



**COMILLAS**

UNIVERSIDAD PONTIFICIA

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Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Degree in International Relations

Final Degree Project

**Moon Jae-in's New  
Paradigm of Korean Politics**

Towards Reunification or Perpetual  
Peace in the Korean Peninsula

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Madrid, April 2020

*I thank God for all the gifts He has given me. Thanks to my parents for sowing in me the love for Korea and my fondness to be interested about what is different, thanks for the opportunity to live and study in Korea, for teaching me to always want to learn more and for reminding me every day that to whom much was given much will be required.*

*Doy gracias a Dios por todos los dones que me ha dado. Gracias a mis padres por sembrar en mí el amor por Corea y mi interés por lo que es diferente, gracias por la oportunidad de vivir y estudiar en Corea, por enseñarme a querer siempre aprender más y por recordarme cada día que a quien mucho se le dio mucho se le pedirá.*

## **Abstract**

When World War II came into an end, the 38th parallel divided the Korean Peninsula. Since then, hostility has invaded the North and South relations. This research paper tries to prove that not everything is as dark as it seems, by analyzing the beginning of the new millennium and how the Korean Peninsula hosted the first summit since they divided. In the project it will be shown how this is the end of a confrontational approach of policy making and the how the most relevant actors of the international community helped to shape this fresh commencement of relations in the Korean Peninsula. As time passed, there have been vicissitudes in the establishment of a common future that foresees Korea as one country, but when President Moon Jae-in came into the presidency in 2017 dialogue and reconciliation were anchored. *This research shows the connection between the new President, Moon Jae-in and a more prosperous future for the inter-Korean relations.* By providing an extensive review of both Korea's relations from a Southern perspective, this project will analyze President Moon's role in the future of the Korean Peninsula, and how with other countries' support, he might be able to build the bridge towards reunification or perpetual peace in the Korean Peninsula.

Key words: North Korea, South Korea, Korean Peninsula, Reunification, Perpetual Peace, Moon Jae-Inn, Park Geun-hye.

## **Resumen**

Cuando terminó la Segunda Guerra Mundial, el paralelo 38 dividió la península de Corea. Desde entonces, la hostilidad ha invadido las relaciones entre el Norte y el Sur. Este proyecto de investigación trata de demostrar que no todo es tan oscuro como parece, analizando el comienzo del nuevo milenio y cómo la Península Coreana acogió la primera cumbre desde que se dividieron. A lo largo de la investigación se mostrará cómo el enfoque político que divide a las dos Coreas ha llegado a su fin; así mismo, se analizará cómo actores más relevantes de la comunidad internacional ayudaron a dar forma a este nuevo comienzo de las relaciones en la Península Coreana. Con el paso del tiempo, ha habido altibajos en el establecimiento de un futuro común con la vista puesta en Corea como un solo país, pero cuando el Presidente Moon Chae-in asumió la presidencia en 2017 se iniciaron el diálogo y la reconciliación. Esta investigación muestra la conexión entre el nuevo Presidente, Moon Chae-in con un futuro más próspero para las relaciones intercoreanas. A través de una extensa presentación de las relaciones coreanas desde la perspectiva de Corea del Sur, este proyecto analizará el papel del Presidente Moon en el futuro de la Península Coreana, y cómo con el apoyo de otros países podría construir el puente hacia la reunificación o la paz perpetua en la Península coreana.

Palabras clave: Corea del Norte, Corea del Sur, Península coreana, Reunificación, Paz Perpetua, Moon Chae-in, Park Geun-hye

## Table of contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Motivation .....	2
1.2. Objectives .....	3
1.3 Methodology.....	4
2. STATE OF AFFAIRS.....	5
2.3. Inter-Korean Relations.....	5
2.3.1. From 1948 to 1953: Containment stage in an open conflict .....	5
2.3.2. From 1953 to 1994: Opening stage .....	8
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	16
3.1. Defining the concept of Statehood: Korea’s Territorial Status under International Law.....	16
3.2. The concept of Reunification .....	18
3.3. Impeachment: definition and procedures.....	19
4. ANALYSIS .....	20
4.1. 1998-2008 Establishment of the Sunshine Policy.....	20
4.2. 2008-2017 Evolution of the Korean Relations .....	22
4.3. Park Gyeun-hye’s fall.....	27
4.3.1. The Sewol Ferry Disaster.....	30
4.3.2. The Candlelight Movement.....	33
4.4 Moon Jae-in’s arrival: Second Sunshine Policy.....	35
4.4.1. Moon Jae-in and his approach towards North Korea.....	36
4.4.2. Possibilities of reunification or perpetual peace in the Korean Peninsula .....	37
5. CONCLUSIONS.....	40
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	42
7. ANNEXES.....	0
Annex 1: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korea President Moon Jae-in during the Inter-Korean Summit in May 2018.....	0
Annex 2: Korean families separated by war reunited after 65 years.....	0
Annex 3: North Korean Missile operations between 1993 and 2017.....	0
Annex 4: March 9-10 Impeachment of Park Geun-hye in Seoul .....	0
Annex 5: Sewol Ferry Disaster affected families and protesters in Seoul.....	0
Annex 6: Sewol Ferry the disaster itself .....	0
Annex 7: The Candlelight Movement.....	0

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*“At the end of hardship comes happiness”, Korean Proverb*

The division of a country creates a very complicated reality. One nation that became two different countries, families that were separated, an array of political, military, economic and diplomatic tensions, etc. this is just part of the aftermath of the Korean Peninsula division. Since the beginning of the 90's, there have been more than a million of cross-border travelers, nearly two million vehicles crossed the inter-Korean border and almost one thousand vessels and planes did the same in a one-way trip, even five hundred trains passed from one Korea to the other (Ministry of Unification, 2013). This is a proof that inter-Korean traffic is not very high, but it remains a reality of the Korean relations. North and South Korea are two different countries that were once the same political reality and that remains a central factor in any analysis concerning security issues on the Peninsula. During a long time, the North and South Korean relations have been quite uncertain. Some periods were characterized by a stronger attempt to establish diplomatic and political ties, yet the Korean Peninsula has also experienced moments of darkness and isolation in which the connections between the two Koreas were almost inexistent.

The vast differences between the two Koreas are every day more and more palpable. The South is opening its market and developing fast, in a sort of continued extension of the so-called Han River Miracle, which is, the rapid economic growth, which happened in South Korea after 1953 when the Korean War ended. On the other hand, the North is internationally considered a nuclear threat and has been criticized for its human right's violations, economic isolation and working fields among others. People in the North risk their lives to escape not only to South Korea but also to Japan, China, Russia, United States, etc., where they do their best to have a better future. Up to now, there have been more than 33 000 North Korean defectors of which 72 % are women. North Koreans tend to be in their late 40s when they fly away. The age group with higher number of refugees is of those from 40 to 49 years old, being 5 757 people out of 32 711 defectors. However, escaping from North Korea has not liberated them from experiencing unwanted living conditions: most North Koreans face discrimination in the

South, as their accent betrays them. In China, they are many times sent back to North Korea where they face retaliation for their defection.

More than 240 kilometers of Demilitarized zone divides the Peninsula, from the estuary of the Han River on the West coast, to the North Korean town of Kaesong on the East coast (Britannica, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2017). The DMZ or Joint Security Area is one of the places with the highest density of wildlife in the world. Despite the presence of dangerous animals such as wild bears, Siberian tigers and leopards, North Koreans keep daring to endanger their lives and escape from the reality they live in their country. However, there are signs of changes and hope in the Korean Peninsula, signs that prove a wish to change and the willingness to establish communication and dialogue and perhaps start thinking about peaceful solutions with a view to reconciliation on the border of the two Koreas and the future ceasefire among them.

### 1.1. Motivation

Taejo of Goryeo was the founder of the Goryeo dynasty, which ruled Korea from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Taejo ruled from 918 to 943, achieving unification of the Later Three Kingdoms in 936 (Kim, 2003). Wang Kon Goryeo and his ancestors believed in the geomantic legend that “if they planted pine trees on Mount Songak, and made the mountain green, and they moved their house to a site near the southern slope, a hero who would unite Korea, would emerge from among their descendants” (Cumings, 2005).

Goryeo united Korea, but history evolves, and many times repeats itself. I believe that if conversation between the two Koreas continues as it has recently been under the Moon Jae-in’s administration, a new order of unification could be a not so distant reality. This prospect sounds more likely to me than predicting an upcoming Third World War with Korea as one of its principal focal areas. Korea has been in conflict for a long time, specifically for almost the last 70 years if we start counting from 1950. It is one of the longest conflicts in history and even if the number of casualties does not continue rising, it constitutes a very complicated area of the world.

There are many reasons that made me choose this research topic. First, the enormous importance of the Korean conflict for the whole world and not only for the Asia-Pacific region. The Korean War, the Kim dynasty in the North and all the changes the South has been through have been indeed object of study of different scholars in the field of International Relations, Political Science along with Law, Economics and History and

Geography. My strong interest in the Korean case, together with the different areas of study that the Korean War, and all the Korean Peninsula affairs cover reinforced my choice.

Second, my motivation is linked to a clear preference for the Asian Region, especially Korea, its people, its landscapes, its religion, its history but also its struggles: wars, conflicts, famines, disputes, etc. Korea has been the theater of operations of many ideological interests and geopolitical attention of the West and the East, the American and the Soviets, the Chinese, the Japanese, etc. It seems that the globe will be shaped by the different decisions and actions of the actors in this region of the world.

There is a third reason closely connected to the second one, since the very beginning of the bachelor's degree I have been very interested in the Korean Peninsula. Before university, I had the opportunity to get in touch with Korean culture very closely, I visited Korea more than four times then, and I had the experience of living with locals. Since 2013, I visit Korea every year. This enabled me to understand their history and their legacy to a good extent. I started having a very strong interest in this topic. I had the opportunity of studying abroad in Sogang University. This time partially overlapped with a period of two years that were of incredible relevance to South Korea and, therefore, to North Korea. Since November 2016, I had the experience to witness firsthand the whole Candlelight Movement that sought to wipe President Park Geun-hye out of the Blue House. This movement ended in March 2017 with her impeachment. The elections that gave the Presidency to the current President Moon Jae-in followed, an event I also had the chance to live. It was a key historical moment for South Korea. One of the most stimulating days for somebody, such as me, who plans to become a diplomat, is the one I visited the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and crossed to the North Korean part of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. I can still remember the sound of the North Korean Communist propaganda over the loudspeaker. These are strong personal motivations for me to research about this.

## 1.2. Objectives

The aim of this project is to analyze the Korean Peninsula from 2017 until today and study the possibilities of unification or perpetual peace in the region. Previous scholars have analyzed the Korean case and it has been of huge interest for the Political Scientist and Security Studies scholars, however, literature is more focused on the study of the

war and not so much on the future of the Korean Peninsula. Therefore, the goal of this research project is to understand the Inter-Korean relations from 2017 and all the approach that Moon Jae-in did until today and see what possibilities of harmony the Korean Peninsula will have. For that, first, it is very important to understand the current South Korean President's policy making in terms of relations with North Korea, study the possible picture of openness between the two Koreas. Second, the project will go through the main historical moments in the Korean relationships and will examine different cases that are of paramount importance for the Korean Peninsula. Third, we will take the leap onto the macro level to understand the geopolitical interest of Korea in the international panorama, to explain China's role in the Peninsula, Russia's performance in the Korean Peninsula or the United States' alliance with the South. Is Moon Jae-in the first Korean president that will enable a more open Korean Peninsula? Is there any possibility for unification in the current Inter-Korean and Korean-American relations? Will North and South Korea enjoy unification or at least perpetual peace? Although the future is uncertain, and the hint to answer these questions will still be a mystery, this analysis effort will try to bring something new that clarifies the literature that has been written about a conflict that is still ongoing and that makes it quite hard to clarify.

