Issues & Studies 37, no. 2 (March/April 2001): 106-146.

Adversarial Engagement and Alliance Relations: Triangular Politics on the Korean Peninsula, 1988-94

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This article seeks to explain the difference in alliance relations by closely examining the processes, policies, and problems involved in triangular diplomacy. In a tight two-against-one relationship, the argument is that adversarial engagement creates an incentive for intraalliance tensions. Yet, conflict between the two allies can be mediated by two factors: the presence of reassurance from the ally and the absence of an alternative security provider. Two comparative case studies are used to probe the plausibility of the hypothesis concerning triangular dynamics. The first case involves the Seoul-Moscow-Pyongyang triangle and the second the Seoul-Beijing-Pyongyang triangle—both during the period from 1988 to 1994. As a result of South Korea-USSR rapprochement, Pyongyang-Moscow relations deteriorated rapidly; yet, despite South Korea-China normalization, the politico-military cohesion in Pyongyang-Beijing relations remained largely unharmed. The difference in North Korea's response can be attributed to China's reassurance and North Korea's lack of alternative ally.

KEYWORDS: **alliance; rivalry; triangle; engagement; Korean Peninsula**

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As the bipolar global order based on the U.S.-Soviet rivalry was crumbling, South Korea succeeded in normalizing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in September 1990 and with China in August 1992.[1] Both South Korea-USSR normalization and South Korea-China normalization were made possible by the strenuous efforts of reform-minded policymakers who were anxious to create a favorable international environment conducive to domestic reform programs. President Roh Tae Woo's *Nordpolitik* was thus on par with Mikhail Gorbachev's *Perestroika* and Deng Xiaoping's Reforms. These liberal and internationalist programs constituted the principal catalysts for accommodation between unfriendly states.[2]

Interestingly, two occasions of cross-bloc recognition brought in two different responses from North Korea and two different outcomes for the future of two strategic partnerships, namely North Korean-Soviet and North Korean-Chinese relations. As a result of South Korea-USSR rapprochement, Pyongyang-Moscow relations deteriorated rapidly; yet, despite South Korea-China normalization, the politico-military cohesion in Pyongyang-Beijing relations remained largely unharmed. These quite different responses are puzzling. Why do the seemingly identical stimuli lead to different outcomes? What variables are responsible for inducing and inhibiting intraalliance disputes in times of engagement?

The mode of analysis that researchers should use would be one triangular in nature. While many international relations scholars have focused on domestic politics, dyadic interaction, and systemic characteristics to explain sources of foreign policy decisions, not many have looked at the

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[1]William C. Wohlforth, "Reality Check: Revising Theories of International Politics in Response to the End of the Cold War," *World Politics* 50, no. 4 (July 1998): 650-80. South Korea is also known as the Republic of Korea (ROK); North Korea as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK); China as the People's Republic of China (PRC); and the Soviet Union as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

[2]As Lebow argues, "The principal catalyst for accommodation is the commitment by leaders of one of the protagonists to domestic reforms and restructuring." See Richard Ned Lebow, "Transitions and Transformations: Building International Cooperation," *Security Studies* 6, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 165.

politics of lateral linkage in the form of triangular relations as a source of change in foreign policy behavior. Given the prevalence of triangular politics in international relations, the lack of interest in triadic state behavior is largely unwarranted.[3] There are three states (named *A*, *B*, and *C*) in a triangle under consideration: *B* is the sole major power, *A* and *C* are two minor rivals, and *B* and *C* are allied against *A*. This is the basic format of extended deterrence. The theoretical question is how *A-B* reconciliation affects the relationship between the two allies.

This article seeks to explain the difference in alliance relations by closely examining the processes, policies, and problems involved in triangular diplomacy. In a tight two-against-one relationship, the argument is that adversarial engagement creates an incentive for intraalliance tensions. Yet, conflict between the two allies can be mediated by two factors: the presence of reassurance from the ally and the absence of an alternative security provider.

While a number of political scientists and area specialists have researched a total of two occasions of cross-bloc normalization in the early 1990s and their impacts on regional politics, none has so far sought to critically and systematically compare the two cases with a sole interest in how these seminal events affected North Korea's relations with its two security partners. This essay attempts to fill the void by comparing the South Korea-North Korea-Soviet Union and South Korea-North Korea-China triangles. This article aims to make a contribution to the international relations field by (1) bringing triangles back into the discourse of international relations theorists; (2) focusing on lateral linkage as a potential source of interstate cooperation and conflict; and (3) emphasizing the interactive nature of allies and rivals.

The article is organized as follows. Sections one and two introduce research questions and a method. Sections three and four deliver case

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[3]Joshua S. Goldstein and John R. Freeman, "U.S.-Soviet-Chinese Relations: Routine, Reciprocity, or Rational Expectations?" *American Political Science Review* 85, no. 1 (March 1991): 17-35; Ilpyong J. Kim, ed., *The Strategic Triangle: China, the United States, and the Soviet Union* (New York: Paragon House, 1987); Lowell Dittmer, "The Strategic Triangle: An Elementary Game-Theoretical Analysis," *World Politics* 33, no. 4 (July 1981): 485-515.

studies, each with different outcomes. Section five compares the two case studies and the following two sections discuss the role of reassurance and alternatives. The last section concludes.

Research Questions

The objective of this article is to find out what kind of impact, if any, cross-bloc cohesion has on the nature of alliance relations. Let us posit a triangle where *B* is the sole major power, *A* and *C* are two minor rivals, and *B* and *C* are allied against *A*. In other words, this is the form of extended deterrence where *B* provides security protection for *C* against the threat of *A*. The hypothesis is that *A-B* reconciliation results in an increase of conflict between *C* and *B*.[4] State *C* gains only a weakened commitment from state *B*, which could develop into disengagement. The minor power *C* is not comfortable with strategic gains obtained by its rival state *A*, either. Thus reconciliation between *A* and *C* is a double-edged loss for state *C*. Facing loss, state *C* increases conflict toward its partner *B*, and the latter will reciprocate by sending conflictive signals back to *C*.

Yet the perception of strategic loss in *C* and that state's successive reprisals toward B may be controlled by reassurance from *B* to *C*. If state *B* is skillful in taming its partner's anger and suspicion by providing renewed commitment, then the expected ally conflict need not happen. The other factor that determines ally responses is the availability of an alter-

[4]My hypothesis is a derivative of the external threat-bloc cohesion proposition whose origin is sociology's in-group/out-group thesis. See Lewis A. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York: The Free Press, 1956); and Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (New York: The Free Press, 1966). According to the in-group/out-group thesis, external threats are conducive to enhanced cohesion among group members. International relations scholars have found some support for the external threat-bloc cohesion proposition in the context of the East-West bloc politics. See Ole R. Holsti, "East-West Conflict and Sino-Soviet Relations," *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 1, no. 2 (April-May-June 1965): 115-30; Ole R. Holsti, Terrence Hopmann, and John D. Sullivan, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances: Comparative Studies* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973); and William R. Thompson and David P. Rapkin, "Collaboration, Consensus, and Détente: The External Threat-Bloc Cohesion Hypothesis," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 25, no. 4 (December 1981): 615-38.

native security partner for state *C*. This variable depends on the capability of state *C*. As a minor power confronting security threats from external sources, *C* cannot afford to be left out without proper security provisions. Hence, whether state *C* is able to obtain external help is a key determinant deciding alliance relations. With an alternative friend, *C* may punish its ally for its unfaithfulness; without such a backup, however, *C* may have to endure any perceived losses by itself. The one main and two auxiliary hypotheses are summarized as follows:

> **Hypothesis:** *In a triangle consisting of states A, B, and C, where B is a major power, A and C are two minor rivals, and B and C are allied against A, A-B reconciliation is associated with an increase of conflict between C and B.*
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> **Auxiliary Hypothesis I:** *State C does not retaliate by increasing conflict with state B if B shows strong reassurance toward C while engaging A.*
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> **Auxiliary Hypothesis II:** *State C does not retaliate by increasing conflict with state B if C is devoid of an alternative security provider.*

This triangular configuration can be characterized as the famous "two-against-one" situation. The two-against-one triangle is in general quite stable and enduring as long as the two adversarial relationships do not change abruptly. In this situation, a state having a rival and a strategic partner will be conscious of what goes on between the latter two just as a state facing two conflictual dyads has an incentive to escape the encirclement. As Dittmer says, "In such a triangular pattern it is clearly in the interest of the excluded player to form an amity with one (or both) of the others and thereby escape further ostracism."[5]

Adversarial engagement brings in a revolutionary change in a stable marriage between the two partners against a pariah state. Such an engage-

[5]Dittmer, "The Strategic Triangle," 490.

ment may trigger different reactions from the states concerned, resulting in different courses of outcome. The first path is that state *B* makes friends with state *A* without alienating state *C*. The second path is that state *B* ends up making friends with state *A* at the expense of losing its partnership with state *C*. Of course, from the point of view of state *B*, strategically much more favorable is to create a triangle resembling the first situation, which will place state *B* in a pivot position. Reassurance and alternative security provisions are the two determinants of how alliance politics will unfold in the post-engagement period.

