasp on the wheel.



## Chapter 4: Conclusion

For about two years from 2018 to 2019, the South Korean people met an unprecedented peaceful moment on the Korean Peninsula. Even though South Korean conservatives emphasized the nuclear and missile capacity of North Korea, a sequence of events in the Korean peace process helped the progressive Moon Administration to gain a wide range of public support. For example, after the first summit between Moon and Kim in 2018, the public approval rate of the Moon Administration's foreign policy was over 80% (Sung, 2018). Even South Korean conservatives recognized the effect of Moon's policies toward North Korea. Even though Moon's high approval rate at that time reflected the impact of former President Park's impeachment for corruption, a series of events in the peace process accorded with the expectation of the South Korean public (Sung 2018). Ironically, while North Korea had halted its nuclear and missile tests, it still had possessed nuclear weapons and missiles to deliver them. At this moment, it was necessary for the US to make the real progress of the Complete Verifiable Irreversible Dismantling (CVID) rather than the amicable atmosphere between the leaders, but the effect of the US-North Korea talks was doubtful (Taylor 2019). South Korea and the US were looking at each of the different points. Geopolitical discourse and logic cannot completely explain such a difference in public opinions between the US and South Korea. In other words, the US had focused on denuclearization and economic sanctions toward North Korea, but South Korea has considered security as well as peace and cooperation with North Korea. It explains why South Korea tried to engage in and lead toward the US-North Korea bilateral talks.

This thesis acknowledged the significance of the New Economic Map on the Korean Peninsula (NEM) in the statecraft of South Korea during this peace process. The NEM is a geostrategy of the Moon administration and was designed as a national initiative presenting the ambition of a spatial reconfiguration of the Korean Peninsula and East Asia. The NEM was also created to follow the previous Sunshine policy by Presidents Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-hyun who were the progressive political predecessors of President Moon. Despite its close connection to previous progressive policies and administrations, the NEM also reflected a much longer-standing geopolitical vision of South Korea that transcends the current political system in South Korea. The geopolitical discourse that has defined Korean foreign relations is that the Korean Peninsula is a place caught in-between land and sea powers and historically has been repeatedly invaded from both the land and sea by the various great power surrounding it. Such a geopolitical discourse evoked the circumstances during the Cold War where the peninsula was split between two such powers.

Conversely, successful economic development and the reinforcement of economic networks in the Post-Cold War have brought to the fore a new discourse of the Korean Peninsula as a land of opportunity. Even though there remained constant friction between both Koreas, this new interpretation of the peninsula highlighted the economic benefits from the construction of a peace with North Korea and the transportation connections with the Asian Continent through infrastructure following that peace. These new interpretations have been gradually recognized in the Korean elite discourse in both progressive and conservative circles. The various Korean national initiatives of both parties have reflected on these discourses and logics. The projects of economic cooperation with North Korea such as the Kaesong Industrial Complex (Doucette and Lee 2015) are a prime example. So, the NEM has reflected this discursive shift about the peninsula to background the negative side of geopolitical conflict and foreground the positive blueprint of geoeconomic cooperation, thereby connecting peace with prosperity.

The shift in emphasis from geopolitics to geoeconomics has also resonated with other public discourses in the South Korean media. Within the Korean Peninsula, the political dispute and conflict have been juxtaposed with the cooperation for the peace of the Korean Peninsula. Political partisanship in South Korea is closely connected with each party's attitude about conflict or cooperation with North Korea. The progressive Moon administration created the 'driver theory' that highlights that South Korea must actively drive the US and North Korea together in dealing with the North Korea issue rather than one that depends on the US to take the lead. This policy was treated with some distrust in the conservative media while being largely supported by the progressive media. Therefore, a series of events in the Korean peace process increased the concern about security to the conservatives, but the expectation of economic cooperation to the progressives. In sum, the central difference between both groups is the means to control North Korea. In other words, the conservatives emphasized conflict, but the progressives recognized cooperation with North Korea. However, both groups tended to agree that the impact of the NEM would bring out an economic benefit to Korea. The NEM reveals the geopolitical imagination of North Korea as a kind of 'spatial fix' for the South economy that had taken hold within both parties. This discourse viewed North Korea as an empty space that would be filled by South Korean investment to increase the connectivity with the Asian Continent beyond North Korea. In this sense, the attention of Trump toward North Korea has been gradually decreased after the second Trump-Kimi summit and Panmunjom Meeting, but South Korean progressives and conservatives both saw a new chance for the Korean peace process in the rest of the Moon's presidency.

The US-China conflict brought about by the trade war has increased with the advance of the Korean peace process. The new US administration may try to restore the trust of its alliances in East Asia, but it seems to be full of geopolitical rhetoric such as the ‘relocation of tactical nuclear weapon’, ‘nuclear deterrence’, and ‘nonproliferation’ (Dalton, 2021). In short, this approach by the US doesn’t capture the significance of geoeconomics in the geopolitics of the Korean Peninsula. Instead, this thesis suggests that the Korean elite and public discourses include more than geopolitical rhetoric seen in the US. In this sense, any move of the new US administration to return to the policy of pre-Trump administration may work unfavorably for the South Korean geostrategy. Such a move would mean a return to the classical geopolitics that has divided East Asia as either an ally or an enemy to the US. For South Korea, the relationship with China is also important for the economy. So, the realization of the NEM’s geostrategy would involve building relations with all countries around the Korean Peninsula (Cronin and Lee 2018; Dalton 2021). While the US-China conflict reminds South Korea of classical geopolitics, the discourse circulated in South Korea is not constrained by the name of the alliance altogether. The geoeconomic discourse and logic in the South are different from the eye of the US that has lost the sense of geoeconomics (Gelb 2010; Blackwill and Harris 2016).

