

# Comparing the 2000 and 2007 Inter-Korean Summits

## By Chung-in Moon



# From Symbols

The leaders of North and South Korea recently held their second summit. The first was held in 2000.

**Political scientist and *Global Asia* Editor-in-Chief Chung-in Moon attended both gatherings as a special delegate. He provides a detailed analysis of why the latest summit should be seen as more significant than many observers have thought.**



# to Substance

I WAS A SPECIAL delegate to both the 2000 and 2007 summits between North and South Korea, the first such meetings ever held on the divided peninsula. I was fortunate to witness the changes in North-South relations over those seven years as reflected in the differences in the ambiance, protocol arrangements, and agreements reached at the two summits. I would like to share some of my thoughts and observations on these two events and consider the implications the 2007 summit will have for future relations between the two Koreas. This kind of first-hand account can help dispel the misguided impression created by some in the media — especially in South Korea — that the Oct. 2007 summit somehow fell short of the accomplishments made in 2000.

Broadly speaking, the 2007 summit represented an important step toward turning the agreements of 2000 into reality. The earlier summit was largely symbolic, an introductory and tension-reducing event, while the 2007 summit produced far more practical agreements for the advancement of future inter-Korean relations.



## READING THE SCENE:

### WHAT THE DETAILS TELL US

In carefully scripted diplomatic events, the smallest details often tell the bigger story. This is true of the two summits, including the finer points of the reception ceremony, the program line-up and the nature of the farewell luncheon.

The 2000 summit was a rather uncertain event because it was the first visit ever made to North Korea by a South Korean head of state. The official schedule was unknown, and there weren't even educated guesses on who would be welcoming us at the airport. On June 13, 2000, when the South Korean delegation arrived at Sunan Airport in Pyongyang Chairman Kim Jong-il was there to receive President Kim Dae-jung in person. We were surprised, because South Koreans expected Kim Young-nam, the president of the presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly and official head of state, to welcome President Kim. Although the welcoming ceremony was brief, Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong-il rode in the same car to the Paekhwawon

<sup>1</sup> The April 25 Culture Center has special significance in North Korea since Kim Il-Sung founded Korea's first anti-Japanese guerrilla group on April 25, 1932. Kim's political legitimacy emanated from the anti-Japanese struggle.

<sup>2</sup> These included Vice Marshal Cho Myong-rok, Korea Workers' Party secretaries Yon Hyung-muk and Kim Yong-soon, the Speaker of the Supreme People's Assembly, Choi Taek-bok, and Vice President of the presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly Yang Hyung-sop.

State Guest House, passing through downtown Pyongyang where over half a million North Koreans welcomed the motorcade with well-choreographed cheers.

In contrast, President Roh Moo-hyun's visit to Pyongyang on Oct. 2, 2007 began with stage-managed drama. Instead of flying, Roh traveled by car to Pyongyang, the first time that a South Korean president had crossed into the North by land since the Korean War. On his way to Pyongyang, he got out of his car with the First Lady and walked across the Military Line of Demarcation that separates the two countries inside the demilitarized zone (DMZ), underscoring the artificial nature of the line.

The welcome in Pyongyang was quite impressive. Roh was greeted by head of state Kim Young-nam at the People's Culture Palace and they paraded in an open car all the way to the April 25th Culture Center, where Kim Jong-il personally welcomed Roh amid enthusiastic cheers from several hundred thousand people.

To my knowledge, Roh is the first outsider to be formally welcomed in front of the April 25 Culture Center, which commemorates Kim Il-sung's anti-Japanese resistance unit.<sup>1</sup> Holding the reception at such a symbolic site in heart of Pyongyang showed the North's increasing acceptance of inter-Korean relations. Indeed, this was qualitatively different from the brief reception given to President Kim Dae-jung at Sunan Airport in 2000. Equally important was the fact that Kim Jong-il personally welcomed official and special delegates from the South in 2007, something that did not happen in 2000.