A Structured and Focused Comparison

In order to test these hypotheses, this paper adopts Alexander George's "method of structured, focused comparison."[6] The purpose of comparative case studies is to establish generalizable patterns of triangular behavior. Comparative case studies are helpful in understanding the actual processes of causal mechanisms.[7] The two cases are chosen due to the presence of the same independent variables yet different dependent values. By carefully monitoring the two cases that carry the variation in their dependent variables, this analysis is able to tease out the key variables that are responsible for the rise of discrepancy in diplomatic outcomes. The second case serves as a control group.[8] As King, Keohane, and Verba ask, "How can we explain variations on a dependent variable if it does not vary?"[9]

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[6]Alexander L. George, "Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison," in *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory*, and Polity, ed. Paul Gordon Lauren (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 43-68. The method is focused "because it deals selectively with only certain aspects of the historical case" and structured "because it employs general questions to guide the data collection and analysis in that historical case" (pp. 61-62). See also Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 43-46.

[7]Charles C. Ragin, *Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press, 1994), chap. 5.

[8]Phillips W. Shively, *The Craft of Political Research* (Englewood, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1998), 75-84; Theda Skocpol, "France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 18, no. 2 (1976): 175-210.

[9]King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, 129.

This paper compares the influence of South Korean-Soviet normalization on North Korean-Soviet relations and of South Korean-Chinese normalization on North Korean-Chinese relations between 1988 and 1994. The choice of cases serves the purpose of control in many ways. First, the comparison between the two cases constitutes a *most similar systems design*.[10] The two triangles have the same structure and components. One dyad has an alliance and the second a rivalry. Two triangles respectively bear the format of extended deterrence. Since these two triangles are alike in many ways and different only in specific variables (i.e., reassurance and alternatives), a researcher knows where to look for an explanation of a given event. Second, this paper holds the impact of regional and periodical settings constant since the two events occur in the context of the politics of the Korean Peninsula, only two years apart from each other; there thus exists a benefit of naturally controlling for the variance of spatial and temporal variables. Third, restricting the independent variable to a diplomatic event of normalization thus controls for the intensity of cooperation between the two engaging parties. Knowing that the level of adversarial cooperation is the same across the two cases, it becomes clear that the difference in outcomes is not to be attributed to the nature of engagement itself.

South Korean-Soviet Reconciliation and North Korean-Soviet Relations, 1988-94

The first case in this investigation is the South Korea-North Korea-Soviet Union triangle. The triangle has a rivalry in one dyad (that is, between Seoul and Pyongyang) and a strategic partnership in another (between Pyongyang and Moscow). The major power guarantees security protection of its junior partner against the threat from its counterpart. Cross-bloc recognition between Seoul and Moscow is the triggering event,

[10]This is also known as the method of difference. See Skocpol, "France, Russia, China," 378-80; and Ragin, *Constructing Social Research*, 36-44.

and a change in Pyongyang-Moscow relations is a point of interest. In this section, the author demonstrates how Seoul-Moscow rapprochement was associated with Moscow-Pyongyang tension in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Perestroika Meets Nordpolitik

Mikhail Gorbachev, on assuming power in March 1985, began the reform process that would affect not only the Soviet system but also the entire world. Under the banners of *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness), Gorbachev's main objectives were to introduce the markets to wipe out inefficiencies in the Soviet economy, to reform the state and party apparatuses in politics, and to create a favorable international environment that would be conducive for carrying out domestic changes.[11] Traditionally, Soviet leaders had perceived East Asia as threats rather than opportunities, a view that began to change dramatically with the advent of Gorbachev.[12] Under *perestroika*, Gorbachev saw a potential for mutual gains in economic and technological cooperation and exchange with capital-rich and technologically sophisticated East Asian countries.[13] He provided his policy guidelines regarding the Far East in the July 1986 Vladivostok speech and the September 1988 Krasnoyarsk speech. In both addresses, Gorbachev expressed his wishes for reducing security anxiety and instability and promoting economic cooperation in the region.[14] At Krasnoyarsk, he specifically singled out South Korea as an area of interest for economic exchanges: "I think that, in the context of a general amelioration of the situation on the Korean Peninsula, opportunities can also be opened up for arranging economic ties with South Korea."[15]

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[11]Yong-Chool Ha, "Russo-North Korean Relations in Transition," in *Foreign Relations of North Korea during Kim Il Sung's Last Days*, ed. Doug Joong Kim (Seoul: Sejong Institute, 1994), 334-36.

[12]Charles E. Ziegler, "Russia and East Asia after the Cold War," in *East Asia in Transition: Toward a New Regional Order*, ed. Robert S. Ross (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 61.

[13]Oleg Davidov, "Soviet Policy toward the Korean Peninsula in the 1990s," *Korean Journal of International Relations* 30 (1990): 429.

[14]*New York Times*, July 29, 1986; *Washington Post*, July 29, 1986.

[15]"Gorbachev Speech to Workers," Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), *Daily Report: Soviet Union* [hereafter *FBIS-SOV*], September 19, 1988, 60.

As soon as becoming president of the ROK, Roh Tae Woo set out to initiate what would become known as *Nordpolitik* or northward policy in order to strengthen his otherwise weak domestic legitimacy.[16] *Nordpolitik* is defined as "a diplomatic effort to establish and expand relations with socialist countries" by the South Korean government.[17] Due to democratization, the Roh government could no longer resort to anticommunist rhetoric or economic growth as its foundation of legitimacy. Instead, President Roh set out to use the "northward policy" to enhance his support among the people. The basic idea of this policy was to normalize diplomatic relations with socialist countries, two major targets being China and the Soviet Union, in order to open up North Korea. Seoul had some economic incentives as well to pursue rapprochement with its giant socialist neighbors. Both China and Russia (as well as North Korea) are well endowed with natural resources. Both societies have the potential to develop huge markets for foreign capital. They are able to provide inexpensive labor to South Korean industrialists who were interested in direct investment in those regions. Seoul, which had growing trade frictions with OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries and had huge energy dependence on OPEC (Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries) countries, especially wanted to diversify its trade and energy sources to former socialist countries.[18]

Pyongyang watched increasing contacts and cooperation between Moscow and Seoul with concern. Regarding Gorbachev's Vladivostok

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[16]Some Korean specialists date the origin of *Nordpolitik* back to President Park Jung Hee's June 23 declaration ("Special Foreign Policy Statement Regarding Peace and Unification") in which he proclaimed that the Republic of Korea would actively seek cooperation and exchange with countries of different ideology and systems. Foreign Minister Bumsuk Lee is known to have used the term "*Nordpolitik*" for the first time in his speech at the National Defense College on June 29, 1983. See Sanghyun Yoon, "South Korea's *Nordpolitik* with Special Reference to Its Relationship with China" (Ph.D. dissertation, George Washington University, 1994), 3.

[17]Sung-Joo Han, "South Korea's Policy Options in a Changing World," *Korean Journal of National Unification* 1 (1992): 10.

[18]Tong Whan Park, Dae-Won Ko, and Kyu-Ryoon Kim, "Democratization and Foreign Policy Change in East Asian NICs," in *Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Change*, ed. Jerel A. Rosati, Joe D. Hagan, and Martin W. Sampson III (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 176-77.

speech, the North Korean elite were supportive of his ideas, which included among others a proposal for reducing U.S. troops on the peninsula. In contrast, Pyongyang was ambivalent toward his Krasnoyarsk speech: North Korea supported arms reduction schemes while expressing concerns about the Kremlin's interest in promoting economic exchanges with Seoul.[19] When North Korean leaders complained about Gorbachev's Krasnoyarsk speech, Moscow replied with a balanced and frank statement:

> The USSR, to solve its economic problems, is interested in new partners. South Korea possesses technology and products that can be of use, especially in the Far Eastern regions of our state. As is well known, South Korea maintains commercial links with almost all countries of the world, including such socialist states as the People's Republic of China. The opening up of direct economic contacts between the Soviet Union and South Korea will also benefit peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. We don't want to rush developing ties. We'll move gradually, measuring progress in the economic field with the political trend in the region.
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> At the same time the USSR remains loyal to obligations to DPRK. We don't intend to start political relations with South Korea. We won't agree to a cross-recognition scheme pushed by Seoul and its friends.[20]

In December 1988, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze traveled to Pyongyang to reassure North Korea about Soviet commitment. The North Koreans were not happy with increasing Moscow-Seoul contacts and demanded an explanation from Shevardnadze. Shevardnadze replied angrily at the North Koreans' heavy pressure and accusation: "I am a Communist, and I give you my word as a party member: the USSR leadership does not have any intention and will not establish diplomatic relations with South Korea." At the end of the meeting, the participants agreed that the USSR and the DPRK would "expand and deepen in the spirit of the agreements achieved during the summit meeting of Gorbachev and Kim Il Sung in Moscow in 1986, and in accordance with the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance."[21]

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[19]Ha, "Russo-North Korean Relations in Transition," 336-37.