### 1.3 Methodology

To address the Korean Peninsula situation and the possibilities of unification I will focus my research on different papers from the Ministry of Unification and other white papers that contain an intensive examination of Moon Jae-in's Policy in the region. I will also pay especial attention to institutions such as the National Bureau of Asian Research, The Korean Ministry of Reunification, The United States Institute of Peace, The Council of Foreign Relations, The Korean Economic Institute of America, The TRT World Research Center, The Prospect Foundation, The RAND Corporation, The Korean Institute of Unification, a book by Bruce Cumings: Korea's Place in the Sun, and others. Readings, white papers and other scholars' analysis will enable me to examine in depth common and exemplary phenomena. In order to make the research more specific I will only focus on very specific timeframe mainly between 1948 and 2017 to analyze the changes in phases of the Korean case and the analysis of Moon Jae-in's policy from 2017 until today. Since the conflict is still ongoing, the outcome is difficult to predict, and things may change during my research. When considering the



reunification of the Korean Peninsula, this project will aim at analyzing peaceful unification notwithstanding the many other potential scenarios in which such unification might take place. This investigation presupposes that the unification will be conducted satisfactorily once it starts and disregards other possible evolutions of the situation, i.e. a DPRK-led unification.

## 2. STATE OF AFFAIRS

### 2.3. Inter-Korean Relations

#### 2.3.1. From 1948 to 1953: Containment stage in an open conflict

The period between 1948 and 1953 is known to be a period of containment in which despite the efforts carried out by the South, the North hostile approach in the inter-Korean relations led to a period characterized by hostilities and containment.

Organized guerilla warfare on the Korean mainland dates from November 1948, after more than a thousand Yosu rebels fled to the Chiri Mountains in South Cholla Province and joined up with guerrillas and bandits already in the hills. (Cumings, 2005). The Yosu-Sunchon Rebellion, a left-wing military and civilian protest against the nascent South Korean government in southern Korea during the post-World War II period, was the movement that began an armed conflict in the Peninsula. In mid-October 1948, when the Korean peninsula was still coping with its recent division into the two separate political entities of North Korea and South Korea, the violent protest broke out in Yosu —a port city of South Jeolla province on the southern coast of the Korean peninsula— against the government headed by the anticommunist president Syngman Rhee. (Murray, 2020). The previously mentioned movement carried the urban political turmoil and rural peasant protest of 1945-1947 to the level of unconventional warfare. Some guerrillas “were armed with rifles mostly Japanese and American, but many just carried clubs and bamboo spears. Food and other supplies came from foraging, contributions in villages or theft of rice stocks.” (Cumings, 2005)

The story of the formation of Republic of Korea's armed forces must properly start at the close of World War II when the nucleus for the future ROK Army came into being, and American military advisors first were assigned to the task of organizing and training security forces. Originally, the Department of the Army had intended to place Korean Military Advisory Group under Ambassador Muccio's administrative direction while permitting General MacArthur to exercise operational control. However, MacArthur's experience with the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group to the Republic of the Philippines (JUSMAGPHIL) made him reluctant to accept a similar arrangement for the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG). In the case of JUSMAGPHIL, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had laid out the group's missions and MacArthur's role had been limited to minor matters having little to do with the major task of advising the Philippine forces. Unless he was granted authority to assign the objectives for KMAG, MacArthur felt that the U.S. Ambassador should control the group. To safeguard military interests KMAG could be granted the right to communicate directly with the Joint Chiefs of Staffs (JCS) on military matters, MacArthur continued, and he recommended that KMAG forward all military messages and reports through the Far East Command. (Sawyer, 1988). KMAG advisers thought overall strategy was in North Korean hands, one team of 60 guerrillas was known to have been dispatched from the North, and defectors estimated that some others were undergoing training for missions in the South. The Korean War came in June 1950 followed on the guerrilla fighting and nine months of battles along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel in 1949. "War in Korea did not happen in 1949 because, although the South wanted war at that moment, the North did not, and neither did the United States or the Soviet Union. This changed in a year time, during this period Rhee rapidly expanded his army. By then it was much bigger than the strength of the North Korean Army, the subsequent build up and the return of China linked soldiers could be seen as the North attempt to establish a balance. Although the South launched many small raids across the Parallel before the summer of 1949, with the North happy to reciprocate, the important battles began at Kaesong in May 1949; the South started the engagement." (Cumings, 2005). Both South and North Korea came to the conclusion at this point of the conflict that any of the foreign powers would help them or support their actions. That is why in 1950, the logic of the war changed and both sides were curious to see who would be careless enough to make a move first. In 1950, America helped South Korea economically and influenced the country a lot penetrating in the South Korean administration and leading towards a huge economic growth in Korea. The evidence

that scholars now have is compatible both with an unprovoked North Korean invasion, and with an interpretation that the North, like the South wanted to seize the Ongjin peninsula and Kaesong and then see what happened next but waited until it had the majority of its crack soldiers back from China and the support or acquiescence of Stalin and Mao. It positioned its troops to take advantage of the first southern provocation in June 1950 or merely to attack and claim direct provocation. Kim Il Sung bears the grave responsibility of rising the civil conflict in Korea to the level of general war with intended and unintended consequences that no one could have predicted. “Whatever happened it was immediately clear that the war was a matter of “Koreans invading Korea” it wasn’t an aggression across generally accepted international lines. The question “who started the Korean war?” it is wrong, it is not a civil war question. Someday Koreans in North and South will reconcile with the wisdom that civil wars do not have single authors.” (Cumings, 2005).

In the summer months of 1950, the North Korean Army pushed towards the South with extraordinary success and the American First Marine Division made the defense stronger but the American forces were defeated. In the wake of the capture of Seoul, the Korean People’s Army — which is the *de facto* military forces of North Korea and the armed wings of the Workers’ Party of Korea that considered the South Korean Military and the United States Forces Korea to be their primary adversaries—, waited about a week to make its next big push, that ended to be the capture of Daejeon. By the beginning of August, American and South Korean forces outnumbered the North’s along the front, but in spite of this the retreat continued. Charles Grutzer who reported the war for the *New York Times*, said in the early going: “fear of infiltrators led to the slaughter of hundreds of South Korean civilians, men and women, by some United States troops and Police of the Republic.” He quoted a high-ranking U.S. officer who told him of an American regiment that panicked in July and shot “many civilians.” The North Koreans had established a system that, unlike the ROK’s did not rely on control of the capital city, but penetrated in the villages in a way no previous Korean state ever had, controlling small towns and villages from the inside. The North imposed its politics in the South, but the opposite thing happened as well. The effective politics of the southern occupation consisted mostly of the National Police and the rightist youths that came along with it. Once the Chinese came into the war and the retreat of the North began, newspapers reported eyewitness accounts of ROK executions of people under

detention. The general conclusion of all American intelligence agencies was that China would not come into the war. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) envisioned a possibility that Chinese volunteers might enter the fighting and later it noted that Manchurian units would be sent to Korea. However, it said: “the odds are that communist China, like the USSR, will not openly intervene in North Korea” (Cumings, 2005).

The best-informed media in America were incapable of judging Chinese intentions. New North Korean and Chinese materials made clear that China did not enter the war as a defensive measure to protect its border, rather that Mao determined early in the war that if the North Korean faltered, China had an obligation to come to their aid because of the sacrifice of so many Koreans in the Chinese revolution and the anti-Japanese resistance. When the war finally ended on July 27, 1953, the North had been devastated by three years of bombing attacks that hardly left a modern building standing. Both Koreas had watched as a virtual massacre ravaged their country and turned the vibrant expectations of 1945 into a nightmare. The true tragedy was not the war itself, the disaster was that the war solved nothing: only the status quo ante was restored, only an armistice held the peace (Cumings, 2005). It is essential to highlight that the Korean Peninsula has not signed any peace agreement yet, and that the agreement that it is in force at the moment is the Korean Armistice Agreement, signed on July 1953.

Today, we can still appreciate the problems and tensions in the Korean peninsula, but the political panorama might leave room for some real change that would end in a long-term solution for all this time of division and hostilities.

### 2.3.2. From 1953 to 1994: Opening stage

In order to proceed to a clear analysis of Korea from 1953 to 1994 we should without a doubt talk about industrialization and about Korea’s Sun Rising period. Korea nowadays, is one of the four Asian Tigers, along with Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan. It is during this period that rapid process of economic prosperity started. The Asian Tigers are countries that managed to have a very rapid industrialization process and did not stop growing economically. When it comes to the case of the Republic of Korea, it is without a doubt an example of clear rapid economic growth. However, before tackling the analysis of industrialization and openness it is important to consider

the situation of the Korean Peninsula after the war. The brutality of the Korean War intensified the enmity and tensions between the North and South. In the years after the war, the two Koreas competed for legitimacy and international recognition abroad, with a developmental dictatorship emerging in the South and a highly centralized regime in the North. For the next several decades, government-to-government contact between the two Koreas was almost nonexistent. In the late 1960s, a sharp rise in clashes along the DMZ, along with the attempted assassination of ROK President Park Chung-hee, increased inter-Korean tensions to their highest point since the war. (Lerner, 2010). We can, therefore, start considering that there has been a moment of openness amidst all the containment political measures that ruled Korea until then. The presence of other actors and states in the international sphere favored this new approach based on dialogue and openness. The United States and China started to reach an agreement, and this led to some changes in the security architecture of East Asia at the beginning of 1970. Due to this rapprochement, the governments of both Koreas found it in their interests to begin a dialogue with one another. Inter-Korean talks, initially held under the auspices of the Red Cross, led to the first Joint Statement on reunification, issued on July 4, 1972 (Foley, 2003). This communiqué is a sign of one of the attempts made by both Koreas to proceed towards unification and try to become one country again, the Joint Statement establishes the three principles of unification: independence, peace and nation-wide unity. Nevertheless, due to unstable political situation in both Koreas, it was very difficult to carry on with the project. In 1974, the ROK's First Lady, Yuk Young-soo, was killed during another unsuccessful assassination attempt on her husband Park Chung-hee, carried out by a Japanese-born North Korea sympathizer. North Korean agents also attempted to assassinate Park's successor, President Chun Doo-hwan, during a presidential trip to Burma in 1983, and bombed a passenger flight, Korean Air Flight 858, in 1987. But, there were still some additional periods of inter-Korean engagement in the latter years of the Cold War – for example, a small number of separated South and North Korean family members were allowed to briefly reunite in Seoul and Pyongyang in 1985, this happened again in 2018 under Moon Jae-in's administration. [See ANNEX 2]. (Foley, 2003) . Other notable inter-Korean dialogue took place during South Korea's first democratically elected president: Roh Tae-woo that was in office from 1988 until 1993, Roh's rule was notable for hosting the Seoul Olympics in 1988 and for his foreign Nordpolitik, which represented a major break from previous administrations. True to his word, he remained committed to democratic reforms. “He

also met with President Corazon Aquino for a series of talks between the Philippines and South Korea for economic, social and cultural ties, supporting Filipino athlete Leopoldo Serantes in the Olympics, and to discuss unification talks to end North Korea's hostilities after the Korean War.” (Wikimedia Foundation Inc. , 2019). Roh’s Nordpolitik led to South Korea’s establishment of diplomatic relations with North Korea’s traditional major allies, the Soviet Union and China. As part of this policy, the Roh administration also reached out diplomatically to North Korea, permitting direct inter-Korean trade in 1989 for the first time and initiating inter-Korean sports exchanges (Unification, 1992). In December 1991, the two Koreas signed a Basic Agreement on reconciliation, nonaggression and exchange and cooperation (Wertz, 2017). “After the signature, the two Koreas issued a Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, pledging not to possess, produce, or use nuclear weapons, prohibiting uranium enrichment, and plutonium reprocessing” (Unification, 1992).