The overall schedule of the 2007 summit was similar to 2000. Roh and Kim Young-nam held a working meeting on the afternoon of Oct. 2, followed by a welcoming dinner hosted by Kim that evening. Roh reciprocated by hosting a dinner on Oct. 3 and Kim Jong-il hosted a farewell

luncheon on Oct. 4. Nevertheless, there were some striking differences.

Whereas only one meeting was held between the two top leaders in 2000, two meetings took place in 2007, a morning and an afternoon session on Oct. 3. In 2000, Kim Jong-il attended the dinner hosted by President Kim, while in 2007 he did not attend the dinner hosted by Roh. Despite this, there seems to be a broad symmetry between 2000 and 2007 in terms of overall protocol, time allocation, and the encounters between the two leaders. Claims in the South Korean mass media that the 2007 summit was marred by negative protocol are unwarranted.

Another difference between the summits is seen in the seating arrangements of those North Korean leaders invited to the farewell luncheon hosted by Chairman Kim Jong-il at the Paekhwawon State Guest House on Oct. 4. In 2000, the North Koreans invited a number of symbolically important leaders to the luncheon<sup>2</sup> who had no practical role in inter-Korean relations.

In contrast, the Kim Jong-il's 2007 luncheon included North Korean participants who are directly involved in implementing the latest summit declaration. Most prominent among them were Prime Minister Kim Young-il and Deputy Prime Minister No Doo-chull. Since the 2007 summit declaration stipulated inter-Korean talks at the prime minister and deputy prime minister level, their presence is a positive sign. Kim Il-chol, North Korea's Defense Minister, was also seated next to Kim Jang-soo, his counterpart in the South. North Korean generals Park Jae-kyung and Ri Myong-su, both Vice Defense Ministers, were also present. Their attendance was interpreted as a sign of Kim Jong-il's commitment to improved relations. It was also notable that Kang Seok-joo and Kim Gye-gwan, the North's Vice Foreign Ministers in charge of the six-party talks, were seated at the head

<sup>3</sup> The 2000 declaration included this wording: “President Kim Dae-jung cordially invited National Defense Commission Chairman Kim Jong-il to visit Seoul, and Chairman Kim Jong-il will visit Seoul at an appropriate time.” That Roh visited the North instead of Kim coming to Seoul was a source of some controversy in South Korea ahead of the 2007 summit.

*Roh is the first outsider to be formally welcomed in front of the April 25 Culture Center, which commemorates Kim Il-sung’s anti-Japanese resistance unit. Holding the reception at such a symbolic site in heart of Pyongyang showed the North’s increasing acceptance of inter-Korean relations.*

table. Given North Korea’s hierarchical leadership structure, this seating arrangement was extraordinary, and essentially represented a gesture of commitment on the part of Kim Jong-il toward the peaceful resolution of the nuclear problem. As in 2000, Kim’s brother-in-law Jang Sung-taik entertained business leaders, while Pak Nam-gi, the head of the Worker’s Party’s planning and fiscal affairs office, entertained the presidents of South Korea’s leading state enterprises. Taken together, the functional composition of the North Korean participants at the 2007 summit and the nature of the seating arrangements suggest a genuine commitment to implementing the 2007 summit declaration.



#### READING THE CONTENT: THE 2000 AND 2007 SUMMIT DECLARATIONS

Beyond the important signals contained in the protocol arrangements, I believe there has also been remarkable progress in the substance of the meetings. This is evident when we compare the respective summit declarations — that of June 15, 2000 and that of Oct. 4, 2007. To be sure, the June 15 Declaration is of paramount importance precisely because without it, the Oct. 4 Declaration would not have been possible. However, the June

15 Declaration is largely symbolic and general, whereas the 2007 document is concrete and specific. What is most remarkable is that the two leaders reached agreement on 45 items across five broad areas in just two rounds of summit talks that lasted a combined four hours. During the 2000 summit, it took more than nine hours to reach agreement on six items, and President Kim Dae-jung and Chairman Kim Jong-il had to spend considerable time settling procedural issues such as who should sign the declaration and whether to include in the declaration a return visit by Chairman Kim to Seoul.<sup>3</sup>

Let’s examine the 2007 declaration by focusing on the three broad categories — peace, mutual prosperity and reconciliation, exchange and unification.