[20]"Memorandum of the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU" (September 28, 1988, Moscow), 2-3, quoted in Natalia Bazhanova, "North Korea and Seoul-Moscow Relations," in *Korea and Russia: Toward the 21st Century*, ed. Il Yung Chung (Seoul: Sejong Institute, 1992), 332.

[21]Quoted in Bazhanova, "North Korea and Seoul-Moscow Relations," 332-33.

Notwithstanding North Korean fears and Shevardnadze's promises to Pyongyang, Soviet-South Korean business contacts proliferated. Businessmen from Seoul and Soviet trade officials frequently exchanged visits to each other's capital.[22] Among others, Chung Ju Yung, founder of Hyundai, traveled to Moscow and signed an agreement on business cooperation with the Soviet Chamber of Commerce.[23] The Soviet Chamber of Commerce opened an office in Seoul in April 1989 and the Korea Trade Promotion Corporation (KOTRA) established an office in Moscow three months later.[24] Thanks to these developments, Soviet-South Korean trade soared to near US$600 million in 1989, a 200 percent increase from a year earlier.[25]

In the middle of unprecedented domestic changes in the Soviet Union, whose scope far surpassed the reform policy advocated by Nikita Khrushchev back in the mid-1950s, North Korea tried hard to remain calm and maintain good relations with the USSR. The North Korean elite pretended as though what went on inside the Soviet Union was not of interest or importance to them. Despite the difference in ideology and policy lines, Pyongyang was willing to do business with the new leadership in the Kremlin. The elite in Pyongyang kept their people in the dark, not informing them of vast changes taking place in the mother country of all socialist states. Pyongyang's official media simply ignored the introduction of the multiple candidacy system and price and enterprise reform measures in the Soviet Union.[26] Pyongyang exhibited great restraint toward Moscow despite the myriad changes taking place in Russia and sought to find a middle ground where the two could manage to sustain their defense commitment toward each other. As noted by one scholar:

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[22]Hakjoon Kim, "The Process Leading to the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between South Korea and the Soviet Union," *Asian Survey* 37, no. 7 (July 1997): 644.

[23]Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 206.

[24]See note 22 above.

[25]All the dollar figures are in current U.S. dollars.

[26]Ha, "Russo-North Korean Relations in Transition," 336.

> What is interesting and important, however, was the fact that despite holding views that contradict with those of the Soviet Union, North Korea managed to find a basis for policy affinity with the Soviet Union. Pyongyang supported the Soviet policy of reducing general forces and the declaration of non-nuclear zones in various parts of the world. It also endorsed and amplified Soviet peace initiatives in relation to the Korean Peninsula.[27]

Worthwhile is to note that, in the 1988-89 period when Gorbachev was vigorously reforming Soviet society and Seoul and Moscow had started their courtship, Pyongyang-Moscow relations did not abruptly collapse. While the political elite in the Soviet Union and North Korea had qualms about each other, they managed to keep bilateral relations afloat. The Kim Il Sung government did not like the idea of *perestroika* and detested even the suggestion of applying Soviet-style opening of domestic society and changing the nature of governance and of relationship between state and society. However, policymakers in Pyongyang restrained themselves up until 1990. The actual split in the Pyongyang-Moscow relationship required the dramatic event of diplomatic recognition between Moscow and Seoul.

In April and July 1989, Moscow and Seoul established trade offices in each other's capital. Pyongyang adopted a carrot-and-stick policy toward Moscow. On the one hand, North Korea attempted to expand cooperation with the Soviet Union via contacting party and military officials in hope that such efforts would mobilize pro-Pyongyang conservatives and influence reform-minded Gorbachev not to cross the line. On the other, Pyongyang threatened the Soviet leadership of grave consequences that would follow if Moscow recognized Seoul. North Koreans displayed a major effort by inviting Gorbachev to Pyongyang when he was touring Beijing in 1989.[28] When Gorbachev turned down the invitation to come to Pyongyang citing various excuses, the North took the refusal as an insult. On Kim Young Sam's Moscow visit in April 1990, who later became a president of the ROK, Pyongyang—mindful of triangular dynamics—warned Moscow:

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[27]Ibid.

[28]Bazhanova, "North Korea and Seoul-Moscow Relations," 334-35.

> If information on the results of Kim Young Sam's visit to the Soviet Union is true, then this undoubtedly means acceptance of U.S. rule and occupation of South Korea, support for the military-fascist dictatorship of Roh Tae Woo, and assistance in perpetuating the division of the Korean Peninsula. Why does Moscow, which is trying to prevent the exit of republics from its federation, create obstacles to the unification of the North and the South of a previously united Korean Peninsula and help those who attempt to establish two Koreas? Our people ... will not allow diplomatic relations between South Korea and the Soviet Union.... The USSR, a friend of ours, should not become a friend of our enemy.[29]

The ensemble between Roh's "northward policy" and Gorbachev's *perestroika* turned out to be so robust and enduring that Pyongyang, a third actor, could not block the tide of the times but had to suffer a diplomatic setback.

Seoul-Moscow Diplomatic Recognition and After

South Korea and the Soviet Union were rapidly drawing closer to mutual recognition. Seoul was determined to establish ties with Moscow at all costs whereas Moscow was more careful not to provoke Pyongyang. By 1990, South Korea's exports to, and imports from, the Soviet Union amounted to US$520 million and US$370 million, respectively. In the same year, the number of South Koreans visiting the Soviet Union totaled 7,014 while 5,022 Soviet citizens came to South Korea.[30] While agreeing that the recognition of Seoul was inevitable given the international context, many in Moscow were still divided over how fast this official step should be taken. The International Affairs Department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Central Committee and the Committee for State Security (KGB) were in favor of normalization. The Defense Ministry, the Soviet military, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were either against normalization or in favor of a gradual approach in order not to provoke its longtime ally in the Far East.[31] As dissension mounted among the Soviet policymakers and opinion makers, the authoritative and final decision

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[29]*Rodong Sinmun* (Labor Daily) (Pyongyang), April 10, 1990.

[30]Intaek Yu, "Inter-Korean Relations and Situation around the Korean Peninsula," *East Asian Review* 3, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 25.

[31]Eugene Bazhanov, "Soviet Policy towards South Korea under Gorbachev," in Chung, *Korea and Russia*, 101.

came from the top echelon of the Soviet leadership. According to Oberdorfer, the Politburo of the CPSU discussed the Korea issue on November 10, 1988 and decided to proceed toward establishing official relations with South Korea.[32]

Presidents Roh Tae Woo and Mikhail Gorbachev finally met in San Francisco on June 4, 1990.[33] The two leaders "have agreed that the effort for normalization of South Korean-Soviet relations has already begun." They concurred that the relationship between the two states would develop into a full diplomatic recognition "in the non-distant future." Regarding North Korea, Roh and Gorbachev expressed their belief that the ending of "the long hiatus in official relations" between Seoul and Moscow "would lead to the improvement of relations between South and North Korea and eventual peaceful reunification."[34] At a press conference held shortly after the Roh-Gorbachev meeting, the South Korean president told reporters that he was working hard to normalize relations with the Soviet Union, a move that might prove to be a steppingstone to the establishment of a relationship with Pyongyang: "The road between Seoul and Pyongyang is now totally blocked. Accordingly, we have to choose an alternative route to the North Korean capital by way of Moscow and Beijing. This may not be the most direct route but we certainly hope it will be an effective one."[35] On Gorbachev's part, he wanted to use the "Seoul card" to put pressure on recalcitrant Japan on the issues of economic cooperation and territorial settlement. "South Korea was intended to be not only an alternative to Japan as a source of economic assistance but also a means of pressing the Japanese to

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[32]Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 197-200.

[33]According to a source, Gorbachev proceeded with a San Francisco meeting without the involvement of the Soviet Foreign Ministry and the KGB, which were concerned that South Korean-Soviet rapprochement might hurt Soviet-North Korean relations. See Kim, "The Process Leading to the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations," 646. Anatoly Dobrynin, senior foreign policy adviser to Gorbachev, came to Seoul in May 1990 to discuss the San Francisco meeting. When Dobrynin met President Roh, he also asked for a financial loan. See Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 209-10.

[34]"A Summary of Talks at the Summit Meeting between President Roh Tae Woo and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev" (San Francisco, June 4, 1990), in Chung, *Korea and Russia*, 424-26.

