

# LUISS



**“Does it still make sense to talk about  
Korean Reunification today?  
A study about Unified Korea: Imagining  
the Reunification and Considering the  
Obstacles”**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

*To Cinzia and  
to all of those who have been separated  
from their loved ones, and never reunited.*

## ***ABSTRACT – KEYWORDS***

### **Abstract:**

The Korean Reunification issue represents an important topic in the study of current International Relations and deserves a particular attention in the literature. The reasons of the huge interest towards these subject stays in its unicity and historic importance: the two Koreas in fact have been officially divided in 1945, at the end of the Second World War. The peculiarity of the situation is given by the absolute social and cultural homogeneity of the Korean people, which share a common millennial history, and by the fact that, despite their similar heritage, the two people still remain separated today. As the time passes, the gradual process of socialization of North and South Korean citizens allowed the creation of a wall of social distance, progressively leading to a greater collective cultural estrangement.

This document is therefore built around the necessity and the importance to improve the cultural and diplomatic dialogue between the two Koreas, in order to favour the creation of a communication network in the long-run, to foster a peaceful relationship and eventually to encourage and promote unification. For this reason, the thesis focuses initially on the historical, economic, and social analysis of the two countries, shifting then to the study regarding the diplomatic relations between the two states, highlighting the positive aspects and the possible modalities of reunification. The work ends with the chapter dedicated to the application of major IR theories to the Korean case study. In conclusion, despite its theoretical pessimism, the document at hand reaffirms the importance and the current necessity to continue to sustain and increase the diplomatic effort for a constructive dialogue between the two states, in order to neutralise the increasing disinterest on the issue registered in the young Korean population, with the aim of finally favouring the foundation of an eventual process of reunification.

### **Keywords :**

Unified Korea; Korean Peninsula; Reunification Studies; Inter-Korean Relations; Diplomacy; Nuclear Power; International Relations; Asian Studies.

## ***INTRODUCTION***

Two of the deadliest conflicts in history, World War I and World War II, changed the previous century's history drastically. Following these events, a new kind of rivalry arose: the Cold War. The ideological antagonism between liberal Western ideals, headed by the United States, and communist principles, represented by the Soviet Union, was the focus of this form of conflict. These two countries used to oppose each other utilizing the "Proxy Wars" tactic, which is defined by Barsimantov, in his "The Strategy of War by Proxy", as a "substitute for a direct confrontation between the major superpowers" (1984, p.2), in which governments do not confront each other with weapons on the battlefield, but instead instigate other states into armed conflict. The result of it is a "controlled local war [which] helps the superpower advance strategic and political interests with a lower level of risk". Additionally, the same author states that "local war without direct superpower intervention is a war by proxy if there is some relationship between the local adversaries and the superpower (1984, p.2).

In this sense, the Korean War represents the finest illustration of these sorts of fights in the Cold War's history, given the fact that the 1950 conflict and the resulting temporary division of the Peninsula are to be seen as a consequence of the opposing interests of the US and the USSR in the region. From that point on, Korea's history changed radically, culminating in the Peninsula's total separation in 1953. The two Korean states have been divided since that year and contacts between them have become increasingly difficult. The situation in the whole area has remained unchanged, and the two neighbouring states, which once, up to 1910, formed a single empire, continue to grow apart. In this regard, it is significant to note that the population of the two nations were once one single people: their language, their culture, their culinary tradition, are actually really similar, but eighty years of separation and a radically different political socialization and environment have deeply changed the conscience and the souls of Koreans.

On the one hand, South Korea is one of the world's most advanced capitalist economies, and it is currently regarded as one of capitalism's economic miracles, not to mention the new phenomenon of the "Korean Wave", representing the increase of global interest towards South Korean culture. North Korea, on the other hand, may be regarded as the best empirical example of communist ideology and the communist dream: a country whose people are willing to die for their Great Leader, and which, due to its nuclear weapons, represents one of the most challenging political scenarios for the Western World today.

According to Robert Kelly, a researcher in International Security at the University of Busan, the issue of the Korean reunification, for a variety of reasons, can be regarded as a situation particularly similar to the one that had occurred in Germany after the Second World War. Firstly, just like the Asian country, Germany had been “divided artificially” by the Cold War scenario, blaming the already mentioned proxy war strategy as the real nature of the conflict: in this sense, the two states share numerous similarities about their past and their situation as divided countries. Secondly, in both of them, there has always been a “Two states, one people conception” underlining the fact that, despite the ideological differences, people of the North and the South, in the case of Korea, and of the East and the West, in the case of Germany, would value more their ethnic and cultural heritage than their political and international orientation. Thirdly, “Intense competition” can be the expression used in order to describe the relationships between the two parties, physically separated by walls and barbed wire, interacting exclusively with their international allies and not between each other. Finally, the major similarity can be found in the fact that, in both cases, one of the two states had a planned type of economy and was highly dependent on its Soviet allies, in this case North Korea and East Germany, while the counterpart was supported by the Western powers and had a market style of economy.

Having seen the similarities of the two situations, it may be difficult to imagine that, in reality, the outcomes of the game were and are totally different. In fact, reunified Germany represents today the most powerful economic power of the EU system, while Korea continues to be a hybrid separated Peninsula.

That said, despite the similarities of the situation, some important differences have influenced the historical path and development process of the two states. Firstly, it is important to focus on the time of the Fall of the Soviet Union, in fact the moment in which the German reunification occurred, in 1990, was more than one full year before the collapse of the USSR. At that time, the country had already entered a huge period of political crisis that led, in 1991, to the fall of the Soviet Union. Therefore, the union could no more guarantee economic and political support to its friend states, and consequently, due to the strong economic dependence tying the USSR with East Germany, and this moment of political crisis in the Soviet Union, it was easier to foster the process of reunification which was still highly wanted by the population. In Korea that was different, due to the fact that North Korea was also highly dependent on China, therefore the fall of the USSR created a massive crisis in the country, but it did not lead the Northern Korean state to complete failure. Secondly and most importantly, the economic situation between East and West Germany and North and South Korea was

different. At the time of the fall of the Soviet Union, East Germany GDP scored 1/4 of the total GDP of West Germany, while North Korea's GDP represented 15% of the South Korean one (Schmidt, 1993). As a matter of fact, Korea at the time was more economically diverse and divided. Thirdly, the mere geographic situation of Germany and Korea is different: Korea is a Peninsula, in this sense, it is not possible to physically interfere with the state, the only feasible border being the one with China, state that, as we will argue, has no interest in supporting the reunification process; while the German situation is totally different, noting the fact that the state is located in the heart of the European continent, resulting in a practical impossibility of isolationism. Finally, the most pivotal indicator is time. German people have been divided for forty-five years, while Korean people since 1953. Time represents a pivotal element in the sense that, as it will be argued during the thesis, the more time passes, the more people get used to their current situation, and it will be more difficult to see a change in the future.

Despite such differences, the two states sometimes show the world a real willingness of reunification: one of these moments occurred in 2018 during the Winter Olympics Games in Pyeongchang, when North and South Korean athletes marched together under the flag of the "Unified Korea". Following this tendency, the aim of this thesis is to understand whether there is a real and concrete hope for a future reunion of these two countries. The solution to this issue will be discussed by analysing different aspects of it.

Firstly, in "Mapping the Division", the thesis will analyse the historical reasons of the division and the current political, legal, economic and social system of the two states, in order to understand the general framework of the matter and to define the main differences between the two Korean states. Secondly, in "Imaging the Reunification", the paper will focus on the effective possibility of a real reunification, analysing different scenarios, moving then to the reconstruction of the past and present diplomatic relations between the two parties, commenting the political significance of the issue and drawing the possible economic benefits of the reunion, in order to better understand the issue of the Korea Reunification in practice. Thirdly, in "Considering the Obstacles", the attention of the research would be shifted on the analysis of the main problems and opposing factors of Korean Reunification, taking into consideration the different analyses of the matter resulting from IR theories. Finally, the study will draw its conclusions of the topic, answering the research question "Is it already too late to hope for a Unified Korea, and consequently, does it still make sense to talk about Korean Reunification today?"

## **CHAPTER 1 : MAPPING THE DIVISION**

In this first description-oriented chapter, the analysis will be focused on the understanding and the presentation of the major differences between North and South Korea. As a matter of fact, it is pivotal to investigate the major economic, political, social and strategic views of the two countries in order to provide a clearer vision about the current situation in the Peninsula. In particular, the first section (1.1) is going to introduce an overview of the historical reasons for the separation of the Peninsula and the creation of the two separated states, remarking the influences of Cold War competitors in the development of the afterwar identity of the newly born states. Secondly (1.2), the analysis will switch its focus, investigating the current economic situation in the two countries, analysing the period of economic development during the 80's and comparing the different economic performance of the two states. Thirdly (1.3), the paper will provide an overview on the internal political situation of North and South Korea, analysing some of the most meaningful articles of the Constitutions of these two states and comparing them with the current situation at the international level. Finally (1.4), the research will investigate the social framework of the two countries, analysing the basic living conditions and standards in the Peninsula, mentioning and commenting on their current major social issues.

### **Section 1 : Historical development of the Division in the Peninsula**

Following Germany's defeat in WWII, the Japanese Empire, a former Nazi ally who had been hit by the Atomic Bomb, was forced to relinquish all its colonial conquests, including the Korean Peninsula, which had been added to the “Big Empire of Japan” with the “Eulsa Treaty in 1905. Korea was exiting a dramatic moment of its history, known as the “Korean Traumatism”, from the time when, during Japanese occupation, the Peninsula underwent a series of violation of their national identity: Japanese colonisers imposed the religion of Shintoism, and the Japanese language to be the only ones accepted in Korea. Moreover, young Korean girls were sent as sex slaves for the Japanese army, and a huge amount of young Korean men was sent to forced labour. This brutal colonial experience in Korea ended with the surrounding of Japan at the end of the Second World War.



Once Japan had left the Korean Peninsula, winning powers joined together to discuss the future of this territory. Already in November 1943, at the Cairo Conference, President Roosevelt, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek and Prime Minister Churchill, signed the so-called "Cairo Declaration". It was a document explaining their position against Japan and its Imperialistic ambitions. It is important to focus on a particular passage, stating: "The aforesaid three great powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent", stating that Korean independence was already in winners' mind.

The first real and practical decision about Korea was taken during the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in December 1945. It was determined that the Korean Peninsula would be placed under a five-year Protectorate of the United States, the Soviet Union, France, and the United Kingdom, in order to facilitate the region's economic recovery and independence. In addition, a Joint Commission was established in 1946 aiming at guiding the country to independence and, eventually, to establish a new government in Korea. Due to the increasing tensions between USSR and USA, given the Cold War framework of those years, this joint commission ended up meeting just twice. The outcome of this situation was the intensification of Soviet influence in the North, mirrored by the same increase of American influence in the South.

The United States took the issue of rising political split in Korea and the lack of a formal unified administration to the United Nations in 1947, advocating the adoption of "UN Resolution N.112, 1947", which called for a general election in the Peninsula. Because of the USSR's opposition to these elections, the vote was held only in the south of the Korean Peninsula. The Republic of Korea was established on August 15, 1948, and the military administration was replaced by newly elected President Syngman Rhee. As an alternative, Northern Korea was organized in a more soviet-style approach on the opposite half of the peninsula: a Bureau of five political administrations was established, and Kim Il-Sung was appointed to rule the country under Soviet ideals. Because he fought against Japanese occupation, he was welcomed as a hero. Hence, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was established a few days after the Republic of Korea, on September 9th, 1948.

Finally, after the five-year protectorate, American and Soviet forces left the nation in 1950, as stipulated in the accords. The two Korean republics still did not want to remain geographically divided, but, due to their already existing political diversity, war came out to be the only feasible alternative to reunify, due to the perceived incompatibility of their political thoughts. The armed conflict began shortly after, in June 1950, when North Korea launched a surprise attack on the South, without any former notification. It

is necessary to state that the two countries at the time had totally different types of economic situations: the North was richer and also more military powerful than the South: Soviets left a huge number of arms and armaments, in order to protect the people in case of attack. The opposite happened in South Korea, that had few armaments left from American Troops. With "United Nations Security Council Resolution 83" of 1950, the United Nations granted permission to support military South Korea during the confrontations because North Korea attacked first and did not follow previous UN resolutions aimed at immediately ending hostilities, while the USSR continued to support North Korea by providing armaments. Three years later, negotiations and the signing of the "Armistice of Panmunjom" in 1953 brought this "fratricidal fighting" to a conclusion. Data state that the Korean War has caused about 2 800 000 casualties.

As a matter of fact, an armistice does not have the same legal meaning as a peace treaty because it does not put an end to the conflict; hence, the two countries are officially still at war today, and following a realism-based analysis, they are still in a state of a state of war. The armistice included provisions for a cease-fire, new state boundaries, the formation of the renowned Korean demilitarized zone, often referred as the "DMZ," the Military demarcation line, and the handling of prisoners and repatriations. It is important to highlight that from that moment, the demilitarized zone started to be one of the world's most tightly fortified borders, leaving the situation unchanged until today.

## **Section 2 : Current Economic situation in North and South Korea**

The afterwar period represents, for Korean history, a moment of radical political and economic change and transformation. Both the Western and the Soviet ideologies increased their influences on the respective states, shaping the future of the economic development, defining their current situation.

After the war, both countries had quite bad economic conditions. According to Professor Jong Won Lee, GNP pro capita in South Korea in 1953 was US\$ 67. At this time, South Korean economy was mainly based on agricultural production, and the national territory was also poor of natural resources, like carbon and oil, that were more concentrated in the North. In addition, the Liberal Government of Syngman Rhee did not give the expected results: he showed not to be a skilled leader, and corruption, bribery and electoral manipulation started flourishing at the time in the country.

The situation started to change with General Pak Chong-Hui government, in the '60s, known as the years of the "Korean Miracle". During these years, the funds coming from the USA and the high quality of instruction that the country was offering, radically changed the society and improved the education of the whole population. In addition, the Land Reform promoted in 1948, that permitted an equal redistribution of the ownership of land in the country, and a continuous social modernization of society, helped in highly improving the state of affairs. Furthermore, Pak Chung-Hui tried to develop and encourage an economy of importing of raw materials and technology. For this reason, the whole '60s are an era of emergence of entrepreneurs and of family-controlled corporations, *Chaebol* in Korean, at the same time when brands such as Hyundai, LG and Samsung were founded, pushing for a further industrialization of the country and an increasing economic spending at the state level, allowing currency to flow more easily.

During the decade 1960-1970, South Korea used protectionist tools and strategies to try to boost its national economy and strengthen national firms: an example is the banning of foreign competitors in the electronics field, ruled out by Pak Chung-Hui to help Samsung. In this way, these corporations became dominant in the country, starting to offer new work opportunities and providing high wages to their workers.

Finally, Korean economy opened to the international market in 1980, and thanks to its strong national firms, it was able to enrich the country ulteriorly. Notwithstanding the Asian Financial crisis of 1990, South Korea was lightly impacted, due to the fact that the Government was strong enough and able to undertake severe economic adjustments, including, expanding labour market flexibility, and allowing greater international investment and exports.

These manoeuvres have resulted in a quick economic restoration, that led South Korea to become today's third biggest economy in Asia after China and Japan, according to its 2020 GDP. South Korea is now one of the world's largest economies, ranking fourteenth in terms of Real GDP in 2020, according to the CIA World Factbook database. Since 1991 the state is a member of United Nations, since 1995 it has joined WTO, and since 1997 OECD.

On the other side of the Peninsula, North Korea had to rebuild itself, and for this reason, the North Korean Government, held by Kim Il-Sung, proposed a series of "Five Years Economic Plans". Some of the main points of these plans were: industrialization, growth of the military, agriculture and trade agreements with external countries. As to make the economy flourish, the country used to trade the most important resource it owned: coal. For this reason, until the beginning of the 1970, North Korean mines have been

exploited in order to extract and export this important raw material in China and in USSR, the two closest geographically but most important ideologically countries, that used to provide in exchange to North Korea machinery, technology and agriculture facilities like chemicals and fertilisers, highly needed tools that the still agricultural economy of the country was not able to produce.

Due to the country's economic dependency on soviet allies, the situation drastically precipitated with the fall of the Soviet Union, the most important political and economic ally of the country at that time. The absence of trade between the two states gave the final blow to the already fragile economy of the country, due to the absence of technic agricultural resources, and the highly dependence that North Korea had on his bigger soviet ally. The country tried to recover with another "Three years plan", that should have focused on international trade, but due to the practical absence of countries to trade with, the plan failed. The economic crisis, the absence of strong allies and a terrible drought happening in the same years, drove the country to a horrendous moment, known as the North Korean Famine. It was a period from 1994 to 1998, in which the country suffered a lot economically but also socially, due to the lack of food. According to the article "The North Korean Famine and Its Demographic Impact" written by Goodkind and West, during these years half of a million North Koreans were annually dying due to starvation and malnutrition according to a bipartisan team of US Congressional Staff Members visiting the country in 1998.

In order to get out of this terrible moment of famine, the country relied on help coming from the outside: in 1990 UNICEF was already intervening in the country, but help began to increase after the 1995 official request for humanitarian aid, whose consequences were the starting of food delivering by World Food Program, managed by the United States. However North Korean economic situation has never officially recovered completely from the crisis.

Currently, the country spends, according to an article on the "International Institute of Strategic Studies" written by Haena Jo, between 14% and 16% of its annual budget on defence. Yet other articles on other sources like "The Korean Herald", and in particular an article by Choi Si-Young, affirms that North Korea is able to spend ... up to one third of its entire GDP for the army. The important fact to underline is that since 1980 the country started researching also for Nuclear Bombs and armaments, spending yearly 6% of their GDP with this aim.

Today's North Korea is a member of United Nations since 1991 and of the World Trade Organization since 1995. The nation, according to the CIA World Factbook database, "does not publish reliable National Income Accounts data". However, it is still possible

to have an overview of the country's economic situation from "purchasing power parity (PPP) GDP estimates that were made by Angus MADDISON in a study conducted for the OECD". According to this study, North Korea would score 121st in the total GDP global classification.

Finally, it is possible to compare the South Korean GDP and the North Korean perceived one, by quoting the article "Comparison of the nominal gross domestic product (GDP) between South Korea and North Korea from 2010 to 2019" by L. Yoon, who states that: "With this, South Korea's nominal GDP was around 54 times greater than that of North Korea. South Korea's nominal GDP has increased continuously over the past decade. North Korea's has increased as well, but its growth has been comparatively minimal".

### **Section 3 : Current Internal political Organization in North and South Korea**

Korean reunification is a challenge presupposing that the two countries' political, economic, and social institutions should unite and function in tandem to establish a single state. As a result, it is critical to show and comprehend the distinctions between the two opposite political systems, as well as their perceived incompatibilities.

On the one hand, South Korea, or the "Republic of Korea" (ROK), is a Presidential Republic, which means it has a system of government in which the executive branch is independent from the legislative and a representative democracy in which deputies, chosen by the people, vote on legislation. For what concerns the executive President Moon Jae-in (in office since May 2017) and Prime Minister Kim Boo-Kyum (in office since May 2021) are the current leaders of South Korea. Additionally, we must include a third political officer: the Minister of Unification, responsible for promoting and achieving North-South cooperation and discussion, with the final aim of Reunification. This office is currently held by Lee In-Young (in office since July 2020).

Today, the President of the Republic of Korea represents the highest political office of the country: he is at the same time Head of State and the Head of Government, meaning that he heads the executive branch, and he is also the chief of the armed forces. The powers and duties of the President of the Republic are listed in Chapter 4 section 1 of the Korean Constitution, and they include: "The President shall have the responsibility and duty to safeguard the independence, territorial integrity and continuity of the State and the Constitution." (Art.66.2), "The President shall have the duty to pursue sincerely the peaceful unification of the homeland" (Art.66.3), and most importantly for our

purposes “A National Unification Advisory Council may be established to advise the President on the formulation of peaceful unification policy” (Art.92.1).

The second most important political figure of the country is the Prime Minister of South Korea, whose role is mainly described by Art. 86 of the Korean Constitution: (1)” The Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President with the consent of the National Assembly”, (2)”. “The Prime Minister shall assist the President and shall direct the Executive Ministries under order of the President”. The figure of the Korean Prime Minister serves more as a sort of “executive assistant” to the President of the Republic, and for this reason, it can be fairly compared with the role of the American Vice-President. Moreover, he is the one in charge of presidential duties, whether the resident wouldn’t be able, for any reason, to successfully stand to his duties.

In the political system of the state, the issue of Korean Unification is perceived so necessary and crucial that it is even mentioned as one of the main aims of the state in the national Constitution. Indeed, its fourth article declares: “The Republic of Korea shall seek unification and shall formulate and carry out a policy of peaceful unification based on the principles of freedom and democracy”.

In addition, the legislative power in South Korea is given to the National Parliament. This institution is unicameral, with a multi-party system and has 300 seats in total: 247 of them are assigned by first-past-the-post, with a single seat constituency and a majority vote, and the left 47 instead are assigned according to a proportional system. Hence, the South Korean voting system is a mixed one.

On the other hand, North Korea, or as the conventional long form suggests: “Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, shortened as DPRK, is an “Independent Socialist State representing the interest of all the Korean People” as stated in the Art.1 of the Constitution. This state has a legally recognised one-party government, as Art. 11 of the Constitution provides “The DPRK shall conduct all activities under the leadership of the Workers’ Party of Korea”, and its institutions work according to the idea of the “Democratic Centralism” (Art.5), an old Leninist concept calling for extreme political unity of the party, once a decision has been officially taken after having been debated. The values and the political action of this country are strictly influenced by the Juche idea, a world outlook centred on people, a revolutionary ideology for achieving the independence of the masses of people, as stated in the Constitution. (Art.3). This Juche, which is sometimes referred to as North Korean ideology or even religion, was defined by Kim Il-Sung, the Great Leader of North Korea: political independence and self-determination, respect for the will of the people, and Korean socialist principles are all fundamental foundations of Juche. It claims that man is the ruler of everything, and it is

particularly potent given Korea's recent past, which includes being a Japanese colony that was occupied by the Soviets, and therefore never having had the opportunity to self-determine and decide for itself.