#### CREATING PEACE ON THE PENINSULA

Lacking any explicit agreements on peace and security, the June 15 Declaration has been subject to immense criticism at home and abroad. Roh realized this inherent weakness and placed a greater emphasis on a peace-related agenda. He had three items in mind: denuclearization of North Korea, transformation of the armistice agreement into a permanent peace

<sup>4</sup> The joint declaration, which became effective on February 19, 1992 stipulates that (1) both Koreas do not test, manufacture, produce, accept, possess, store, deploy, and use nuclear weapons; (2) both Koreas use nuclear energy only for peaceful purposes; (3) both Koreas do not possess nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities; (4) both Koreas conduct inspection on mutually agreed and selected nuclear facilities in accordance with procedures and methods defined by the North-South Joint Nuclear Control Committee in order to verify the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula; (5) both Koreas establish and operate the Joint Nuclear Control Committee in order to implement the joint declaration during one month after the joint declaration becomes effective.

regime through an official declaration of an end to the Korean War and, finally, tension-reduction and military confidence-building measures. Roh achieved mixed results on these issues.

It is now known that it was Roh who initiated the discussion of the nuclear issue at the 2007 summit. He strongly urged Kim Jong-il to comply with the “Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” the document signed by the two countries in 1992.<sup>4</sup> In response, on Oct. 3 Kim Jong-il called on North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye-gwan, who had just returned from Beijing, to report on the recent agreement reached at the six-party talks in front of the two leaders. Kim Gye-gwan reported that North Korea will strictly observe the so-called “second stage” tasks of disabling all nuclear facilities and openly declaring all nuclear programs and weapons, including uranium enrichment activities. Furthermore, Kim Jong-il reaffirmed his intention to honor his father’s desire, stated in 1992, to see a denuclearized Korean Peninsula.

It is in this context that Roh and Kim reasserted the two countries’ resolve to work toward the establishment of peace on the Korean Peninsula and denuclearization. The second paragraph of Article 4 of the summit declaration confirms this: “The South and the North agree to work together to implement the Sept. 19 Joint Statement and the Feb. 13 Agreement (of the six-party talks), smoothly in order to resolve the nuclear problem on the Korean Peninsula.”

Although the Oct. 4 Declaration does not specifically state North Korea’s willingness to discard its nuclear weapons, the inclusion of North Korea’s willingness to comply with the Sept. 19 Joint Statement, which contains both the abandonment of all nuclear programs and compliance with the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, implicitly addresses the issue and

*An insistence that only the legal parties to the original armistice should be involved in future talks to end the Korean War no longer makes sense.*

*The September 19 Joint Statement of the six party talks implies a more sensible approach: that both de jure and de facto parties, namely the two Koreas, the US, and China, should be included.*

can be seen as a supplemental commitment to the denuclearization process. However, because the six-party talks are the primary venue for the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue, Roh would have been constrained in pressing the issue at the summit. It also might have been difficult for him to insist on more action given that this was his first encounter with Chairman Kim. Nevertheless, Roh was able to bring the issue to the table and receive some confirmation from Kim that he was willing to resolve the nuclear issue peacefully.

Some critics have argued that Roh appeared to have appeased his counterpart by not formally linking inter-Korean economic exchange and cooperation to North Korea's denuclearization in the Oct. 4 Declaration. This criticism, in my view, is off-base. It is commonly understood that more comprehensive inter-Korean economic cooperation is virtually inconceivable without tangible progress toward denuclearization. Roh might simply have felt it impolite to press the issue in a summit that was designed to build mutual trust.