[35]Quoted in Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 212.

offer concessions over the territorial dispute."[36] Regarding the two Koreas, he wanted to position Moscow in a pivot role between two minor rivals.

North Koreans were enraged at the news from San Francisco. The North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman stated: "We consider that the President of the Soviet Union, an ally of ours, is quite able to analyze and judge what a serious political consequence will be entailed by his meeting with Roh Tae Woo, who is seeking only the split of Korea." According to Pyongyang's political judgment, the San Francisco meeting was "a serious political issue concerning the freezing of the division of our country."[37] An editorial in *Rodong Sinmun* (Labor Daily) denounced the Roh-Gorbachev meeting as "unforgivable, criminal dealings."[38]

The San Francisco meeting was a turning point for Seoul-Moscow rapprochement. The Soviet leadership decided to normalize bilateral relations on January 1, 1991 and to send Shevardnadze to Pyongyang in order to explain the important Kremlin decision. Until the Shevardnadze mission, the Soviets did not consult with North Koreans about their policy change toward the Korean Peninsula.[39] In a bitter meeting between the two foreign ministers on September 2-3, 1990, each endeavored to no avail to persuade the other to change his position. Shevardnadze pointed out that Moscow-Seoul recognition would allow Soviet diplomats to bring up unification issues to South Koreans, which would be to the benefit of the North. He also added that the Soviet Union would still uphold all bilateral obligations toward Pyongyang.[40]

North Korean Foreign Minister Kim Young Nam retorted that Moscow's move would only consolidate the national division on the peninsula

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[36]Leszek Buszynski, "Russia and the Asia-Pacific Region," *Pacific Affairs* 65, no. 4 (Winter 1992-1993): 496.

[37]Hakjoon Kim, *Korea's Relations with Her Neighbors in a Changing World* (Seoul: Hollym, 1993), 414.

[38]*Rodong Sinmun*, June 12, 1990.

[39]Jane Shapiro Zacek, "Russia in North Korean Foreign Policy," in *North Korean Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era*, ed. Samuel S. Kim (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1998), 76.

[40]Robert A. Scalapino, "Korea in the Cold War and Its Aftermath," in Ross, *East Asia in Transition*, 193; Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 214-16.

and severely undermine North Korean-Soviet relations. He even reminded Shevardnadze that the Soviet Union was one of the parties who was historically responsible for the division of Korea. Kim hinted that Pyongyang might recognize Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as independent states as a reprisal. He threatened that the DPRK might abrogate the mutual defense treaty and support Japan on the northern islands territorial disputes. In addition, Kim suggested that the Soviet desertion would leave Pyongyang with no alternative but to produce weapons of mass destruction. Shevardnadze returned to Moscow without seeing Kim Il Sung.[41]

At the UN headquarters on September 30, 1990, foreign ministers Choi Ho Joong and Eduard Shevardnadze agreed to establish full diplomatic relations. North Korea, stopping short of "the extreme step of severing or downgrading diplomatic ties," poured harsh criticism on the Soviet Union.[42] *Rodong Sinmun* ran an editorial entitled "Diplomatic Relations Sold and Bought with Dollars" and labeled the event "an act of betrayal."[43] On October 5 the same newspaper decried the Soviet "betrayal and hypocrisy." According to the paper, the Soviet Union inflicted harm upon North Korea by "openly joining the United States in its basic strategy aimed at freezing the division of Korea into two Koreas, isolating us internationally and guiding us to 'opening' and thus overthrowing the socialist system in our country."[44]

After Seoul-Moscow recognition, the Soviets announced in January 1991 that they were cutting off economic aid to Pyongyang and would from then on require North Korea to pay for oil in hard currency at world market prices. The USSR's grim economic situation, rather than animosity toward the DPRK, contributed greatly to these decisions; yet, for North Korea's policymakers, the Soviet ultimatum could not have come at a worse moment. Pyongyang felt all the more betrayed by Moscow's successive deci-

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[41]B. C. Koh, "Trends in North Korean Foreign Policy," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 71.

[42]Ibid., 62.

[43]Zacek, "Russia in North Korean Foreign Policy," 80.

[44]Quoted in Chae-Jin Lee, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institutiton Press, 1996), 118.

sions. The reduction in Soviet economic aid was a hard blow to North Korea's already ailing economy. As noted by two experts, "North Korea's economy faltered in the 1970s, declined in the 1980s, and collapsed in the 1990s."[45] Without equivocation, the Kim government attributed the North's economic failure in part to the Soviet betrayal of "socialist duties." The August coup in the Kremlin against Gorbachev took place in the middle of these diplomatic setbacks in Moscow-Pyongyang relations. Even though not actively endorsing the change, Pyongyang closely monitored and reproduced in detail via press and radio broadcasts the coup leaders' statements.[46] Pyongyang's attitudes toward the coup did not, moreover, help ease the tensions between the Moscow and Pyongyang regimes once the normal chain of order was resumed in Moscow.

The transformation of the USSR into the Russian Federation brought uncertainty to Moscow's grand strategy for dealing with the outside world. Due to mounting political, economic, and ethnic problems in domestic politics, Russia was not able to formulate consistent and reliable foreign policy objectives, much less guidelines regarding the Korean Peninsula. The Kremlin was preoccupied with solving its domestic problems and interested in developing relations with the West. In contrast to the uniform and unified decisions handed down by the Politburo during the Soviet era, foreign policy decisionmaking now was racked by disagreement between pro- and anti-Westerners, and among Parliament, the Council of Ministers, the Presidency, and the Defense Ministry. Yet, while East Asia received a low priority in Moscow, Boris Yeltsin and his cohorts saw a huge opportunity in economic exchanges with booming capitalist East Asian countries.[47] One can argue that a new Russia generally followed the footsteps of Gorbachev's reform-minded Far East policy.

The rise of the new leadership (and even of a new state) in Moscow

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[45]Kongdan Oh and Ralph Hassig, "North Korea between Collapse and Reform," *Asian Survey* 39, no. 2 (March/April 1999): 287.

[46]Peggy Falkenheim Meyer, "Gorbachev and Post-Gorbachev Policy toward the Korean Peninsula: The Impact of Changing Russian Perceptions," *Asian Survey* 32, no. 8 (August 1992): 768.

[47]Ziegler, "Russia and East Asia after the Cold War," 68.

did not disrupt the comfortable ties between South Korea and Russia, two countries that still needed each other. South Korean entrepreneurs and government officials continued to be interested in Russia's natural resources as well as military and space technology. Moscow in turn welcomed Korean capital and investment. Yeltsin was able to regain a US$3 billion loan, which was initially promised to Gorbachev but frozen at the time of Soviet disintegration.[48] Yeltsin visited South Korea in November 1992 "to formalize and strengthen ties that had developed in the later Gorbachev years, and to sort out debt and repayment problems that had constrained further economic cooperation." A modest form of military cooperation was also developing in Russian-South Korean relations. Accompanying Yeltsin on his Seoul visit were none other than Defense Minister Pavel Grachev and Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandr Shokhin, the latter of whom was in charge of arms sales abroad. Seoul and Moscow agreed to open up military and technology cooperation, which included naval visits to the ports of Vladivostok and Pusan.[49]

With the end of the Gorbachev era, Russia formally disrobed itself of socialist garb and pursued liberalization at a rapid albeit tumultuous pace. From Moscow's perspective, contacts with Seoul seemed promising while contacts with Pyongyang were awkward. The leadership change from Gorbachev to Yeltsin did not help improve Pyongyang-Moscow relations. Russia under President Yeltsin , at least in his early days, was not favorable to the sole remaining Stalinist regime in the Far East. To the Russians who were desperately seeking foreign capital and technology, the strategic value of Pyongyang was not rated high. North Korea did not seek to restore close relations with Moscow, which was enjoying amicable relations with Seoul. Hence, North Korea and Russia remained cool to each other for the time being.[50]

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[48]Eugene Bazhanov and Natasha Bazhanov, "Russia and Asia in 1992: A Balancing Act," *Asian Survey* 33, no. 1 (January 1993): 97.

[49]Ibid., 75.

[50]See note 36 above.

South Korean-Chinese Reconciliation and North Korean-Chinese Relations, 1988-94

This section investigates the South Korea-North Korea-China triangle, which consists of one rivalry dyad—between Seoul and Pyongyang—and one alliance dyad—between Pyongyang and Beijing. Beijing provides Pyongyang with security assistance against the threat from the South in the format of extended deterrence. The research question at hand is whether adversarial engagement in the form of diplomatic recognition is associated with intraalliance discord. A cross-bloc recognition between Seoul and Beijing is the triggering event, and the change in Pyongyang-Beijing relations is what the analysis sets out to explore.