North Korea has two important political roles to be taken into consideration: the most significant is the President of the State Affairs Commission (SAC) of DPRK, and it is the role played by Kim Jong-Un, since April 2012, who is also the General Secretary of the Worker's Party, as already mentioned, the only big political party allowed in DPRK. The State Affairs Commission of DPRK is the most valuable governmental organ of the country, and the person who covers the role of chairman in this body, automatically becomes the Head of state of North Korea, or, in a more renowned wording "Supreme Leader" (Art.100). This political figure is legally the chief of the SAC, of the army, and eventually also of the Worker's party, because of the fact that in practice, these two roles have always been assigned to the same person. In principle, the chairman of the SAC is proposed by the Supreme Peoples' Assembly, the name of the north Korean Parliament, to the SAC, and there voted for acceptance or refusal. Because of these joint powers, the Supreme Leader of North Korea has the power to: "direct the overall affairs of the State"; "personally guide the work of the National Defence Commission", "Ratify or rescind major treaties concluded with other countries"; "Proclaim a state of emergency, a state of war and mobilization order within the country" (Art.103.1,2,4,6). Moreover, he is the commander in chief, meaning he has the control of the army (Art.102).

The second most important role in North Korean politics is the First Vice President of the SAC, that plays at the same time the role of Chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly Standing Committee. These positions are today held by Choe Ryong-Hae, since April 2019. North Korea, as already stated, has its own national Parliament, the Supreme People's Assembly or SPA, discussed in section 4 of the Socialist Constitution, according to which "is the highest organ of State power in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea." (Art.87). There are 687 seats available in the unicameral parliament of the country, and each legislature lasts five years, at the end of the which there are elections. North Korea assigns the seat to the candidate of every constituency of the country, many as the number of the seats in the SPA. The North Korean candidate for every constituency is already selected by the Democratic Front for the Reunification of Korea, that is an organ close to the workers Party. Therefore, citizens have the possibility to accept or refuse the name of the candidate: in theory if a candidate is refused, the week after there is going to be the proposition of a new name, but this has

never been the case in North Korea. Additionally, the vote is not secret, because of the fact that the ballot, after being compiled, it has to be deposited in two different boxes, according to the expressed preference (yes/no). Voting is a mandatory act, starting from the age of 17, and it is also used as a moment of Census for all citizens.

Finally, the powers of the North Korean Parliament are all listed in Art.116 of the Socialist Constitution. The real power is still given to the Standing Committee, that exercises legislative power when the parliament does not meet, due to the fact that the National Assembly convenes rarely. For this reason, the real powers of the assembly are given to the Standing Committee, in which there are fifteen seats available: one of them is reserved for the president of the committee, two for the vice-presidents, and one for the secretariat. The tasks of this organ are the same of the SPA: examine and enact legislation, supervise the central court and electing judges, interpret and enact constitution, supervise parliamentary committees, ratify international treaties, organise elections, and have also a diplomatic role of receiving diplomatic credentials. According to section six of the North Korean Socialist Constitution, the country enjoys the presence of “Local Peoples ‘Assemblies”, that according to Art.137 “Is the local organ of state power”. Art.140 lists the functions of these assemblies: deliberation of local plans for development, local budget, adopt measures to adapt state law. According to art.138, deputies of the assemblies “are elected on the principle of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot”.

## **Section 4 : Current Social Situation and Issues in North and South Korea**

The impact of Korean allies and their opposing political approaches forced the two countries to have radically distinct styles of economic growth in the post-war period. These differences led not just to the current different financial situation of the states, but also to a completely different social environment. For this reason, the last part of this chapter aims at understanding, starting from economics and with the help of statistical devices and indexes, the different living situation of the Korean people: a necessary aspect to be taken in consideration in this paper’s analysis.

Shortly after the end of the Korean War, South Korea was the poorer of the two countries because it lacked access to natural resources, such as coal, that its northern neighbour had, and instead concentrated on agriculture. During the already mentioned “Korean Miracle”, the country started to develop, and South Korea is now the world's 14th largest economy by GDP and Asia's third strongest economy, just after China and



Japan, scoring a high value in Human Development Index, 0.91. Furthermore, thanks to its great education system, famous cultural history, powerful governmental structure, and investments in the K-Pop music business, the country positioned eleventh in the "Global Soft Power Index" in 2021 by Brand Finance, just two places ahead of Russia (13<sup>th</sup>). However, another source, "The annual Soft Power Survey" of 2020 by the English Magazine Monocle, ranks the Asian country as second, explaining this trend by mentioning Korean Innovation and Entertainment industry.

Instead, unlike its neighbour, North Korea began to economically rely on its allies, particularly the Soviet Union and China. The fall of the Soviet Union pushed the country into a deep economic crisis, culminating in the 1994-1998 famine. The Northern country's present economic status is not even close to that of its neighbouring Korean state: it ranks 121st in terms of GDP. However, it is necessary to state that, if we were to focus on the Real GDP pro capita indicator which actually shows the average amount of money that citizens have in their hands, the country fell to the 216<sup>th</sup> position in the world in 2019. Due to the fact that North Korea does not officially publish its economic indicators, it is not quite reliable to take into consideration the official estimates shown on CIA World Factbook website. As a consequence of this lack of reliable and precise data about education and healthcare system, there are no official indications on North Korean Human Development Index or in Global Soft Power Index, so a comparison between the two countries in this sense is impossible to make.

A further study of social factors can be carried out by analysing the demographic situation of the two states. On this matter, South Korean population counted more than 50 million inhabitants in July 2021, doubling in number in that of North Korea, which amounted, according to CIA estimates, to a number between 25 and 26 million inhabitants. However, South Korean population is significantly older than the one of its Northern neighbours due to the fact that the former holds a median age of 43.2 years, while the value decreases for the latter to 34.6 years. This trend can be explained by a substantial difference in the fertility rate in the two states. According to the latest data in 2021, this indicator scores 1.09 in the South and 1.93 in the North, awarding consequently to North Korea a younger population. South Korea scores badly in the "Birth Rate" Indicator, as one of the worst three countries on earth. This indicator computes the number of births every thousand people, and the country scores 6.89 over 1000, that represents the 226<sup>th</sup> position in the world, lower than Japan and Italy, countries famously known to be two with the oldest population in the world. Instead, North Korea scores 14.35 over 1000, resulting 125<sup>th</sup> in the global classification. This is also related to the "Life expectancy at birth" indicator, which measures the number of

years a person can expect to live since their birth, and it also commonly used as an overall quality of life indicator in a country, for example in computing the efficiency of the healthcare system or food security. In North Korea the index scores 71.65 years, while it increases to 82.78 in the South, marking a ten years difference.

Having seen this data, it is clear now that North and South Korean societies are not just economically different, but their living conditions and provided services differ.

South Korean society perfectly embodies the Western values of capitalism and free market, founding its current culture and fame on the phenomenon of the so called “Hallyu”, translated in English as the “Korean Wave”, defined by the “Oxford English Dictionary” as “The increase in international interest in South Korea and its popular culture, represented by the global success of South Korean music, film, TV, fashion and food”. This term has been recently added to the Oxford English Dictionary in late 2021, alongside other 25 Korean words, due to their common use in current English language.

Oppositely, North Korea was originally born as Soviet style of society, aiming at reaching the system of the “classless society”, in order to follow and create a Communist style of community. However, during the first years after the Korean War, also given the pivotal importance that the army and the defence sector had in the country, and the moment of high tension, a new sort of “privileged elite made out of high-ranked militaries and members of the Korean Worker’s Party” was born in the country. With time, this organisation has transformed into the Songbun, a sort of Korean Caste System, which has been defined by Robert Collins, member of the Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, as the “Basic Concept Underlying all of North Korea’s Human Rights violations”. Every family has its own classification into the Songbun system based on the actions of their ancestry, their closeness to the Worker’s party, and their economic status. The highest positions are the ones that permit to receive important political or military responsibilities, and consequently give access to certain types of benefits. The members of this elite class can have access to more luxury goods, such as cars, housing in Pyongyang, imported goods coming from abroad, which the rest of the population cannot afford and better schooling and healthcare for their family members. In this sense, the North Korean education system consists of twelve years of free and compulsory schooling, at the end of which the wealthiest and higher ranked Songbun students attend the Kim Il-sung university in Pyongyang, while the others have the possibility to join technical schools. The country pushes also for military education, hence why conscription is mandatory in North Korea. Officially, the duration stretches between three to four years but is usually lasts much longer. Moreover, according to the article in the Guardian, “North Korea introduces 'mandatory military service for women”

written by Choi Song Min in 2015, compulsory conscription for young women until the age of twenty-three years old has been introduced as well. On the other side of the Peninsula, conscription is mandatory for one year and a half for all young men, and on a voluntary basis also for young women.

Likewise, freedom of the press and of information in Korea is a value that has been highly discussed in Korean Legal Studies research. The National North Korean Constitution in the Art.67 states that: “Citizens are guaranteed freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, demonstration and association”, even if, according to the conclusion of the article “Press laws in North Korea” written by Kyu Ho Youm, professor at the School of Journalism at University of Oregon: “No dissenting voice is permitted in the news media [...] there is a considerable disparity between the constitutional guarantee of press freedom and its practical application. [...] The basic right to a free press is denied to North Koreans.”

Ultimately, an important issue to be taken into consideration while presenting the social issues in the Korean Peninsula, especially in the Northern part, is defectionism. During the last decades, the phenomenon reached its highest value in North Korea. At the time of the great famine, a huge amount of desperate people tried to cross the border between North and South Korea, or to escape in China, in order to flee from the famine. It is difficult to find correct and complete datasets about the phenomenon, yet the most reliable are those from the South Korean Ministry of Unification stating that, since 1998, 33.788 people have escaped from North Korea to South Korea. These numbers have a relative significance because South Korea is not the only destination where North Korean defectors usually want to seek refuge, as there are also other countries such as China or Thailand. Moreover, it is important to take into consideration the fact that these numbers represent just that of defections that have been legally registered by South Korean authorities, while the real number would reasonably be much larger. Taking into consideration illegal hiding and unknown number of casualties, it is reasonable to assume that this data is not completely descriptive of the phenomenon.

Once defectors arrive in South Korea, their integration in the country happens through various stages. Firstly, the refugees have to attend a three-months curriculum at Hanawon: this is defined by Eschborn and Apel as a “facility run by the Ministry of the Unification, designed to help refugees to integrate into South Korean society”(2014, p.18). This program has the aim to overcome social anxiety, cultural heterogeneity, and provide pragmatic instruction for living in the South. At the beginning of the program, South Korean officials interrogate refugees about their life in North Korea and journey to the South, in order to “gather intelligence about North Korea, and to weed out any

North Korean spies who may be posing as refugees” according to the official Hanawon website.

At the end of the three months, they receive economic help from the state to find an accommodation, and they can decide to attend further courses called Hana, which are targeted schools that offer fast specialization programs aimed at finding a job quickly. After having successfully completed the Hanawon, North Koreans are provided with South Korean passports, so they become effectively citizens of the country even if official documents “are not enough to turn them into South Koreans” (2014 p.24). This last quote by the article “North Korean refugees in South Korea: Arduous escape and difficult integration” by Eschborn and Apel shows that integration for North Koreans into South Korea represents a big obstacle. It is true that existing surveys about North Korean’s life in South Korea, as the two authors argue, “show that three quarters of the respondents believe that they did the right decision to flee their own country”(2014, p.23), due to the fact that they feel “more economic freedom” and the “lack of the constant surveillance and control”, but on the other side these people still represent a minority which is sometimes subject to discrimination.

According to the article “Resettling in South Korea: Challenges for Young North Korean Refugees” by Jiyoung Sung and Myong-Hyun Go, the integrational difficulties that young North Koreans suffer can be shown using “Drop-Out Rates in South Korea” provided by the Ministry of Education. It has been found out that, during high school period, 1% of South Koreans teenagers drops out, while, if we compare the data regarding North Koreans living in South Korea, the number increases up to 7.5%.

Of course, in the case in which a reunification between North and South Korea were to happen, the people from the North and the one from the south would need to integrate in creating a new sort of national sense and pride, creating a new idea of Koreanness, according to the reunification path the two states would possibly follow. These ideas of new Koreanness and, more in general, of questions about after-reunification scenario, will be discussed lately, in chapter three of the thesis.

## **CHAPITRE 2 : IMAGINING THE REUNIFICATION**

The second Chapter of this thesis, “Imagining the reunification”, shall profoundly investigate the phenomenon of the Korean reunification in order to understand the practicalities of the matter, and the possible consequences of such an event. This section has a pivotal importance in the study to understand the potentials of a Unified New State of Korea. For this reason, the first part of the chapter (2.1) will be dedicated to the study of the practical meaning of reunification, aimed at identifying the different ways in which Korean Reunification can be carried out and all the academic debate on the issue. Secondly (2.2), the past and current Inter-Korean relationships will be analysed, a fundamental step to understand how diplomacy has already behaved on the matter and how national politics and future elections can potentially shape the present and future status of the issue. Thirdly (2.3), the focus will be shifted to the positive outcomes of the Reunification, in order to deeply understand the economic, demographic, and strategic advantages of a Unified Korea. Finally (2.4), the last part of the chapter will be dedicated to the public events concerning the reunification, focusing on the topic of cultural diplomacy, sport diplomacy and infrastructural diplomacy.

### **Section 1 : What Would Reunification mean?**

The reunification of the two countries represents one of the most discussed topics in Asian Studies and Politics: the situation in the Peninsula perfectly illustrates the stalemate of dangerous consequences bipolar rivalries and ideological extremisms. Reunification would not just mean peace between the two countries, since, as already stated, they are technically still at war, but it will require much more: political, economic, and social integration between the two different Korean national systems. In order to discuss reunification policies, problems, and possible outcomes, it is necessary to start by looking at the current situation, analysing political plans and strategies about this matter. What has already been done on the issue? What are the methods that can be used to favour the reunification? Is there a clear possibility of carrying out a formal reunification of the two parties?

As a matter of fact, Korean reunification is a phenomenon that needs to be seen from two different perspectives: according to Chung Min Lee, in his paper “A Peninsula of Paradoxes”, “How South Koreans perceive prospects for unification emotionally and psychologically can be very different from how they cognitively reason about how the unification process would actually work.” This quotation perfectly underlines that South

Koreans look at the unification in two different ways: either emotionally or rationally. The former stresses the common values of the Korean people, emphasising their shared history, culture, language, and at the sentiment and the pride of being Korean. The latter instead focuses on the mere reality of facts, such as the current difference in government, international alliances, economic system, society and welfare. Notably, as Charles Lee argues in his “Korean Reunification: The Dream and the Reality”, the “Korean Dream” can be built on three different factors. Firstly, the shared history that the Peninsula has, given the fact that “Korea had been a unified nation since 668 A.D, over a millennium of Korean shared history means that all Koreans share the same language, costumes, traditional attitudes and views”. Secondly, the idea of “Korean National Consanguinity” since the Korean Peninsula is one of the most ethnically homogeneous areas on Earth, also taking into consideration the quasi-absolute presence of the Han civilization mixed to the “Confucian principles” praising the values of community and motherland, give birth to a “sense of a large extended family”. Thirdly, entire Korean families have been divided by the Korean War, and the memory of this event is still vivid in the private lives of Korean people. Also, the division has been the consequence of a clear war-strategy adopted by foreign countries, mainly USSR and the US, in the Peninsula, in Lee’s words “the division was never what Korean wanted” (1989, p.3). For these reasons, the still shared ethnic and cultural similarities between North and South Koreans would serve as a sort of glue for the creation of a new Korean people.

However, the reality in the Peninsula is much more complex than just an ideological difference, given the fact that the obstacles of the reunification are represented by any sort of practical aspect. Said difficulties, as better discussed in chapter three, are represented by the hardship of finding a synthesis between the Northern and the Southern life-styles, creating huge issues in the basic economic, political, social, defensive, and external relations domains.

Nevertheless, before analysing the specific issues that a Unified Korean Peninsula would have, it is important to understand how the two countries could practically start a process of re-approaching and eventually become a unique nation state. For this reason, it is pivotal to analyse the different scenarios concerning a new Korean state-building, focusing on how the two different entities would organise each other and what possible scenarios can be drawn.

As it would be discussed later, North and South Korea adopt two antagonist views about the practical process of unification, having different requirements and opposite ideas about the final product of the procedure. However, it is primarily important to analyse

the paper written by Woo-Young Lee and Hayeon Lee, “The Perception of the Integration of North and South Korea”, which enumerates the four alternative types of paths to be walked in the light of the Korean reunification: (1) “Single Political System based on North Korea”, (2) “Single Political System based on South Korea”, (3) “Single state through a Federation between North and South Korea” and a (4) “Union of Nations between North and South Korea”.

Firstly, for as long as the Earth has existed, unification by Force has been the most successful method of state-building. Realist IR theories are in fact based on the Hobbesian idea supporting that the external world can be defined as anarchic, a place in which states have to continuously care about their national security, because peace is not conceptualised as an absence of threat, but just as an unsecure and temporary absence of violence. According to this view, which has been the most widely adopted in humankind history, war can be a weapon to end hostilities and to increase a state’s importance. According to Buzan and Cox’s concept of “Warfare Rise”, a country can have the possibility to profit economically, politically, and internationally from the positive result of a war, acknowledging to wars a positive function of state-development tools. In the context of the new Korean state-building, according to Kwak and Joo, in their article “The Future of the Korean Peninsula”, it is possible to define the Korean War period as the first big attempt to reunify the Korean Peninsula. In this sense: Second World War comes to an end, Korea is divided in two zones of influence against its will, and two new states are originated, having ideology as single original divider. It is quite easy though to understand that, in that period, given the difficulty in dialogue already present between the two states and the relatively little amount of time passed after the separation, there was a deep willingness to reunify Korea. For this reason, in 1950, war was considered the easiest and fastest strategy to reunification: the Korean War therefore assumes the meaning of an armed attempt to reunify Korea under Kim Il-sung, as noted also by Maass in his “North Korea’s Endgame: Peaceful two States Solution or Coercive Unification?”.

Yet, arguably, the Korean War ended with the worst-case scenario possibility. In fact, this fratricidal sort of civil war, responsible for nearly three million casualties, half of them civilians, was supposed to lead Korea to unity. In case of Kim Il-Sung’s victory, meaning the total defeat of the South Korean American allies, the new state of Korea would have been reunified under the North Korean soviet style of government, creating a situation in which the peninsula would have undergone a “Single Political System based on North Korea”. The opposite still holds true, in the sense that, in case of victory of the South Korean part, the state would apply the “Single Political System based on

South Korea”. As a consequence, both cases would have strongly influenced and shaped the East-Asian regional balance of power and geopolitical equilibria. In spite of these possibilities, the war terminated basically re-establishing the original status quo, increasing the influence of the two different ideologies in the two states, and creating a situation of geographical proximity but political distance, which has not still been resolved.

However, scenarios (1) and (2) are both linkable to the old Korean War and still be somehow verifiable today. A single political system based either on North or on South Korea is not completely impossible, given the still high tensions between the two countries. In fact, the Korean border represents today one of the tensest areas in the world, in which security issues and threats are far from being totally absent. Said border represents a highly political area of pressure with the potential of resonating in world politics, particularly if considering the issue of the rise of China and the consequent willingness of the United States to be present in the area. It is not wrong to admit that, the Korean situation was born as a political conflict between the East and the West, and still has the potential of being such, given also that some Realist scholars, like Mearsheimer, are quite negative about it due to the fact that, in reality, “states can never be certain about each other’s intentions” (referring also to North Korea’s vivid nuclear ambitions).

It is possible to state that, in the absence of war or violent coercion, no rational state or authority would totally give away its power and its territory to an enemy state. Holding this assumption as true, it is more convenient and somehow rational to take into consideration other types of state-building theories, which take in regard the positions and the cultural and political differences of the two Korean states. Following Woo-Young Lee and Hayeon Lee’s progression, a third scenario can be proposed, focused on the creation of a single state through a Federation between North and South Korea, which has been already proposed in the history of the Korean issue.

Again, it was the North who moved the first steps to advance this proposition. The state in fact is determined to follow a system of integration based on the plan of the Federalist Republic of Koryo, which has been proposed in 1980 by the Supreme Leader Kim Il-Sung. According to this idea, the new state of Korea would be created via an integration of the two countries, following a federalist concept: both sides would preserve their respective political systems and governments, but a unified federal parliament and government would be established. This new Korean state would be named “The Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo” or DCRK and will follow a structure similar to the “one country two systems” idea. In 1980, North Korea was clear on the matter:



the country would agree to the reunification with South Korea solely through this system. Additionally, in order to carry out a successful reunification, the Northern state asks for few conditions to be respected. First, the removal of US forces from South Korean territory, given the fact that the American presence is seen as a virus infecting the Korean relationships. In fact, North Korea blames the Americans as the main responsible for the Korean division, and for this reason, the departure of all the American presence from the country is seen as a necessary and essential requirement to carry out the reunification. Second, the signing of a non-aggression declaration between North and South Korea, in order to avoid any military threat during the period of negotiation. Third, the conclusion of a Peace treaty between North Korea and the United States, to stop the tensions between the two states and to ensure a cooperation between the North and the American ally. As a matter of fact, the idea of the proxy war is here today still vivid, considering the evidence that North Korea wants to appease the US before than South Korea. The reunification prerequisite is in fact the “Liberation” of South Korea from the “American Imperialism”: only when the country will be totally free from the “western threat”, North Korea will be ready to discuss the reunification; Pyeongyang was inflexible on the subject. On the other side, Seoul prefers not to reduce the presence of the United Nations Command at the border, and to remain close to the United States, in order to receive military security and political support in politics, given the high level of instability of the North-South Korean relations.

However, critiques can easily be waved at this proposal, given the fact that it is not certain that such sort of political system will benefit the newly born state. Indeed, the political autonomy of the two regions would create uncertainty and inhomogeneity in the country, with the potential of harming national political order as well as the economy and leading to potentially divisive social disorders and discrimination.