Regarding the creation of a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, Roh conveyed US President George W. Bush's message on this subject to Kim during the summit. Roh and Bush had earlier discussed ways of replacing the 1953 armistice agreement with a peace regime in Korea. At the ROK-US summit on September 6 during the 2007 Sydney APEC summit, Bush indicated he would join the leaders of South and North Korea to declare an end to the Korean War and engage in discussions to create a permanent peace regime if North Korea's denuclearization was complete. Bush's proposal would involve three parties in the discussion: North and South Korea, and the US.

While Kim responded favorably to the message, he suggested a summit with "three or four" parties. It is not clear exactly what he

meant, but it is presumed that he meant the fourth party to be China.

Interestingly, Roh raised the possibility of including China in such a summit when he met President Hu Jintao in Sydney in September, but Hu did not formally endorse the idea. Nevertheless, both Koreas would most likely extend an invitation to China to join such a process, and China would likely agree, not only because it is a legal party to the 1953 armistice agreement — which South Korea did not actually sign — but also because the Sept. 19 Joint Statement stipulated so. Article 4 of the Oct. 4 Declaration says: "The South and the North both recognize the need to end the current armistice regime and build a permanent peace regime and work together to hold a three or four party summit talk in an area of the Korean peninsula with other countries directly involved in this matter to declare an end to the Korean War." On Nov. 13 Roh followed this up with a public call for such a summit: "In order to push for the prompt nuclear dismantlement of North Korea and the conclusion of a peace treaty, the leaders of the concerned countries need to make a joint declaration and set up a definite milestone."

Efforts to move toward a formal declaration to end the Korean War face three contentious issues. The first is the view that the talks should be restricted to three parties — North Korea, the US and China, to the exclusion of South Korea. This is based on the legal structure of the original armistice agreement, which was signed by the US, China and North Korea, but not by South Korea — which, in protest, did not sign. From a legal point of view, such an argument seems valid. But upon closer scrutiny, the absurd complexities of the situation become evident. The actual signatories agreement were a North Korean general representing the North's government, a Chinese general representing Chinese "volunteer" forc-

es, and an American admiral representing the United Nations Command. In other words, strictly speaking, the legal signatories were the North Korean government, Chinese volunteer forces that no longer exist, and the United Nations Command, not the US government. Thus, an insistence that only the legal parties to the original armistice should be involved in future talks to end the Korean War no longer makes sense. The Sept. 19 Joint Statement of the six-party talks implies a more sensible approach: that both de jure and de facto parties, namely the two Koreas, the US, and China, should be included.

The second contentious issue is the question of timing. Some argue that negotiations over a peace treaty should precede a “three or four party” summit aimed at declaring an end to the Korean War, because otherwise the Korean Peninsula would be susceptible to transitional uncertainty without a formal arrangement for peace. But such criticism seems to me too severe and literal. Such transitional uncertainty can easily be resolved by including in the declaration to end the war such provisions as maintenance of the existing armistice agreement until a permanent peace regime is established, initiation of four-party negotiations for a peace regime, and the launching of DPRK-US bilateral negotiations on diplomatic normalization.

A final contentious issue is the argument that the 2007 summit declaration failed to link the establishment of a permanent peace regime to North Korea’s complete denuclearization. This argument, however, ignores the fact that South Korea has all along sought to link the six-party talks to the establishment of a peace regime. This view has held that if North Korea makes visible progress in dismantling its nuclear programs and weapons, the other concerned parties may well consider holding talks to end the Korean War as an incentive for North Korea.