This study recognizes the role of geoeconomics to make critical geopolitics more nuanced in understanding political processes and suggests the importance of a simultaneous understanding the geopolitics and geoeconomics in constructing a geostrategy. This approach also seems to resonate with the definition of geoeconomics by Blackwill and Harris (2016: 20), which is “the use of economic instruments to promote and defend national interests and to produce beneficial geopolitical results and the effects of other nation’s economic actions on a country’s geopolitical goals.” Even if it can be investigated in individual cases, I do not want to overemphasize the possible causality between geopolitics and geoeconomics. Rather, South Korea’s geostrategy reveals the entanglement of geopolitics and geoeconomics. The geopolitical discourse that the Korean Peninsula is in-between land and sea powers emphasized its geopolitical crisis and its geoeconomic opportunity in the statecraft of South Korea at different moments in time. Also, the geostrategy of South Korea in the Post-Cold War era responded to changing international political and economic circumstances such as the collapse of the Communist bloc and the rise of globalization. The shaping of geostrategy toward North Korea indicates the advance of peace through economic cooperation as a geoeconomic tool. Conversely, the advance of the peace process amplifies the geoeconomic hope for better capitalist benefit. Therefore, the ‘peace and economy’ or ‘peace and prosperity’ that is a slogan of the Moon government toward North Korea should be understood as less the causality of geopolitics and geoeconomics and more as their entanglement and co-production. It means that the dynamics of East Asian geopolitics cannot be defined through the single eye of geopolitics which would designate

South Korea as a part of the US geostrategy toward East Asia. However, the recognition of geoeconomics in the Korean geostrategy can contribute to understanding why the statecraft of South Korea pursues independent actions but with the framework of its alliance with the US.

Of course, this study has several limitations, which are both technical and methodological. Firstly, this study's technical limitation derives from the collection of available data. The first section of this thesis depended on the expansive archival materials about the history of Korean geography. However, I could not gain access to some of the books or publications that have not yet been digitalized. I knew of their existence through other works that I could access (e.g., Im 1996; Kim 2016), but could not examine them to derive data. For example, Pyo Hae-Un, who was an early proponent of classical geopolitics but not a geographer, published several books and papers from 1930 to 1960. But I could not access most of his works except one book because it would have required a visit to a Korean library that possesses the hard copies of his works. Instead, I gained information about him through secondary materials that deal with his biography and works. For the same reason, I did not access some of the works of other early Korean geographers. Second, the methodological limitation of my thesis has to do with discourse analysis as a method of inquiry. Even though discourse analysis is comprehensively utilized in critical geopolitics studies, this study is less sophisticated in using it. For example, I could have chosen the news articles considering a larger range of keywords or otherwise tried to increase the number of articles to analyze. Also, the contents of the articles can be codified for analysis. In addition, while critical discourse analysis provides useful tools to interpret the discourse inherent in the media that embeds (political) ideology within a social context (Fairclough 1995; Machin and Mayr 2012), there are few examples of its application to non-Western languages. I do think that critical discourse analysis can be a good methodological approach to clarify the discourse emphasized by the Korean media but the literature from which I could draw examples to shape my own research was very limited.

Despite these limitations, I feel my study has potential for further inquiry and I would like to describe three potential themes for future research. First, I could collect more archival data about the history of Korean geography, in order to expand the understanding of the early geopolitical discourse of Korea. The biography and works by Pyo Hae-Un seem especially valuable to study in that his works may present how Korea imported or was forced to import classical geopolitics from Europe through Japan to Korea. While Im (1996) and Oh (2015) describe an overview of his biography and works, most of Pyo's personal history and contributions are still understudied. In my opinion, this is because he was not a geographer and was an official working for Imperial Japan, especially in Manchukuo. In general, Korean geographers have not been interested in the works of non-

geographers and other researchers may have understood his works as the things of a pro-Japanese Korean who served as the slave to imperial power. The earliest work of Korean political geography is recognized as the efforts by Choi Bok-Hyun who was a professor of the Geography Program at Seoul National University or Hyung Ki-Ju who was a professor of the Geography Education Program at Dongkuk University, which were published in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Im 1996; Kim 2016). But Pyo's biography and works in the 1940s and 1950s can be an example of the contradictory attempts to explain the justification of the new independent state using the knowledge of classical geopolitics supported by imperial authority. Therefore, his works offer potential to study critically.

Second, another potential study direction would be to examine which geopolitical or geoeconomic discourses President Moon wanted to emphasize in his addresses around the events of the peace process. While those findings might be expected to support the findings of my current study, critical discourse analysis can provide pragmatic tools to deal with geopolitical texts such as addresses and news articles (Machin and Mayr, 2012). By doing so, this theme would have double merits that complement the conclusion of my study and could contribute to the expansion of Korean language applications of critical discourse analysis.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the potential theme of how the geopolitics of the NEM may interact with local issues in Korea. For example, Lee (2018) points out that the peace efforts by the Moon government have amplified an existing local conflict based on political partisanship along the South Korea borderland with the North. The contours of this conflict are between those who wanted to emphasize the fear from North Korea and those who wished to support the peace process within the places nearest the demilitarized zone that separates the South from the North. In this case, a 'high politics' of the Korean peace process have come to the fore within localities based on a political conflict inherent in the everyday South Korean's attitudes toward North Korea. Also, the peace process in 2018 created regionally-focused side effects such as the rapid rise of land price by development boom on South Korean borderland, especially on the regions with the infrastructure toward North Korea (TBS 2018). In other words, a national project to create more capitalist benefits prompted the local projects to inspire the capitalist ambition of local agents. Exploring these multi-faceted and multi-scalar aspects of the peace process would undoubtedly prove insightful into how political space is continuously made and remade by both geopolitical and geoeconomic discourses.

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