When it comes to industrialization, as I previously mentioned one of the main events was the Han River Miracle. “In the period between 1945 and 1960, it was rare to find any American official who thought that the ROK would become “economically viable” in the stock phrase without unification or a very close connection to Japan.” Park Chung-hee designed a completely new system that would enable Korea to grow so much in economic terms. “Park sought to draw upon the old virtues of obedience and loyalty, family values and filial piety, and the leader as father of the nation. One big economic success piled upon another... Park herded all the big firms into Changwon to build more than one hundred factories and required foreign construction firms to source out their components in Korea” (Cumings, 2005).

During the Park Administration, in 1979 the Korea Status Report was published. The Report deals with the talks between the two Koreas in which the Status Report points out that the two sides remained deadlocked on the status of the delegations although each has modified its original position. The report points out how the South has a different vision on the Inter-Korean approach and it outlines how the South then proposed that the two sides held “working-level contacts” with the following meeting. The Report also clarifies that there is also a wish to negotiate in the North that proposed, instead, that the meetings should be between “liaison delegations of the political parties, public organizations and authorities”. We can therefore infer that a further meeting will

take place and the contacts seem likely to continue. This is a clear sign of an open period of Korean history. The Korean Status Report also explains how the official statements made by both sides sounded harsh, but the atmosphere was quite good. Both sides have given the contacts low-key domestic coverage and avoided raising great expectations. The North, while continuing to broadcast criticism of the South, honored its commitment to end propaganda attacks. The North also reacted with relative moderation (compared to previous years) to the joint US-ROK military maneuvers (Report, 1979).

Diplomacy played a very important role in this whole negotiation procedure, and in particular, the Korean Status Report introduces the concept of Ping Pong Diplomacy. The report describes how simultaneously with the political contacts, talks were taking place in Panmunjom between the Table Tennis Associations of the North and the South concerning Korean participation in the World Table Tennis Championships, which will be held in Pyongyang on 25 April 1979. The North proposed a United Korean team. The South, while not rejecting the idea, insisted that the South Korean Tennis Team participate, in any event, as such. "The ping-pong discussions attracted attention because of the role of ping-pong in opening the way for broader US-Chinese contacts. At that moment in 1979, the South had some difficulty dealing with the issue since while publicly favoring reunification; it does not wish to lend credence to a one Korea concept with joint international representation. A unified team now seems ruled out and the South is suggesting a North-South tournament as a means of encouraging cooperation" (Report, 1979).

During the late 90s, the Inter-Korean relations became more open. The breakdown of all communist states in Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991, which included the USSR itself, was a deep shock to North Korea and denied Pyongyang most of its major commercial associates, political backers and allies. Even before the communist collapse, the Eastern European countries had been normalizing their relations with the Republic of Korea; by 1992, Russia and even North Korea's supposed unconditional ally, China, had set up diplomatic relations with Seoul. It was going to take nearly a decade for a mutual movement by Western countries to restore ties with Pyongyang. From an economic standpoint, South Korea had long ago taken an unprecedented jump beyond the level of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Far from the Basic Agreement being the beginning of a new era of parity between the two Koreas, the times seemed to

question the continued ability of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to exist in any way. The movement in inter-Korean relations appeared to be almost a questionable point. Unification in the German style, in which the South absorbed the North as West Germany had absorbed East Germany in 1990, was widely anticipated, especially by Western analysts (Armstrong, 2005).

To sum up, efforts needed to continue being done. Between September 1990 and October 1992, the two Koreas engaged in so many different bilateral meetings among which we could find: the first High-Level Talks that was held in Seoul. In addition, in December 1991, the two sides signed an Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression and exchanges of cooperation between South and the North. This is the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement; this agreement was focused on mutual respect between the two nations, the renunciation of armed aggression, exchange of cooperation in lots of different sectors, the guarantee of free exchange of people between the two countries. From the mid-1990s onwards, the South's government continued to provide support to the North, which continued to experience serious economic difficulties (NY, 2020). In the years to come, the Korean Peninsula suffered many changes, all of them very relevant for the Korean and inter-Korean political and diplomatic relations.

### 2.3.3. From 1994 to 2017: Containment stage

On July 1994 Kim Il-sung, the North Korean leader, died of a heart attack. With CNN cameras in the North Korean capital city, the world was able to watch the outpouring of sorrow that for somebody perceived by many as an abusive, renegade dictator, seemed hard to understand. Millions of people rushed to Pyongyang, tearing, beating the ground, weeping uncontrollably. It was widely spread to think that the regime staged the displays but that seemed implausible given the sincerity of most people and their enormous numbers. Perhaps it was a case of mass hysteria: *Newsweek* seemed to think a national nervous breakdown was ensuing, with the DPRK now a “headless beast” (INC., 1994). Crying Kim's death and mourning for the leader lasted for one hundred days, and when it ended a government representative said: “the loss of the great leader was the irretrievable loss of our people. At this shocking news, like the earth breaking apart and the sun falling, not only our party members and working people as well as the South Korean people and overseas compatriots, but even the mountains, rivers, plants, and trees wailed.” Pyongyang scribes began using an unfamiliar term to describe the



new regime: Kim Jong-il now had the “mandate of heaven” because he inherited his father’s line. Earlier, an article in the party newspaper had hailed Kim Jong-il’s leadership qualities. Many problems occurred in the North since the death of Kim Il-sung, “the North faced one crisis after the other, floods, an energy system that almost collapsed, a summer drought and a resulting famine that took away the lives of more than half a million people. This constitutes a clear example of the terrible chaos that is supposed to characterize the end of the Confucian dynastic cycle. Kim Jong-il waited the three-year traditional mourning period of the first son of the king before assuming his father’s leadership of the ruling party. On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the regime’s founding, in September 1998, became the maximum leader but chose not to become the head of state, which is, president of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea” (Cumings, 2005). The fact that Kim Jong-il assumes to be the top leader of the country but he is not willing to carry out the functions of head of state is a clear sign of containment, because he appears to be uncomfortable in meeting foreign leaders.

The situation in North Korea today is not as bad as it was in 1998, when the Korean Central News Agency said, “The people are tapping all the possibilities and reserves and eking out their living in reliance upon substitute food”, the Agency also acknowledged that “China rendered free assistance to North Korea, on several occasions for years, through the relief grain.” (Agency, 1998) In other countries when there is a humanitarian emergency like the one in North Korea, there are signs or clear marks of collapse of state power, but in the North Korean case this is not the scenario, except for the breakdowns at the local level. North Korea suffered as Somalia or Ethiopia, but has a much more developed and modern economy. North Korea had before a powerful industrial economy and remains relatively urbanized and, until recent years, international agencies found that life expectancy rates, child welfare, inoculation rates, and general public health conditions were, comparatively speaking, quite good in North Korea. This is not the case in other places affected by humanitarian disasters. (Cumings, 2005)

In the South, in 1993 the Kim Young-sam administration seemed like it was ready to carry out rather progressive policies in every sector of internal politics, economy, social and inter-Korean relations. The Kim government’s ambitious attempt was possible because he could lean on the public trust and people had expectations over the civilian regime led by the former opposition leader who devoted his life in fighting against

authoritarianism. However, the Kim government had to fight against a new challenge and it is about North Korea's nuclear issue and all the serious attention this matter started to draw from the international panorama. When the Kim government started to operate in the South, the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) program regarding North Korea's nuclear development came across a lot of discrepancies between Pyongyang's initial report to the IAEA in May 1992 and what was found after six-round inspections. The international community started to be more and more suspicious over the North's intention and this drove the Board of Governor's decision to ask special inspection over the North's two undeclared sites in Yongbyon, two North Korean nuclear complexes. (KIL, 1994)

The political sphere in the South appeared to be open to negotiations and had some behaviors that are typical of an open state towards the North. However, the new staff working with President Kim Young-sam in charge of foreign affairs, security and inter-Korean affairs were university professors in the past and their experience in the public sector was non-existent, and this together with other factors was a difficulty that drove the Inter-Korean relations to a containment approach. The lack of experience in the public sector was the general rule. Nevertheless, among what was known as "Gang of four" in which we could find: Deputy Prime Minister of Unification Han Wan-sang, Foreign Minister Han Sung-joo, President's Security Advisor Chung Chong-wook, and the chief of the National Security Planning (which is the Korean CIA) Kim Duk, specifically the Deputy Prime Minister had a different career than the others. It is important to take into account Dr. Han's background, he was always in favor of the oppressed and he was a human rights activist that was expelled twice from the university campus. He did a fantastic job promoting progressive policy in the inter-Korean relations and in humanitarian matters, he proclaimed himself very supportive in the President's decision to bring back Lee In-mo, a North Korean journalist that was captured in the Korean War. That issue has often ignited confrontation and hostilities in North-South debate. (KIL, 1994)

Regarding North Korea, after Kim Il-sung's death and the establishment of Kim Jong-il in power, the country was neither moving towards some kind of post-communism, in the same way socialist states did in after 1989, nor is carrying out serious reforms within its country like China or Vietnam did. The leadership seemed deeply frightened by the consequences of opening up the economy, preferring instead to open up small

enclaves. (Cumings, 2005) An example of such enclaves is the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) that is located inside North Korea just passing the demilitarized zone from the South Korean side. This constitutes an interesting example, because it was the South who largely financed the project in an attempt to increase co-operation. It is a point of peaceful engagement between the two Koreas and it is oftentimes taken as an example of the relations between North and South Korea. North Korea benefits from Kaesong Industrial Complex thanks to all the investment that the South is doing in the area, however if the project is threatened, South Korea also stands to lose. The KIC has also been subject of tensions between the North and the South. North Korea has closed the enclave in several occasions. In April 2013, feeling threatened by military drills by Seoul and Washington, the North shut down the complex for more than four months. In the same way in 2009, after US-South Korean military drills the North Korean authorities imposed restrictions on the KIC. Entry into the KIC was shut down for a number of days and hundreds of South Korean workers were effectively trapped. Nevertheless, most of the time the KIC has continued to operate and expand despite the common flare-ups of tensions in the Korean Peninsula. (BBC, What is the Kaesong Industrial Complex?, 2016)

Even if the South made so much efforts to build a strong and closer inter-Korean relations, the internal political division of the South and the nuclear tests in the North made it quite difficult. The Unification Minister Han became an easy target of the conservative spectrum of South Korean politics, especially when the North made an announcement to pull out of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), just the following day Seoul officially decided to return Lee In-mo, the previously mentioned North Korean journalist, to the North. It was Dr. Han's misfortune to drive himself to the setting where he would inevitably be in a defensive position when it comes to planning and undertaking unification policy with progressive tone. All of the members of the above-mentioned "Gang of four" thought that North Korea's nuclear problem was a serious challenge and frustration that carried out many problems. The entire nuclear problem was a very new issue to the South Korean government and no official debate was allowed since former president Park Chung-hee's attempt to develop nuclear weapons in late 1970s. Such lack of expertise in the matter together with frustration made Kim Young-sam government show instability when dealing with the nuclear problem from the beginning. Following development of the nuclear issue, South Korean

government's policy decisions regarding the nuclear problem were made by the, already introduced, "Gang of four" until the Unification Minister Han stepped down December 1993 replaced by a conservative educator named Lee Yung-duk. (KIL, 1994)

All the efforts that the South did in order to take a closer approach and became closer to its neighbors have been very difficult due to all the nuclear tests that North Korea carried out during this period [SEE ANNEX 3]. All the missiles and nuclear test posed a problem in the inter-Korean relations and the peninsula started to be at the center of attention in the international panorama.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to theoretically frame this research project, there are some key concepts that need to be taken into account: the concept of State under international law and the legal status of both North Korea and South Korea, the main characteristics of reunification, and the impeachment procedures that will be relevant to better understand how Moon Jae-in came into power. Within these four elements, different matters have to be analyzed and examined in order to pursue a better understanding of the subject in question, as these concepts are interconnected throughout the project.