Consequently, South Korea moves on to the fourth type of scenario, the “Union of Nations between North and South Korea”. This latter case pushes for a plan of reform of the two countries, mixing the two political systems and providing a single parliament with a single government, and not permitting substantial autonomies to the single regions. The Southern state wants to follow a gradual and functional approach, leading to a total unification, without a sort of federalism or division.

However, the problem of this project resides in the fact that the result of this third style of state building is determined by the degree of willingness of cooperation and integration that the two states will wish to obtain. Theoretical critiques to this somehow visionary project can be assessed. From a rational perspective, it is highly improbable to believe in a perfect harmonious balanced system which will equally take into

consideration the North and the Southern interest. For this reason, the fourth scenario of state building can actually be resembled to (1) and (2) given the fact that in a moment of perfect cooperation between the two parts, it is probable to foresee a stronger Southern or Northern initiative and influence on certain fields.

On this topic, Professor Takesada, in his essay “The Birth of a Unified Korea”, proposes another type of reunification process, which he names “the German process”. According to this idea, the winner of the economic competition will “swallow” the other part”, referring to the collapse of East Germany and the annexation by West Germany after the fall of the Soviet Union. However, this path seemed to not be verifiable because North Korea, despite the crisis of its major ally, was still capable of surviving. Additionally, the same author provides a final possibility, according to which “a second scenario could begin with the internal unrest in DPRK, such a situation can be a domestic uproar or a confrontation within the leadership, involving the use of force” (2001, p.4), similar to what has happened in Romania under Ceausescu administration. This point of view can open the door to a few of critiques, based on the fact that social unrest and manifestations generally happen when the population is unsatisfied, an adjective that does not describe North Koreans for a few reasons. First, in recent history, North Koreans people have never taken part to manifestations, strikes or attacks against the central government, or at least, none has been officially organised. This trend can be verified by the lack of a citizen uprising even during the hardest time of Korean modern history, such as the period of famine. Second, the Juche ideology, studied ever since childhood by North Korean citizens, claims for the cult of ideology of a Great Leader, given the fact that just this person is required for the masses to be successful in their revolutionary movement. For this reason, it is basically wrong to act against the leader, as this represents a serious breach of Juche ideology, and that is why this theory seems quite improbable to verify, at least in a short-time period. Oppositely to this claim, it is also important to note that, as The Guardian’s article “Whispers of dissent in North Korea suggest waning loyalty to Kim Jong-un” suggests that Kim Jong-un popularity seems decreasing, overall, in North Korean younger generation.

In conclusion, it is still unclear how these two states could be able to combine their differences to create a new Korean state. The big issue overall in their relation is that there is a clear lack of trust and willingness to compromise: the reunification needs an agreed plan between the two parties, but it does not seem to be close to a shared and approved conclusion. Moreover, the two states would have to discuss also other aspects of their integration, such as the economy. Matter-of-factly, South Korea is a liberal market economy, while North Korea is a communist centrally planned economy, and the

reunification would not just mean a union of the two economies, but a fundamental shift in one of them, not to mention social and international geopolitical issues, which are going to be discussed later on in the thesis.

## **Section 2 : Past and Current Inter-Korean Relationships**

The formal situation in the Peninsula, as already stated, is the one of formal open conflict, given the fact that after 1953 Panmunjom Armistice, there has never been an official peace treaty, officially ending all the hostilities. In this section, the attention will be focused on the major diplomatic negotiations and political moves that could have permitted the two Koreas to maintain a significant degree of dialogue.

Korean reunification has been a critical issue since the Korean War in 1950. It is important to note that, after the end of the War, the two states concentrated more on their own national state construction and their economic development than on the question of the reunion. For nearly twenty years, reunification initiatives and dialogues were silent, given the profound interest in national state-building. However, in 1972, in order to diminish the risk of a new war, and with the aim of creating the basis for a project of future reunification the “July 4 North-South Joint Statement” was signed under the presidency of Kim Il-Sung (North) and Park Chung-hee (South). This declaration contained three fundamental points to be respected to build further cooperation and reunification. First, it stated that “The reunification must be achieved with no reliance on external forces or interference. It must be achieved internally.” This first position was clearly calling for a sort of “Reunification-related Korean Monroe Doctrine”, meaning that no states should intervene in the Korean Reunification Issue. In this sense, the willingness of North Korea to avoid any sort of American interference is evident, as well as the attempt by both governments to prevent any sort of armed conflict and violence. The second recited that “The reunification must be achieved peacefully without the use of military forces against the other side”. This point affirmed the importance of preventing any sort of armed conflict and violence in the name of the national reunification. Additionally, in this sense, the declaration is silently opposing the aforementioned concept of “Unification by Force”. Third, “Both parties must promote national unity as a united people over any differences of our ideological and political system”. The final element pushed for the need of Inter-Korean dialogue and openness, aiming at coordinating the reunification discourse in the two countries, despite their

internal differences. Other points of the declaration highlighted the importance of organising meetings in order to foster mutual understanding and reconnect the people as well as the governments of North and South Korea, affirming the importance of Inter-Korean fair communication and the will to avoid the phenomenon of fake news spreading and defaming in order to grant a peace and avoid armed conflicts.

Twenty years later, in 1992, another document on reunification was negotiated on the basis of the 1972 declaration, under the presidency of Roh Tae-woo (South) and Kim Jong-Il (North), the “Agreement on reconciliation, non-aggression and exchanges and cooperation between South and North”. The aims of this declaration were the “longing of the entire Korean race for the peaceful Unification” and “to realize multi-faceted exchanges and cooperation to promote interests and prosperity common to the Korean people”, acknowledging that “their relationship [...] is a special one constituted temporarily in the process of unification”. The document is divided in four chapters, which somehow reference to the 1972 wording: the first one approaches the topic of “North South Reconciliation”, stating that the two states “shall recognize and respect the system of each other” (Art.1), “shall not interfere in the internal affairs of each other” (Art.2) and “shall not slander or defame each other” (Art.3). The second chapter is dedicated to the “Agreement of non-aggression between North and South Korea”, engaging the two states in promising that they “shall not use force against each other and shall not undertake armed aggression against each other” (Art.9), “shall resolve peacefully, through dialogue and negotiation, any differences of views and disputes arising between them”, and “shall establish a South-North Joint Military Commission within three months of the entry into force of this Agreement”. Finally, the third chapter, on “Exchanges and Cooperation between South and North Korea”, declared that the two states, “shall engage in economic exchanges and cooperation”(Art.15), “shall promote cooperation in various fields such as science and technology, education, literature and the arts, health, sports, the environment, journalism and media”(Art.16), “shall establish and link facilities for exchanges by post and telecommunication” (Art.20), and “shall establish joint commissions for each sector”(Art.22). Additionally, the fourth chapter about Amendments and Effectuation states that “This Agreement may be amended or supplemented by agreement between the two sides” (Art.24).

These documents have been two of the most important formal sources of the Korean reunification issue and initiatives of reunification. However, Korean Reunification is not just a matter of diplomacy and international relations, it is overall an internal national issue. For this reason, South Korean policy towards reunification has been highly influenced by the political elite in charge in those years. It has been noted that South

Korean Presidents coming from Liberal parties were keener to support the political reunification of the two Koreas than their respective equivalents from the Conservative parties. An example of this has been the so-called “Sunshine Policy”.

The main supporter of this policy was the South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung, who was member of the Democratic Party of South Korea. Kim was awarded with the 2000 Nobel Prize for Peace because of this Sunshine Policy project, begun in 1998. According to Moon Chung-In, in his “The Sunshine Policy and the Korean Summit” this program can be defined as a “proactive policy to induce incremental and voluntary changes in North Korea for peace, opening, and reform through the patient pursuit of reconciliation, exchanges, and cooperation”. Moreover, the main aim of this proposal is “to lay the foundation for peaceful Korean unification by breaking the vicious cycle of negative, hostile actions and reactions through peaceful coexistence and peaceful exchanges and cooperation”. The important aspect to be noted in this sense is that the Sunshine Policy is neither a single document nor an agreement, but it represents a completely new type of South Korean political approach in the relations with their North Korean neighbours. According to the paper, “The Sunshine Policy: principles and main activities”, written by Levin and Han, the whole policy depends on three theoretical principles, which are: “No toleration of North Korean armed provocations”, “No South Korean efforts to undermine or absorb the North”, and “Active ROK attempts to promote reconciliation and cooperation between the two Koreas”. Likewise, according to the same authors, it is possible to find other two subprinciples, which call for the “separation of politics and economics” and “the requirement for reciprocity”. These five points were the Sunshine imperatives that governed South Korean policies towards North Korea until 2008, also covering the mandate of the successor of President Kim, the Democratic President Roh Moo-Hyun.

Within this timeframe, the Seoul government engaged in five different types of activities in order to better retie their relationship with Pyeongyang. The Sunshine Policy permitted first of all to revive talks and political dialogue between the two Koreas, leading to some great historic achievements such as President Kim’s visit to North Korea in 2000, the first event of this kind after the Korean War. In general, according to the book “Sunshine in Korea” by Levin and Han, the Sunshine Policy would have created an averseness to taking military risks that might irritate the political dialogue between Seoul and Pyeongyang. Secondly, the activities of Sunshine Policy focused on “expanding North-South economic intercourse”, following the role of the separation of political and economic fields. Specifically, South Korea stimulated its national businesses to invest in North Korean different markets, such as the manufacturing one,

resulting with the construction of the Kaesong industrial complex in DPRK, and the touristic one, ending up with DPRK Mount Kumgang opening to travels. Thirdly, another important achievement of the policy is the one of the so called “Korean Reunions”. Such events are moments organised by the two countries in which people from the two states have the possibility to meet. These are not ordinary people, but they are rather members of families that had been separated during the Korean War. Every year such an event takes place, in which a hundred of North and South Korean citizens can reunite, after more than seventy years of separation and have a dinner together. These meetings are annually organised by the two governments with the support of some other entities such as the “Inter-Korea Separated Family Association” or the “Korea Red Cross” that have the possibility to organise virtual reunions, as well as face-to-face one. Fourthly, the policy pushed for “food and humanitarian assistance” given the fact that in 1998, North Korea was still fighting with the consequence of the Great Famine. Finally, the last goal of the Sunshine Policy concerned “broader effort to encourage international cooperation to reduce tensions and maintain peace in the peninsula”, inviting the North Korean state to participate and being involved in regional and international organizations, permitting North and South Korea to negotiate a final solution of their conflict.

Despite the significant initiatives taken by Seoul, the Sunshine Policy is basically seen as a political failure of South Korea. Two are the principal reasons for this assumption: external politics and internal politics. The former is related to the article written by Popeski “Sunshine Policy failed to change North Korea: report” for Reuters, which, quoting the policy review by President Lee Myung-Bak’s government, declares that “Despite the qualitative growth in inter-Korea ties, North Korea has not changed.” In addition, “There are no positive changes to North Korea’s position that correspond to the support and cooperation offered by us”, basically underlining a sort of impossibility of convergence and cooperation between the two states. Furthermore, North Korean search of nuclear armaments and “the sinking of a South Korean navy ship in March 2010 that killed 46 sailors” represent key examples of Pyongyang’s deceptive nature. Secondly, a radical shift in the Presidency of Seoul would also have its influence, given the fact that President Lee Myung-Bak comes from a more Conservative Party, with different background and political interests than his predecessors.

However, the debate about the policy pursued by Seoul is still open, and scholars present also other reading of the events. According to Kwon, the author of the paper “The Re-evaluation of the Sunshine Policy: Failure or Success”, the policy does not have to be criticised for its final failure, but has to be praised for its historical successes,

given the fact that it was a “new initiative for securing direct conversation with the North and it achieved the first mover’s advantage in strategic move by inducing the North to take a cooperative attitude toward the South” (2014, p.13), also mentioning historical Kim’s visit in DPRK in 2000. Secondly, “it can be considered to be a commitment device which actually created the joint industrial zone as a symbol of the inter-Korean cooperative economic development and negotiated more than forty different types of agreements between two Koreas” (2014, p.10). According to the same author, it is also possible to state that “The Sunshine Policy contributed to enhance the probability of sustaining the security on the Korean peninsula”(2014, p.10), given the rapprochement that nevertheless had happened. Finally, according to what Antonio Fiori, one of the most important Italian IR scholars on Korea, wrote in his ISPI article “The third Inter-Korean Meeting: Is the Moonshine policy beginning?”, “Without any doubts, its implementation [Sunshine Policy] favoured the relaxation of Inter-Korean relation, gave way to economic cooperation and promoted people-to-people exchanges. On the other hand, it has always suffered from allegation of being a unilateral approach, unable to induce any substantial modification in Pyongyang’s attitude”.

After the twilight of the Sunshine Policy in 2008, the new Conservative Governments in Seoul held by Lee Myung-Bak until February 2013 and then by his successor, Park Geun-hye, until 2017, did not actively face the problem of Korean Reunification, limiting themselves to dialogue with Pyongyang to the strict necessary. However, the real switch in trend happened in 2017, after the impeachment of President Park: a new Presidential election was held and a member of the Democratic Party, the current President Moon Jae-In, was chosen. His political campaign for 2017 elections has been particularly interesting for the purposes of this thesis, given the fact that one of the pillars of his plan was the re-opening of important dialogue channels with North Korea, stating that “he would consider visiting Pyongyang before Washington, if elected”.

As a matter of fact, after his election, President Moon Jae-In gave birth to a new type of approach, wrongly addressed as Sunshine Policy 2.0. Moon’s style in dealing with North Korean counterparts is slightly different than his Democratic predecessors, thus, scholars and researchers on the matter prefer to name Moon’s approach as “Moonshine Policy”. The wording is adequate, given the fact that it resembles the original Sunshine Policy, but adopted through President Moon’s perspective: the result is a word pun, with sun and Moon, which is current stateman’s surname.

The aim of Moonshine Policy is similar to the former one adopted by Presidents Kim and Roh, so the willingness to “create the basis for a renovated and continuing relationship with Pyongyang”, taking into consideration the counterpart’s intentions.

According to Professor Fiori, Moonshine Policy's main innovations are three. First, economic concessions: Moon's attitude towards North Korea has been defined "more vigilant", deciding to not send economic concessions to North Korea before the summit's meetings. The aim of this act is to avoid the economic intervention by Seoul without a clear and structured return by Pyongyang. Second, President Moon cares more about international support than other former Presidents, meaning in practice that "he has not tried to create any distance with the US", rather, he supported US sanctions on North Korea and pushed for trilateral meetings. Finally, maybe the more symbolic one, the President pushed to organise meetings in neutral areas, such as in Panmunjom, on the DMZ. This site has an incredible importance in Korean contemporary history, being the location of signature of the Armistice of the Korean War in 1953.

During President Moon's government, South Korean and North Korean dialogue resulted to be increasingly active, giving birth, among to others, to the "Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula", signed by the two Korean leaders in 2018. The opening formula of the document states the intentions and aims of the declaration, with the words: "The two leaders solemnly declared before the 80 million Koreans and the whole world that there will be no more war and a new era of peace has begun on the Korean peninsula". The declaration is then divided into three sections, dedicated to different objectives. First, "The two sides will reconnect the blood relations of the nation and bring forward the future of co-prosperity and independent reunification led by Koreans by achieving comprehensive and epochal improvement and development in inter-Korean relations" by establishing "dialogue and negotiations in various field" (Point.1.2), "joint liaison office with resident representatives of both sides in Kaesong area" (Point.1.3) and "to swiftly resolve the humanitarian issues that resulted from the division of the nation" (Point.1.5). Second, "The two sides will make joint efforts to defuse the acute military tensions and to substantially remove the danger of a war on the Korean Peninsula", agreeing to "completely cease all hostile acts against each other in every domain" (Point.2.1), to devise a practical scheme to turn the area of the Northern Limit Line in the West Sea into a maritime peace zone (Point.2.2) and "to reinvigorate the mutual cooperation, exchanges, visits and contacts, take various military measures to ensure such endeavours" (Point.2.3). Third, "The two sides will actively cooperate to build a permanent and stable peace regime on the Korean peninsula" declaring their intention to "carry out disarmament in a phased manner" (Point.3.2), "to end the war this year that marks the 65th anniversary of the Armistice Agreement and actively promote the holding of trilateral meetings involving the two sides and the United States, or



quadrilateral meetings involving the two sides, the United States and China with a view to replacing the Armistice Agreement with a peace agreement and establishing a permanent and solid peace regime” (Point.3.3), and “confirmed the common goal of realizing, through complete denuclearization, a nuclear-free Korean peninsula” (Point.3.4). The Declaration was finally submitted to the United Nations General Assembly on September 6, 2018. This declaration of course represents a powerful step forward in the field of peace and security in the Korean Peninsula, also opening the way for a future formal document to end the Korean War, and to move forward a denuclearised country.

Nevertheless, as stated by Angela Semee Kim, in the abstract of her “An End to the Korean War: The Legal Character of the 2018 Summit Declarations and Implications of an Official Korean Peace Treaty”, “Although these summits resulted in declarations which pronounced an end to the Korean War and an establishment of a peace regime, the declarations must not be mistaken as official peace treaties. Unlike a peace treaty, which is governed by international law, the two summit declarations are not governed by international law due to their lack of legality. Therefore, a clear distinction must be drawn between the declarations and a peace treaty”. The author wants to underline the legal lack of significance of the declaration, being not legally binding in the mere practice. Moreover, the ASAN Institute for Policy Studies published a report in 2018 discussing the Panmunjom Declaration, defining it as a “a Glass half full”. According to the article, “Progress is being made towards North Korea denuclearization and the improvement of Inter-Korean relations”, given the fact that it has been the first Inter-Korean document in which the word “denuclearization” has appeared. However, the critiques are expressed in the moment in which, reading the declaration, it can appear “veiled by its sense of vagueness”, resulting by an effective lack of practical measures and strategies to deal with the issues.

Finally, the last topic to be analysed in this part of the thesis is the effective formal demand for the final peace in the Korean Peninsula after the Korean War of 1950. Of course, the 2018 Declaration represents a huge step forward concerning this aim, crystallizing the intention of both parties to reach this result. As a matter of fact, since the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, an event that will be discussed later in the fourth part of this chapter, a yearly Peace Forum has been organised in the city. This forum does not represent an official platform for diplomatic dialogue, but more, as the website suggests, a “Global meeting of peace makers and peace builders”, with the aim of promoting the Pyeongchang Peace Spirit, defined as “the message of peace conveyed during the Pyeongchang Olympics”. This February’s annual meeting slogan was “Peace,

Here and Now!”, pushing for the current discussion to finally formalize the intention of the 2018 Panmunjom Declaration, showing a clear craving for the end of the eighty-years old Korean hostilities. Interestingly, the 2022 edition’s topics linked to the Korean issue were: economy, sports, DMZ Peace Zone, UN SDGs and peace public diplomacy. In the meantime, the South Korean government has already negotiated a wording for the declaration ending the Korean War, even if, according to President Moon, “it would be too physically demanding to reach a declaration to end the Korean War before the end of my term”, given the upcoming Presidential elections in March 2022, and due to the Constitutional impossibility to run for a second Presidential mandate. However, President Moon’s mandate is long enough to prepare the floor to favour the signature of a future peace treaty. truth be told, in an interview with Yonhap News Agency he declared that "I would at least like to make conditions ripe for an end-of-war declaration and pass that on to the next administration". Furthermore, according to an article published in the Korean Herald, “S. Korea, US agree on wording of declaration ending Korean War: Moon”, the President Moon declared that "An end-of-war declaration is useful since it signifies a process to promote mutual trust and a move toward denuclearization and the institutionalization of peace on the Korean Peninsula while putting an end to hostile relations,". Finally, the “MOU Work Plan for 2022” declares the Ministerial intention to “Expand Nationwide service relating to unification and North Korea”, to “Spread consensus for unification through new way of communication with aims to the future generation” and to “Lay the groundwork to rekindle and maintain the Korean Peninsula Peace Process”. Therefore, as a matter of fact, the results of March elections will be fundamental to understand the future of the whole Korean Peninsula: people in South Korea will have the power to decide President Moon’s successor, shaping the future of the unification dialogue, by electing a new President more or less prone to this solution.

### **Section 3 : Positive Outcomes of the Reunification**

In Imagining the Korean reunification, it is necessary to acknowledge all the positive aspects that this event will bring as a direct consequence: the Korean issue it is not just a matter of social unification, since, of course, other factors have to be taken into consideration, such as economic, political and social ones.

The very first issue to be tackled in this sense is economy. As already stated in the first chapter, North and South Korean GDP are extremely different in their volume: according to Takesada, in 2001, South Korean economy was twelve times as big as the

North Korean one, and today, given the rapid rise of Seoul's economic power and soft power, said distance has increased. Moreover, for the purpose of this thesis, it is also important to bear in mind that estimates tell that North Korean per capita income is about 5 percent the size of South Korean's. As a consequence, the question to be answered in this part is whether, in a scenario of Korean reunification, the economy would benefit or not from this union.

The answer at first glance can seem "no", given the enormous difference between the North Korean and the South Korean way of living. However, research has been carried out on the topic, holding interesting results. According to the "Global Economics Paper No: 188", published by Goldman Sachs Global Economics Commodities and Strategy Research in 2009, "A united Korea could overtake France, Germany and possibly Japan in 30-40 years in terms of GDP in USD terms". The reasons behind this assumption are to be found in the following arguments. In 2022, on an analysis provided by Credit Agricole, "South Korea ranks tenth among the world's greatest economic powers and fourth in Asia", thanks to its remarkable transformation from one of the world's poorest countries to a developed, high-income economy in only one generation. This makes the country a strong trade and manufacturing economy, importing raw materials from abroad.

On the other side, as stated in the Global Economics Paper No: 188 "North Korea has strong untapped potential, which could be unleashed once meaningful economic reforms start and investment flows in"(2009, p.9). This potential has to be understood in terms of "abundant and competitive labour force, ample room for synergies between South Korean capital and technology and North Korean natural resources and labour, and the potentially large gains from productivity and currency appreciation typical in transition economies".