Pragmatism Meets Nordpolitik

Ever since Deng Xiaoping began to liberalize China's economy, South Korea emerged as an actor that could not be ignored in Northeast Asian economy. China desperately needed investment capital and advanced technology from Taiwan and South Korea as well as from Japan. In order not to provoke its strategic ally, North Korea, China sought to control the speed and intensity of cooperation with the South by (1) separating politics and economy and (2) provincializing contacts with Seoul, which continued until formal normalization between Beijing and Seoul. China's two strategies for dealing with Seoul actually helped to ease North Korea's fear of abandonment and suspicion at the early stage of Seoul-Beijing interaction.[51] Seoul-Beijing contacts then were much different from Seoul-Moscow contacts: whereas the latter were abrupt and revolutionary, the former were incremental and sequential. China tested the ground with "indirect" trade through "unofficial channels" and then proceeded to move from "semiofficial" to "official" relations.[52] The Chinese leaders kept the North Korean leaders informed, consulted them when serious issues arose, and

[51]Jia Hao and Zhuang Qubing, "China's Policy toward the Korean Peninsula," *Asian Survey* 32, no. 12 (December 1992): 1146.

[52]Hong Yung Lee, "China's Changing Relationship with North Korea," in Kim, *Foreign Relations of North Korea*, 278-79.

reassured them of the PRC's commitment toward its longtime ally whenever necessary. Jia and Zhuang aptly summarize China's attitudes and tactics regarding the two Koreas in the late 1980s and early 1990s:

> In contrast to Moscow's about-face in advancing political and economic ties with South Korea, Beijing focused its ties with Seoul at first on incremental expansion of "substantial" relations (mainly economic), coupled with sports, cultural, and personnel exchanges; meanwhile, China deliberately retarded the process of establishing official relations. In pursuing its policy toward the South, Beijing has paid great attention to safeguarding its traditional links with North Korea, and its policymakers have tried hard to strike a balance in policies toward both sides on the peninsula, endeavoring to avert any action that would cause a sudden shock to Pyongyang.[53]

Needless to say, the 1988 Olympics in Seoul and the 1990 Asian Games in Beijing became important venues where both Chinese and South Korean leaders could meet and increase understanding. Shortly after South Korean-Soviet recognition, Beijing and Seoul agreed to open trade offices in each other's capital in October 1990.[54] South Korean-Chinese economic exchanges grew steadily in the 1980s. In 1985, a symbolic year in the South Korea-North Korea-China triangle, the volume of ROK-PRC trade surpassed that of DPRK-PRC trade. Four yeas later, bilateral South Korean-Chinese trade was valued at more than US$3 billion, almost ten times that of North Korea-China trade for the same year. South Korean-Chinese trade totaled US$5.8 billion in 1991 and US$9 billion in 1993. The size of two-way economic exchanges across the Yellow Sea doubled in 1991 and tripled in 1993 from the figure of 1989. In 1989-93, two-way trade increased at about 50 percent a year. South Korea's capital was also making inroads into China's markets. South Korean investment in China doubled each year since 1990 and, in 1993, exceeded US$1 billion. As of the mid-1990s, about 60 percent of South Korea's total foreign direct investment (FDI) headed for China.[55] In order to manage and facilitate economic transactions with South Korea, the Chinese had set up an economic

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[53]Jia and Zhuang, "China's Policy toward the Korean Peninsula," 1146-47.

[54]Sungyoon Kim, "Prospects for Seoul's Entering Relations with Beijing and the Effects on Inter-Korean Relations," *East Asian Review* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 50-52.

[55]Lee, "China's Changing Relationship with North Korea," 277.

task force under a vice-premier's authority in March 1988, which was active until the official recognition by both countries.[56]

During an official visit to Pyongyang in May 1991, Chinese Premier Li Peng informed his counterparts of two important Chinese decisions. The first was that China could not afford to veto Seoul's bid to obtain membership in the United Nations. This decision eventually led to a dual North-South admission to the UN. The second was that trade arrangements with Pyongyang based on concessional and barter exchanges should be changed for a new system based on convertible currency at international prices. A new trade agreement between China and North Korea was signed in January the following year in Pyongyang and the two sides have implemented a new trade system since 1993.[57]

Once both Koreas became members of the UN, the organization became a venue for South Korean diplomats to contact Chinese counterparts. At the UN's headquarters in New York in September 1991, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen and South Korean Foreign Minister Lee Sang Ok met face to face, which was the first occasion of the sort between the two countries. Two months later Qian flew to Seoul in November 1991 to participate in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum and met Lee for a second time. Qian also had a chance to meet President Roh. Roh expressed his wishes for upgrading relations between China and South Korea, citing a long tradition of mutual amity between the two nations. He assured the Chinese foreign minister that China and South Korea could become friendly states without Beijing estranging Pyongyang. Qian replied that North-South relations, Japanese-North Korean relations, U.S.-North Korean relations, and Sino-South Korean relations should all develop simultaneously.[58] The third meeting between the two foreign ministers took place in Beijing in April 1992 when Lee was taking part in a meeting of the UN General Assembly's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). Qian alluded to Lee that China was ready to

[56]Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 240.
[57]Ibid., 231-44.
[58]Ibid., 244-45.

begin sincere negotiations for diplomatic recognition. Lee and Qian concurred, "South Korea-China diplomatic normalization was necessary for peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region."[59]

Seoul-Beijing Diplomatic Recognition and After

Outsiders now know that the Chinese decision to recognize Seoul in 1992 did not come easily. The Chinese leadership was deeply divided on the timing of Seoul-Beijing normalization. Some of the conservative senior Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders, Korean War veterans, and cadres in the CCP's International Liaison Department and in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs advised against an early recognition of Seoul. They argued that such a move would be tantamount to abandoning its ally, North Korea, thus pushing Pyongyang further into isolation and placing the North Korean regime in danger. The final decision was made when Deng Xiaoping agreed with the normalization plan.[60]

In January 1992, the Chinese Foreign Ministry convened successive strategic planning roundtables and decided to establish diplomatic ties with Seoul. The actual negotiations between South Korea and China for the opening of diplomatic relations began in April the same year. The three rounds of preliminary talks took place between May and June of 1992.[61] In the first of those meetings, which convened in Beijing from May 14 to 16, China strongly called for South Korea's endorsement of the "one China" principle, which meant that the latter had to break off ties with its long-standing strategic as well as economic partner, Taiwan. Uneasy about China's tenacious position on the Taiwan issue, which was not unexpected considering China's past practices on the subject, South Korea responded by asking China to accept a "one Korea" principle. The meeting ended in impasse, unable to find a common ground between the two negotiators. In the second series of talks, South Korea asked that its counterpart apologize

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[59]Hakjoon Kim, "The Establishment of South Korean-Chinese Diplomatic Relations: A South Korean Perspective," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 41.

[60]Lee, *China and Korea*, 124.

[61]Yoon, "South Korea's *Nordpolitik*," 340-41.

for the intervention in the Korean War, make an effort to solve the North Korean nuclear issue, and keep an equal distance between the South and the North. Seoul also notified Beijing that South Korea would maintain "the highest unofficial relations" with Taiwan "through the exchange of trade representatives."[62] In the third preliminary talks, June 20-21, the two sides were able to agree on the normalization and the content of the joint communiqué.

Finally, the formal meeting took place in Beijing on July 29, with the two sides initialing the normalization agreement. However, the announcement of South Korean-Chinese normalization had to be postponed almost a month in order to give China the necessary time to assuage North Korea of China's decision. On August 24, 1992, foreign ministers Lee and Qian concluded formal diplomatic ties between the ROK and the PRC. The two countries made public an unusually short joint communiqué. In the communiqué, the ROK recognized the PRC as the sole, legitimate government of all of China, and Taiwan as an integral part of the former. China pledged support for the Koreans' earnest desire for reunification.[63] Paradoxically, Seoul acknowledged explicitly the PRC's "one China" policy whereas the latter implicitly followed the former's "two Korea" policy.

While Seoul was working on its own triangle—China and the two Koreas, Beijing had another triangle in its strategic calculation—the two Chinas and South Korea. China's primary objective in negotiating diplomatic ties with Seoul, other than for economic gain, was to place Taiwan on the defensive.[64] When establishing ties with a foreign nation, China forces the precondition that the latter sever ties with Taiwan. South Korea was no exception and was thus forced to cut official ties with Taiwan.[65] From the PRC's perspective, Taiwan was vigorously buying recognition from foreign nations by taking advantage of the island's financial prowess.

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[62]Ibid.

[63]Lee, "China's Changing Relationship with North Korea," 278.

[64]Hong Liu, "The Sino-South Korean Normalization: A Triangular Explanation," *Asian Survey* 33, no. 11 (November 1993): 1088-90.

[65]*The Economist*, August 29, 1992, 27.