#### 3.1. Defining the concept of Statehood: Korea's Territorial Status under International Law

The only subject of international law with full and root capacity are the States, because in accordance with the classic structure of juxtaposition of sovereign, equal and independent states, it is they who create and receive international legal norms, and who possess the widest range of international rights and duties. States possess all characteristics of international legal personality without limitation, they have the capacity to create and sign treaties, the capacity to create other normative manifestations or to maintain relations with other subjects of international law, to receive and send representatives, to participate in legal relations of international responsibility or the capacity to be bound by the rules of the law of war in the event of their involvement in

an armed conflict... According to international law, a State exists and is endowed with legal personality when the three basic constituent elements of the State converge in it. These are population, territory, and political and social organization. The emergence of new states in the international arena may occur as a result of one of the modalities of what is known as state succession (a phenomenon that refers to a change in sovereignty over a given territory). In this sense, there are four forms of succession that bring about the emergence of a new state: independence of colonial territories, secession of part of a state's territory, union of two states to form a new one or dissolution of a state giving rise to new states. (Berlanga, 2016)

In the Korean case, we are talking about two different countries; both North Korea and South Korea are considered States under international law and recognized as States in the international community. Both Koreas have the three elements that are required to consider a State as such: government, population and territory. State recognition is a free and discretionary action, with a clear political purpose, and it is therefore not a legal obligation and has only a declaratory value. That is why, as soon as the three elements (population, territory and government) are met, the State already exists, even if recognition by the other States did not take place. In international law, there is another theory, which holds that recognition is a constitutive and obligatory legal act; the majority does not support this theory (Unceta, 2016).

The subject par excellence of international law is the State, which is characterized by its sovereignty, broadly defined as freedom of action at both the domestic and international levels. Sovereignty is an inherent characteristic of States, which means that a legal personality is conferred when certain circumstances are present, in accordance with the principle of effectiveness, that is, when there are elements that characterize and give content to the State. The existence of a State in the international sphere requires the confluence of certain elements. The constituent elements of the state were determined in 1933 during the Montevideo Conference. These elements are: permanent population, determined territory, government and capacity to maintain relations with other states, the latter being an intrinsic requirement for the political independence demanded of the governmental element. (Unceta, 2016)

This division of theories would not affect the Korean case because the North as well as the South meet the three requirements needed to be a State and are recognized by other countries. State succession has the effect of changing sovereignty over a given territory,

i.e. a territory upon which one state exerted sovereignty is brought under the sovereignty of a different state. In the case of the Korean Peninsula, what occurred is known in international law as separation or secession: namely, a part of the territory separating and becoming a new independent state. Another concept that is interesting for our case study and that we must take into account is the one concerning the delimitation of state territory. The delimitation of the territory of a state is carried out by means of a legal figure known as a border. (Martin, 2016)

In the Korean case, the border between the two countries is the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. The border is the line that marks the boundary of the territory on which a State can exercise its sovereign rights. The drawing of a border requires a process consisting of two consecutive phases: delimitation and emaciation. The area immediately located north and south to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel also known as the Demilitarized zone is the border that divides the Korean peninsula in two different countries. The 38th parallel was first proposed as a dividing line for Korea in 1902. Russia was trying to drag Korea under its control and Japan was granted rights over the Korean Peninsula, therefore, in order to avoid any kind of confrontation Japan suggested to Russia that the division should be made in accordance with its terrestrial parallel, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, but no official agreement was reached. In 1948, the line became the border between the two newly created nations; South Korea and North Korea. During the Korean War, the parallel was invaded by the most powerful forces of the war to fight the enemy line. At the end of the Korean War, a new border was established across half of the Demilitarized Zone, which cuts the 38th parallel. The war devastated ecological paradises, magnificent trees, incredible forests, etc. But, that is not the case of the Korean Demilitarized Zone that is an ecological sanctuary. (ECURED, 2020)

### 3.2. The concept of Reunification

Since the division of the Korean Peninsula in 1945, the question of reunification has drawn the attention of lots of members of the international community and has been on the debate of the inter-Korean relations ever since. Unifying the Korean peninsula would mean that North and South Korea are one nation again, meaning that they will share the attributes of a State: population, territory and government.

The 25th meeting of the central committee of the Democratic National United Front of North Korea, held in March 1948, made public a major policy for national reunification, that the country should be reunified independently and in a peaceful way, by the efforts of the Korean people themselves on democratic principles, without interference of any foreign forces. Settling the question of national reunification without interference of any foreign forces, in accordance with the fundamental interests and will of the Korean people and by the efforts of the Korean people themselves is “their sacred right to national self-determination no one can encroach upon.” Achieving national reunification on democratic principles means achieving it in the way of establishing a unified central government by holding the democratic general elections in the north and south in accordance with the free will and demand of all the Korean people. (106, 2017)

### 3.3. Impeachment: definition and procedures

This project will theoretically frame the impeachment process because it is very relevant when analyzing Moon Jae-in’s arrival to power. For a society such as the Korean with strong Confucian principles, carrying out an impeachment process to end up with a President’s Administration is something historical and since it was with Park Geun-hye that happened for the first time in Korea, I consider important to explain from a theoretical point of view on what consists the impeachment process in Korea.

South Korea is a presidential representative democratic republic; this means that the president is head of state and of a multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the National Assembly. The Judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature and comprises a Supreme Court, appellate courts and a Constitutional Court. Since 1948, the constitution has undergone five major revisions, each signifying a new republic. The current Sixth Republic began with the last major constitutional revision in 1987. (foundation, 2020)

In order to explain the impeachment process in the Asian country we will take the case of the former Korean President Park Geun-hye, impeached in 2017. In order to impeach a president it is necessary that the 300-member National Assembly vote on an

impeachment bill. If 200 members of the National Assembly give an affirmative response in the bill, the National Assembly will carry out a formal request to the Constitutional Court to impeach the president and end the mandate. In Korea, in order to carry out an impeachment process, the impeachment motion must include an official violation of “the Constitution and the laws”; however, the National Assembly is not obliged to prove those charges. If the impeachment motion passes, the president that is being impeached would be suspended from office. The court must decide whether the president is guilty of the crimes that the National Assembly claims she committed and whether they are serious enough to merit impeachment. If the President is impeached, with more than 6 judges voting for impeachment, like it happened with Park Geun-hye, South Korea will have 60 days to elect a successor or, in this case, with Mr. Hwang carrying out her duties in the meantime. If fewer than six judges vote for impeachment, Ms. Park would have immediately returned to office. A South Korean President has faced impeachment before on one occasion; it was in 2004, when President Roh Moo-hyun was accused of calling on voters to support his party in parliamentary elections. The calls were said to violate a law requiring the president to remain neutral in the election. The National Assembly voted for impeachment, but the decision enraged many South Koreans, who demonstrated in large numbers and gave Mr. Roh’s party a landslide victory at the polls. The Constitutional Court voted against impeachment, saying Mr. Roh’s breaches of the election law were relatively minor, and he was returned to office. (Sang-Hun, South Korea’s Impeachment Process, Explained, 2016)

## 4. ANALYSIS

### 4.1. 1998-2008 Establishment of the Sunshine Policy

The Sunshine Policy is named after one of Aesop’s Fables called The North Wind and the Sun, the moral of the story is that persuasion has more power and makes a bigger impact than the use of force. The story is about the North Wind and the Sun competing to prove which one is stronger, the competition consisted on making a passing voyager pull out their cloak. No matter how hard the wind blew, the traveler would only kept his cloak closer to be warm, nevertheless, when the sun was shining the adventurer was



very uncomfortable with the weather and took the cloak off. The Korean President Kim Dae-jung, in office from 1998-2003, was the first opposition leader to win election to the South Korean presidency, he also received the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2000 to congratulate him on the huge efforts to work for democracy in South Korea and to bound with North Korea (Britannica, Britannica, 2020). In order to better understand the approach that President Kim Dae-jung carried out towards North Korea, it is very important to highlight the main aspects of the Democratic Party of Korea, where he belongs. The Democratic Party of Korea is a center liberal party that supports more human rights protection and a better understanding with the North Korean neighbors; their economic policy approach is based on new progressivism. Kim Dae-jung himself founded the Party in 1995 and in 2000; the party changed its name into the Millennium Democratic Party (Britannica, britannica , 2019).

The Sunshine Policy, officially named the Reconciliation and Cooperation Policy Towards the North, aimed to promote reconciliation and boost the peace process in the Korean Peninsula, among the various measures taken in the Sunshine Policy we can find the allowance by the government of South Korean NGO's, business and private citizens get some interaction across the DMZ. The ROK government also provided fertilizer aid and food to the North, at that moment in 1998 North Korea was just starting to recover from a devastating famine. Something that deserves some attention is that in 1998 a branch of the South Korean Hyundai Group started to operate tours in Mount Geumgang in North Korea. (Wertz, 2017) Unfortunately, this initiative stopped when a North Korean soldier killed a South Korean tourist in 2008, this led to a huge loss of South Korea's investment in the area. In June 2000, Kim Dae-jung and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il met in Pyongyang for the first presidential summit for the first time since the division of Korea, leading to a radical shift in South Korean attitudes toward the North as well as in the policy approach or the decision taking (Snyder, 2008). Among the numerous initiatives included in the Sunshine Policy, we can find family reunion meetings agreed by both Koreas, and the establishment of the inter-Korean Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) close to the DMZ.

The KIC is located about 106 miles southeast of Pyongyang and 43 miles north of Seoul just across the demilitarized zone. The purposes of the KIC as South Korea established have been to develop an industrial park in which South Korean businesses could manufacture products using North Korean labor, provide an opening for North Korea to

liberalize and reform its economy, and ease tensions across the DMZ. Even if it began primarily as a private sector venture, both North and South governments are heavily involved in the project. Groundbreaking occurred in June 2003 and again in April 2004, Hyundai Asan and the Korea Land Corporation, both from South Korea, have been developing and managing the complex. The KIC is practically the last vestige of the range of inter-Korean cooperation projects initiated during the period of détente between South Korea and North Korea from 2000 to 2008. Relations began deteriorating after new developments in both Koreas. (Nanto, 2011). However, the KIC is a clear proof of the enormous endeavors carried out by South Korea in order to get closer to the North Korean people, after many years of a shared past and a common history, rivalry could not tear them fully apart and the Kaesong Industrial Complex is an evidence of this feeling of camaraderie, a sentiment present in some chinks of society.

#### 4.2. 2008-2017 Evolution of the Korean Relations

This feeling of closeness between the two Koreas has gone through different ups and downs in history. This specific section of the research project will focus on Inter-Korean Relations between 2008, –which is when Conservative Lee Myung-bak is elected as South Korean president, ending a decade of liberal rule in Seoul–, and 2017 which is the year of Park Geun-hye’s fall and the arrival of Moon Jae-in.

The Lee Myung-bak administration started in 2008 and his policy was oriented towards the happy and peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula. He promoted principles that would lead to mutual benefits and common prosperity in the relations between the two Koreas. The Ministry of Unification reported to President Lee the 2008 inter-Korean relations development plan that consisted of three goals and 12 assessments, the goals focus on denuclearization, the boost of mutually beneficial economic cooperation and humanitarian cooperation. To work towards denuclearization, some of the assessments focus on helping North Korea to solve its nuclear problem through dialogue, and specific denuclearization plans. In order to expand mutually beneficial economic cooperation the plan included assessments such as planting trees, cooperate in agriculture and fisheries and solve inter-Korean corporate problems related to economic cooperation. To work harder towards the reciprocal humanitarian cooperation, the assessments put the stress on a strong

family reunion plan, improve the resettlement program for North Korean people and make an effort to improve the human rights situation in North Korea.