## Building Closer Ties

**The 2007 Declaration includes several interesting cooperative investment, infrastructure and natural resource development projects. They include:**

1. Creation of the “special zone for peace and cooperation in the West Sea.”

The Oct. 4 Declaration recognizes the possibility that inter-Korean cooperation and a reduction in tensions is necessary to make this happen. Article 3 of the declaration says: “The South and the North agree to work closely together to end their hostile military relations, reducing tension and securing peace on the Korean Peninsula. They agree to ease military tensions, resolve disputes through dialogue and negotiations, oppose war on the peninsula, and oppose any kinds of war, while adhering strictly to their commitment to nonaggression.” Despite this, the declaration lacks specific agreements in this area, such as the notification and observation of military maneuvers, exchange of military personnel and information, establishment of a military hot line, peaceful use of the demilitarized zone, military redeployment measures such as the relocation of offensive forces to the rear area, and initiation of the joint military commission to oversee these confidence-building measures.

However, North and South Korea did agree to designate a common fishery zone in the West Sea as a “zone of peace,” in order to pre-

2. Swift completion of the first-phase construction of the Kaeseong Industrial Complex.
3. Opening of freight rail services to Kaesong and improved transportation, communication, and customs clearance procedures for the complex.
4. Repair of the Kaeseong-Sinuiju rail link and the Kaeseong-Pyongyang expressway.
5. Construction of joint shipyards at Anbyeon and Nampo ports in North Korea.
- 6 Pursuit of joint projects related to agriculture, public health and environmental protection.

vent accidental naval clashes over violations of the Northern Limit Line, which defines the sea boundary between the two countries and has long been disputed by the North. They have also agreed to hold inter-Korean defense ministerial talks in Pyongyang in November to discuss various issues, including confidence-building measures regarding cooperative projects in the zone. This represents significant progress, but North Korea still seems reluctant to pursue a wide range of inter-Korean military confidence-building measures and arms control actions. Meanwhile, South Korea's efforts to use economic cooperation to produce positive effects on the peace process are innovative, but have yet to produce concrete results.



#### SHAPING COMMON PROSPERITY

Compared with the June 15, 2000 declaration, which stipulated in very general terms the need for balanced development of the national economy through economic cooperation, the 2007 declaration contained a broad range of concrete agreements. In particular, Article 5 of the declaration sets forth two

principles of inter-Korean economic cooperation: “joint management for joint benefits and sharing abundance and needs with each other” and “preferential treatment in inter-Korean economic cooperation.” The former principle means inter-Korean economic relations should be based on a mutually beneficial and complementary exchange, while the latter refers to the preferential treatment of South Korean firms engaging in economic projects in the North. The first essentially reflects a North Korean demand. The North has been extremely critical of the notion of “unilateral giving (peojugi)” and has called for a new division of labor in which the South will provide capital and technology, while the North will provide land and manpower, so that the South may share its prosperity with the North (see box for more information).

The two sides have also agreed to upgrade the status of the existing Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation Promotion Committee to a Deputy Prime Minister-level Joint Commission for Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation.

The creation of a special zone in the West Sea has several profound implications. In the past, the North Korean military strongly opposed any cooperation in the West Sea without first resolving the territorial question of the Northern Limit Line. Several naval clashes have taken place as a result of disputes over the line with casualties on both sides. But at the 2007 summit, the North relaxed its position by agreeing to transform Haeju port and adjoining coastal areas into a special zone without first settling the issue of the line. The special zone comprises several projects: the establishment of a common fishery and peace zone, construction of a special economic zone and utilization of Haeju port, passage of civilian vessels to and from Haeju through a direct sea route and joint utilization of the Han River estuary. As noted in Article 3 of the declaration, mili-

tary assurance and confidence-building measures are essential in order to implement these projects. The inter-Korean defense ministerial talks scheduled in November were to discuss these issues. In view of this, the implementation of a special zone in the West Sea could bring about a circle of limited economic cooperation. Given the current high wall of suspicion and distrust, an incremental approach linking economic cooperation and peace appears to be the only viable way to build inter-Korean confidence.