As Liu aptly states, "Taiwan's wealth is a major asset in its diplomacy."[66] Taiwan succeeded in opening relations with Latvia in January 1992 and with Niger in June the same year. China was also wary of Taiwan's offensive to rejoin the UN and the increasing momentum of the domestic separatist movement on the island spearheaded by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). By recognizing Seoul and forcing a break in South Korea-Taiwan ties, the PRC aimed to isolate the island from the international community.[67]

The trend of increasing South Korean-Chinese economic exchanges continued and even accelerated in the post-normalization period. China offered its partner cheap labor and huge domestic markets, and South Korea provided China with capital, manufactured goods, high technology, and—above all—experience and know-how regarding rapid industrialization. Various trade and most-favored-nation (MFN) status agreements lowered trade barriers between the two countries.[68] South Korea exported consumer electronics to, and imported coal and oil as well as inexpensive cotton textiles and consumer goods from, China. In the mid-1990s, China became South Korea's fourth-largest trading partner and, in turn, South Korea became China's fifth-largest trading partner.[69]

As China was drawing closer to Seoul, Chinese leaders sought to keep North Korean leaders informed of the process. When Kim Il Sung was making an official trip to China in October 1991 (officially known as his thirty-ninth visit since the foundation of the North Korean regime), party leader Jiang Zemin escorted him for several days. In stark contrast to Russia's inept handling of alliance politics regarding normalization with the enemy, the Chinese approached the delicate issue with "great political and diplomatic finesse."[70] As Beijing and Seoul were launching secret normalization negotiations, President Yang Shangkun and his brother Yang

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[66]Liu, "The Sino-South Korean Normalization," 1089.
[67]Ibid., 1090.
[68]Ibid., 1087-88.
[69]Ibid., 1090-92.
[70]Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 247.

Baibing, secretary-general of the CCP Central Military Commission, successively visited Pyongyang to demonstrate "goodwill" between the two countries. The Chinese intentionally delayed the announcement of diplomatic recognition until August 24, which was almost a month after the initial conclusion of negotiations between China and South Korea on July 29. Foreign Minister Qian is known to have informed the Pyongyang leadership of the news in his secret mission to Pyongyang in June. Apparently, the Chinese excuse was that they had to balance against Taiwan's diplomatic offensives by making Seoul sever relations with Taiwan.[71] He also argued that Sino-South Korean normalization would contribute to the development of Pyongyang-Tokyo and Pyongyang-Washington relations.[72]

Pyongyang sought to treat South Korean-Chinese normalization as if nothing of significance had happened. The North Korean diplomats stationed in Beijing refused to comment on the events. When asked about the significance of the establishment of relations between the ROK and the PRC by a news reporter, North Korea's Foreign Minister Kim Young Nam replied this was "nothing special ... nothing [that] matters to us" and added that China and North Korea "keep each other informed."[73] Contrasting a bitter criticism following Moscow's recognition of Seoul, *Rodong Sinmun* this time did not carry an article discussing new political ties between Pyongyang's major and only ally and its archrival. Instead, the paper ran an editorial calling for reconciliation between the United States and North Korea in order to bring in stability and peace in East Asia.[74] On the day Seoul and Beijing signed the normalization agreement, "a goodwill delegation representing the Chinese People's Liberation Army was visiting Pyongyang."[75] Twenty days later, *Rodong Sinmun* introduced a September 9 editorial in *Renmin Ribao* (People's Daily), which commemorated the forty-fourth anniversary of the establishment of the DPRK. The editorial

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[71]Ibid., 247-48.

[72]Lee, *China and Korea*, 125.

[73]*Washington Post*, September 30, 1992.

[74]Lee, "China's Changing Relationship with North Korea," 282.

[75]Koh, "Trends in North Korean Foreign Policy," 62.

complimented Pyongyang's accomplishments as a socialist society and emphasized the strong companionship between China and North Korea. The editorial pledged that the Chinese people would continue to "support the North Korean people's endeavors in socialist construction and quest for reunification."[76]

Pyongyang was dependent on Beijing both politically and economically. While North Korean-Russian relations had been downgraded from being staunch allies to normal neighbors, North Korea and China maintained common strategic and political bonds. Beijing was a major provider of such indispensable goods as oil, coal, and food to Pyongyang. The transactions required hard currency at "preferential" prices that, though not "friendship" prices, were still lower than world prices.[77] True, DPRK-PRC relations were no longer as solid. From 1992 to 1994, China's economic aid to its ally declined at an annual rate of 10 to 15 percent. According to several interviews conducted by Garrett and Glaser, "Chinese officials insist privately that Beijing's leverage with Pyongyang has always been limited and that [this influence] has declined significantly since China established diplomatic ties with South Korea in August 1992."[78] Some trouble spots in Pyongyang-Beijing relations were observed down the road. First, North Korea, in way of protest, limited cultural exchange programs with China. Second, Pyongyang made a black list of Chinese officials and scholars whom the government regarded as pro-ROK. Third, the North Korean-Chinese border was closed for a few months.[79]

These incidents notwithstanding, China remained a faithful ally to North Korea and North Korea never publicly protested China's recognition of South Korea. Even though China's opening to the South was a severe setback for the Kim Il Sung government, the North decided to stay calm and maintain friendship with China.

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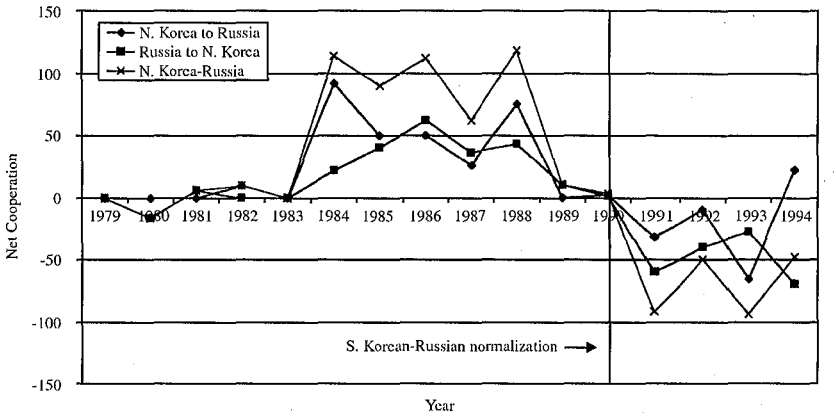
[76]Ibid., 63.

[77]Banning Garrett and Bonnie Glaser, "Looking across the Yalu: Chinese Assessments of North Korea," *Asian Survey* 35, no. 6 (June 1995): 540-41.

[78]Ibid., 528.

[79]Lee, *China and Korea*, 128.

Figure 1
South Korean-Russian Reconciliation and North Korean-Russian Relations, 1979-94 (yearly, weighted aggregates of GEDS data)



North Korean-Russian Relations and North Korean-Chinese Relations in Comparison

The following analysis demonstrates the differences in alliance relations in response to adversarial engagement using event data and data on economic cooperation. Event data records foreign policy behavior of an actor toward a target following the format "who did what to whom?" along the given scale of cooperation and conflict at a given point in time.[80] This is "a formal method of measuring the phenomena that contribute to foreign policy perceptions" using such public news sources as newspapers and press releases.[81] Event data GEDS (Global Events Data System) provides measurement of interstate cooperation levels from 1979 to 1994 for the dyads that this article focuses on. GEDS uses Reuters Library Report as a primary news source.

Figure 1 shows the trends in North Korean-Soviet relations in 1979-

[80]Philip A. Schrodt, "Event Data in Foreign Policy Analysis," in *Foreign Policy Analysis: Continuity and Change in Its Second Generation*, ed. Laura Neack, Jeane A.K. Hey, and Patrick J. Haney (Englewood, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1995), 145-48.

[81]Ibid., 146.

94 as recorded in GEDS. Seoul-Moscow normalization took place in 1990. A quick glance tells an observer that there are dynamics in Pyongyang-Moscow relations that can be divided into three distinct phases. The figure demonstrates a clear trend that shows a change from a relatively neutral interaction to one of a high level of cooperation to, finally, conflict-prone interaction between North Korea and the Soviet Union (later Russia). In the first phase (1979-83), North Korean-Soviet interactions remained at a low frequency and with low levels of cooperation. After limited exchanges between the two, both the frequency and intensity of exchanges picked up in the second phase (1984-90). The Pyongyang-Moscow relationship recorded a high level of cooperation, peaking in 1984, 1986, and again in 1988. In 1989, a year before South Korean-Soviet normalization, North Korean-Soviet cooperation dropped significantly. For two consecutive years, 1989 and 1990, North Korean-Soviet net cooperation remained slightly above the neutral line. In the third phase (1991-94), the post-normalization period, event data exhibits a rather high level of conflict (negative net cooperation) in the North Korean-Russian dyad in contrast to the two preceding periods.