The potential reunification of the two countries will be positive in economic sense, firstly, given the abundancy of skilled labour workers in North Korea and the lack of them in the South. Secondly, South Korea has no mineral resources: for this reason, Seoul annually imports 97% of the energy and mineral resources South Korea uses, among which the "six strategic minerals" used in the circuit boards of mobile phones" (bituminous coal, uranium, iron, copper, steel and nickel). Luckily, North Korean subsoil is rich in these kinds of materials, potentially making the production process faster, easier and overall, national. Finally, transitional economies are usually keen to greater profits in their productivity and financial performances, according to IMF's scholar Garbis Iradian in his "Rapid Growth in Transition Economies: Growth-Accounting Approach". For this reason, according to Keenan, in the paper "The Inter-

Korean Relationships: Views from South Korean University” “The resources of both countries fit together like pieces of a puzzle. Continuing economic collaboration could be not only economically beneficial for both countries, but a step towards a similar economic and governmental system”( 2020, p.11).

As a matter of fact, according to the research team of Goldman Sachs, it would be necessary to go through a three stages strategy to permit a good result in the North-South Korean economic integration. The first stage will represent a “Transition Phase period of 15 years” to better confirm and strengthen the integration process as well as control the increasing productivity and financial performance of the North. then, the second stage would be a “Consolidation Phase of 10 years” when growth in North Korea will start to decrease, ending with a third and final “Maturing phase” that would foresee a final convergence of the two state’s growth rates, permitting to the newly formed state to economically compete with Japan as second strongest economy in Asia and increasing the pro capita GDP and social wellness in the North Korean region.

Economic growth seems a positive consequence of the Korean Reunification, but it is not the only one. Demography represents another important field with great margins of improvement to be analysed in the framework of Korean Reunification. As already stated in the first chapter, South Korea, as many other important economic powers, such as Japan, China and Italy, has a tendency of becoming very old country in terms of population, as the average median age is already 43.2 years. South Korean families are usually formed by just an only child mainly due to the yearly increase cost of life in the country, which is not a good point, neither for economy nor for social demographics. However, on the other hand, North Korean families are bigger and more prosperous. Following these two different trends, it would be possible to secure the future of the demographics of the Korean workforce, avoiding the future aging of the population.

Moreover, apart for economy and demography, a Unified Korea will be able to increase its levels of national and border security, yet as Kwak and Joo wrote, “[Korean] security relations will be greatly affected by how unification occurs”. However, more in general it is possible to state that, if the two Koreas were to reunite, the military strength of the country would increase for a number of reasons. First, the population of the Unified Country will grow in number, so will the military human capability, considering the fact that in both Koreas, there is the military conscription. Second, given the high skilled level of the two countries armies, the military strength of the army will increase. According to the report “Unified Korea Military Strength”, published by Global Fire Power, “At the end of the day, the military power of a unified Korea would be something of a mix between two first-rate powers - Britain and Japan. The UK holds a

GFP ranking of #6 while Japan is right behind at #7. A unified Korea could very well place in the top ten by our measure - ahead of Turkey, Germany and Egypt". Third, if the two Koreas reunify, the Demilitarized Zone would be no more such a tense and military significant region. For this reason, Unified Korean army could employ their forces in other parts of their national territory.

Despite the aforementioned economic, demographic and security possible positive results, which represent a tangible type of resource, another aspect to be taken into consideration is the more liberal and romantic one of the restorations of the Korean National spirit and of a new essence of "Koreanness", as defined by Pheiffer in his "The Social Implication of Korean Reunification". This facet as well as all the initiatives about Korean brotherhood and friendship will be discussed in the following Chapter.

## **Section 4 : Public Events about Reunification**

In these eighty years of separation, North and South Korea have sometimes shown a particular type of "friendship" based on their common culture, history, and willingness to be one state, and they tried to show to the world how a Unified Korea would be. In this sense, these United Korean feeling can be analysed under "sport diplomacy", "infrastructure diplomacy" and "cultural diplomacy". All of these terms make reference to the wider concept of "Public Diplomacy", defined by the U.S. Department of State's Dictionary of International Relations Terms as "government-sponsored programs intended to inform or influence public opinion in other countries; its chief instruments are publications, motion pictures, cultural exchanges, radio and television". Therefore, the use of public diplomacy jointly with a stable diplomatic dialogue, would theoretically lead state entities to increase their confidence and understanding for each other, consequently resulting in an improvement of the relations between them.

The two countries, especially the South, often organize events about Korean Fraternity and reunification. Furthermore, it is also possible to see the two states coordinating and organizing special joint events in which North and South Korean ordinary citizens can meet, talk, and cooperate together.

The first instance to be taken into consideration is the Winter Olympics Games in Pyeongchang, hence sport diplomacy. The aforementioned games took place in South Korea in 2018 and have had a huge impact on the analysis of the relationships between the two countries. During the opening ceremony of the event, North and South Korean teams agreed to parade together under the same flag of the "Unified Korea". This decision was of course the result of an intense coordination between North and South Korean authorities. In addition, these two countries created a single team for the Ice

Hockey Oxymoronic discipline and played together during the whole games. This event had a resonance in the whole Peninsula, but also in the international community. Since then, the subject of the reunification has become even more discussed and popular. On the matter, Jung Won Lee, in her article “Olympic Ceremony and Diplomacy: South Korean, North Korean and British Media coverage of the 2018 Olympic Winter Games’ Opening and Closing Ceremonies”, has argued that the media coverage of the event has shown three important factors, namely “(1) The dissemination of a message of peace and unity, (2) the representation of unified Korean identity and Korean cultural heritage, and (3) the communication and negotiation between the high level state officials” stating that, “the combination of cultural diplomacy, sport diplomacy and interstate diplomacy is actively at work during these ritualistic events”. The idea is that 2018 Olympics games have been used by the two Koreas to show the world the problem of their reunification and the willingness to solve it.

The WO of 2018 were not the first time that the two states cooperated together in the field of “sport diplomacy”. Indeed, we need to consider that the two Koreas join forces during the 2018 Asian Games and Para Games in Indonesia, in World Table Tennis Championship in Japan in 1991, and in FIFA World Cup in Portugal in 1991. However, Pyeongchang had a particular resonance given the fact that it was the first, and so far, the only global event in which the two Koreas competed as one. This can sound quite pessimistic, but delving more in the specifics of the matter, we notice that North Korean athletes did not join neither the Tokyo Olympic Games in Summer 2020, nor the Beijing Winter Olympics Games in Winter 2022 for national health reasons. The North Korean government, decided not to let its athletes participate in the competition, given the outbreak of the covid pandemic, in order “to protect athletes from the global health crisis caused by the coronavirus”. Thus, despite the lack of participation by North Korea at the Olympics, the trend of the United Korean teams cannot be described as negative, because Covid represents an important and somehow “valid” justification in this sense, even if critiques have arisen. As a matter of fact, according to the article “Koreas officially out of running for 2032 Summer Olympics” written by Yonhap and published by The Korean Herald, “Koreas have declared their intention to work together to co-host the 2032 Olympics in September 2018” and formally in February 2019, to the IOC headquarters in Lausanne. However, the candidature of Brisbane, Australia, has been considered the best decision. Despite the failure, the attempt of a co-application of Seoul and Pyongyang represents a good symbol of the willingness of cooperation of the two states.

As a matter of fact, Korean Unification is not just a politics-related issue, but also an infrastructural one. In this sense, South Korea is currently adopting what is known as infrastructural diplomacy, investing 1.2\$ dollars to build and restore the Inter-Korean Railway. In November 2020, South Korea declared the willingness to renovate the southern part of the Gyeongwon line, which would originally lead from Seoul (South Korea) to Wonsan (North Korea). According to an article by Jeongmin Kim, “While the \$1.2 million will only be used on South Korea’s side of the Gyeongwon line, the maintenance is meant to prepare for a time when Seoul and Pyongyang can engage with one another more directly, according to the unification ministry”. This willingness comes after the 2018 Panmunjom Declaration, which aim was to “reconnect and modernize” inter-Korean roads and railways. The same document also makes reference to the intention to reopen the Gyongui Line, the Korean Western railway potentially able to link Seoul and Pyongyang. Were there no closed border between the two Koreas, it would be also possible to connect the country with China thanks to the TCR, the Trans China Railway. Similarly, on the other side of the Peninsula, the Donghae line that goes from the Southern city of Busan to the Northern city of Khasan might be connected to the TSR, the Trans-Siberian Railway in Vladivostok through said initiative.

A further topic to tackle is the relevance that Korean Reunification has in popular culture in South Korea. It is to be remarked that the “Korean Wave”, the phenomenon of the spreading of the Korean Culture in the western world since the 2000’s, has managed to make the world conscious of the situation. For this reason, today, the issue of reunification is not just seen as a Korean concern but more as an international one. Cultural diplomacy in this sense can be analysed in Inter-Korean relations, but also in Global relations. On the one hand, cultural events, such as the Pyeongyang Concert, which in 2018 hosted eleven artists coming from South Korea, among which the famous K-Pop Group Red Velvet. In exchange, North Korean Samjiyon orchestra played publicly in Seoul in the same year. On the other hand, a huge number of South Korean Films, Tv Series, Songs and Programmes, available in the western streaming platforms such as Netflix, treat the issue of the Korean Reunification in a more or less serious way, emphasising the social willingness of the people to reunify.

Additionally, art also has a powerful aim in this context, which is the one to deliver a particular message. In this sense, both in Pyeongyang and in Seoul, it is possible to spot two similar sculptures representing the division and the extreme willingness of reunification. In 2005, in Seoul has erected a big monument called “The statue of brothers”, representing two soldiers (North and South Korea) hugging each other over a fragmentated ground, symbolising the division. The sculpture represents the willingness

of the whole Korean people to reunify, despite the division and the difficulties. On the other side of the Peninsula, in Pyeongyang, a monument called “The Sisters Monument” or “The Reunification Arch” was built in 2001, which is an arch build on the highway linking the two Korean capital cities. The piece represents two sisters (North and South Korea), who are holding up a structure with the flag of the Unified Korea. The two works, despite their differences, strongly represent the same will of reunion.

All of these acts suit the Cumming’s definition of Cultural Diplomacy in “Cultural Diplomacy and the United States government: a survey”, quoting “The concept of “Cultural Diplomacy,” refers to the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding. But cultural diplomacy can also be more of a one-way street than a two-way exchange, as when one nation concentrates its efforts on promoting the national language, explaining its policies and point of view, or telling its story to the rest of the world”.

Finally, for all the already mentioned reasons, it is not impossible, especially after the events of 2018, to spot a new type of tendency, calling for a cultural rapprochement between the two Korean states. This phenomenon however saw a decisive stop after 2019, given the Covid-19. For this reason, it will be crucial to analyse the behaviour of the two states after the end of the Pandemic period, in order to understand whether this tendency would continue or not, and how eventually new international crises and events will shape the issue and the political equilibria in the whole region.



## **CHAPITRE 3 : CONSIDERING THE OBSTACLES**

In this final chapter the issue of the Korean Reunification will be studied with the help of major International Relations theories. Specifically, this part will take into consideration the greatest concerns and impediments which can potentially obstacle the real and practical possibility of reunification. Accordingly, this chapter will firstly deal with the Constructivist approach taking into consideration the state identities on the matter of reunification, studying current trends on the possibility of creating a unique new national and shared sense of “Koreanness”. Secondly, the emphasis will be put on the practical difficulty of peace between the two states, focusing on the analysis of Liberal Peace Theories and the representativeness of national governments, referring also to socio-economic issues on the matter. Thirdly, a Neo-Marxist lecture of the situation will be proposed, by working on the real economic disparities in the two countries and the difficulty to join them together, mentioning the German experience. Finally, Realism will close this chapter, by offering an interesting analysis on the foreign allies’ support or opposition for the reunification, imaging the different roles which world’s powers will cover on the issue.

### **Section 1 : Identity issues : Matters of intersubjective understanding : A Constructivist view**

In order to start the discussion about Constructivism and the Korean division, it is necessary to define the situation. The two states are in fact in a permanent status quo since 1953, which obliged them to stay divided and to create and shape two different “identities” in the international stage, given their overall differences in ideology. According to Alexandrov in the paper “The Concept of State Identity in International Relations,” “state identity is generally considered as a part of culture, which most constructivists define as socially shared beliefs” (2003, p.2). However, it results somehow difficult to separate the two. It is essential to state here that the term identity is used in a specific meaning, the one coined by Hopf in his paper “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory” which according to whom “The identity of a state implies its preferences and consequent actions. A state understands others according to the identity it attributes to them, while simultaneously reproducing its own identity through daily social practice” (1998, p.6). They are though “necessary”, given the fact that “a world without identities is a world of chaos, a world of pervasive and irremediable uncertainty, much more dangerous than anarchy” (1998, p.6). Furthermore, these types of social constructs have by definition three aims, “they tell

you and the others who you are, and they tell you who others are” (1998, p.6). In this sense, identities appear as fundamental aspects in the relationship between states, given the fact that they will influence the way different states will behave with respect to each other. Moreover Bloom, in the book “Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations” argues that the resulting national identity of a state is highly influential in the context of said countries’ foreign policy, shaping the behaviour that the state will follow.

For this reason, given the pivotal importance of the aforementioned concept, it is significant to remember that, as Alexander Wendt, one of the most influential constructivist scholars argues in his “Anarchy is what States make of it,” it is the very interaction with others which “create[s] and initiate[s] one structure of identities and interests rather than another” (1992, p.6). As a result, the case of the Korean Reunification can be regarded, under a Constructivist point of view, as a social willingness to change these two states’ identities into a newly developed one. A sort of transformation is to occur and, according to a Constructivist theoretical dialogue, it is possible. Therefore, as stated by Walt in his “International Relations: One World, Many Theories” “Constructivist theories are best suited to the analysis of how identities and interests can change over time, thereby producing subtle shifts in the behaviour of states and occasionally triggering far reaching but unexpected shifts in international affair” (1998, p.16). This quotation on the possibility of change can be verified by another passage of Wendt’s most famous work, which claims identities not to be already given, instead he declares them as being constantly constructed by shared ideas. Similarly, Hopf writes that “The crucial observation here is that the producer of the identity is not in control of what it ultimately means to others; the intersubjective structure is the arbiter of the meaning” (1998, p.6). Furthermore, states would be deeply concerned about their identity according to the idea of Finnemore, who expresses in her “National Interests in International Society” that state behaviour is inherently defined by its own identity and interests.

Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, according to mainstream Constructivist ideas, the relationships between states are mainly shaped on the intersubjective perception of identity that these states share in the international environment. Interestingly, it is possible, according to Wendt, to recognise that international politics as taking place in a world of anarchy, exactly as stated by Realism, and to recognise that states are moving in this space with the intention to reach their national interest. The Constructivist contribution at this time stays in the fact that these national interests have to be understood not as somehow pre-given and pre-constructed, as realism believes, but

as depending on state's single identity, which is however highly influenced by the international environment in which these states act. Therefore, identities are recognised as highly independent in the process of national self-identification and behaviour of a state. Moreover, in his "Social Theory of International Politics", the author explains the existence of three different kinds of anarchies, based on the shared identities that the state's reveal. International politics can therefore be found in a system of Hobbesian, Lockean or Kantian anarchies, all of them meaning different approaches in the perception of the self, the other and the approach on the use of violence.

Therefore, due to all these reasons, it is possible to state that a practical shift in national and international politics is feasible as a consequence of a state's change in its identity, which is however socially constructed and shared in the international environment. These assumptions can henceforth bring to the consequential conclusion that a reunification can happen if and only if the two Korean states are willing to change their intersubjective identity, and to create a different one, which is more prone to dialogue. This path, according to Wendt, can actually happen by following a three steps progress, firstly a "Breakdown of consensus about identity commitments", secondly a "Critical examination of old ideas and structures of interactions and "Identification of new possible selves and aspirations" and lastly "Reiteration of new practices".

The three different national Wendt's identities depend on the concept of anarchies here described: Firstly, the Hobbesian anarchy represents a system in which states do not recognise each other the right of existence, a place in which, following Hobbesian state of nature, threat is always present, and violence is always an option. In this framework, states consider one another as "enemies", given the fact that one's destruction means another one's survival. This kind of scenario is said to be proper of human history until the Middle Ages, being typical of the age of Empires and political entities that aimed at totally denying others one's right to exist. This approach, even if far, can be sometimes present in modern and contemporary history, presenting as a modern example the French Empire of Napoleon in the XIX century or the Imperial Germany at the beginning of the XX century.

Later on, after The Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, one of the milestones moments of the history of the International Relations, given the intersubjective recognition of the new norm of national sovereignty over national territory, a new system of anarchy was developed: the Lockean one, in which states are considered as "rivals". At this stage, states do recognise their and others' right to exist and to be sovereign, however the use of violence is still sometimes present, but with a different aim: the reason in not the one to annex and conquer states, but more to fight border disputes. An example of it can be

the relationship between Israel and Egypt before and after 1973: prior to this year, the two states found themselves enemies in an Hobbesian state of war, in the framework of the Arab Israeli conflict. In 1973, Egyptian President Sadat, a few years after the disastrous “6 days War” in 1967, in which the country risked losing the Sinai Peninsula, he signed a peace treaty with Israel, basically changing his state’s approach to Wendtian anarchy: from Hobbesian to Lockean.

Lastly, the final kind of anarchy is the Kantian one. In this scenario, states perceive themselves as friends, the use of violence is neither considered or put in action, and states usually have similar aims which try to archive with cooperation and coordination. Friendly states share a sort of political altruism which make them cooperate in case of crisis, they totally set aside violent threats and open themselves to diplomacy and political dialogue. In a certain sense, this approach can be explained by looking inside the states and the relationships of the European Union member states, even if this institution does not perfectly mirror Kant’s views on the matter and given the big debate about European Integration and the nature of the role of the EU as an international actor. Therefore, it is now necessary to apply the theory to Korean Reunification: what is the shared identity and consequently, in which sort of anarchy the two states live in? Arguably, reunification would be highly more possible and feasible if these two states would enjoy the status of friends.

Therefore, in order to understand and give a name to North and South Korean relations, it is necessary so to study what the respective national governments and statesman declared and how did they behave in relation to one another. In this sense, the analysis will focus on the study by political leaders of the two countries and on the understanding of their current policies in the framework of the North-South Korean relationship. Before starting with the analysis, it is important to point out that, due to the change of leadership in South Korean in March 2022 elections, in which the Conservative Yoon Seok-yeol, has been capable of winning against the liberal candidate Lee Jae-myung, party fellow of President Moon Jae-in. Notably, Korean Presidential Mandate starts officially in May, so the analysis of South Korea will take into consideration both former and future President Points of view.

Therefore, starting with South Korea, and more in the specific with former President Moon Jae-in, it is possible to state that, under his mandate, South Korea tried thanks to the Moonshine policy, to establish a sort of confidence in between the two states, reaching what can be interpreted as a Lockean type of Anarchy. In the years of the Moon’s presidency, South Korea tried to propose herself as the leader of constructive talks to lead towards a sort of better diplomatic and cultural dialogue between the two

states. Moon's South Korea recognised North Korea as a sovereign state, tried to increase the political talks between the parts, but never lowered the defence at the border, neither refused American Presence in the DMZ, underlying the evidence of the existence of a security threat. Moreover, North Korean nuclear activities do not permit a smooth evolution of the talks, given the fact that President Moon defines them as "very concerning". In the same interview with ABC news, the Southern President moves for a reopening of "North Korean/US talks and the inter-Korean talks", given the fact that "we have to make North Korea understand that dialogue and diplomacy is the only way to archive peace in the Korean Peninsula". The interview confirms the fact that Moon's South Korea does consider diplomacy and dialogue as the main means of solving the issue of Korean Reunification, confirming the hypothesis of the application of the Lockean concept of anarchy, which is actually somehow keen to reach to the Kantian one.

Secondly, the analysis will now focus on new South Korean President Yoon Seok-yeol. He has not yet formally taken the power, given the fact that the official mandate would start in May, however, it is possible to understand at least his intention towards North Korea thanks to some interviews and declarations during this year's electoral campaign. President Yoon has been a member of the opposition political force during Moon's presidency; therefore, their positions are sometimes quite different, maybe also given the current North Korean intensification of the national nuclear plans. In an interview published by the CNA, President Yoon declares that "I will build strong armed forces to deter any provocation to deter our people safety [...] I will answer sternly against North Korean illegal and irrational actions, [...] I will always keep the door open for dialogue with North Korea". These declarations, show the important difference in Mr. Yoon attitude towards North Korea, way more Realist than Moon's approach, given the fact that South Korea will undergo a series of internal balance of power in order to cope with North Korean "illegal" nuclear activities. The dialogue is always welcomed by President Yoon, but at this time, it is not seen as the very first approach, which is this case, it is the one of deterrence and increase of national and border security. In another article for Nikkei Asia "Yoon to take hard line against 'main enemy' North Korea", the newly elected President reveals his view of North Korea as the "main enemy" of Seoul. This attitude, mainly build on words, given the prematurity of a possible effective analysis of Yoon's policies on North Korea, make it possible to state that Yoon's South Korean attitude towards North Korea is located in the domain of Lockean anarchy, but with a little tendency towards the Hobbesian, from which it is still quite far and distant.