This section of the analysis will look into the main events that took place in the Korean Peninsula that shaped the current situation in Korea. The main issues are not only related to nuclear weapons but also to different political and social realities that surrounded the Korean Peninsula in the already mentioned period: from 2008 and 2017. In 2008, Lee Myung-bak is elected as the new President of the Republic of Korea, he was a conservative leader and his election put an end to a decade of liberal rule in Seoul. One of the most relevant actions he proposed to carry out regarding the relations with their neighbor, North Korea, was eliminating the Unification Ministry. This government Agency had long endeavored to build reunification with North Korea but the then new president Lee Myung-bak considered that the ministry was too soft on the North Korean regime. When President Lee Myung-bak proposed to abolish the Unification Ministry the Parliament had to approve that decision. It was a situation where liberal lawmakers, who dominated the legislature and usually took great pride in the inter-Korean détente they have long been pursuing, were expected to fight to save the ministry and they finally succeeded at it. How did North Korea react to this new proposal on the South? At the time, there was no instantaneous response from North Korea, but at that moment, some political scientists said North Korea was likely to react harshly and that would complicate the six-nation talks on finishing nuclear activities (Sang-Hun, *The New York Times*, 2008).

It was on March 26, 2010 when “the ROK Navy corvette Cheonan sank in the Yellow Sea just south of the disputed Northern Limit Line near Baengnyeong Island after an explosion in the ship’s stern ripped it in two. Of the 104 South Korean sailors on board, 58 were rescued; 46 are dead or remain missing. Experts from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Sweden have been assisting in the on-going investigation. Nearly a month after the sinking, South Korean investigators confirmed that the cause of the explosion was external, fueling speculation that the Cheonan was hit by a torpedo or a floating mine. North Korea has denied any involvement in the Cheonan’s sinking.” (Cha, 2010). This happened in March 2010 but it was not until May 2010 that South Korea formally accused North Korea of being responsible for the sinking of the warship. North Korea’s reaction was unusually fast and that could be due to the recent tensions between both countries. North Korea considered that South Korea

was making a scene and the North threatened to respond with strong sanctions and measures, including a full-scale war. Be that as it may, a team of military and civil investigators from different countries pointed to North Korea as the only possible candidate to have sent the torpedo. This conclusion led to a time of tension between the two Koreas and the international panorama restarted the debate on how to apply punitive measures to the North (Sang-Hun, The New York Times , 2010). Despite all the efforts made by the south to improve relations with its northern neighbors, actions such as the sinking of the warship led to periods of great tension between the two Koreas, it is evident that there was a need to evolve on the nuclear issue and achieve greater rapprochement through dialogue and mutual understanding.

In 2011, Kim Jong-un takes power after his father death Kim Jong-i. However, it was not until April 11, 2012, that Kim Jong-un was officially appointed the supreme leader of North Korea and granted the status of "first secretary" during the 4<sup>th</sup> party conference, the country's first major political gathering since 2010. The following day, Kim Jong-un was also awarded the rank of First chairman. This permitted the new leader to take the power of North Korea's party, military and state leadership as given. (Times, 2011)

Finally, on 17 July 2012, Kim Jong-un was also named Marshal, the highest military rank in North Korea, which had only previously been held by his father and grandfather. (BBC, 2018) The expected elevation of Kim Jong-un to the top defense rank post completes his rise to the summit of the North Korean state. After the two-day bilateral talks with the United States of America that took place in February 2012, North Korea announced that it would cancel the development of its nuclear program and give international examiners admittance to the country's main nuclear plant. In exchange, the United States guaranteed to supply up to 240 000 tons of food — most of it nutritional supplements, rather than rice or grains. The agreement reached 29 February 2012 with the US (food in exchange of a moratorium on Pyongyang's nuclear program) was terminated a couple of months later, when Pyongyang declared its aspiration to launch a satellite into space (Roberto Bendini, 2014).

In December 2012, North Korea succeeded in launching a rocket that could put a spacecraft into orbit. The so-called "civilian" nature of the new vector pushed by

Pyongyang did not satisfy the international community, which responded by implementing new penalties. On 22 January 2013, the United Nations Security Council determined that the rocket launch was a ballistic missile test and, at the behest of the United States and Japan, unanimously applied new sanctions against North Korea. On 13 February 2013, the DPRK carried out successfully its third nuclear testing experiment, which, analysts say, was twice as big as the 2009 test. Because of the rocket firing and nuclear trials, the U.N. placed a new set of restrictions on North Korea. These were essentially a ban on luxury goods (a kind of ware largely circumvented by the North Korean elite) and an embargo on arms. (Council, 2013) (Roberto Bendini, 2014).

Park arrived into power in 2013. In her inauguration speech at the National Assembly building, “Park spoke of her plan to open a new era of hope through "economic prosperity, people's happiness, and cultural enrichment". She particularly expressed her hope that North Korea would give up its nuclear arms and walk on the path of peace and mutual development, and declared that the foundation for a happy era of unification in which all Korean people will be able to enjoy prosperity and freedom and realize their dreams would be built through the Korean Peninsula Trust-building Process. In her inauguration speech, Park presented four guiding principles to realize her administrative vision: economic prosperity, people's happiness, cultural enrichment, and establishment of foundation for peaceful unification” (Foundation, 2020). Up to now, the Korean Peninsula was undergoing major changes. The establishment of a new generation of the Kim dynasty in the north, and the election of the daughter of the dictator Park Chung-hee in the south, the previous attempt to put an end to the Ministry of Unification, and all the North Korean nuclear trials that blew up the efforts of the south to build a period of peace. This was not any different in the years to come; in 2013, Kim Jong-un announced that his country would pursue a national *byungjin* policy. *Byungjin* is a political concept in North Korea. At first, it referred to the policy carried out in the decade of 1960s by Kim Il-sung to develop the army and the economy, but with Kim Jong-un in power, it was used to describe the concurrent unfolding of nuclear weapons and the economy (ahasuerus, 2017). The North Korean decision is seen in the Korean Peninsula and the international panorama as a clear breach with the former Northern stance that used the nuclear agenda predominantly as a bargaining chip to draw out concessions from external administrations. This, once again, slowed down any possibility of rapprochement or understanding between the two Koreas, unification was

not going to be in their agendas and it did not seem to be part of their conversations for a long time.

In 2015, tensions continue and this time the issue is related to land mines, South Korea accuses North Korea because land mines maim two soldiers in the DMZ. The debate over the presence of land mines is there and some people argue that they are a remnant of the Korean War and they are there since then, on the contrary many other sectors of South Korean civil and military society point to North Korean establishment of land mines in the DMZ.

I still remember being in my Korean language evening class in Seoul when in 2016, we felt the table move and all the foreigners started to panic a little bit, until our teacher said in Korean: “don’t worry it is just a nuclear test carried out by our neighbors.” It was around the month of February and every foreign newspaper or media site pictured the situation as a very difficult one, parents called their sons to check if everything was fine and the university had to send some communiqués to prevent students of the ongoing nuclear test. In reality, the only consequence for this nuclear test was that the South decided to shut or at least put under military control the joint factory park they have in Kaesong industrial complex, to this North Korea responded announcing it was expelling all South Korean workers and said it would freeze all South Korean capital and supplies. As can be noted, understanding, dialogue, and a desire to continue working toward a common project were conspicuous by their absence. At the same time, the feeling of helping North Korea was deeply rooted in South Korean society. I remember during the week of the North Korean nuclear tests how many South Korean students on campus set up booths where they offered other students to wear the classic Samsung virtual reality glasses and invited other students to observe the reality of North Korea, and no doubt they denounced the human rights violations of what they called their North Korean "brothers". Under the slogan "one step for North Korean Human Rights", they handed out bracelets and campaigned to make people aware that the first ones to be harmed by the North Korean regime were the North Koreans themselves. This helped me to realize that, with all the problems in inter-Korean relations at that time, there was a great desire for unity and eventual peace between the two Koreas, a willingness to build, to look at what unites the two countries rather than what separates them. That is why South Koreans were tired of the former Government of Park Gyeun-hye and did everything possible to remove her from power. This was a historical

moment for South Korean society that shaped the South Korean reality and the inter-Korean relations in an enormous way. Therefore, Park Gyeun-hye's fall deserve to be analyzed in a different section.

#### 4.3. Park Gyeun-hye's fall

In order to deal with Park Gyeun-hye's fall it is very relevant to provide some background about her family, it is also important to explain how she got into power.

Park Geun-hye, born in 1952, holds an engineer degree from Sogang University, a well-known Jesuit university in Seoul and one of the most prestigious in South Korea. Park Geun-hye started to get involved in politics when she was 22 and served as a kind of first lady during her father's administration. Her mother was killed by a North Korean gunman in 1974, and she started her public life with her father's administration. She was the first woman president of South Korea, which is still a traditional society, but some argue that her association with her father enabled her to overcome prejudices among certain conservative voters. Park Gyeun-hye is Park Chung-hee's daughter. Park Chung-hee was a South Korean general and politician, president of the Republic of Korea from 1963 to his death in 1979. He got into power through a coup d'état, known in Korean history as the May 16 military coup d'état.

During his administration, "Park Chung-hee maintained a policy of guided democracy, with restrictions on personal freedoms, suppression of the press and of opposition parties, and control over the judicial system and the universities. He organized and expanded the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA; now the National Intelligence Service), which became a much-feared agent of political repression. Park claimed that all his measures were necessary to fight communism. In foreign affairs, he continued the close relations his predecessors Syngman Rhee and Yun Po-son had maintained with the United States. Park was responsible in large part for South Korea's "economic miracle"; the programs he initiated gave his country one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. However, his arrival into power brought in some irregular behavior. In the South Korean 1963 elections, President Park Chung-hee took a clear advantage of his situation. The 1963 elections were the elections promised by the military junta in 1961 to give power back to civilians, it was held on October 15.

Even if some parties entered the race, the real competition was between the Democratic Republican Party with Park Chung-hee as a leader and the last minute assembled Civil Rule Party with Yu Po Son as a leader, who served as a president in Chang Myon's government. Park Chung-hee beat Yu Po Son winning by 42.6 % of votes against 41.2 %. Park enjoyed a clear advantage over the opposition in terms of organization and campaign funds. He used the state bureaucracy, including the police, extensively to mobilize votes; there were also other organizations that help Park Chung-hee to be known in the villages and rural areas, giving him a lot of support among those sectors. Even if this election is known to be the fairest and freest election in South Korean history, in reality, the 1963 presidential election was full of irregularities. The Central Election Management Committee opened a way for the state bureaucracy to marshal its power behind Park in the election without breaking the law that forbid civil servants to get involved in political activities. The heads of rural villages and urban blocs were on the public payroll, but freely went door by door knocking and solicit support for Park Chung-hee. The September and October issues of *Chosun Ilbo*, the country's leading newspaper, carried reports of irregularities every single day. Some village heads forced farmers to apply for DRP membership under the threat of abruptly ending their grain rations. Another measure taken was sending police officers and County officials back to their hometowns to persuade their family and friends and persuade them to vote for Park Chung-hee. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) itself was accused of setting up coordination committees at every level of the public administration to facilitate cooperation among and between state ministries and parastatal organizations on behalf of Park Chung-hee's candidacy. The majors of Busan and other cities organized festivities in honor of the elderly to campaign for Park. In some special classes the schools organized events where students could learn about civil duties, several pro-Park nongovernmental organizations came to give lectures on "current affairs" and to hold exhibitions on past corruption. The regional chapters of the People's Movement for National Reconstruction (PMNR) also ran so many educational programs on election procedures for schoolteachers, families of public officials and local notables. Through this and many other efforts, Park Chung-hee was able to register a total of 1.568.006 men and women as DRP members. The DRP additionally held 629 rallies with an alleged participation of 2.64 million people by the time of the election." (Byung-Kook Kim, 2011)



Park Chung-hee played a very important role in Korea's industrialization. He used the military junta to make South Korea a modern and industrialized nation through the modernization of the administrative institutions. All the different administrative institutions set by the military junta helped to make South Korea not so dependent on the United States and its foreign policy and helped to set the basis for the extremely fast economic growth that South Korea experienced during the Park Chung-hee government.