Two years after Seoul-Moscow normalization, China decided to go ahead with the plan to recognize South Korea, a move that again placed North Korea on the defensive. Yet, according to evidence marshaled in the GEDS data, Pyongyang did not punish Beijing for its unfaithfulness. GEDS data shows that China has stepped up cooperative gestures toward Pyongyang while engaging Seoul at the same time. Figure 2 shows the level of net cooperation in the DPRK-PRC dyad between 1979 and 1994 (Seoul-Beijing normalization took place in 1992). The figure can be divided into two phases. The second phase (1991-94) has denser observations compared to the first phase (1979-90). Neither North Korea nor China sent many conflicting signals to each other in the whole observation span. In 1979-90, Pyongyang-Beijing net cooperation remained at the moderate level without many fluctuations.

One can detect a change in the actions of both countries after 1990. In 1991, a year after Seoul-Moscow recognition and a year before Seoul-Beijing recognition, China bestowed an unusually high level of cooperative efforts on Pyongyang. In 1991 and 1992, North Korea was also cooper-

ative with Beijing. In the 1992-94 period, demonstrating the nature of relations between Pyongyang and Beijing right after China normalized relations with South Korea, net cooperation remained at a high level. In 1993, a year after normalization, Pyongyang's behavior toward Beijing became conflictive, but in the following year bounced back to being cooperative. In 1994, the last year of event data observation, Pyongyang-Beijing net cooperation reached the highest peak ever. Chinese cooperative moves peaked in 1991 and again in 1994.

The crisscrossing trends in Seoul-Moscow cohesion and Pyongyang-Moscow conflict are clearly corroborated by longitudinal evidence concerning bilateral trade volumes in both dyads. As in the politico-security realm where Pyongyang-Moscow relations plummeted following the Seoul-Moscow rapprochement, a similar trend is manifested in economic exchanges. Table 1 captures the movement in South Korean-Russian and North Korean-Russian economic cooperation in the 1983-94 period. In 1983, the bilateral trade volume between South Korea and the USSR had been less than US$50 million, which increased only a bit in the following year. The trade volume in 1985 was more than twice that of 1983. The figure grew slowly in 1987, but in 1989, crossed the half-billion mark. In 1991, the volume surpassed the billion mark and three years later reached

Figure 2
South Korean-Chinese Reconciliation and North Korean-Chinese Relations, 1979-94 (yearly, weighted aggregates of GEDS data)

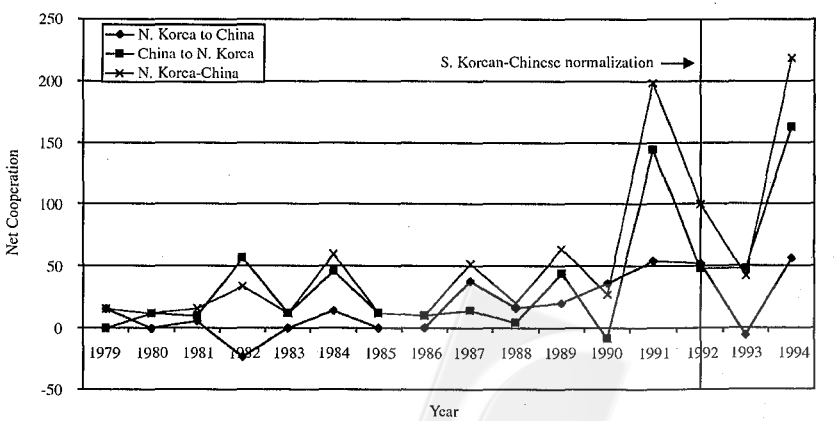


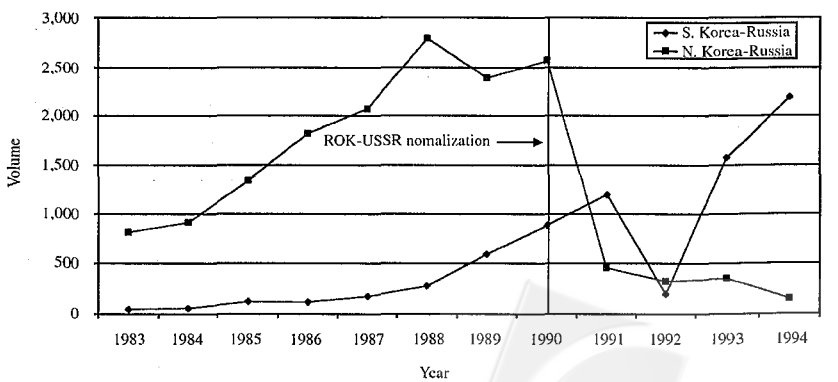
Table 1
South Korea-Russian vs. North Korean-Russian Economic Cooperation (bilateral trade volumes), 1983-94 (current values in US$ million)

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
S. Korea-Russia	48	57	122	114	173	278	599	889	1,202	193	1,576	2,192
N. Korea-Russia	827	924	1,349	1,826	2,076	2,791	2,388	2,570	460	320	350	140

Sources: Data for South Korea-Russia are from Byung-joon Ahn, "South Korean-Soviet Relations: Contemporary Issues and Prospects," *Asian Survey* 31, no. 9 (September 1991): 819; International Monetary Fund (IMF), *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook* (various years). Data for North Korea-Russia are from Soo-Young Choi, "Foreign Trade of North Korea, 1946-1988: Structure and Performance" (Ph.D. dissertation, Northeastern University, 1992), 312-13; National Unification Board, ROK, *Pukhan geyo 1995* (North Korea: A compendium 1995) (Seoul: 1995), 238-39.

US$2 billion. In 1992, the ROK and Russia traded for only about US$200 million, which seemed to be a transient impact of Soviet disintegration. Between North Korea and Russia, bilateral trade had grown almost steadily until the year 1990, thereupon plunging below the US$500 million mark. In 1983, the two countries traded at a level of US$800 million, a figure that more than doubled three years later. The trade volume reached the US$2 billion mark in 1987 and in the following year marked the highest point between the two countries ever. After 1990, when the two had traded at more

Figure 3
South Korean-Russian vs. North Korean-Russian Economic Cooperation (bilateral trade volumes), 1983-94 (current values in US$ million)



Sources: See table 1.

Table 2
South Korean-Chinese vs. North Korean-Chinese Economic Cooperation (bilateral trade volumes), 1982-94 (current values in US$ million)

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
S. Korea-China	139	120	434	1,161	1,289	1,679	3,087
N. Korea-China	585	528	498	488	510	513	579

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
S. Korea-China	3,143	3,821	5,812	8,218	9,078	11,660
N. Korea-China	563	483	610	697	890	624

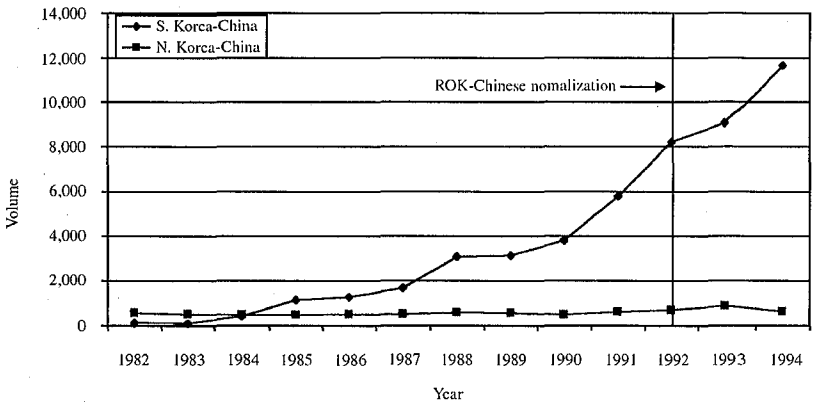
Source: Data from Chae-Jin Lee, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations* (Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, 1996), 140, 146.

than a US$2.5 billion level, the volume nose-dived and stayed below the US$500 million level.

According to table 1 and figure 3, between 1983 and 1990, North Korean-Russian economic cooperation was continuously higher than that between South Korea and Russia. During this period, both dyads enjoyed increasing cooperation with an exception of the Pyongyang-Moscow dyad in 1989. Figure 3 demonstrates a sharp drop in North Korean-Russian economic cooperation since 1991, a trend that continues until the last year of observation. The impact of Seoul-Moscow reconciliation on Pyongyang-Moscow economic cooperation is hard to miss. In 1991, North Korea and Russia were trading at a level that represented 18 percent of the previous year's value. The figure also shows that the rapid increase in Seoul-Moscow trade continued in the 1988-94 period with the exception of 1992. The year 1991, a year after normalization, was the first year that Seoul began to trade with Moscow at a higher level than did Pyongyang. Heavier cooperation in Seoul-Moscow economic exchanges (compared to Pyongyang-Moscow cooperation) continued in 1993 and 1994.