On the other side of the Peninsula, the North Korean government and national newspapers have reacted to the Southern change of Government by mentioning it in a few lines of report, without expressing any comment on it. Additionally, no declarations have been reported by major North Korean government members about the new presidency in Seoul. Words and declarations in this case can be used to understand North Korean position in the relation: in fact, North Korean government has published in late March a video, showing the testing of a new nuclear missile. The South Korean reaction of the video was the declaration of the South Korean Minister of defence Suh Wook, that according to The Guardian declared that “his country had the ability and readiness to launch precision strikes on North Korea if it detects the North intends to fire missiles against its neighbours”, referring to the deterrence technology South Korean has in order to oppose eventual attacks coming from Pyongyang. In the same article, it has been reported that Kim Yo-jong, Kim Jong-un ‘s sister, which is considered the “number two official behind the Great Leader”, answered to South Korean Defence Minister words, declaring that “South Korea should discipline itself if it wants to stave off disaster” given the fact that “unless the South Korean army takes military action against our state, it will not be regarded as a target,[...] But if South Korea, for any reason – whether or not it is blinded by misjudgement – opts for such military action as ‘pre-emptive, the situation will change. In that case, South Korea itself will become a target”. That said, North Korean declaration on South Korean and make it possible to state that Kim’s North Korea is following a balance of power with the ownership of nuclear missiles, in the aim of pre-emption, similarly to the one stated by President Yoon. North Korea recognises the sovereignty of South Korea but recognises also its right of self-defence. That said, it is possible to understand a sort of similarity in the two approaches, meaning that both of them fall into the domain of Lockean logic, but again with a quite visible tendency towards Hobbesianism.

That said, the subchapter demonstrated two assumptions: first, national identities can change with politicians, so they are somehow highly politically driven. Secondly, both the two Korean have not currently reached the shared identity of friends and arguably neither of perfect competitors. These two conclusions make constructivist approach dysfunctional to solve the problem of the Korean Reunification, given the incompatibility of the two identities and leaderships, and given the high and maybe excessive degree of politicization related to the whole theory, at least, in this particular case study.

On the other side of the coin, far from the classic mainstream constructivist logic hold by Wendt, stressing the importance of the international environment in shaping state

identities, another wave of constructivism can be considered. In fact, some other scholars such as Katzenstein, and Bozdaglioglou emphasise the importance of domestic environment in the creation of state identities. On the matter, Katzenstein in his “The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identities in World Politics”, argues that it would be necessary to “include culture as well as identity as important causal factors that help define the interests and constitute the actors that shape national security policy and global insecurities” (1996, p.537), approaching the subject on a more cultural and social manner. On the same idea, Bozdaglioglou argues in his “Constructivism and Identity formation” that “Domestic political developments can transform identities in several ways [...], through domestic institutional arrangements or elections, the role of domestic political groups or individuals in the foreign policy making process can be altered. In this case the foreign policy discourse can be dominated by entirely new organizations or individuals with different identity conceptions that may perceive the national interest in a different way” (2007, p.141). Given the fact that elections are seen as means of potential change, and given that society is the responsible for that, it would be important, according to this theory to look at public opinion.

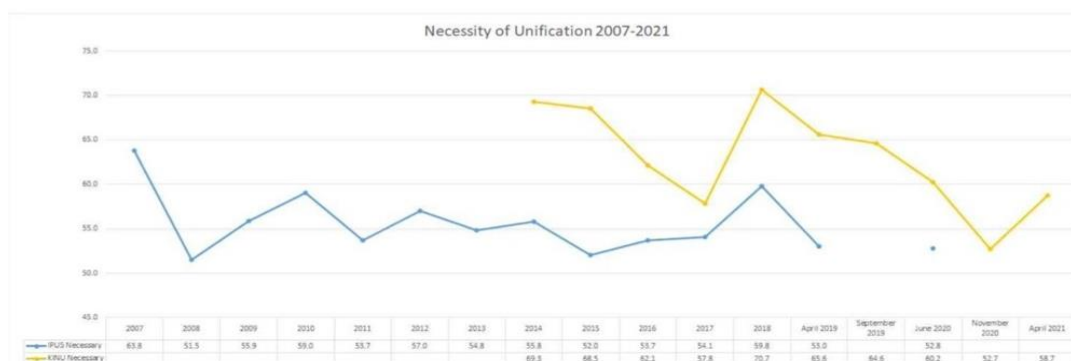
As a result, the first problem to address in a preview of a unification is the effective desire of Korean people to march toward said process, and in this respect, it is reasonable to claim that Reunification may not occur if Korean people do not regard this issue as especially significant and important, and the opposite still holds true.

Hence, the first source to be analysed in this sense is the “KINU Unification Survey” which is a publication provided every year by the Korean Institute of National Unification, based in Seoul. The data taken in consideration in this thesis come from the most recent version of the document, which is the one published in 2021. The annual report analyses different types of variables, aiming at “research changes in South Korean public’s perception on reunification” and in order to “contribute to establishing unification and policies supported by public opinion”.

Firstly, it is important to mention that 2021 has been a quite positive year for Korean Reunification in South Korean public opinion, given the fact that support for

## 1. Necessity of Unification

<Figure 1> Necessity of Unification 2007-2021



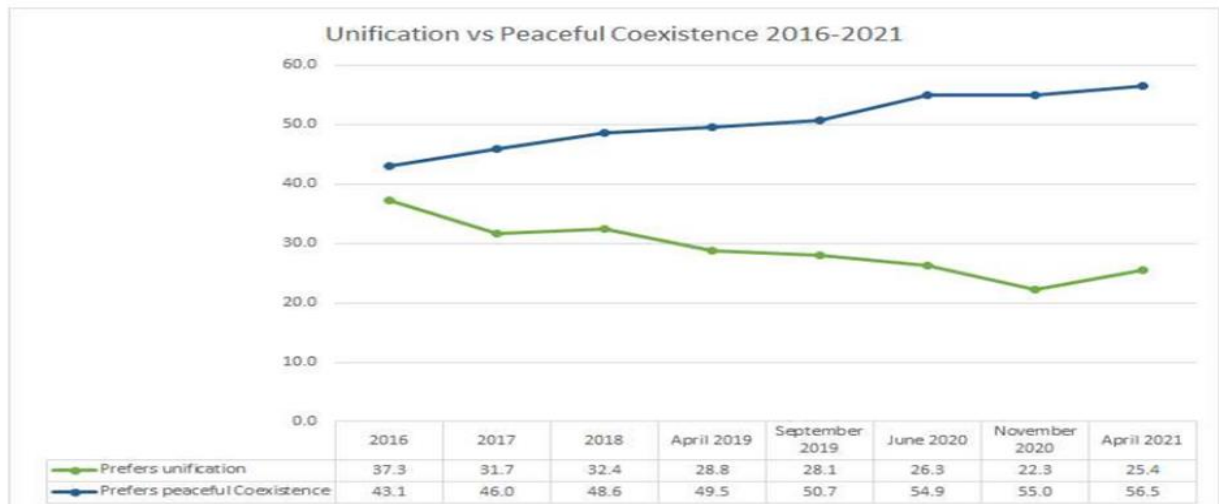
reunification has increased in average by 6% in the whole sample taken into consideration, if compared with the 2020 data sets. The data shown below are constructed with the answers to the following question “How much do you think is the unification necessary?”. Answers are standardised with the help of two different scale-indexes: the blue line represents IPUS scale, constantly used until 2019, consisting in a four- points scale, in which value 1 means “strongly unnecessary” and 5 means “absolutely necessary” and the new KINU scale, which has just 4 answers, in order to avoid the “neutral” answer, potentially biasing. In general, 2021 has registered an increase in the value of the variable “Necessity of Unification” (58.7%), even if this result is far lower than it used to be in other years, like in 2018 (70.7%). However, it is important not just to underline the presence of this variation, but also to account for this trend. As a matter of fact, the survey explains that “The necessity of reunification is closely connected to changes in inter-Korean relations”: it is actually possible to find a higher value of “Necessity of Reunification” in 2018, year of the beginning of the already mentioned Moonshine policy and the consequent enthusiasm behind it, followed by the Panmunjom declaration. These events, despite the initial interest, resulted in a relative decrease of interest for South Korean people, given also the nuclear exercitations whose frequency North Korea has intensified in the last years.

Secondly, it would be also important to focus on the willingness of South Koreans to have an effective need and intention of the reunification. This second variable was measured in relation to the answers sample gave to the sentence “If South and North can peacefully coexist without war, the unification is not necessary”, answering on a five-point scale in which 1 means “strongly disagree” and 5 “strongly agree”. The answers basically create two types of variables: the “Prefers Unification” or the “Prefers Peaceful Coexistence”. Results are interesting, given the fact that in 2016 the two alternatives scored more or less the same values (Unification 37.3, Coexistence 43.1), however in 2021, like in precedent years, “the ratio of preference for peaceful coexistence has continued to increase”, showing an increase in 2021 (Unification 25.4, Coexistence 56.8). These results show two important factors: first, the decreasing trust that South Koreans have with regards to North Korea, and second, the increase of polarization on the issue, given the fact that the neutral answer is decreasing.



## 2. Unification vs Peaceful Coexistence

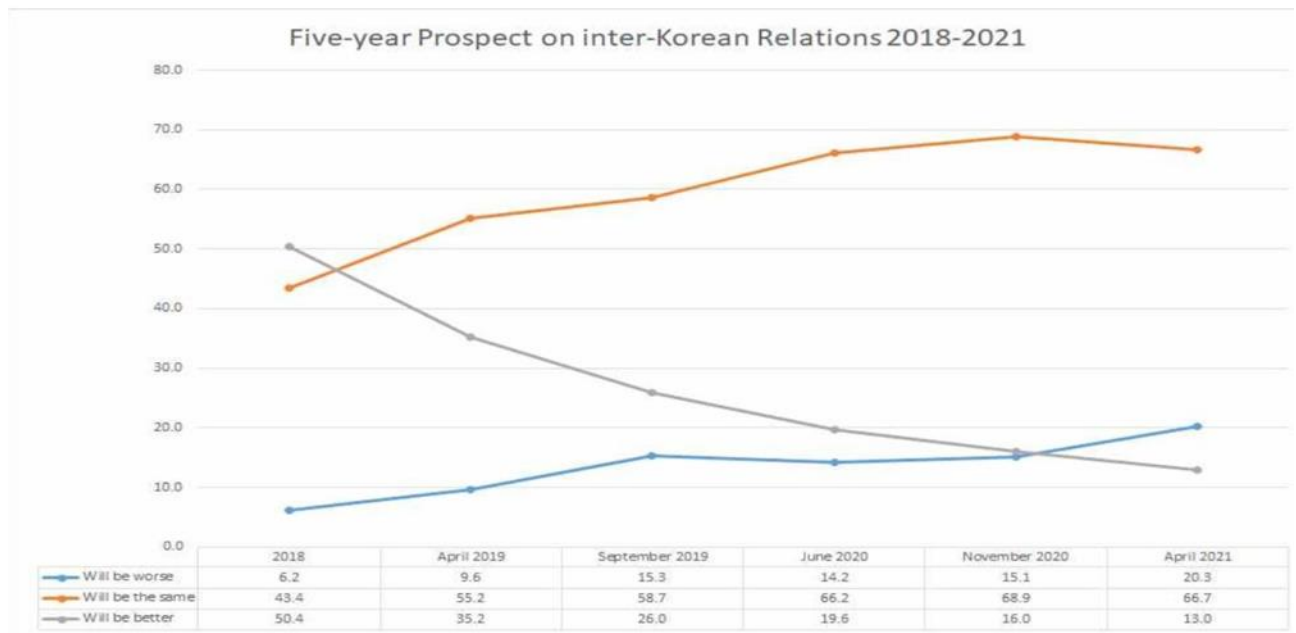
<Figure 2> Unification vs Peaceful Coexistence 2016-2021



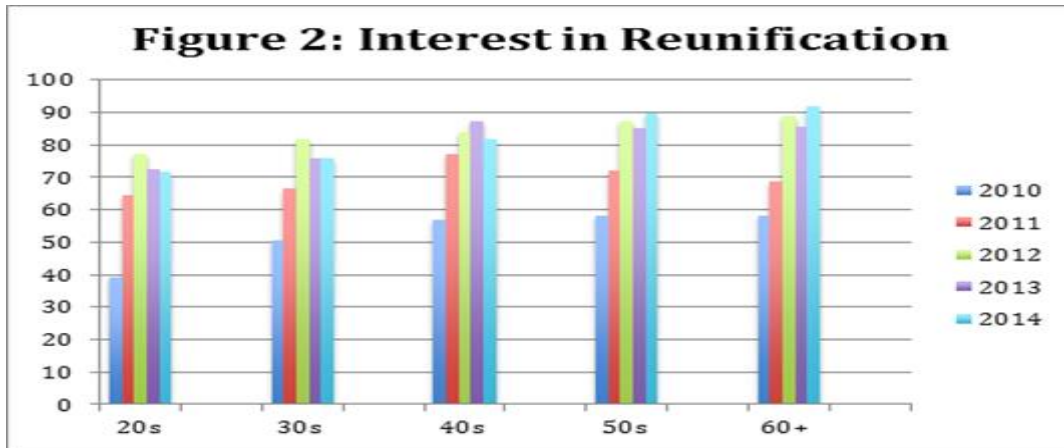
This trend can be related to a third and final phenomenon proposed in the KINU survey, the one on “Five Years Prospect on Inter-Korean relation”, which studies the expected trend and quality of this type of relation in five-year time. The question proposed is “What do you think will happen in the next five years of the relationships of North and South Korea?” allowing respondents to answer through a five-points scale, in which 1 means “it will be much worse” and 5 “it will be much better”. In this sense, 2021 represents a pivotal year in the analysis, given the fact that “Negative prospects overtook positive prospects for the first time”. This is a crucial phenomenon; however, it is important to consider also that almost of 67% of respondents believe in a sort of status quo situation along the next five years. One thing is evident from the survey: South Koreans do not expect North-South Korean relationship to improve. Interestingly, it is possible to find some consistency in these data and the ones about the necessity of reunification, given the fact that both of them registered a peak in 2018, and a consistent decrease in the following years. This trend can be explained by a failure of the policy to reach its objectives. In this sense, the biggest manifestation of this trend of pessimism is the March 2022 Korean Presidential Election, which ended with the victory of the Conservative Candidate Yoon Seok-Yeol. Hence, as clearly shown by these trends, South Korean public opinion does not seem particularly enthusiastic about the prospect of a reunification, as they are generally neither optimistic about the result of it.

## 6. Five-year Prospect on inter-Korean Relations

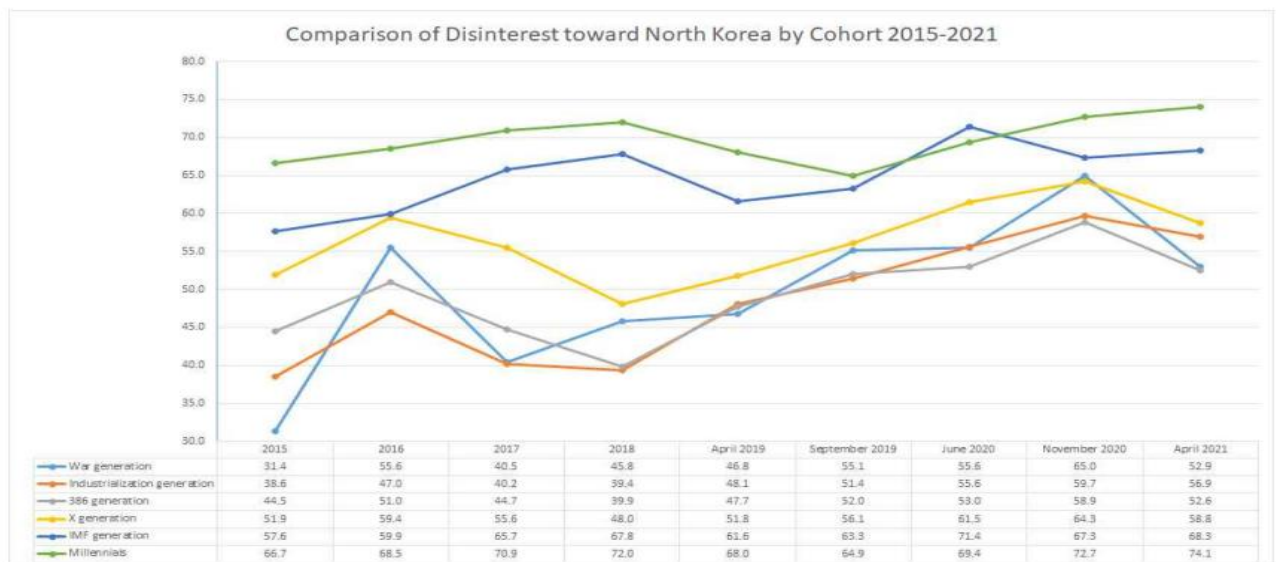
<Figure 8> Five-year Prospect on inter-Korean Relations 2018-2021



Furthermore, it is interesting to study the nature of this data, in order to understand the reason why this trend is in fall. The statistics under analysis are those considered in the up-mentioned article of Chung Min Lee, but also those from the “South Korean Attitudes toward North Korea and Reunification” (2015), a work from Kim Jiyeon, Karl Friedhoff, Kang Chungku and Lee Euicheol by the ASAN Institute for Policy Studies on public opinion in South Korea about reunification. It is important to focus on a particular set of data in the second study concerning the “Interest of Reunification compared to age”. By looking at it, statistics clearly show the interests and the willingness of the respondents in respect to the Reunification process: data has been collected yearly from 2010 until 2014, and respondents have been divided into five categories according to their age (20/30/40/50/60+). As the results demonstrate, there is a clear decrease of interest in the topic as the population gets younger: older people care more about the Korean reunification than younger ones. This is a trend that repeats itself throughout all the five years of study. A similar trend is registered in the 2021 KINU Unification Studies, which acknowledges the “millennials” defined in the survey as “the respondents who were born after 1991”, as being the more “indifferent to North Korea” age group in South Korea, as, in 2021 “74.1% of Millennial generation are indifferent to North Korea”. Even in this case, the trend seems to be quite stable, showing a negative relationship between “age” and “interested to North Korea”. This fact, apart from being greatly significant, means also that the idea of unification does not “greatly impacts individual’s everyday life”, especially younger generations.



<Figure 10> Comparison of Disinterest toward North Korea by Cohort 2015-2021



The reason behind this trend is to be found in the sociological theory of Socialization, according to which the change and the influences coming from the surrounding social environment transform the way people react and see the social environment. Quoting the definition provided by “A Dictionary of Sociology” by John Scott and Gordon Marshall “Socialization is the process by which we learn to become members of society, both by internalizing the norms and values”. Concretely, this means that being born in an already divided situation makes South Korean youngsters feel the attachment for their “Cousins” in the Northern country less and less. Additionally, it is interesting to notice the variation of the data between 2010 and 2011. In 2010 data was collected just after the sinking of a South Korean submarine, the Cheonan, by North Korea: thanks to this example, it is therefore possible to confirm that Unification willingness is partially influenced by current events in political relations between the two states as well. This

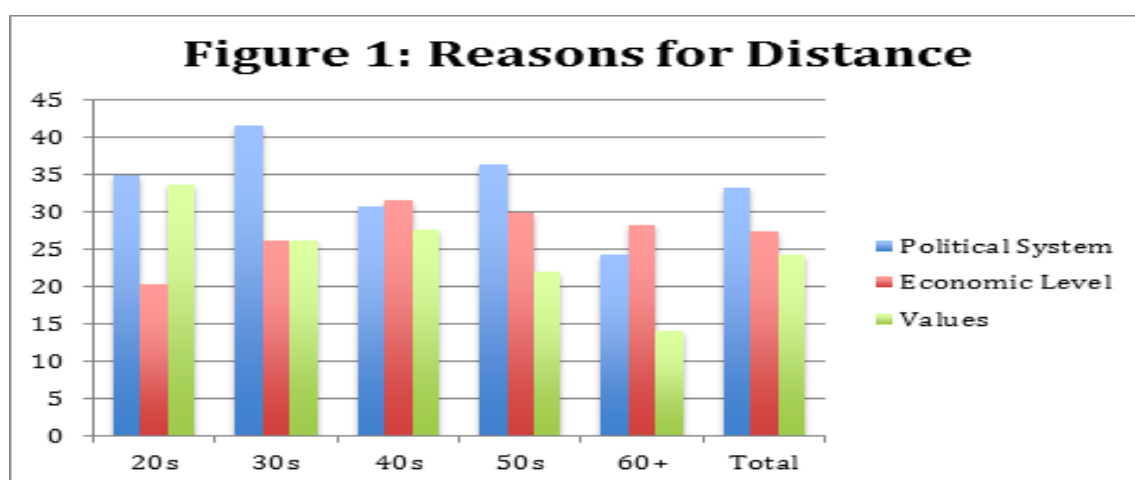
piece of news of course biased data for the worst, resulting in a general diminishment of desire for the reunification in all the age categories in 2010. The importance and the real significance of this data is relative to time: the more years pass, the more people start being less interested in reunification, meaning that there will progressively be fewer people prone to accept a Unified Korean State.

The key factor of unification is the Korean people, intended as a whole, because they are the ones who are going to sustain, economically and socially, the costs of the unification. The more time passes, the less people are interested in the issue, the less a real unification is going to happen, according to a Southern Korean scenario.

That said, the Korean reunification issue, being a topic regarding two countries, needs to be observed from the perspective of both states. North Korean policies, actions, and propaganda, already described in the previous chapters, show the official intentions of the government, even if they are not firmly explicative of the intentions of the North Korean people. However, given the lack of official data and surveys about the topic in the North, the study will be focused on the analysis of some North Korean defector's interviews on the topic. This represents a bias in the study, given the fact that the sample is not as representative as the one taken in consideration in this thesis' previous sources. Firstly, more than 95 percent of North Korean defectors who responded said unification is needed in a 2017 survey by the Seoul National University Institute for Peace and Unification Studies. However, it remains important to listen to the interviews of the YouTube video "Do North Koreans Want Reunification with South Korea?" by Asian Boss. During the video, the three North Korean interviewed express the idea that reunification is a generally supported topic in their country, declaring that 80-90% of the North Koreans would want the reunification, given the fact that "They have nothing going for them, rather than risking their life to escape, it is just safer for them to wish for reunification". Another respondent declares that - according to her - "some people are well-off in North Korea, so regardless or not we reunify, they would not really care", decreasing the rate at a 70-60% of support. However, from the interview, it is important to note that the younger generation is the one which is more prone to reunification, given the facts that "People in their 20-30 don't have a future in North Korea", and that "they follow a lot of South Korean and Chinese media", youngsters do realise the difference of living conditions between their own state and the surrounding ones. The third North Korean interviewed, reacting to the assumption that North and South Koreans are two different people, replied "I never thought of us being a separate county, we have 5000 years of history behind us, so of course we are the same people" showing than even North Koreans can experience the same level of cultural attachment for their

neighbours that South Koreans sometimes have. Finally, another interview in the article “Cuddled in Kim Jong Un’s arms” by Smith shows that “North Koreans said they see their Southern neighbours as family”, quoting the words of Pyongyang waitress Song Jin-A “North and South are one blood,” Pyongyang waitress Song Jin A told Reuters. “As a new generation, we want to live with our compatriots in the South as one, (we) want to all live together cuddled in our leader Kim Jong Un’s arms”.