When it comes to the foreign policy towards the North, Park Chung-hee at some point, could feel that North Korea was a threat to the peninsula stability and balance and he decided to develop nuclear weapons in the South, but the United States saw that the whole Korean peninsula full of nuclear weapons was not a very positive thing for the political stability in the region. Thus, United States persuaded Park Chung-hee not to develop nuclear weapons and to continue trusting in the United States as their main ally in terms of military defense. Even if Park Chung-hee played a very important role in the creation of a modern South Korea, he had a very repressive behavior towards the South Korean population at the very end of his presidency, even proclaiming the martial law in the country several times. Because of the social and political vacuum that Park's assassination left, there were many movements and democratic uprisings upon his decease: all the movements that were suppressed during Park Chung-hee's regime were being revived and that is the case of the Kwangju uprising.

After this introduction about Park Gyeun-hye's father, it is essential to analyze how she got into power. Park Geun-hye won the elections that took place in December 19, 2012. The results were: "Park won 51.6 % of the vote, compared with Moon's 48 %. The electoral turnout of 78.6 % was the highest in 15 years, and Park became the first presidential candidate to win an absolute majority of the vote since South Korea's transition to democracy in 1987. Voting patterns confirmed a growing rift within South Korean society. The bulk of Park's support came, as predicted, from voters aged 50 and over, while voters in their 20s and 30s voted overwhelmingly for her rival, Moon. Park won in the majority of South Korea's provinces, with the only notable exceptions being the capital Seoul and the two traditionally liberal-leaning provinces of North and South Jeolla." (Lukas GAJDOS, 2013)

Many irregularities during her administration led Park to be impeached between March 9 and 10, 2017. The streets of Seoul were full of police [See ANNEX 4], I had the

chance to experience first-hand and walk around the main streets of Seoul during those days.

The controversies in the Park administration date back to 2014 when the Sewol Ferry disaster took place, result of a negligence which is one of the biggest scandals for Korean society. This, will serve as an example to illustrate the poor performance of Park.

#### 4.3.1. The Sewol Ferry Disaster

A boat full of students sank and the controversy over this issue is such that the rescue of the ship and the release of the bodies did not take place until mid-March 2017, after Park was removed. Yellow ribbons had covered Seoul City since the 2014 sinking, those ribbons were used as a symbol of remembrance for all deceased students, and other symbols such as the yellow paper boat have also been the protagonists on social networks and in protest campaigns to work towards clarifying everything about the Sewol Ferry. In addition, hundreds of families began camping out on the main streets of Seoul to pay homage to their children who had died in the accident. The plight of the families was seen on the streets where in 2017 they began to point to the President as the main culprit in the failure of parents to bury their dead children. On the main streets, mothers erected altars to remember their children, and a very large sector of society turned out to support these families: actors, K-pop singers.... [See ANNEX 5]

However, what was so controversial about the Sewol Ferry disaster? What made the public opinion and civil society point their finger at Park Geun-hye? First, the sinking of the boat was the result of a continuous negligent and irregular performance by the safety authorities and the president Park. It is therefore relevant to explain what happened.

On the night of 15 April 2014, the Sewol ferry departed Incheon Port. A total of 476 passengers, including 325 students on a school trip to Jeju Island, were on board.

It was at 8:52 a.m. that the first call between the Korean emergency number and a passenger took place. The student at that time was already noticing the authorities of the situation of the boat, which was sagged to one side, and asking for help. The boat authorities at 8:56 a.m. when the boat was sinking ask the students not to move and to

hold on to available pillars. The students were shocked and comment things like “this is crazy, this is not the type of situation when they tell you not to move and that everything will be okay.” However, they did not panic because the authorities kept on saying that everything was going to be sorted out. The students started talking about how that situation reminded them of a subway accident in which the only ones who survived were the ones who did not follow orders. At 9:10 a.m., a call between Jindo Vessel Traffic Service and the Sewol Ferry took place. When the Jindo Vessel Traffic Service authorities asked what the situation was, the Sewol Ferry authorities explained that all of them were off their feet and were wondering whether to order everyone to jump into the water or not. The Vessel Traffic Service and the Sewol Ferry contacted again at 9:17 a.m. and the Sewol announced that all the crewmembers were already wearing their lifejackets and standing on the bridge of the ship, the safest area of the boat.

Another call was made at 9:23 a.m. but this time between the Coast Guard and President’s Park office. The Presidential Crisis Situation Office asked different questions to the Coast Guard Officer but none trying to solve the issue and save the students, the President’s Office asked questions such as: “Did you get the distress call from the ferry in Jindo?”, “Is it a grave situation?” When the Coast Guard informed the President Office that the ship was sinking, the President Office asked one of the most shocking questions: “Is there any video yet?.” Some minutes later, at 9:25 a.m. another call took place, it was again between the Sewol Ferry and the Jindo Vessel Traffic Service. The Traffic Service warned the boat authorities that the scape call should be made on the captain’s judgement and they asked the boat authorities to make an immediate decision. At 9:26 a.m., planes were flying over the scene of the disaster [SEE ANNEX 6 a] but, did nothing to help, they just watched expectantly. It was only a few minutes later, at 9:32 a.m. when again a call between the Coast Guard and President’s Park office took place, again the same short calls asking for details of the number of passengers and the exact situation of the boat. Not a single indication of how to save the students, nor how to evacuate the ship, even though the images showed that the ship was in a critical situation [SEE ANNEX 6 b] there was no sign of any attempt to rescue or help the children, teachers or crewmembers. It was at 9:35 a.m., nearly an hour after the first call that the kids made, that Patrol Boat 123 arrived and it was the only commanding rescue boat at the scene that maintained communication with the Coast

Guard HQ. At 9:37 a.m., a call starts between the Coast guard and the Patrol Boat 123. The Patrol boat arrived and saw an empty deck where no one could be rescued, and no one jumped in the water or was in the sea. (Yorker, 2019)

The students kept on being told by the members of the crew to stay still and not to move, the crewmembers did not help to evacuate the boat and the kids remained in their cabins. One of the most shocking events took place at 9:47 a.m. the captain leaves the boat in his underwear and escapes to Patrol Boat 123 [SEE ANNEX 6 c], the captain left behind all the students, teachers, and members of the crew that needed him. The captain was rescued (Yorker, 2019). Some parents of the kids that were in the Sewol Ferry shared their testimony with the world, Yoo An-sil, mother of Yumi-Ji said with her glassy eyes:

*“I talked to my daughter on the phone at 9:47 a.m. that is when the captain was being rescued. I told her to follow the teacher’s guidance, which is my biggest regret; I should have told her to scape quickly. But, I did not know the situation, I just told her to follow the teacher’s instructions and she said she would. After the call I could not reach her.”* (Yorker, 2019)

The Sewol started to sink at around 8:49 a.m. When the captain escaped, more than half of the passengers were still on board. Instead of intensifying the rescue operation, the Park government agencies repeatedly requested a camera to be sent in for their internal reporting (Yorker, 2019). Some survivors have also spoken up about what happened that night and this is the case of Kim Sung-mook, who said:

*“At 9:54 a.m., I heard a chopper and looked out, it had a camera, but neither the chopper, nor the Patrol Boat made an evacuation call and, no rescuers led us or gave us any instructions about what to do or not to do.”* (Yorker, 2019)

At 9:56 a.m., some students started texting their parents: “mom, dad the ship has sagged a lot... miss you.” At 10 o’clock in the morning, government agencies were too busy asking for visual evidence and they did not take any care of students that were still inside the boat. Fishermen started to help students but the rescue patrols rejected them and did nothing to help the kids [SEE ANNEX 6 d]. Patrol Boat 123 was the only Coast Guard boat that was at the scene, something already negligent for an area with an enormous traffic of vessels. Patrol Boat 123 did nothing to help the kids, and they approached the Sewol Ferry only once, and then hang back until the ferry sank [SEE

ANNEX 6 e]. The captain who was supposed to protect the people was absent and students who survived made it without any help from the authorities, it was mainly the fishermen who saved their lives.

At 10:25 a.m., the Presidential Office called the Coast Guards and passed on a message from Park Geun-hye that said: “First, make sure to have no casualties. Second, make sure no one is missing in the ferry by scouring the cabins and engine room.” When the boat was almost sunk, they give clear orders to avoid casualties. Nevertheless, it was too late, President Park Geun-hye, who had remained in her bedroom for most of the morning, emerged at the end of the day. Apparently, she had a limited understanding of the desperate situation (Yorker, 2019). That same day in the evening, Park Geun-hye started to show some interest to the situation. The following day, a group of civilian divers arrived on the scene to assist in the Coast Guard’s rescue of any of the 291 people still trapped in the ship. The divers explained that people could be alive if there was air in the boat. The Coast Guards told the drivers they had to pump air into the ferry because the President Park Geun-hye was watching. The diving material used by the president authorities and the Coast Guards was quite unprofessional according to some civilian divers, and the Coast Guards said they were just pretending because the President was watching and pretended to pump some air in front of Park Geun-hye until the boat finally sank.

Over the following 3 months, civilian divers worked to retrieve the bodies of the victims. Some of those civilian divers committed suicide because they could not deal with the trauma. With no government drivers skillful enough to retrieve the bodies in the 40-metre deep sea, the civilian divers dedicated themselves to the recovery mission. Parents complained that instead of saving the kids, the government kept on reporting the situation. On July 2014, the government of Park Geun-hye suddenly ordered the civilian divers to cease the search operation and to leave the area. Over the following year, victims’ families and civilian divers worked together to call for the government to investigate the mishandling of the rescue. (Yorker, 2019)

All this poor administration led the people of South Korea to protest from October 2016 to March 2017. This is known as the Candlelight Protest Movement.

#### [4.3.2. The Candlelight Movement](#)

The Korean protest movement known as the Candlelight movement, the Candlelight Demonstrations or the Candlelight struggle went on for five months, [SEE ANNEX 7], protesters were demanding the impeachment of President Park Geun-hye, finally after this time, Park Geun-hye was found guilty of corruption, blacklisting and misuse of power. Two weeks after President Park was removed from office, the salvage of the Sewol began. It was three years after the sinking (Yorker, 2019). The candlelight movement was one of the main forces of social change, this movement, with other important factors, made the former president leave the Blue house and the voice of the Korean people was finally heard. This was a turning point for the Asia-Pacific region, because there had never been anything of this kind in the neighboring countries.

The candlelight movement started with a small number of protesters, there were not more than 21.000 participants, and this was on October 2016. But, numbers grew rapidly and the organizers said that there were more than 100.000 protesters. The protesters came from all different backgrounds, high school and university students, journalist, professors, etc. As the protests went by more and more people joined and in November almost 2 million people hit the streets of Seoul, major peaks of the protest were for example on new year's eve when South Koreans celebrated the day with a massive protest, in 2017 some politicians also joined the protest because they wanted to be part of the civilian wave that was promoting all the social changes, this is the case of Moon Jae-in and An Hee-jung. In February 2017, Samsung's Vice-chairman Lee Jae-yong was arrested and accused of bribery; this was thanks to all the pressure that the protesters put for the whole corruption situation to come to an end. This movement has a particular relevance for South Korea and this is because it is a divided country. To understand the importance of the candlelight movement in South Korea it is important to bear in mind that even though a new democratic constitution superseded the undemocratic systems of the Yushin regime of Park Chung-hee and the Fifth Republic of Chun Du-hwan the old regime continued to operate. In the context of a divided nation, the constitution may be suspended at any time if the anti-communist and anti-North Korean cause so demands. This was a type of "hidden constitution" unseen in the printed pages of the charter. The harmful impact of this hidden constitution culminated in the random rule and retreat of democracy in the days of Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye (Nak-chung, The Historical Significance and Remaining Challenges of the Candlelight Movement, 2018) .