Despite the impressive array of economic agreements, questions have been raised over costs and feasibility. In my view it seems premature to raise the issue of cost. This will become much clearer only after prioritization of agreed projects, estimates of project costs, division of financial resources (e.g., taxpayers' money, private sector investment, mobilization of international public and private funds, etc.) and project-by-project feasibility studies. For example, cooperative projects on agriculture, public health and the environment will require South Korean budgetary support, but projects such as the improvement of the Seoul-Shinuiju railway and the Kaeseong-Pyongyang highway, shipbuilding ventures, the expansion of the Kaeseong Industrial Complex and the establishment of special economic zones could mobilize private sector resources and even participation by the international financial community. Resolution of the North Korean nuclear problem and a reduction in inter-Korean tensions, however, are prerequisites for this to happen.

On a slight tangent, I do not see any reason why the next South Korean government would not honor the agreements in the 2007 declaration. Provided that progress is made on nuclear issues, even Lee Myong-bak, the conservative Grand National Party presidential candidate and the current favorite to win the election, is

likely to implement these agreements. The problem is whether the North is willing to cooperate. The GNP is the traditional party of hard-line anti-communism and Lee has been extremely critical of the North, describing the coming presidential election as "a fight between pro-North Korean leftists and pro-American conservatives." Judging from past experiences during the Kim Young-sam period, the North may well maintain a confrontational attitude toward Lee if he is elected, despite its desperate economic needs.



#### ENHANCING RECONCILIATION, EXCHANGE AND UNIFICATION

Article 2 of the June 15 Declaration states: "Recognizing a commonality in the South's proposal of a 'union of states' and the North's proposal of a low stage of federation, the North and the South have agreed to seek national unification in this direction." Since that was agreed in 2000, no progress was made on this issue. However, during the 2007 summit, there was discernable movement on the institutionalization of inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation. The mutual agreement to hold North-South talks at the level of prime minister, deputy prime minister and defense minister, as well as inter-Korean parliamentary talks underscores the institutionalization of the North-South dialogue, a great step toward incremental unification. Indeed, Prime Minister-level talks, held in Seoul in November, were the first meetings between the premiers of the two countries in 15 years.

Additionally, there were noticeable efforts at the 2007 summit regarding social and cultural exchanges and cooperation in history, language, education, science and technology, culture and arts, and sports. On tourism, an area of both symbolic importance and economic benefit, the two Koreas agreed to operate direct flights between Seoul and Mt. Paektu in the North. Furthermore,

a South-North joint cheering team will be sent to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, using the Seoul-Sinuiju Railway Line en route to Beijing.

The South and North also agreed to promote humanitarian projects, to expand reunions of separated families and promote exchanges of video messages and to station resident representatives from each side at the reunion center to be established at Mt. Geumgang in North Korea. The two sides also agreed to cooperate in times of natural disasters and other emergencies.

However, when Roh raised the issue of the return of “kidnapped South Koreans” and “Korean War prisoners” — two sensitive issues for South Koreans — the response was not promising. The North insists there are no South Korean “abductees.” Instead, they argue these people voluntarily embraced the North. The North’s position on prisoners of war also appears unchanged. The North argues that there was a complete exchange of prisoners as part of the 1953 armistice. Resolution of these two issues remains unlikely.

The South and North agreed to increase cooperation to promote the interests of all Koreans, especially the interests of overseas Koreans. This appears to reflect a North Korean request regarding joint cooperation to ease the plight of Josoren, pro-North Korean residents in Japan. Since the government of Junichiro Koizumi, Japanese authorities pressured the Josoren business community through tax investigations and a cutoff of access to bank credit as part of an effort to prevent the transfer of illicit funds to North Korea. Consequently, both North Korea and the Josoren community have suffered.