Another important survey to take into consideration to understand the reasons of the perceived social and cultural detachment between the is the “Reasons for distance” in which South Koreans are asked which is the biggest difference between the two countries. There are three possible answers: “Political System, Economic Level and Values”. It is interesting to see how older generation focus more on political system and economic level, while young people (20s) place their attention on values. The idea underneath these results is that older generations see the main divergence with North Korea in either economy or the government, so a formal difference in institutions and wealth. Whereas younger people see it more at a substantial level, meaning that they feel North Korea and North Koreans farther and more distant than their older fellow citizens do. This trend can just strengthen the idea expressed by Steven Denney, in the article “The Generation Gap on Korean Unification”, according to which young South Koreans nowadays “do not consider North Koreans to be part of the same “bloodline” as them; in other words, North Koreans belong to a different nation”. Moreover, the ASAN Public Opinion Report on “South Korean Attitudes toward North Korea and Reunification”, comments this data claiming that “This result indicates that social integration will be another problem in a unified Korea”.



In the aftermath of a possible reunification, it will be important to try to reconcile and integrate in Korean society people permitting the free circulations of citizens inside the Peninsula as well. Cultural exchanges and meetings would represent of course the

necessary prerequisite to create a sort of new Korean Identity. According to Hang Pheiffer, the author of the paper "The Social Implication of Korean Reunification", if the two countries reunify, it will be necessary to reidentify the sense of "Koreanness", so what it really means to feel and be Korean citizens. Following his study in South Korea, it is possible to identify, with the help of a survey, that the major perceived variables of Koreanness as "Keeping Korean Citizenship" (88.4%), "Being able to write and speak Korean" (91.1%), "Abiding Korean Legal System" (93.1%) and "Understanding Korean Traditions" (91.5%).

As the plan is designed in order to foresee a reunification under the direction of South Korea, this situation would create a system of prejudice, given the fact that North Korean defectors escaping in South Korea register high values of discrimination, once arrived in South Korea. Adaptation and "social reunification" in this sense could also have the opposite result, an increase of social division in the peninsula.

Firstly, North Koreans will not have any problems regarding Citizenship, due to the fact that it would be provided by the newly formed state. After, Korean language and writing is not too different between the North and The South. Indeed, the biggest difference resides in the accent, but this little difference would not represent a source of non-Koreanness, the same goes for culture and traditions, sometimes not perfectly identical between the two states, but still very similar. The truly big problem North Koreans would face in adapting to Southern standards would be the "Abiding Korean Legal System" that is also the factor perceived as the most important by South Koreans. In this sense, North Korean people, being socialised in a totally different political and social environment, would perceive the South Korean political and justice system as a "shock". It would be of course a long-term situation, due to the fact that it will not be easy for these people to change from the North Korean system, rooted in the Juche, to the Liberal one of South Korea, based on totally different values and ideology.

Therefore, to sum up, according to all these studies, South Koreans seem not too much enthusiastic about a Korean Reunification, given not only a perceived distance between the two people, but also the social problems linked to it. In fact, problems of adaptation, migrations and pervasive discrimination have the potential to be even more divisive and socially costly. Finally, already existing issues within South Korean society, such as infrastructure limitations, social inequalities based on regions, labour crowding competition and social discrimination, may intensify, and increase in the event of an integration of the two Korean States.

Thus, the two currents of Constructivism currently present a negative overview of the matter.

## **Section 2 : Political Issues: Matters of Peace Theories: A Liberal view**

Secondly, the question of Korean Reunification needs to be tackled considering the Liberal tradition of International Relations. This theory finds its bases on the works of John Locke and Immanuel Kant, both believing in the possibility for human beings to prosper in a society governed by the capitalist economy and individual liberty and rights.

Liberal thought can be explained following the famous sentence of Jeremy Bentham in “A Comment on the Commentaries and a Fragment on Government”, “the greatest happiness of the greatest number”, (1977, p.373) which refers to the willingness of Liberalism to take into consideration the needs of the citizens instead of the ones of the state as an absolute entity. For this reason, beliefs in progress, human reason and democratic values are highly influential in this idea. As a matter of fact, liberalism takes into consideration the existence of societal actors beyond the states, like social movements and others, not focusing exclusively on the national government, given the huge influence and network that these entities have in today’s politics. Consequently, the state in the eyes of liberalism is not a unitary system, given the fact that decisions are taken on the basis of domestic political alliances and compromises, and for these same reasons, the state is not deemed as being rational in the realist sense, but following a rationality which is based on collaboration and coordination with other entities, leading anyways to the accomplishment of the national interests in a situation of win-win situation. Consequently, the government will sometimes not act in order to reach the best solution for itself, but it will work in cooperation with other states or civil actors to reach common aims. For this reason, endogenous factors of the states are a pillar to explain a state’s foreign policy.

Consequently, in this case, the assumption to be analysed in this subchapter is the following: The two states will be able to reunify if both of them would, following the path dictated by liberal peace theories, cooperate together, and not just consider their single national interests and security issues. In order to verify this assumption, it would be then necessary to apply the Liberal Peace Theories to the Korean Reunification case study issue.

These Theories describe how a society based on liberal values is able to avoid wars and to establish cooperative relationships between states, in order to reach shared goals, following a win-win approach. Firstly, the Theory of Liberal Institutionalism finds his academic origin in Kant’s Perpetual Peace. According to his ideas, in order to have an

everlasting peace “The civil constitution of each state shall be republican” (1), “The law of nations shall be founded on a federation of free states” (2) and “The rights of men, as citizens of the world, shall be limited to the conditions of universal hospitality” (3). The first point clearly refers to the fact that just democratic countries are able to reach a perpetual peace among one another. This is possible because politics is seen as the result of all the citizens action, rendering it an active occupation for the whole state society. Consequently, international peace would be reached thanks to the intention of states to cooperate in order to create an inclusive, recognised, and accountable system of International Law. Thirdly, a sort of freedom of movement would be recognised.

This theoretical base, especially the second point has been rendered somehow effective in 1918 at the end of the First World War, thanks to the American President Woodrow Wilson. More specifically, he delivered a very famous speech, now known as “Wilson’s fourteen points speech”. He put forward fourteen initiatives in order to secure the world from further catastrophic events such as the one just concluded in 1918. It is in this thesis’ interest to analyse the last point, “A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.” This is the clear inspiration and the intention to give birth to the League of Nations, the predecessor of today’s United Nations.

In general, according to Jackson, Sorensen and Moller, international institutions can make cooperation between countries easier and more likely. In this sense, the member states of such organizations shall benefit from such partnerships: in fact, as stated by Keohane and Martin in their “The Promise of Institutionalist Theory”, being a member state would imply reducing transaction costs, providing information, making commitments more credible, establishing focal points for coordination as well as facilitating the principle of reciprocity. As a matter of fact, the two Koreas have joined the UN together in 1991, but, since then, the major issue related to Koreas was the one of non-proliferation and de-nuclearization of the Peninsula, and relationships between the two have not highly benefitted of the partnership of UN, given the fact that major appeasement efforts between the two have been ruled out by national governments in bilateralism rather than inside the multilateral UN scenario. For this reason, it is possible to observe a partial failure of this peace theory, in relation to the Korean issue.

Secondly, the so-called theory of “Economic Interdependence” is based on what Montesquieu had written in the first half of the XVIII century in the XX book of “De l’esprit des lois”. There, he states that “The natural effect of commerce is to bring peace. Two nations that negotiate between themselves become reciprocally dependent, if one



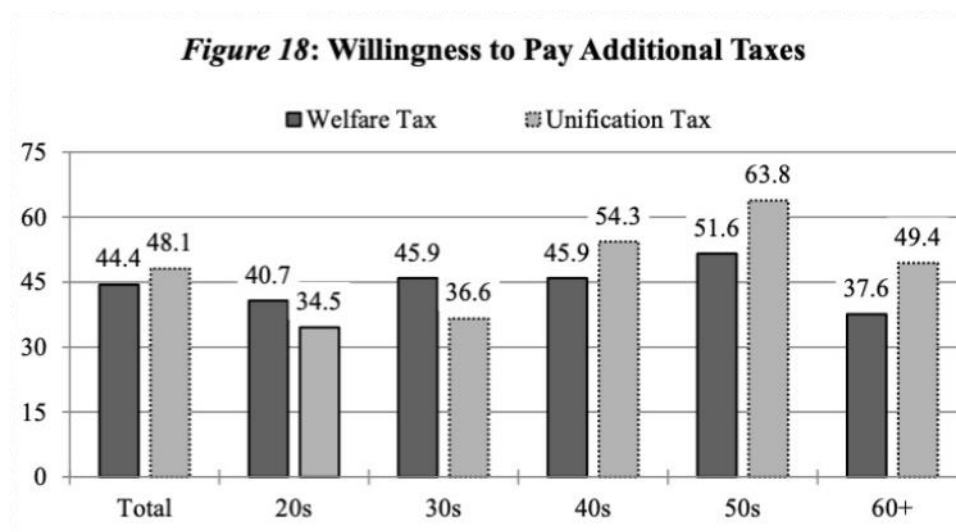
has an interest in buying and the other in selling. And all unions are based on mutual needs.” According to this theory, economic cooperation and financial investments could help two states to come closer also politically. This idea is then somehow verified, at least in its theoretical aspects, by Mitrany’s Theory of Functional Integration expressed in the paper “A Working Peace system”, supporting the assumption that “overlay political divisions with a spreading web of international activities and agencies, in which and through which the interests and life of all the nations would be gradually integrated” (1966, p.2). Furthermore, Haas in his “Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic forces”, explains his neo-functionalist theory of international integration, modelled on Mitrany’s thought. According to him, a spill-over effect has to be expected: if states start to cooperate in one field, they will then expand to others, being able to change the international system with an increasing, gradual cooperation among countries. In this sense, the example showed in the paper focuses on Western European states in the 50’s and 60’s. The same theoretical bases are to be found under the “Sunshine Policy” plan previously discussed in Chapter 2. It is therefore possible to argue that the theory of Economic Interdependence had no positive effect in the Korean Reunification issue, given the fact that South Korean economic investments in North Korea did not prompt further political cooperation between the two governments, leading the South Korean Unification Ministry to declare the official failure of Sunshine Policy in 2010.

Finally, the Theory of the Democratic Peace would be useful to understand the reason of the critical importance of the March 2022 Presidential elections. The first step is to be found again in the Perpetual Peace of Immanuel Kant, more specifically the first point, which calls for a republican constitution in all the world’s states. This idea may be better explained with the quotation coming from 1994 State of The Union Address delivered by President Clinton, “Democracies do not attack each other”. This assumption has been historically defined by Russett in his “Grasping the Democratic Peace” as “one of the strongest nontrivial and non-tautological generalizations that can be made about international relations” (1989, p.245). The reason for it can be found in Doyle’s article “Liberalization and World Politics” in which he states that democratic peace is based on three points: “peaceful conflict resolution between democratic states”, “common values among democratic states”, and “economic cooperation among democracies”. To our purpose, it is important to focus more in depth on the first point. In this sense, peace is always the first option because democracies are shaped by citizens. Domestic policies as well as external ones are the result of internal political mechanisms that deeply involve citizens about their preferences. Arguably, it is difficult to see that more than half of a

state's citizenry wants war, so that citizens are to be seen as the main grantors of peace within a system of representative democracies. The key argument on the Korean Reunification is therefore that, if citizens have the possibility to control their national policies thanks to democratic tools such as universal suffrage, they have the possibility to actually shape the national interest of the state and actions thanks to elections. In this case, it is possible to state that, just like the Sunshine Policy, Moonshine Policy has somehow come to an end, given the fact that March 2022 elections have designed as new South Korean President the Conservative Candidate Yoon Seok-Yeo, member of the opposition during Moon Jae-In Presidency. It is therefore possible to state that, thanks to democratic process, South Koreans decided to put an end to the policy of openness towards North Korea of President Moon, having elected an opposer of it as President. According to Bernal, in her article for Nikkei Asia "Yoon to take hard line against 'main enemy' North Korea", the newly elected President shows a totally opposite point of view than Moon's one concerning North Korea, given the fact that as already states, he considers the country as the "main enemy" of South Korea.

Too all of this socio-political analysis, it is necessary to add a socio-economic account. In fact, in case of a reunification, South Koreans, being the richer population of the Peninsula, should expect to pay more taxes with the aim of sustaining and balancing the reunification for a long time, while also being prepared for an increasing trend of migration from the North. Hence, in 2010, President Lee Myung-bak proposed a "reunification tax" to make the country financially ready to pay for reunification with North Korea, "which some observers estimate will cost more than \$1 trillion", according to the article "The Economic Costs of Korean Reunification" by Spice Stanford. It is actually interesting to investigate the variation in the support for Korean Unification in the moment in which economic policies become the main focus of the question. In fact, it is possible to observe a clear decrease when an economic caveat is added to the question. According to "The ASAN Public Opinion Report", 86.6 percent of respondents stated that reunification is necessary, but when the question changed in "Are you be favourable to a Unification Tax to sustain the costs of the Unification?", the trend halves at 48.1%. Again, in the above graph, taken from the "The ASAN Public Opinion Report", it is possible to reconfirm, the trend according to which younger people are less interested in the Reunification: there is indeed an important gap between the young category or "gen Y" (20) (34.5%) as it is sometimes named, and the 50/60+ category (63.8%).

This interesting trend creates a sort of limit to the willingness of Koreans to reunite, as culture and values are highly influential in the discourse. However, it is impossible not to question the real intention of South Koreans to reunite, given this strong discrepancy in the data.



On the other side of the Peninsula, North Korean government does not seem completely indifferent to the Southern push for unification. In fact, as already stated, different meetings, especially the ones in 2018 between Kim Jong-Un and Moon Jae-In, had created a quite optimistic environment at the time, which has been however started to gradually decline until 2021. South Korean citizens are not completely confident in the real intentions of North Korean government towards unification given the fact that, in reality, North Korean’s partial openness in regard to South Koreans can bring important economic and political advantages to the Northern State. As a matter of fact, in the 2019 KINU survey it is possible to observe a basic polarization of South Korean citizens regarding the real intentions of their Northern neighbour on the theme of reunification. In this sense, the question to be answered was “What North Korea wants is regime stability and economic development rather than communist unification”. Indeed, more than 50% of the respondents agreed that the real aim of the North Korean government was not the one of the peace and reunification, but the one of regime stability and economic growth.

Therefore, as proved in this section, the understanding of socio-political and socio-economic spheres and the analysis of liberal peace theories are not sufficient to foresee a future Reunification in the country, at least in the short run.

### **Section 3 : Economic Issues: Matters of Economic Inequality: A Neo-Marxist view**

Thirdly, the analysis has to be shifted to a more economic side, in order to better focus on the practical aspects of the reunification. In this case, the thesis will provide a conclusion, based on the International Relations Theory of Neo-Marxism, considering the high importance that this thought acknowledges to economy.

As a matter of fact, Jackson, Sorensen and Moller, in their book “International Relations” define Marxists as materialist, given the fact that the whole approach is “based on the claim that the core activity in any society concerns the way in which human beings produce their means of existence” (2019, p.187). Hence, for this reason, it is possible to state that “economic production is the basis for all human activities, including politics”. This assumption can be corroborated by the words and the works of different Marxists and Neo-Marxists authors, among which Marx’s “A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy”, in which he states that “The totality of relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life” (2010[1859]. P.92). Consequently, the current world is involved in a path of economic globalization, which, according to Cox, in his article “Reflections and Transitions” makes “non-territorial power” more important for states, since they compete for markets and economic opportunities across the globe. As a matter of fact, today’s International Relations are not just focused on states, but also on non-governmental organizations, enterprises, and social actors. On this idea, Cohen, in his “Advanced Introduction of to International Political Economy” explains how states’ behaviour can be explained by economic ties, in fact “States are not autonomous, they are driven by ruling-class interests” (2014, p.38), mainly economic ones.

As it was previously done in other subchapters, theory is used to extract a statement. In this sense, given the pivotal importance that economy has for Neo-Marxism, representing the real base of the state and, consequently, the direction of the policing of a state as well, it is possible to argue that the reunification could happen just if the two states are able to find an agreed, feasible and vantages solution for joining their two economic systems in one, taking into consideration the different conceptions and volumes of their two economies.

Firstly, it would be interesting to propose an economic theoretical framework of the reunification of the two Koreas. As a matter of fact, in the moment in which the two countries would reunify, also their two economic systems would follow the same path. The problem at that time would be the practical difficulty in joining two completely different systems: in fact, as already stated, North Korea represents one of the last worlds planned communist economies, polarly different from South Korean liberal market economy. In the North Korean case, the volume of the production is established by the state, according to the general need of the national population; in this type of economy, there is no competition between firms, given the fact that just a few producers exists, and much of them are state-owned: this leads to a lack of variety of the products in the market and a scarce innovation and minimum research, but at the same time, it helps avoiding resource wasting and overproduction-related problems and surplus. On the other side, the South Korean economy is a system government by national and international marketplace demand: different firms propose similar products, which are highly differentiated between them; this leads to great research and innovation in the field but increases much more the possibility of wasting materials and store unsold surplus.

Hence, the problem is not just represented by their two different economic systems, however, the economic volume that these two countries move is completely different, as their investments and national expenditures. In fact, as already stated in the First Chapter of this thesis “Mapping the Division”, during the second decade of 2000, South Korean GDP was around 54 times greater than that of North Korea: therefore, the analysis is focusing on two financial opposites.

The case of the Korean economic Reunification represents a challenge also under the theoretical and economic point of view, given the scarcity of practice and similar contemporary historical situation. An analysis must therefore start by the study of the best working example of an economic reunification: the one of Germany in 1990.

As already stated in the introduction, Germany can be seen as the major example for Korean reunification also under the economic point of view, given the fact that both the issues are related to the opposition between a market economy led system and planned one. Moreover, it is possible to argue that, in both scenarios, there was a big economic gap between the two countries, even that, as already stated the economic situation, the Korean one represents a more divided and polarised system.

That said, it is important to note that some studies have focused on the economic differences and similarities of the Korean situation and the German regarding unification. Consequently, according to Jong W.Lee and Warwick J. McKibbin, in their

article “Korean Unification: Economic Adjustments under German Assumptions” (2019, p.1) “Unification can reduce the growth rate in South Korea for a certain period following the unification shock due to the transfer of resources out of the South into the North and an increase in risk on the Korea peninsula. Due to the relative sizes in population and per capita gross domestic product of the two Koreas, unification can be more disruptive on North and South Korea, compared to the experience of Germany. The critical factors determining the economic effects of unification are the nature of wage-adjustment, the size of resource transfers from the South to North, and exchange rate policy.” The problem in the paper are basically expressed by the practical incompatibility of the two economic systems, given the high difference of economic discrepancy of Seoul’s and Pyeongyang financial systems.

Yet, Korean Reunification and German Reunification are not always studied as similar, following the ideas brought forward by the article “Why Korea Can’t Replicate Germany’s reunification”, by GPF. He states that “In most ways, though, the two Germanys were much better suited for reunification”. Different arguments are presented, such as the higher relative level of integration between East and West Germany than the one of the two Koreas, the fact that East Germany never applied North Korean “extreme version of totalitarianism and collectivism”, and most importantly, “The economic disparities between the two Koreas are also far wider”. East and West Germany in fact had a relative more ease to reunify than potentially North and South Korea resulting in a far less onerous reunification for East Germany than it would be for South Korea.

Recalling the second chapter of this thesis, “Imagining the Reunification”, specifically in the third sub-chapter “Positive outcomes of the Reunification”, it has been shown how Korean Reunification could represent a positive economic advantage for the whole united country. These predicted positive results are however exclusively based on purely economic factors that do not take into consideration the short-run consequences of the situation, focusing just on the possible situation after fifty years. An opposing view, in this sense, is given by the paper “Korean unification: How painful and how costly?” written by Mario Arturo Ruiz Estrada and Donghyun Park. The two scholars try to analyse the issue of the Korean Reunification by the use of the so-called “Global Dimension of Regional Integration model” or “GDRI Model”. The aim of this prototype is to “provide policymakers and researchers a new analytical tool to study the evolution of any regional integration process from a global perspective encompassing the political, social, economic and technological dimensions” (2009, p.3). According to their analysis of the two countries, given the “large and growing gap between the two Koreas in terms of political, social, economic and technological development and consequently, overall

development”, there is a “divergence between the two Koreas rather than a convergence, which suggests that unification is likely to be a painful and disruptive process entailing large adjustment costs” (2009, p.13). The process of reunification would in fact harm South Korean economy, as the case of Reunification, the current generation of South Koreans would be hit by serious financial adjustments and economic pressure, which they are not prone to accept, given also the decreasing trend concerning the willingness of the younger generations to reunite, already analysed in the Constructivist part. On the matter, Tanaka, President of the Centre for International Public Policy Studies, declared in the interview “How Japan Can Prepare for Korean Peninsula Unification”, “Even if a unification program developed peacefully, they would still have to confront a very great inconsistency within the unified state”.