The candlelight demonstrations put a stop to the operations of the hidden constitution and, by activating the written constitution, put an end to the Park Geun-hye regime. In other words, they carried out “a more essential revolution that changed a country where constitutions were not observed into one where they were” (Nak-chung, changpi magazine, 2016). It is important to bear in mind that a government that was born under the umbrella of this protest movement cannot be other than a groundbreaking government craving to change the Korean Peninsula into a better place with fair and prosperous institutions. Moreover, Moon Jae-in's presidency has proven to be socially and politically revolutionary, so far working day by day to bury the ghosts of the past of corruption, lack of transparency and lack of clarity. It is now time to analyze if Moon's administration has been so far revolutionary for the Korean people and to study Moon Jae-in's arrival into power with his second Sunshine Policy.

#### 4.4 Moon Jae-in's arrival: Second Sunshine Policy

The new president came to power at a time in history when Koreans were emotionally drained and very worn out from all that they had experienced under Park's rule. Koreans were desperate to have a leader who would rule Korea as they deserved, and just then Moon Jae-in arrived. “Steps forward for peace and prosperity were taken through three rounds of inter-Korean summits. In particular, North Korea's participation in the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games marked a turning point in inter-Korean relations toward the path of dialogue and cooperation. It also served as a decisive factor in generating momentum for dialogue so that advances in inter-Korean relations could lead to the establishment of peace on the Korean Peninsula. The leaders of the South and the North, meeting for the first time in 11 years, adopted the Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula at the Peace House of Panmunjom in April envisioning that the two sides would actively cooperate to build a permanent and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula and realize, through complete denuclearization, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula” (Korea, 2019).

Moon continued making efforts towards inter-Korean prosperity. “At the second inter-Korean summit at the Tongilgak of Panmunjom in May, the two leaders agreed to cooperate for the success of the US-North Korea summit, swift implementation of the Panmunjom Declaration, and communication between the leaders without any formality. In the third inter-Korean summit held in Pyongyang in September, North

Korea expressed its will to permanently dismantle its missile engine test site and launch pad in Dongchang-ri in the presence of experts from relevant countries. It also said it would take additional measures such as the permanent dismantlement of the Yongbyon nuclear complex if the US took corresponding measures. The South and the North adopted the Pyongyang Joint Declaration of September 2018, expressing the intention to cooperate closely in the process of complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and the Military Agreement to Implement the Pyongyang Declaration as an annex agreement. These efforts paved the way for complete denuclearization and the establishment of lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula” (Korea, 2019).

#### 4.4.1. Moon Jae-in and his approach towards North Korea

The sudden passing of President Roh Moo-hyun in May 2009 shocked South Korea; the entire nation was overwhelmed, including Moon Jae-in. He assumed the role of a chief mourner and oversaw the overall procedures from the announcement of death to presiding over meetings for the funeral preparations. President Roh was a friend to him, a comrade and the person who led him into politics. Moon was elected a National Assemblyman in the election for the 19<sup>th</sup> National Assembly, representing Sasang-gu District, Busan. He was narrowly defeated in the 18<sup>th</sup> presidential election as the sole candidate representing the entire opposition. From 2015 to January 2016, he was the Chairperson of the New Politics Alliance for Democracy, and retained that position when the party name was changed to the Democratic Party of Korea. In November 2016, he was at the forefront of the efforts to impeach former President Park Geun-hye and spoke for and stayed together with the people who took part in the Candlelight movement protesting, from the beginning to the end, lamenting that the country was not functioning properly. A snap presidential election was held after the Constitutional Court voted unanimously to remove President Park from office. He ran for the presidency as the Democratic Party nominee, declaring that he would uphold the will of the people and create a new Republic of Korea. On the strength of full support from the public, he won by the widest margin ever in Korean presidential election’s history and was elected President for the 19<sup>th</sup> term on May 10, 2017. (Wadae, 2019)

In September 2018, the leaders of South and North Korea met for the third time and embraced each other like friends [see ANNEX 1]. President Moon became the first



South Korean president to address 150,000 Pyongyang citizens in person, declaring that: “our people must live together.” This scene served as confirmation that the two leaders’ determination for peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula was stronger than ever. President Moon Jae-in at the May Day Stadium in Pyongyang addressed the following on September 19, 2018:

*“Our people are outstanding. Our people are resilient. Our people love peace. And, our people must live together. We had lived together for five thousand years but apart for just 70 years. Here, at this place today, I propose we move forward toward the big picture of peace in which the past 70-year-long hostility can be eradicated and we can become one again.”* (Korea.net, 2020).

#### 4.4.2. Possibilities of reunification or perpetual peace in the Korean Peninsula

Both Koreas dream of unification, although the content of each dream appears to be quite different. Both seem to hope that a unified Korea might rise from a middle power to a major power and give Koreans a better place in the world. “Nevertheless, the differences between the two Korean societies and governments would make a peaceful unification difficult to achieve. Indeed, a peaceful unification might proceed only as far as a confederation before the two sides recognize that one or the other is likely to be a loser in unification: a win-win outcome for the two governments does not seem to exist. An interesting and accurate example of peaceful unification is the German case. For many Koreans, the peaceful, negotiated German unification is largely viewed as a success that they would like to replicate. However, the history of German unification suggests that, although it has been generally successful, it has also had its problems, especially for East Germans. Thus, the literature applying the German unification case to Korea usually talks about mistakes that were made in Germany that should not be repeated in Korea. However, the more recent trend in this literature suggests that German unification was substantially different from a potential Korean case” (Bennett, 2018).

For example, Rüdiger Frank argues:

*Closer look, however, reveals that the differences between Germany and Korea far outweigh any similarities. This issue is not just an academic question; wrong*

*assumptions can lead to wrong conclusions and to wrong policies. In the best case, such missteps would only waste money. In the worst case, however, they could lead to mismanagement of the unification process, with potentially disastrous consequences in the social, economic and security spheres (Frank, 2016).*

In addition, Andrei Lankov argues that the calculations of the economists make us increasingly suspect that a German-style unification will disastrously break the South Korean economy, thus undermining the very basis of a unified country's prosperity. (Lankov, Developmental Dictatorship' Could Be North Korea's Most Hopeful, 2016).

In short, a peaceful unification of Korea, attempting to resemble the German reunification, could fail, that is why it is important to focus exclusively in the Korean case and see the path towards Korean unification. (Bennett, 2018). As Lankov points out:

*I would like to start with a statement many people here will find disappointing and disturbing: there are virtually no reasons to expect that a negotiated and voluntary unification of the two Korean states is likely to happen in the near future. It has been noticed many times that the world history has no precedents of a negotiated peaceful and equal unification of two states. The only possible exception is Yemen, but in this country the supposedly "peaceful unification" was followed by a bitter civil war between the former North and former South—hardly an inspiring example. However, a closer look at Korea's situation indicates that in Korea as well the negotiated unification is not possible. (Lankov, Unification and Great Powers, 2017).*

Lankov supports the idea that unification in the Korean Peninsula is not likely to happen, however, the current political performance that is being carried out by the President of South Korea and many other actors in the international community points to a different direction. A direction towards dialogue and openness and that may eventually lead to a closer approach of both countries, a cease-fire or perpetual peace. Moon Jae-In has also publically admitted that he wishes to achieve unification of the Korean Peninsula; this took place during a speech to mark the 74th anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japan's 1910-45 colonial rule. It is essential to mention that the

presidency highlights the importance of denuclearization and greater economic cooperation with the North explaining that in that, lays foundations for lasting peace on the peninsula. “A new Korean peninsula, one that will bring peace and prosperity to itself, East Asia and the world, awaits us,” he said. (McCurry, 2019).

The nuclear issue plays a very important role when it comes to designing a possible unification plan. The unification Minister, Kim Yeon-chul pointed that North Korea has already improved to take some action towards denuclearization, but the minister finds it still “insufficient”, the minister also supports the idea that the increased priority that North Korea is giving to its economic development should be used as leverage to encourage more progress on dismantling its weapons programs. “Basically I think they can’t have both nuclear weapons and the economy at the same time,” Kim said. (Hyonhee Shin, 2019).

The Unification Ministry plays a very important role when it comes to building bridges towards Korean Unification. The ministry defends the values that seek to create a community for peace, prosperity and happiness. The *modus operandi* is based upon a balance between national security and inter-Korean cooperation and it seeks to create a stronger bond between the two Koreas. With the right decisions and the adequate tools, the Korean Peninsula is a potential candidate to be one country again. The Korean relations with other states is also a very important element regarding this possibility and especially the South Korean Relations with the United States and China.

When considering the possibility of a reunification or even that of perpetual peace, the International Relations of South Korea and other nations are, indeed, a key aspect to count on. The foreign relations of a country define to a certain extent their internal politics. First, if we analyze South Korea-China relations it is important to make a difference between both Park Geun-hye and Moon Jae-in administrations. Early in Park Geun-hye's administration, South Korea's contacts with China reached a historic high. Yet, this was followed by reciprocal deceptions. The final major breakthrough in the partnership came in July 2016, when Seoul declared its decision to roll out the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense System (THAAD missile defense system.) In reaction, Beijing used several tools, which incorporated financial constraints, to put additional pressure on Seoul to overturn its position. With the then newly elected president of the Republic of Korea Moon Jae-in in office in Seoul, there was a chance to strengthen existing ties between South Korea and China (Glaser, 2018).

When Moon Jae-in's administration began in May 2017, summit diplomacy was rapidly revived, this type of diplomacy was discontinued by the ex-president's removal, and in 2018, he reinforced Korea's cooperative ties with its four next-door neighbors ,the United States, China, Japan, and Russia, by means of active diplomacy. The Korean government contacted and collaborated more intensely with the United States than before to accomplish the joint objective of full denuclearization and the restoration of a long-lasting peace under the changing security environment of the Korean peninsula. In this regard, the Korean Government worked successfully on the Korean-United States partnership issues such as the wartime transfer of operational control and the Tenth Agreement on Special Measures (Korea, 2019).

President Moon Jae-in set the stage for repairing Korea-China relations by seizing the occasion of his state visit to China in December 2017. The Korean Cabinet embarked on various levels of dialogue and partnership with China through the development of government-to-government networks at various stages, including summit meetings, as well as economic and people-to-people exchanges with the purpose of completely reshaping bilateral relations. In tandem, the Government endeavored to promote China's ability to play a useful role on Korean peninsula affairs. Korea and Russia further strengthened the strategic alliance by actively participating in high-level exchanges and cooperation for the development of Russia's Far East region. In June 2018, President Moon Jae-in conducted a state visit to Russia, the first state visit in 19 years by a Korean president, and was the very first Korean president to deliver a speech to the State Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament. He concurred with President Putin on the need for cooperation in the "9-Bridge" areas, which include gas, railways and ports (Korea, 2019).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

*“Starting is half the task”*, Korean proverb

This research project has described the endeavors of president Moon Jae-in in terms of a new paradigm of politics in the Korean Peninsula and has introduced the hypothesis that, under this kind of leadership, not only a perpetual peace and ceasefire can be expected, but also even a Korean reunification could be reasonably longed for. Moon Jae-In has started a new approach, and starting is half the task.