*Given the current high wall of suspicion and distrust, an incremental approach linking economic cooperation and peace appears to be the only viable way to build inter-Korean confidence.*



#### ASSESSMENTS AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

History reveals that inter-Korean agreements have been marked by a lack of implementation. The Basic Agreement on Non-

aggression, Reconciliation, and Exchanges and Cooperation and the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of 1992, for example, were not implemented as agreed. Such a track record has fueled doubts about the future of the 2nd Korean summit declaration. This time, however, the situation seems somewhat different from

the Oct. 4 declaration. These talks, which were held for only the second time in inter-Korean history, also ended with several important agreements: (1) activation of a joint military commission to discuss a wide range of inter-Korean military confidence-building measures; (2) military assurance for a direct sea route between Incheon

*Despite the overall success of the 2007 summit in institutionalizing inter-Korea relations, solidifying agreements set forth in the June 15, 2000 declaration and making more concrete headway in economic, social and cultural cooperation, several daunting challenges lie ahead.*

the past. Both Koreas have been moving in a surprisingly swift mode.

As the Oct. 4 summit declaration stipulated, Prime Minister Kim Young-il of North Korea visited Seoul Nov. 14-16 and held the first inter-Korean talks at the premier level since 1992. The talks reached 49 concrete agreements aimed at implementing provisions of the Oct. 4 declaration. Apart from agreements on technical details of cooperative projects, the talks also produced more meaningful outcomes related to the institutionalization of inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation. These included regular premier-level talks twice a year; the launching of the deputy prime minister-level North-South Joint Economic Commission in Seoul on Dec. 4-6, 2007; the initiation of a committee for the promotion of a special zone for peace and cooperation in the West Sea at ministerial level; and the establishment of a joint committee on social and cultural cooperation.

North-South defense minister talks were also held in Pyongyang Nov. 27-29, as mandated by

and Haeju port; (3) joint utilization of the Han River estuary; (4) security assurance for a direct air route between Seoul and Mt. Baekdu; (5) military assurance for a railway connection to Kaesung; (6) joint excavation of remains of those missing in action during the Korean War; and finally, (7) the holding of a third series of defense minister talks in Seoul in 2008. Given the military conflict and tensions of the past, this, in my view, is quite an impressive achievement.

However, two of the most sensitive issues were not resolved. The two defense ministers failed to reach an agreement of the designation of common fishery zones and a zone of peace in the West Sea due to divergent views on the Northern Limit Line (NLL). Whereas the South proposed to designate an equal area north and south of the NLL as a peace zone, the North adhered to its old position, calling for a lowering of the NLL to a 12 nautical mile line from the North Korean coast in accordance with the International Law of the Sea. It was agreed that the issues of common fishery zones and the peace zone be rene-

gotiated at general level talks, while the issue of maritime boundaries would be taken up by the Joint Military Commission.

South Korea's proposal to set up a hotline between defense ministers was also turned down. The North insisted on using existing telephone lines between military situation rooms located at the western (Seoul-Shinuiju railway management) and eastern parts (East sea railway management) of the DMZ.

Equally important in assessing the outcome of the second inter-Korean summit was Kim Yang-gon's visit to Seoul Nov. 29-Dec. 1. Kim is head of the United Front Department of the Korea Workers' Party, which formulates and oversees policy on inter-Korea relations. It was his department that orchestrated the October inter-Korean summit, and he was the only North Korean official who was present during two rounds of the 2nd Korean summit. During his visit, Kim met with a wide range of South Korean leaders and assured them of North Korea's intention to implement the Oct. 4 declaration without interruption. One of the aims of his visit appears to have been to broaden the social support base for implementing the declaration. This again tells us something about North Korea's commitment to exchanges and cooperation with the South.

Despite the overall success of the 2007 summit in institutionalizing inter-Korea relations, solidifying agreements set forth in the June 15, 2000 declaration and making concrete headway in economic, social and cultural cooperation, several daunting challenges lie ahead.

The first could arise from excessive optimism regarding the mutually beneficial relationship between the six-party talks and the inter-Korean summit, and between economic cooperation and peace. Although significant progress has been made, failure to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue through the six-party talks could

have a devastating impact on inter-Korean relations. At the same time, if the inter-Korean defense ministerial meeting fails to produce workable military assurances over the special zone for peace and cooperation in the West Sea, the Koreas could again enter another period of protracted stalemate, which in turn could impact the success of the six-party talks. More cautious and prudent measures, therefore, must be envisioned in order to prevent a "virtuous circle" from turning into a "vicious circle."