Seoul’s and Pyeongyang polarized economic systems seem difficult to reunify in just one system, given both their difference in ideology and volumes. However, it is not the first time in history that the necessity of a socialist country to modernize its economy made it reshape its political approach: that country is China. In this framework, in forty years’ time, China succeeded in completely changing its economic conditions: in 1978 the share of Chinese economy was 1.8% of the Global one, instead it was the 18.2% in 2018 (World Bank Data). China has doubtlessly increased its wealth, and one of the main reasons of such rapid development has been a pack of reforms proposed by Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese paramount leader since 1978. One of the innovations brought in this period was the so called “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics” also called “Socialist Market Economy”. Said approach is founded on the socialist economic and philosophical base approach, with some liberal openings, such as the access to international markets and the membership to western trade institutions, like WTO in 2001, in order to peruse the final aim of development. The main explanation of this approach can be found in a speech delivered by Deng Xiaoping in 1962, “It doesn't matter whether the cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice.” This sentence shows Deng’s willingness to reach the result of improving China, no matter the economic ideology. This approach and the consequent influence of it in North Korea has been studied in 1978 by Koh in his article “The Impact of the Chinese Model on North Korea”, on the possibility of seeing a shift of North Korean market economy into a more “Socialism with North Korean Characteristics”, that would arguably represent a step forward in the feasibility of the economic integration between the North and South Korea. However, as stated by the author, and confirmed by latest trend, North Korean political and economic closeness does not seem to be welcoming the application of this

system, which would threaten the “Marxists-Leninist” North Korean approach based on Juche ideology.

Arguably, to make Reunification happen, according to Zang’s article “A Realistic Process towards Korean Unification and the Harmonized Privatization of Properties in the Unified Korea” one of the conditions is that North Korean people want it, making reference to our previous Constructivist claim and a North Korean government representing the will of the people be in power, quoting the Liberal one. Therefore, the question rises naturally: Why is it North Korean government cooperating and inking agreements with South Korean counterparts on the creation of political preparation plans for the reunification? The answer here is to be found in the national interest of North Korea, given the fact that “North Korea’s rhetoric gravitates around unification not because they really believe in an immediate unification but it’s a powerful slogan that gives justification for them to improve inter-Korean relations” resulting in overall economic benefits for the country, said Lim Eul-chul, professor of North Korean studies at Kyungnam University in Seoul, in the article by Reuters “Cuddled in Kim Jong Un’s arms”. In this sense, it is possible to state that North Korean government and policies towards reunification are aimed at gaining the greatest economic benefits from it, but with the real aim of not joining the reunification. In this sense, North Korea chose to follow its economic aims of development.

Finally, on the other side of the Peninsula, in the same article, Professor Lim argued “the idea of unification is not as appealing because it immediately reminds of the burden of unification costs”, words recalling that economic expenditure from South Korea represents a big and somehow potentially prohibitive element of the Reunification. Thus, in this sense, given the non-economic profitability of the issue, the Neo-Marxist tradition is not able to adequately deal with Korean Reunification.

## **Section 4 : Strategic Issues: Matters of International Support, Foreign Policy and Alliances: A Realist View**

Finally, the analysis must take into consideration the Realist theory of International Relations, focusing not just on the two Koreas, but also on all the strong and influential powers which have the possibility to shape the situation.

Originally, it is possible to recognise the Greek author Thucydides as one of the eldest contributors of this school. The author in fact lived in Greece in the period of great fights between the major city-states, and he started documenting his everyday history, also by constructing theories about it. One of his most famous sentences has been written in the fifth book of his major opera “The Peloponnesian War”, stating that “The



standard of justice depends on the equality of power to compel and that in fact the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept". (1972, p.406). This sentence is enough to represent the basic realist dialectic about power: in fact, according to Smith, in his "Realist thought from Weber to Kissinger", Thucydides 'words formulated two important claims of realism "First, that the structure of the international system affects relations between states, including ultimately war. Second, that moral reasoning has little bearing on relations between states" (1986, p.9-10). Yet, another important contribution to the historical path of realism is the Italian writer Niccolò Machiavelli. He has been recognised as one of the founders of the modern Political Science thanks to his works of political analysis "Il Principe". The important contribution of this author stands in the fact that he recognised the world as a dangerous place and as a dynamic entity in which change is always possible. That is why, he writes in his great opera "It is necessary that he [The Prince], has a mind ready to turn itself according to the way the winds of fortune and the changeability of affairs require" (1984, p.59-60). For this reason, it results necessary the implementation of an attempt analysis and understanding of the situation, and in some cases, also the use of preventive acts, such as wars, are welcomed, if the situation so requires, totally rejecting a system of morality. Finally, the English author Thomas Hobbes contributed greatly to the Realist ideas by defining the situation of the pre-civic politics, as the author described this system as a totally anarchic one, defined "state of nature". In this stage, according to his major work "Leviathan", "there is no place for industry, [...], no art, no letters, no society, and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death and the life of man, solitary, nasty, brutish and short" (1946, p.82). However, in order to avoid such condition, it is necessary to sign a "security pact", which will permit people to be protected and live in relative peace and safety, and the only way to do it is to build a sovereign state, which can order and regulate the lives of its citizens. This same idea works for the single states, which prosper in a sort of "international state of nature" where anarchy reigns. Given the impossibility to form a world government, these states will live in perpetual fear of one another, and they would principally value their national security (defensive realism, Waltz) or power (offensive realism, Morgenthau, Mearsheimer), as the most important principles for their existence.

Therefore, in order to apply the realist theory of international relations to the Korean Reunification issue, it is possible to create the following assumption to be verified: "Korean Reunification will happen if major international powers' interests, mainly defensive and strategic, would not be threatened", or, as Noland which in "Realism and

Unification “ quotes Zang’s words “outside actors, principally the US and China, would at a minimum not actively undermine or hinder the process”.

As a matter of fact, together with North and South Korea, it would be therefore crucial for the analysis to take into consideration states that currently detain the title of world’s hegemonic powers, such as the already mentioned United States (which also held a pivotal role in the Korean Conflict and aftermath) and China (which represents the new stronger ally of North Korea and whose rise is threatening American hegemonic position in world’s politics). Additionally, focusing on Japan and Russia, two important historically influential nations in the area, neighbours of Korea, can be functional to understand the point of view of the strongest American and Chinese allies in the region.

Firstly, analysing North Korean national and foreign policy, it is possible to define the state as a great follower of the defensive realism technique. This approach, founded by Neo-Realist scholar Kenneth Waltz, emphasises the idea that states shall seek to maximise their defensive capability to avoid being vulnerable in the international state of nature. The North Korean desire for security is principally evidently made out of its nuclear weapons, which are seen as the main form of protection by the state. In this sense, North Korea is a purely isolationist country, it does not have the ambition to be a hegemonic power in the region, it just wants the continuation of its government and the safety of its citizens. However, as stated by Herz in his book “Political Realism and Political Idealism”, “the self-help attempts of states to look after their security needs tend, regardless of intention, to lead to rising insecurity for others as each interprets its own measures as defensive and measures of others as potentially threatening” (1951, p.7), perfectly describing what is known as the “security dilemma”. In this sense, North Korean nuclear weapons manifest the extreme need of the country to feel protected, but this fact leads other states to arm themselves against it, given that nuclear weapons are considered by the United Nations office for disarmament affairs as the “most dangerous weapons on Earth”. Consequently, states have manifested their dissent towards North Korean nuclear plans by adopting different types of UNSC resolution against the country, making the country the fourth most sanctioned state in the world, according to Zandt’s paper “The World's Most-Sanctioned Countries”. The important fact to be noted here is that, despite the sanctions, which are principally of an economic and isolationist nature, the state still prefers to damage its economy than its security. Given the fact that North Korean denuclearization is seen as a pivotal element on the possibility of the reunification, and that the country has never stopped investing in the field since the 80s, is it realistically possible to see the end of the nuclear program, just to improve the political relations with the South? Realism says no.

Secondly, South Korean government's intention to reunify is swinging, given the fact that it is a matter of national politics and interests, shaped by the political party in charge. South Koreans, in order to have a real and constructive dialogue with Pyeongyang should lower their American allies' presence at the border, which has exactly the same function of the North Koreans nuclear weapons: security and prevention. Just like the North, South Korea lacks a real motivation to be sure about the North's good intention.

Moreover, as Waltz stated in his article "Structural Realism After the Cold War," the Korean peninsula still has "more military forces per square kilometre than any other portion of the globe"(2000, p.30). This sentence has been written in the year 2000, in order to appear a bit paradoxical. In fact, on the one hand the two states are trying to find a peace solution, while on the other hand, as Fraser argues in his paper "Reconciling Realism: DPRK-ROK Co-operation and IR Implications" in the Korean Peninsula, the "Security dilemma of realism has not been compromised, and the arms race has not ceased". This sentence refers to the fact that since the end of the great famine, both North and South Korea have increased their national military expenditure: according to CIA the World's Factbook, "between 2010 and 2019, military expenditures accounted for an estimated 20-25% of North Korea's GDP annually" and South Korea maintains the expenditure between the 2-3% of its GDP per year, countering however that national GDP grew by 2% every year until 2019."

Therefore, it is possible to acknowledge that both Seoul and Pyeongyang's policies can lead to the same conclusion. As Fraser wrote, "the co-operative ventures do not affect the applicability of realist theory to the Korean peninsula", given the fact that military expenditure has not declined and "national security/regime survival never wavers from being the top priority of the DPRK and the ROK respectively".

As a matter of fact, Korean Reunification, despite being a national issue for the two Korean states, it represents an event which can potentially change the strategic settlement in East-Asia. For this reasons, influential states in the region, but also global power's point of view has to be taken into consideration.

Firstly, a Chinese analysis of the Korean Issue has to be proposed. Thus, the state is at the centre of one of the most important debates of current International Relations, as, the dialectic of the "Rise of China" might potentially change the world's order. This phenomenon would see an increase in the Chinese political and economic influence all over the globe, thanks to economic ties of the new Belt and Road initiative and also its increasing military power, which will lead the state to be a direct challenger of the world's hegemonic power: the United States. In fact, different predictions, such as the

one made by Aaron O'Neill, show that Chinese GDP in official exchange rate is doomed to surpass the American one in ten-years' time, given the assumption that the Asian state will keep on grow economically. Moreover, according to the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, the Chinese one was amounting to 252 billions of American dollars in 2020, while The United States' value was three times bigger, counting 778 billions of American dollars spent for the armed forces. However, China doubled its military spending (130bln in 2010, 252bln in 2020, still lower than 2% of its GDP), and given the numbers of American military expenditure in the same years (865bln in 2010, 778 bln in 2020), it is possible to note an opposite American tendency. China is increasing military expenditure, while the USA are slowly kowtowing. However, it is also indeed possible to argue that The US military budget is in decrease because of the country's declined involvement in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, in line with Trump's and Biden's attitude to stick with American National Interest in the domain of foreign policy.

According to the Realist thinker Mearsheimer in his paper "Can China Rise Peacefully", the Chinese Rise will not happen differently than the American one, given the fact that both of them followed the same rising model. In fact, the theory presented by the author postulates that, in order to reach hegemonic power, emerging powers have first to become regional hegemons, and secondly, but not less importantly, they should prevent other states from becoming regional hegemons in other areas. In this framework, North Korea has a great importance for Chinese security and strategy in the region, as Professor Zhang Baohui stated in an interview for the article "Does China Want the Koreas to Reconcile?" by China File the "Korean Peninsula has been at the frontline of China's geopolitics for many centuries. China has intervened repeatedly on the Korean Peninsula, waging war to prevent other great powers from establishing themselves there", showing the reality of Chinese interest for the Peninsula. Evidently, "China's grand strategy toward the Korean Peninsula is shaped by geography and politics", given the fact that "No great power wants to see other great powers establishing a presence nearby", interpreted as an impediment for their regional hegemonic strategy. In this sense, North Korea represents a precious buffer zone for China, which permits the country to safely stay away from American presence in Asia. While Cold War is finished, "Cold War logic is still operating around the 38th parallel", according to Coduti, who makes reference to the still enduring proxy hybrid conflict between the two Koreas. As a matter of fact, the Korean Reunification would potentially put this Chinese buffer zone in jeopardy. However, truth be said, China is not against the idea of reunification per se, but indeed the country is likely to oppose a South Korean-led unification, given the fact that this would harm its security and strategic assets, and

would instead increase American influence in a region in which China wants to be and somehow already is hegemonic. Therefore, it is possible to argue that Beijing would prefer the status quo of a divided Peninsula rather than sharing the border with a united, democratic, western valued, militarily strong Korean neighbours, supported by the United States.

On the other side, it is important to understand the already mentioned American point of view on the situation. In fact, a South Korean-driven unification process will consequently profit American Interest in the region, given the great concern that the state has with respect to containing China. In this sense, a united Korean Peninsula would be a further strong western-aligned power to cooperate with the already existing QUAD group, also known as the “Quadrilateral Security Dialogue”. As stated by Rajesh Basrur, in his article “The Quad: What It Is – And What It Is Not” this group of countries is usually seen as an “alliance in the making, perhaps an Asian NATO. It is not. Rather, the Quad is designed as a loose-knit network of like-minded partners aiming at a broader purpose”. Perhaps this group of four western-aligned states, whose main objective is “to have established the basis for regular defence cooperation through naval exercises, and the sharing of intelligence and military logistics” can be somehow threatening for Chinese interests. In fact, member states see as one of the duties of the QUAD the one to “drive forward coordinated responses to the most pressing challenges in the region”, to quote the “Reciprocal Access Agreement” of 2022 between Australia and Japan, defined by Lukin and Korotich in the abstract of “The Asia-Pacific Alliances of the United States” as the “the American allies most engaged in anti-China balancing”. In this sense, American interest in the peninsula in the period after reunification would not just be the creation of a peaceful and stable region based on Western values, but, more importantly, “[securing] that all North Korean nuclear weapons are removed”, both for national security but also to lower the tense future border relationship with China: “This will be a paramount priority”, according to Revere’s article “Korean Reunification and U.S. Interests” for Brookings.

On the other side of the sea, Japan has mixed feelings on the Korean Reunification issue. As highlighted by the data shown in the KIMU Survey of 2021, Japan is perceived as the second country to not want a Korean Reunification, and in September 2021, it was seen as the first one, even over China. The question now rises, on the reasons why Japan would not be willing to hope for a reunified Korea. Firstly, it is important to mention that Japan, just like the United States, is threatened by North Korean ballistic missiles experiments. Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that, despite their alliance, Japan is much more vulnerable than the U.S. to such phenomenon for a simple geographical

reason, since Pyeongyang's exercitations are usually carried out in the Sea of Japan. Hence, Japan would fully support South Korea and the USA, given the fact that North Korea represents a threat to Japanese security. On this issue, "Klingner" in "Allies Should Include Japan in Korean Unification Plans" declares that "As long as the Korean peninsula remains divided and the North Korean threat remains, Japan pays an enormous opportunity cost, in the form of military spending to guard against the nuclear threat from North Korea", and for these reasons, it is possible to state that Japan would receive security benefits from the Reunification. On the other side, a Unified Korea could, on the long run, as stated by the already mentioned Goldman Sachs report, "surpass Japan" in the economic field. It is important to underline the double-face of the Korean Issue in Japan: on the one hand, the country supports the reunification for mere security reasons following realist logics. Yet, on the other side, Japanese economic and financial elites are more partial to a status-quo scenario, given the fact that Japanese economy must be protected and prioritised; however, this view represents a minor one.

Finally, Russian contribution on the issue is interesting. In 2018, Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs Lavrov, during a meeting with North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho stated that "We are ready to do everything in our power to promote reunification of the Korean Peninsula to create [common] economic and transport infrastructure". Thus, Russia seems to be in favour of a Korean Reunification. Yet, exactly like China, the state agrees that the process of reunification should not be led by South Korea. As a matter of fact, as Seulkee Jang has stated on the article "North Korean lecture for workers in Russia mentions Ukraine crisis" for Daily NK, "North Korea continues to show public support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine" given also the North Korean vote against "UN General Assembly Resolution ES-11/1" on the condemnation of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and demanding the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from the country. These facts show that North Korean authorities completely support Russian initiatives. In this sense, it is possible to state that Russian authorities, just like Chinese ones, do not oppose a Reunification. indeed, Moscow is positive about it, yet the main focus should be on avoiding a South Korean-led reunification.

To sum up, Realist theories are focused on single state's interests; being the Korean Reunification an issue covering and involving more than a few states, it results difficult to have a univocal answer to the problem. That is why the solution to the hypothesis proposed at the beginning of the sub-chapter results quite complex: the USA, and more in general the Western world, seem to agree on the reunification, siding with a South Korean-led initiative. Oppositely, Russia wants the inverse, hoping for a North-led reunification process. Yet, China somehow agrees with Russia but does not exclude the

option of the status-quo, to some extent like Japan, which mixes its security and economy interests on the issue. As it has been already stated, the subject, according to the realist theory, does not concern the possibility or not of creating the reunification, but rather the practical difficulty to make other major powers' interests align due to the already stated principle that a "Cold War logic is still operating around the 38th parallel".

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Does it still make sense to talk about Korean Reunification today?**

This thesis has deeply examined the Korean Reunification issue, from different units of analysis, in order to answer the final question “Is it already too late to hope for a Unified Korea, and consequently, does it still make sense to talk about Korean Reunification today?” The careful and scrupulous study of the different aspects of this current phenomenon has led to some interesting conclusions. As first, the Chapter “Mapping the Division” has been used as a starting point to describe North and South Korean situations, taking into consideration their shared history, their different economic, legal, political, and social situations, creating the basis for a better understanding of the real living conditions and regimes differences between the two countries. Second, the focus switched to “Imagining the Reunification”, a Chapter dedicated to the investigation of the possible gains that a process of reunification in the Peninsula could bring, focusing mainly on the recent history of inter-Korean dialogues, on the different alternatives of possible reunification, mentioning the economic and demographic success of it. Finally, the heart of the thesis was represented by a more International Relation theories-based chapter, “Considering the Obstacles”, focusing on the main difficulties in relation to the issue, offering a more theoretical point of view. Resulting assumptions have shown that IR theories are not particularly favourable for a reunification: Constructivist theory failed in foreseeing a willingness of identity change, from a Wendt’s Lockean anarchy to a Kantian one, in the relation between the two states. Then, the analysis did not comply with the Liberal peace theories, presenting practical examples of how these are not able to work on the Korean issue. Thirdly, the Marxist view has presented the economic side of the reunification, showing that big financial adjustments and economic inequality may be acknowledged as impeding obstacles of the reunification. Finally, Realism showed the current perpetration of a Cold War logic in the Korean Peninsula and the clear difficulty to combine North and South Korean national interests, principally security, with those of other influencing major powers.

As a matter of fact, the answer to the first question “Is it already too late to hope for a Unified Korea?” appears to be a pessimist one, at least in the short-run, given the prevalence of negative theoretical assumptions and practical obstacles over the positive aspects. Contrarily, the answer to the second and most important question of the thesis being “Does it still make sense to talk about Korean Reunification today?” still remains positive. The reason for this assumption resides in the fact that social awareness



represents the most important tool for Korean Reunification. At a first glance, talking about Korean reunification can appear pointless and somehow utopian, given our first conclusion. Yet, on the contrary, it would be completely destructive and damaging for the two Koreas not to remember their shared past. As a matter of fact, as shown by the great initial popularity of Korean Republican presidents, reunification plans and rhetoric usually has a positive tendency to exert enthusiasm and optimism in the population, being reunification something that an important amount of people still desires. The moments in which this positiveness on the matter diminish are instead characterised by political incomprehension or perceived incompatibility of single policies, as we saw that support for reunification is highly influenced by the short run policies of the single states, as happened in 2010 with the sinking of the Cheonan. Therefore, it is crucial to spread awareness nationally and internationally on the matter, in a variety of ways, profiting from the current South Korean phenomenon of “Korean Wave”, and not to leave space for fake news or stereotyped idea. Given the fact that the current South Korean younger generation results so disinterested on the matter, it would be important, if not crucial, to try to annul, or at least minimize, said tendency according to which the more time passes, the less people would be interested in the matter. In order to archive this goal, a specific focus on the matter should firstly concern education, as, according to KIMU Survey 2021, “Contrary to general perception, most South Koreans do not pay much attention to inter-Korean relations or North Korean issues”. Social awareness and sensibility on the matter should be improved as well by increasing the number of shared activities and elements of cultural diplomacy between the two states, given the fact that increased meetings within the two Korean people will raise the curiosity for each other. This strategy could increase the interest towards Korean neighbours, foster political and diplomatic discourse and eventually provoke a change in the Korean shared identity, from rival countries to peaceful entities. With time, the theoretical absence of security threat, provided by these approaches would create a situation of increased constructive dialogue, which would finally let the reunification happened.

In conclusion, does it still make sense to talk about Korean Reunification today? The answer is definitely positive: yes. Furthermore, it is indeed necessary to talk about Korean Reunification now more than ever before.

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(Panmunjom Armistice)

## ***SYNTHESIS IN ITALIAN***

La questione della riunificazione coreana rappresenta una tematica rilevante nell'ambito delle Relazioni Internazionali odierne, e merita particolare attenzione. Il motivo del grande interesse verso questo argomento risiede nella sua unicità e importanza storica: le due Coree, infatti, si dividono ufficialmente nel 1953, al termine della Guerra di Corea, dopo la condivisione di una storia millenaria. La peculiarità di questa situazione sta difatti nella assoluta omogeneità culturale del popolo coreano, e nel paradosso che, nonostante questa uguaglianza, oggi i due stati risultino ancora politicamente separati. Con il passare del tempo, il graduale processo di socializzazione dei cittadini Nord e Sud Coreani ha permesso un progressivo allontanamento dei due popoli, arrivando persino a sviluppare una sorta di straniamento collettivo. Lo scopo della tesi è dunque rispondere a due quesiti fondamentali: il primo verte sulla reale possibilità di vedere riunite le due Coree nel breve termine, ed il secondo si interroga sull'effettiva utilità di perseguire il dialogo politico e diplomatico tra le due Coree, nel lungo termine.