Through different summits and practices, Moon has been able to build a stronger relationship with the North and create a new alliance with their neighbors. First, it has ensured an inter-Korean dialogue attending the inter-Korean summits for the first time since 2007 when former President Roh was representing South Korea. In 2018 alone, there were three summits where the leaders of the two Koreas met. Undoubtedly, something that marked a before and after in the relations between the two Koreas was the result of the summit that took place in April 2018. The result of this summit between the neighboring countries was the Panmunjom Declaration, which was signed at a symbolic place: the Peace House located in the famous Demilitarized Zone. This rapprochement is the proof that the two Koreas wish to leave behind the 70 years of separation that divide them and embark on a common project that will lead them to a possible reunification.

The scenario of a definitive peace agreement to replace the armistice that ended the war in 1953 is not far off. As there is no peace treaty as such, the two nations are still engaged in a technical war, but if the two Koreas continue to strive to put their differences behind them, reunification will be possible.

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## 7. ANNEXES

Annex 1: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korea President Moon Jae-in during the Inter-Korean Summit in May 2018



Source: (NAKAZAWA, 2018)



Source: (Reuters, 2018)

Annex 2: Korean families separated by war reunited after 65 years

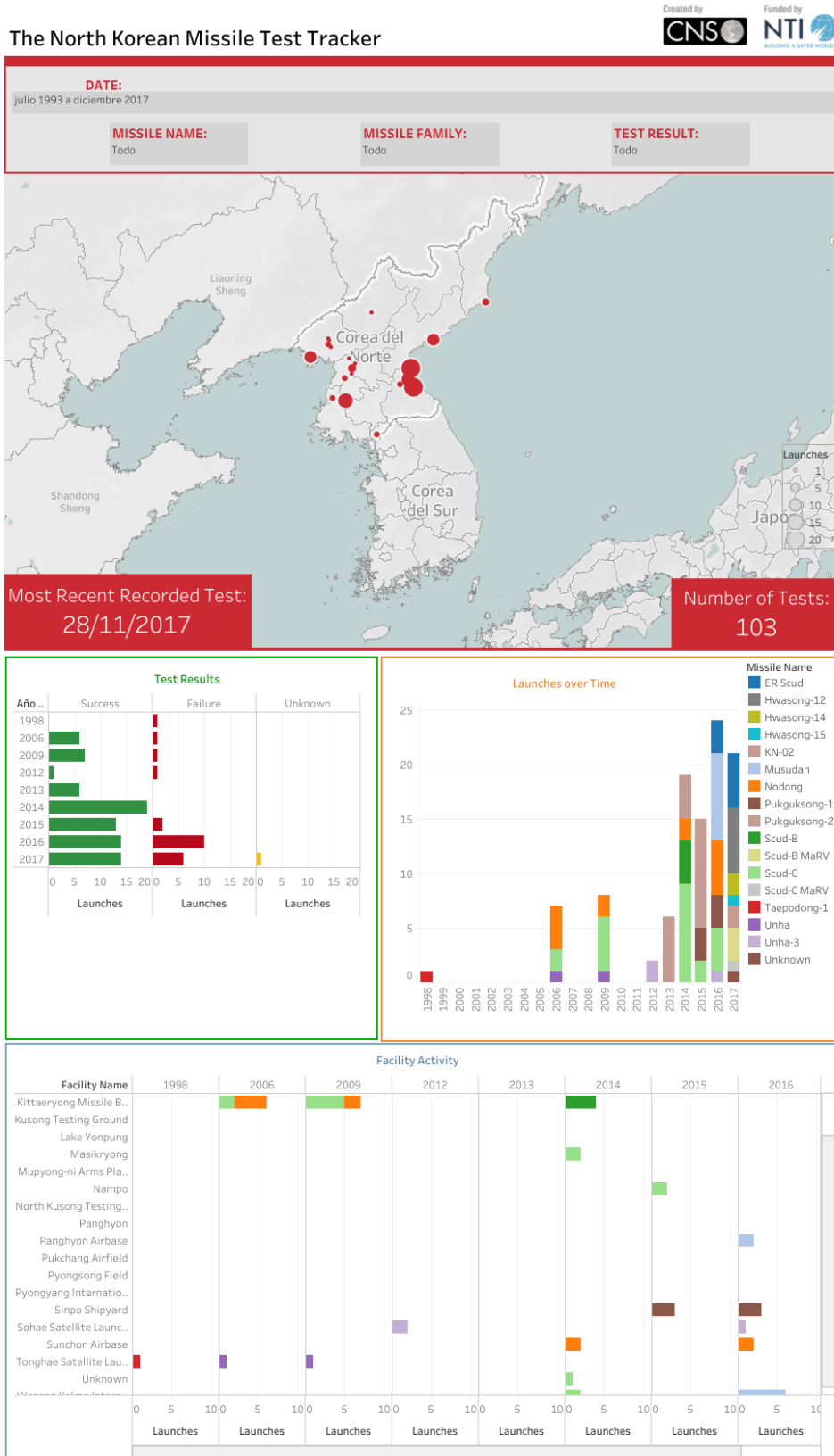


Source: (Reuters, Business Insider , 2018)



Source: (History, 2000)

### Annex 3: North Korean Missile operations between 1993 and 2017.



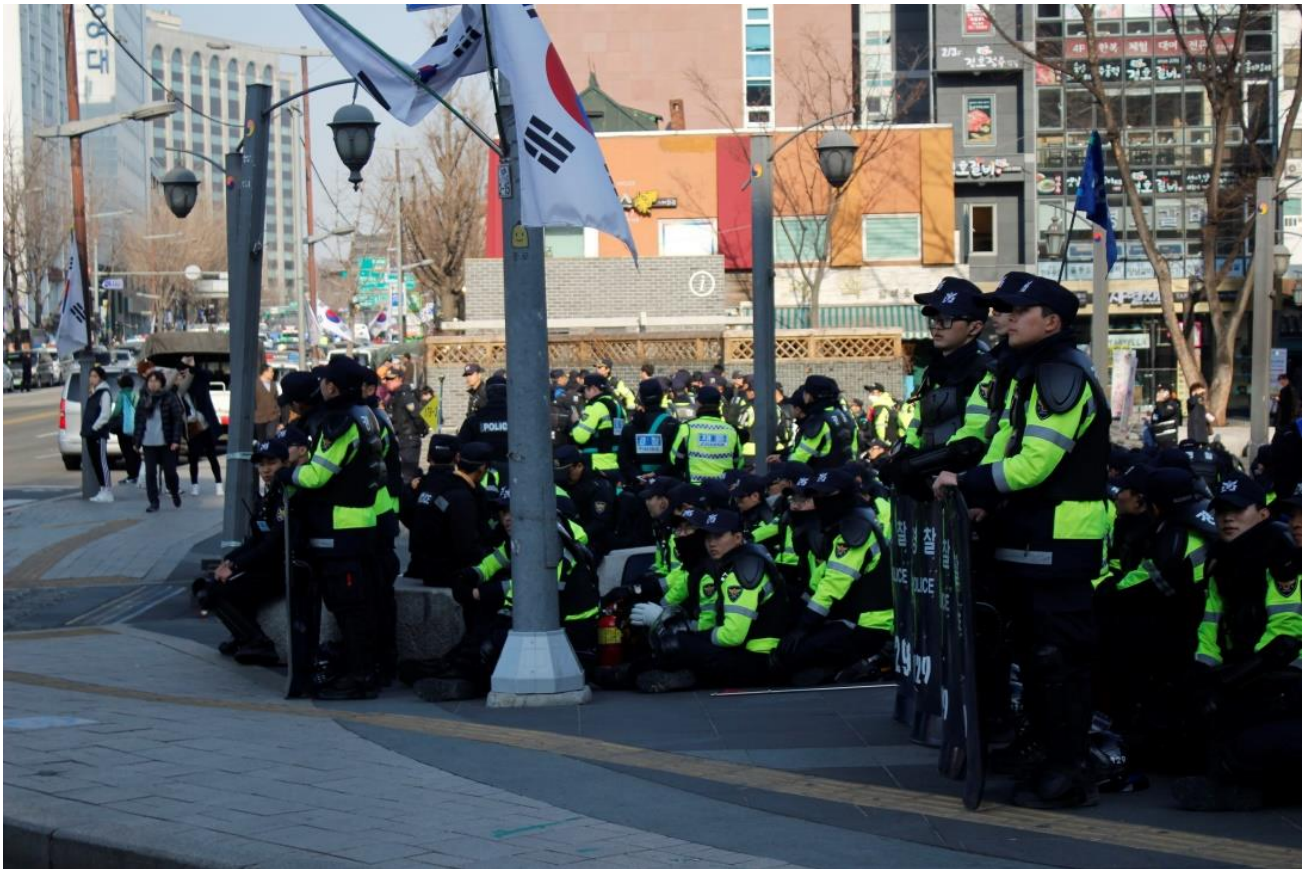
Source: (world, 2020)

Annex 4: March 9-10 Impeachment of Park Geun-hye in Seoul

Source for all images under ANNEX 4: (Moussa, Impeachment Picture, 2017)







Annex 5: Sewol Ferry Disaster affected families and protesters in Seoul



Source: (Moussa, Sewol Ferry Disaster affected families and protesters , 2017)





Source: (Ju, 2017)



Source: (Salmon, 2015)

Annex 6: Sewol Ferry the disaster itself

A:



Source: (Yorker, 2019)

B:



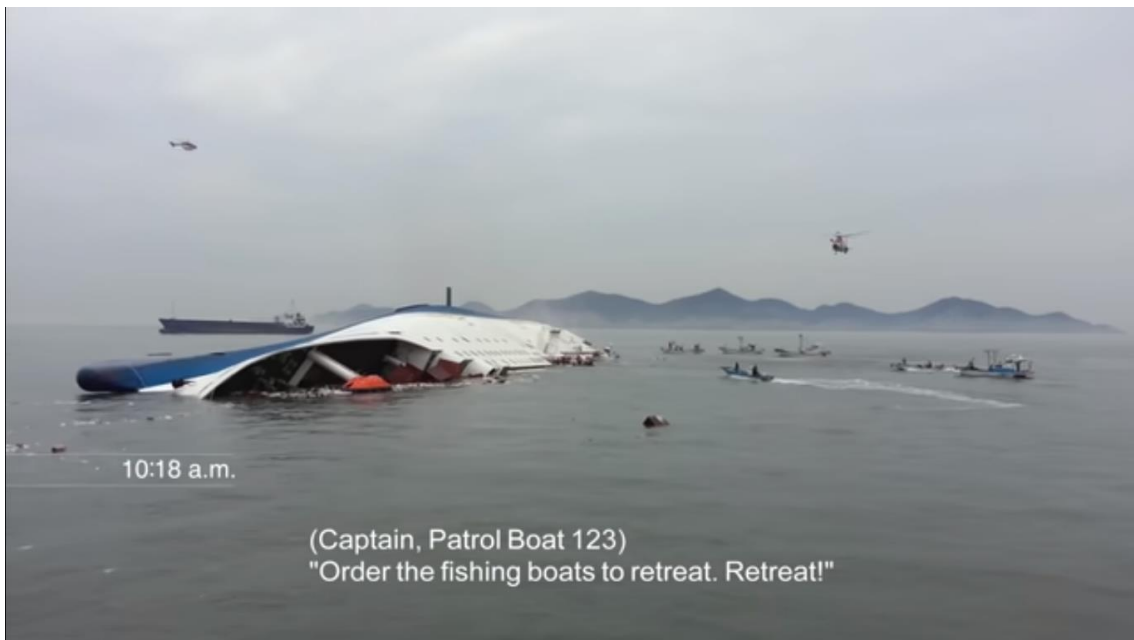
Source: (Yorker, 2019)

C:



Source: (Yorker, 2019)

D:



Source: (Yorker, 2019)

E:



(Yorker, 2019)

#### Annex 7: The Candlelight Movement



Source: (CNN, 2016)