The second challenge involves deep-rooted suspicion and distrust between the two Koreas. Although Article 2 of the 2007 declaration reaffirmed the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, Pyongyang still seems suspicious of Seoul's intentions. The issue actually became somewhat pronounced in the course of the summit. Roh proposed the creation of several special economic zones in the North for mutual cooperation, but Kim's response was quite negative. Commenting on the Kaeseong zone, he said, "Thank you for your proposal, but we have not received any benefits from the Kaeseong project. The project was launched four years ago, but it is still in the pilot stage. You have not even arrived at the first stage. More importantly, the South has been staging a political propaganda campaign as if the Kaeseong project is a successful example of opening and reform in the North."

In other words, Kim made it clear that he viewed Seoul's proposal on special economic zones as an attempt to undermine the North Korean regime through "opening and reform." Confronted with this response, Roh decided not to use terms such as "opening and reform" in the context of such zones — something that has triggered fierce opposition from conservative forces in the South. In order to further enhance inter-Korean cooperation, mutual suspi-

<sup>5</sup> North Korean officials raised this issue during the 2000 summit. They told business leaders from the South that they were willing to accommodate requests pertaining to legal and institutional arrangements for investment from the South, but urged the South to refrain from using terms such as “opening and reform” since this could trigger enormous opposition from hard-liners in the military and the party.

*The specter of domestic confrontation over the South’s relationship to the North also clouds the future of inter-Korean relations. Polarization between liberal proponents of engagement and conservative anti-engagement hardliners could profoundly undercut the prospects for improved inter-Korean relations.*

cions regarding such economic zones will have to be overcome.<sup>5</sup>

The third challenge emanates from inherent contradictions between inter-Korean cooperation and international cooperation. From the moment President Roh arrived in Pyongyang on Oct. 2, he was bombarded with North Korean sermonizing on the primacy of self-reliance and Korean solidarity over international, especially US-South Korea, cooperation. However, Roh was firm. He argued that no country could live and prosper in complete self-reliance in a world of globalization and economic interdependence, even citing the plight of North Korea in the wake of the Banco Delta Asia incident. He said that although he increased Seoul’s military autonomy by regaining wartime operational control from the U.S. and planning for the relocation of American military bases to Pyongtaek by 2012, South Korea needed close cooperation with the United States. Furthermore, he added that inter-Korean cooperation devoid of international cooperation, especially with the US, is virtually inconceivable and that there is no such a thing as absolute self-reliance. While Kim seemed to agree with the argument, this issue will nevertheless continue to haunt inter-Korean relations.

The specter of domestic confrontation over the South’s relationship to the North also clouds the future of inter-Korean relations. Polarization

between liberal proponents of engagement and conservative anti-engagement hardliners could profoundly undercut the prospects for improved inter-Korean relations. Overcoming the black-and-white mentality of South Korean politics is essential before a lasting and peaceful settlement with the North can be reached.

Finally, the 2007 Korean summit again reaffirmed the importance of the United States. It is generally believed that Kim proposed the second inter-Korean summit because of the North’s desperate need for economic revitalization. But economic needs simply serve as a necessary condition. What prompted him to venture into a second summit is his perception of a genuine change in White House policy on the North. Kim seems to have high hopes that denuclearization can be exchanged for an end to hostile relations and eventual diplomatic normalization with the United States. Likewise, his perceptions of American policy and the overall nature of US-North Korea relations appear to be the most important factor in inter-Korean relations. In view of this, much still depends on American policy, which is why it demands our closest attention.

**Chung-in Moon is Editor-in-Chief of *Global Asia* and Professor of Political Science at Yonsei University, Seoul**