Per raggiungere questo scopo, la tesi si articola in tre capitoli. Nel primo, "Mapping the Division", l'attenzione dell'elaborato verte inizialmente sull'analisi storica, economica, politica e sociale delle singole Coree, in modo tale da poter meglio inquadrare il singolare caso studio preso in riferimento, e al fine di poter richiamare alla memoria nozioni rilevanti che saranno poi utili nel corso della tesi per strutturare le basi delle conclusioni. Risulta dunque importante ricordare la vera natura del conflitto coreano e della successiva separazione dei due paesi, ovvero la cosiddetta "Proxy War". Questo concetto descrive un conflitto, spesso armato, tra due o più stati, che trae però le sue origini dalle volontà o dagli interessi di stati terzi. Nel caso della Guerra di Corea (1950-1953) infatti, al termine dei cinque anni del sistema di amministrazione fiduciaria, stati influenti si schierarono dall'una o dall'altra parte per supportare i propri interessi nella regione, motivo per cui gli eserciti Nord e Sud Coreani ricevettero entrambi supporto militare da parte di stati terzi, rispettivamente la Nord Corea dall'URSS e dalla nuova Repubblica Popolare Cinese, e la Corea del Sud da Stati Uniti e, in una fase secondaria del conflitto armato, anche dall'ONU.

Con l'armistizio di Panmunjeom nel 1953, i combattimenti cessarono, e venne stabilito il confine geografico tra le due Coree, ma la guerra vera e propria non viene mai dichiarata conclusa: infatti, ancora oggi, i due stati risultano teoricamente in conflitto tra loro e si cerca di lavorare ad una vera e propria pace che possa legalmente terminare queste ostilità.

Dopo la guerra, i due stati iniziarono a svilupparsi economicamente e riorganizzarsi politicamente in due maniere totalmente differenti, seguendo ognuno il sistema proposto dai propri stati alleati. Nello specifico, la Corea del Nord organizzò il suo sistema politico seguendo lo stile adottato dall'URSS, e mettendo in atto manovre economiche finalizzate soprattutto allo sviluppo dell'industria, dell'agricoltura e dell'esercito. Inoltre, Pyeongyang rafforzò ulteriormente i propri legami economici con gli alleati sovietici, grazie al commercio di carbone. Lo stato restò dunque estremamente dipendente dall'URSS, sia per ragioni economiche che politiche, e questa stessa dipendenza, inizialmente favorevole per lo sviluppo dello stato Nordcoreano, diventò un elemento svantaggioso con la crisi e il successivo crollo dell'Unione Sovietica. Perdendo infatti il supporto politico ed economico del suo più importante alleato, la Corea del Nord iniziò a sperimentare una serie di fallimenti finanziari che, insieme ad eventi climatici avversi, porteranno lo stato ad affrontare un lungo periodo di crisi e carestia. Con l'arrivo del nuovo millennio, la Corea del Nord, anche grazie ad aiuti umanitari provenienti dall'ONU, riuscì a venir fuori dal periodo di carestia, e cominciò ad investire parte ingente del suo PIL per intraprendere il programma di ricerca nucleare. Questo obiettivo venne e viene tutt'ora combattuto dal Consiglio di Sicurezza dell'ONU tramite pesanti sanzioni, e contribuisce a ridurre il paese in una condizione di assoluto isolamento economico e politico, che ancora oggi persiste.

Dall'altra parte della Penisola invece, la Corea del Sud ha seguito la scia dei suoi alleati occidentali, principalmente gli Stati Uniti, votando democraticamente il proprio governo ed istituendo una Repubblica Presidenziale. Fino agli anni Sessanta però, lo stato non raggiunse solidità né dal punto di vista politico, vista la alta presenza di corruzione, né dal punto di vista economico, considerando che il sud della Penisola Coreana, risultava essere privo di risorse naturali e di infrastrutture industriali. La situazione cambiò, e la Corea del Sud entrò nel periodo del cosiddetto "Korean Miracle" quando il Generale Pak Chong-Hui salì al governo. Durante questo periodo, infatti, la Corea del Sud, usufruendo di misure politiche protezionistiche, riuscì a rafforzare la propria economia interna, ed a consolidare le nuove industrie Sudcoreane, che iniziarono a specializzarsi soprattutto nel settore dell'high-tech. Una volta raggiunta questa stabilità a livello nazionale, la Corea del Sud si inserisce nel mercato globale, riuscendo nel giro di quarant'anni a diventare la quarta potenza economica d'Asia.

Nel secondo capitolo della tesi intitolato "Imagining the Reunification", vengono analizzati i principali accordi e proposte riguardanti le soluzioni per una possibile riunificazione della Penisola Coreana, ripercorrendo i passaggi principali all'interno

della storia delle Relazioni Diplomatiche Nord e Sud Coreane. Nello specifico, l'elaborato evoca più volte la complessità del tema preso in considerazione, dato che un'eventuale riunificazione della Penisola Coreana non prevederebbe soltanto un trattato di pace tra i due stati, comunque fondamentale dato che i due stati si trovano ancora tecnicamente in guerra, ma anche e soprattutto una volontà di integrazione dei diversi modelli politici, economici, e sociali dei due paesi.

Il tema della riunificazione, pertanto, come spiegato da Chung Min Lee, nel suo "A Peninsula of Paradoxes", proprio per la sua intrinseca complessità, viene affrontato dai Sud Coreani in due modalità diverse. Secondo l'autore, infatti, la riunificazione è emotivamente e psicologicamente vista come necessaria, e per supportare questa teoria ci si appella ai concetti di "shared history", "shared traditions" tra i due popoli. Allo stesso tempo però, lo stesso tema, analizzato logicamente e con una certa lontananza emotiva, viene considerato come complesso e non così essenziale, date le ormai grandi differenze dal punto di vista di organizzazione politica, alleanze strategiche, economia ed ideologia.

Nella tesi vengono inoltre proposti i punti di vista generali dei due paesi riguardo le modalità dell'unificazione, che risultano essere estremamente diverse, se non diametralmente opposte, le une dalle altre. Per essere più precisi, nel 1980, il Leader Supremo Nordcoreano, Kim Il-Sung, propose il suo piano di riunificazione nazionale, sotto il nome di "Repubblica di Koryo". Questo piano prevedeva una riunificazione della Corea sotto una matrice federale, ove le due regioni (Nord e Sud) avrebbero potuto mantenere la propria organizzazione politica, istituendo però un governo ed un corrispettivo parlamento a livello nazionale. Tutto questo poteva accadere solo se la Corea del Sud avesse accettato alcuni termini, come ad esempio la rinuncia al contingente americano al confine tra le due regioni, la firma di un patto di non aggressione con il Nord, e la stipula di una pace tra Nord Corea e Stati Uniti. Tutte queste condizioni, specialmente la rinuncia al supporto militare americano, ma anche più in generale il disegno federale del modello di unificazione coreano proposto dalla Corea del Nord, non risultano coerenti con gli interessi nazionali di Seoul. A sua volta, il Sud preferisce spingere per un piano di unificazione nazionale basato sulla completa unione dei due stati, abolendo totalmente il sistema federale proposto da Pyongyang.

All'interno della tesi, vengono inoltre proposte e discusse altre teorie di diversa natura, come quella del Professor Takesada, nel suo "The Birth of a Unified Korea", dove è illustrata la tesi economica del cosiddetto "German Process", secondo la quale il paese con l'economia più potente finirà per inglobare il paese meno virtuoso. Sempre nello stesso articolo si menziona inoltre una possibile rivolta popolare nel Nord, anche

basandosi sulla recente presunta insoddisfazione del popolo Nordcoreano nei confronti del governo di Pyeongyang, con il possibile sostegno di Seoul.

In seguito, nello stesso capitolo, vengono presentati e discussi gli aspetti positivi dell'eventuale riunificazione tra Nord e Sud Corea, evidenziando i benefici di una tale situazione dal punto di vista demografico, militare, e soprattutto economico. In particolare, risulta importante menzionare il "Global Economics Paper No: 188", pubblicato da "Goldman Sachs Global Economics Commodities and Strategy Research" nel 2009, secondo il quale, la Penisola Coreana unita riuscirebbe nel giro di quarant'anni a raggiungere il PIL di Francia e Germania, ed a rappresentare un importante avversario anche per l'economia giapponese, attualmente seconda economia in Asia e terza al mondo. Questo nuovo "Korean Miracle", potrebbe difatti originarsi dall'unione dei due paesi Coreani con competenze e risorse complementari, riuscendo a favorire un'indipendenza economica nazionale data dalla presenza di risorse naturali, manovalanza specializzata, alta tecnologia e una rivalutazione monetaria macroeconomica tipica delle "transition economies".

È importante sottolineare che la riunificazione coreana rappresenta di fatto non solo una tematica importante per l'intera Penisola Coreana, ma anche una problematica internazionale, soprattutto da quando nel 2018, durante i giochi Olimpici Invernali di Pyeongchang, in Corea del Sud, i due stati Coreani hanno deciso di sfilare nel corso della cerimonia inaugurale dei giochi sotto la bandiera della Corea Unita. Questo evento ha mostrato l'importanza della cosiddetta "Public Diplomacy", nelle relazioni Inter-Coreane, ed ha dato l'avvio ad una cooperazione non politica tra i due paesi, finalizzata allo scambio culturale reciproco, concretizzatosi ad esempio nel concerto tenutosi nel 2018 a Pyeongyang, a cui hanno preso parte artisti Nord e Sudcoreani e l'annuale conferenza del "Pyeongchang Global Peace Forum".

Infine, la tesi trova il suo punto focale nel terzo capitolo, dedicato all'applicazione delle teorie delle Relazioni Internazionali sul tema della riunificazione coreana. Questa sezione risulta essere estremamente rilevante, dato che le conclusioni finali dell'elaborato provengono in gran parte dalla discussione effettuata in questo capitolo. Quest'ultimo risulta diviso in quattro sotto-capitoli, ciascuno di essi focalizzato su una diversa teoria delle RI, organizzati in maniera tale da offrire all'inizio di ogni sotto-capitolo una base teorica, menzionando i punti fondamentali delle varie teorie. Da questa, si deduce poi una "assumption", ovvero un'affermazione inerente al caso studio coreano, che sarà poi verificata o smentita successivamente tramite una trattazione basata su fatti empirici, dati statistici ed articoli accademici di rilievo.

Iniziando dalla teoria Costruttivista, nella tesi si differenzia il classico approccio di Alexander Wendt, secondo il quale la costruzione del concetto di “state identity” è fortemente influenzato dal sistema internazionale e dalle relazioni tra i vari stati, e quello di Bozdaglioglou, che invece evidenzia l’importanza dell’ambiente strettamente nazionale e locale di uno stato nel processo di formazione della suddetta “state identity”. Nel primo caso, infatti, l’analisi verte sulle tre diverse concezioni di anarchia secondo Wendt, e di come queste situazioni possano essere adattate nell’ambito della riunificazione coreana. Si riconosce infatti che, da un lato, la riunificazione tra le due Coree possa compiersi soltanto in uno scenario di “Anarchia Kantiana”, nella quale gli stati in analisi si considerano “amici”, l’uso della violenza non è minimamente preso in considerazione in quanto la diplomazia assume un ruolo assoluto nelle relazioni internazionali, ma soprattutto, la presenza di una sorta di altruismo sociale fa in modo che gli stati non si combattano tra di loro, ma si aiutino vicendevolmente. D’altra parte, la discussione e l’attuale analisi empirica suggeriscono tutt’altro che uno status d’amicizia tra le due Coree, affermando che, stando alla teoria costruttivista di Wendt, la riunificazione tra le due Coree risulta impossibile, almeno nel breve termine.

Nel secondo caso invece, citando la teoria di Bozdaglioglou, si fa leva sulla volontà popolare di creare un cambiamento della politica interna, trasformando la eventuale volontà popolare della riunificazione in una nuova ambizione politica nazionale. Per questo motivo risulta importante interrogarsi sulla reale ed effettiva volontà dei cittadini Coreani (sia Nord che Sud) riguardo la riunificazione, arrivando a sostenere che un’effettiva riunificazione non sarebbe possibile, qualora i cittadini dei rispettivi stati non la desiderassero. A tal fine, nella discussione sono stati analizzati e discussi i dati statistici raccolti principalmente nel “2021 KINU Unification Studies Survey”, che mostrano come effettivamente, soprattutto i Sudcoreani tendano di anno in anno ad aumentare il proprio disinteresse riguardo l’unificazione. Entrambe le linee Costruttiviste analizzate nell’elaborato, dunque, forniscono una risposta negativa alla possibilità della riunificazione della Penisola Coreana nel breve termine.

In seguito, l’attenzione viene posta sulle teorie Liberali ed in particolare sull’analisi delle tre “Peace Theories” proprie del liberalismo. In questo caso, si presuppone che, qualora le due Coree fossero in grado di seguire una delle tre “Peace Theories”, l’unificazione diventerebbe possibile.

Durante la trattazione, però, risulta che il caso studio della riunificazione coreana non sia in linea con nessuna delle teorie precedentemente citate.

La dottrina dell’“Istituzionalismo Liberale” afferma che l’appartenenza degli stati ad Organizzazioni Internazionali dovrebbe guidare gli stati membri a collaborare per



obiettivi comuni e ad evitare eccessive tensioni. Tale teoria risulta confutata da un'attenta analisi empirica dell'operato delle suddette Organizzazioni, nel merito della situazione coreana, specialmente da parte delle Nazioni Unite e del Consiglio di Sicurezza dell'ONU, e dal loro fallimento nell'intento di portare pace e fiducia tra le due Coree.

Per quanto riguarda invece la teoria dell'"Interdipendenza Economica", due stati che commerciano tra di loro non hanno interesse ad entrare in conflitto. Questa teoria è contraddetta dalla dichiarazione di fallimento nel 2010 della "Sunshine Policy. Tale politica, infatti, prevedeva una serie di investimenti economici da parte di Seoul in Nord Corea, in maniera tale da stabilire una collaborazione economica tra i due paesi, con la speranza di migliorare non solo i rapporti economici ma anche politici. Nel caso delle due Coree, pertanto, la "Interdipendenza Economica" non trova terreno fertile.

Per ultima, la teoria della "Pace Democratica" sostiene che gli stati democratici non possano entrare in guerra con altre democrazie, dato che il popolo ha la possibilità di influenzare le azioni dello stato tramite il voto, e si presuppone che il popolo ripudi la guerra. In questo caso, durante le recenti elezioni, il popolo coreano ha deciso di supportare il candidato conservatore Yoon Seok-Yeo, membro dell'opposizione durante il governo del Presidente Moon. Questo dato è importante perché sottolinea la volontà del popolo coreano di mettere fine alle politiche di apertura con Pyongyang, decretando probabilmente anche il fallimento della "Moonshine Policy".

Da questa analisi emerge perciò la grande difficoltà nell'applicare positivamente le teorie liberali al caso studio dell'unificazione coreana, suggerendo dunque, anche dal punto di vista liberale, una risposta negativa al quesito della riunificazione.

Successivamente, la tesi si sofferma sulla teoria Neo-Marxista, e sulla convinzione che la riunificazione possa avvenire solo nel momento in cui i due stati saranno capaci di trovare una soluzione congiunta e vantaggiosa per unire i due diversi sistemi economici nazionali, tenendo in considerazione le due opposte concezioni e grandezze, proprie delle due economie. La difficoltà risiede nel fatto che la Corea del Sud rappresenta una delle più fiorenti economie di mercato degli ultimi quarant'anni, mentre la Corea del Nord rimane uno degli ultimi vividi esempi al mondo di economia pianificata: per tale motivo, l'unificazione di questi due sistemi economici risulta ancora più complessa. Diversi studi, tra i quali "Korean Reunification: Economic Adjustments under German Assumptions", di Lee e McKibbin, mettendo a paragone la situazione coreana con la riunificazione tedesca, evidenziano come la prima sia molto più complessa e rischiosa della seconda, principalmente per le notevoli differenze economiche tra i due stati in questione, prevedendo addirittura delle conseguenze negative per l'economia coreana,

qualora il paese dovesse unificarsi. Inoltre, l'articolo di Park e Ruiz Estrada "Korean Reunification: How painful and how costly", utilizzando il modello economico dell'integrazione regionale GDRI, sostiene l'impossibilità di trarre beneficio dall'unione di Nord e Sud Corea, in considerazione proprio dalla loro iniziale divergenza politica, economica, sociale e tecnologica. In alternativa, Koh nel suo articolo "The impact of Chinese Model on North Korea", tratta della possibilità, in seguito fallita, di vedere in Nord Corea una possibile apertura nei confronti di un sistema economico ibrido, in linea con quello adottato in Cina a partire dal 1962 da Deng Xiaoping, conosciuto come "Socialismo con caratteristiche Cinesi". Questa possibilità avrebbe rappresentato un'importante variazione del sistema economico Nordcoreano, che avrebbe potuto significare anche una maggiore apertura economica verso il Sud.

Per questi motivi, dunque, anche la scuola Neo-Marxista allontana l'ipotesi di una possibile prossima riunificazione della Penisola Coreana.

A conclusione del capitolo, l'analisi viene focalizzata sulle teorie del Realismo, che analizzano gli interessi strategici di più paesi coinvolti nel conflitto, non solo dunque la Corea del Nord e la Corea del Sud, ma anche Stati Uniti, Cina, Russia e Giappone.

Dopo un'attenta analisi della teoria realista, si conclude che la riunificazione coreana possa avvenire solo qualora gli interessi delle grandi potenze non vengano danneggiati da tale atto. Risulta dunque fondamentale riconoscere il fatto che la questione coreana racchiuda in realtà una moltitudine di interessi e volontà di stati diversi.

Partendo proprio dall'analisi della posizione Nordcoreana, si evince che Pyeongyang applichi proprio la teoria del realismo difensivo, ideata da Kenneth Waltz. Il paese, infatti, preferisce massimizzare le sue difese e la sua sicurezza nazionale, investendo nello sviluppo della bomba atomica come arma di prevenzione, piuttosto che evitare le pesanti sanzioni economiche del Consiglio di Sicurezza dell'ONU. Sembra dunque che lo stato Nordcoreano non abbia particolari ambizioni espansionistiche nella regione, ma necessiti piuttosto di incrementare esponenzialmente la sua sicurezza. Questa situazione causa però degli effetti indesiderati come lo sviluppo del "security dilemma", portando automaticamente gli altri stati a reagire al programma nucleare coreano con le già menzionate sanzioni e lasciando lo stato in una situazione di isolamento economico, politico e diplomatico. Risulta assai difficile pensare che la Corea del Nord possa rinunciare al suo programma nucleare e, considerato che la denuclearizzazione viene reputata aspetto necessario per la riunificazione, la possibilità che i due stati si riuniscano risulta quindi essere ancora più bassa. D'altra parte, in Corea del Sud, la riunificazione ha ormai assunto una pericolosa natura politica, considerando il fatto che solo alcuni partiti sono effettivamente propensi a collaborare con il Nord per tale scopo.

Inoltre, come per il Nord il nucleare rappresenta un motivo di sicurezza, altrettanto si può dire per il sud, riguardo la presenza del contingente americano al confine: nessuna delle parti sembra intenzionata ad abbandonare le proprie difese: la presenza armata nella DMZ risulta addirittura essere aumentata dal 2010 al 2019, secondo “CIA The world’s Factbook”, simbolo della reale mancanza di progresso in tal senso.

Inoltre, come già espresso in precedenza, diventa importante anche prendere in considerazione il punto di vista di altri paesi influenti nell’area: in effetti, le principali potenze odierne, paesi come la Cina e gli Stati Uniti, hanno volontà opposte riguardo l’unificazione, e pertanto, la ricerca di una soluzione risulta piuttosto complessa. Se da un lato, infatti, gli Stati Uniti spingono per un’unificazione totale della Penisola, con la condizione che tale atto avvenga sotto la leadership della Corea del Sud, la Cina risulta meno interessata ad un cambio radicale di scacchiere, e comunque, in caso di riunificazione, spingerebbe per una leadership Nordcoreana. Tutto questo perché la Corea del Nord rappresenta in realtà uno stato-cuscinetto della Cina, dato che lo stato separa il territorio cinese da un paese alleato degli Stati Uniti. D’altra parte, una Corea riunificata sotto la leadership Sudcoreana rappresenterebbe un nuovo forte alleato dell’occidente, confinante con la Cina ed un’importantissima risorsa per la “containment policy” Americana. Queste dinamiche confermano la teoria di Coduti, nell’articolo “Does China want the Koreas to Reconcile”, secondo la quale le logiche e le dinamiche della Guerra Fredda sono ben presenti ancora oggi attorno al trentottesimo parallelo. Inoltre, altri stati come la Russia hanno manifestato interesse nell’aiutare la Corea nel processo di riunificazione, supportando Pyeongyang come principale attore. Infine, una situazione particolarmente complicata è rappresentata dal Giappone, che rappresenta uno dei principali stati interessati nella riunificazione: il paese del Sol Levante infatti percepisce i continui test nucleari da parte della Corea del Nord come un pericolo per la propria sicurezza nazionale, problema inesistente qualora le due Coree si unificassero, portando grandi benefici per la sicurezza del paese. D’altra parte, l’unificazione coreana potrebbe però creare un importante competitore economico per l’economia dell’arcipelago nipponico, e dunque le élites economiche del paese spingono per evitare che ciò accada.

Pertanto, come le altre teorie già analizzate, anche quella realista non sembra supportare la possibilità di una Penisola Coreana unita, data la notevole presenza di interessi contrastanti nella regione per diversi paesi influenti.

In conclusione, ritornando ai due quesiti fondamentali dell’elaborato, è possibile affermare che l’effettiva possibilità di una riunificazione coreana nel breve termine

appare teoricamente alquanto improbabile. Risulta però ancora opportuno discutere della riunificazione coreana nel lungo termine, continuando a supportare ed incrementare lo sforzo per un dialogo diplomatico e culturale, al fine di neutralizzare il crescente disinteresse registrato negli ultimi anni nella giovane popolazione coreana sul tema. Saranno dunque non solo lo sforzo diplomatico nazionale ed internazionale, ma anche il sapiente utilizzo della “Public Diplomacy”, a decidere le sorti della Penisola Coreana nel lungo termine.