Table 2 and figure 4 show the trends in South Korean-Chinese and North Korean-Chinese economic cooperation. China's trade with South Korea had been steadily growing since the launch of Deng's reform in the late 1970s. South Korea and China were trading at a low US$140 million level in 1982, which grew more than threefold in two years. In 1985, the

Figure 4
South Korean-Chinese vs. North Korean-Chinese Economic Cooperation (bilateral trade volumes), 1982-94 (current values in US$ million)



Source: See table 2.

amount reached the billion level, and three years later the two were trading almost three times the 1985 level—at over US$3 billion. In 1991, the bilateral trade volume reached almost US$6 billion. The volume surpassed US$8 billion in the year of normalization and, in 1994, the figure was higher than US$11 billion.

In contrast to ever-increasing trade exchanges between China and South Korea, North Korean-Chinese trade remained at the level of half a billion dollars for the entire 1980s. In 1991, largely due to the free fall of North Korean-Russian trade, China became the primary trading partner of the DPRK.[82] For the 1991-93 period, North Korean-Chinese trade rose seemingly to compensate for the loss in North Korean-Russian trade. In terms of economic cooperation or the DPRK's trade dependence on China, China's normalization of relations with South Korea in 1992 did not affect the level and nature of Beijing-Pyongyang interactions.

Figure 4 shows that South Korean-Chinese trade surpassed North Korean-Chinese trade for the first time in 1985. As the former grew ex-

[82]Zacek, "Russia in North Korean Foreign Policy," 83.

ponentially and the latter stagnated, the gap between the two continued to widen in the 1984-94 period. In 1988, for instance, the volume of Seoul-Beijing trade was five times higher than that of Pyongyang-Beijing trade and eighteen times in 1994. The growth in South Korean-Chinese economic cooperation was largely gradual, and North Korean-Chinese economic cooperation was consistent and withstood the intervention of the political shock of Seoul-Beijing recognition.

Comparing figures 3 and 4, a difference in the impacts of cross-bloc engagement is striking. While Russia's and China's trade with South Korea continued to grow, ROK-USSR trade exhibited—with minor exceptions—a sudden upswing and ROK-PRC trade showed an early start and a gradually rising trend. The difference in Russia's and China's trade with North Korea is revealing. Pyongyang-Moscow economic cooperation nose-dived after the 1990 Seoul-Moscow recognition whereas Pyongyang-Beijing economic cooperation remained at a similar level after the 1992 Seoul-Beijing recognition.

The above illustration reveals the difference between Pyongyang-Moscow and Pyongyang-Beijing relations in response to adversarial engagement. Following is an account of the behavioral differences in ally relations in terms of the variables of reassurance and alternatives.

Reassurance

Comparing the two triangular politics cases, one notices that the same type of triggering events does not end up generating similar outcomes. One of the keys to the difference in behavioral outcomes is the presence of reassurance. I define reassurance as the ally's specific and immediate display of commitment of strategic cooperation toward its partner. When the major power engaging an adversary is willing to make up for the sense of strategic loss and vulnerability inflicted upon the remaining third (minor) power by a renewed display of commitment, intraalliance feuding need not happen. However, in the absence of due reassurance to which the minor party feels entitled, alliance disputes are likely to follow an adversarial engagement. In this case, reassurance functions as an inhibitor of alliance conflict.

While engaging South Korea in the early 1990s, the Soviets and the Chinese displayed different attitudes toward their old-time ally, North Korea. The Soviets were largely indifferent to Pyongyang's sensitivity about Moscow-Seoul rapprochement. Engulfed with its own financial emergency, the Kremlin was largely inept at comforting the North. While the Kremlin had initially dreamed of building cozy relations with both Koreas, their own actions actually pushed Pyongyang away. The influence of the conservatives who valued the traditional friendship with Pyongyang was too limited and their voice not loud enough; the reform-minded factions in Moscow were too anxious to buy Seoul's hearts and did not care much about Pyongyang's feelings. In stark contrast, the Chinese leadership was dearly both apprehensive and understanding of the North Korean leadership's sense of isolation. Chinese leaders made sure that the Kim government was informed of the process leading to Seoul-Beijing normalization. Whenever opportunities arose, the Chinese emphatically stressed the "traditional friendship," "militant friendship," and "revolutionary loyalty" between the PRC and the DPRK. The top-ranking officials of the PRC frequently visited Pyongyang and received heartfelt welcome from their counterparts; the Chinese were not shy in inviting the North Korean leaders to their capital. Jia and Zhuang note that "China deliberately retarded the process of establishing official relations" in order to safeguard "its traditional links with North Korea."[83] China spent considerable time persuading North Korea that the recognition of the South was inevitable and might contribute to the hastening of the reunification of the two Koreas as China had channels to both sides.[84] The difference in the intensity of the display of renewed commitment impacted subsequent alliance politics. Due to a paucity of reassurance, the North Korean-Soviet alliance suffered serious setbacks. The PRC's strong reassurance saved the North Korean-Chinese courtship.

Ally commitment in times of adversarial engagement assumes many forms: military, economic, and diplomatic. First, the continuance of the

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[83]Jia and Zhuang, "China's Policy toward the Korean Peninsula," 1146-47.

[84]See note 65 above.

security commitment is very important. Upholding preexisting security pledges is critical in saving the alliance relationship in times of adversarial engagement. In the North Korean-Soviet relationship, the Soviet Union abrogated or downgraded some of the terms that had bound the relationship between the two. The joint naval exercises that had been taking place in the second part of the 1980s were abrogated in 1990. That year, the year of Moscow-Seoul normalization, the Kremlin downgraded the terms of military assistance pledge from that of an unconditional participation in case of hostilities involving either one of the two (as appears in Art. 1 of the 1961 Soviet-North Korean defense treaty) to assistance only in the case of an unprovoked attack.[85] Since then, the Russians seemed to have distanced themselves from the security commitment with its ally even further. While visiting Pyongyang as President Yeltsin's special envoy in early 1992, Ivan Rogachev commented upon the 1961 defense treaty that its application needed to reflect "the new reality."[86] Later that year Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev remarked that the treaty contained "too many ideological elements." According to him, it was "naive to count on friendship with South Korea while maintaining the high level of military cooperation with the old ideological allies of the northern half of the Korean Peninsula."[87] What is more, Yeltsin told South Korean Foreign Minister Lee Sang Ok, who was visiting Moscow, that the treaty "lost its effect and only retained the name."[88]

The Chinese showed a different attitude toward its ally than did the Soviets. While economic merits drove the PRC toward engaging the ROK, Beijing's security commitment toward the DPRK and support for the Pyongyang leadership was unwavering. One might even say that Beijing's courtship of the Kim Il Sung regime grew stronger as Moscow launched its

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[85]Zacek, "Russia in North Korean Foreign Policy," 85-86.

[86]Mette Skak, "Post-Soviet Foreign Policy: The Emerging Relationship between Russia and Northeast Asia," *Journal of East Asian Affairs* 7, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 1993): 177.

[87]*Izvestia* (News Daily) (Moscow), March 31, 1992, quoted in Skak, "Post-Soviet Foreign Policy," 177.

[88]*Izvestia*, July 31, 1992, quoted in Skak, "Post-Soviet Foreign Policy," 178. In 1996, Russia and North Korea concluded a general treaty of friendship and cooperation, which replaced the 1961 defense treaty. See Zacek, "Russia in North Korean Foreign Policy," 85-86.

liberalization programs and as Pyongyang's domestic as well as international conditions deteriorated. Beijing stepped up supporting the DPRK's official unification and foreign policy at the same time as preparing for Sino-South Korean engagement.

Second, strong material incentives function as a sign of renewed commitment. The minor power facing betrayal by its major partner decides not to provoke conflict with the ally if compensated with enough material goods. The Soviet Union and later Russia did not provide such material aid to North Korea whereas China offered some material incentives to North Korea. The North, facing the severest economic downturn in its history, was badly in need of foreign assistance. The Russians, heavily inflicted by their own financial situation, asked the North to make trade purchases in hard currency; this was a hard blow for the Pyongyang regime which was short of foreign exchange reserves.

In contrast, the Chinese sought to be generous toward their ally even though they themselves were beset by economic problems. Immediately after the conclusion of South Korean-Soviet normalization, Kim Il Sung secretly met Deng and Jiang Zemin in Shenyang. During the meeting, the two Chinese leaders agreed to grant urgent economic assistance to Kim. Especially helpful for North Korea was China's promise for an increase in crude oil exports at a "friendship price."[89] In the early 1990s, China sold about the half of its total oil exports to Pyongyang, which was integral to the North's survival.[90] In November 1990, Premier Yon Hyung Muk, accompanied by his deputy Kim Tal Hyun, visited China and the two states signed an agreement on China's economic assistance to North Korea. Premier Yon met soon after Jiang Zemin in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone and observed how China was making headway toward economic development.[91] Following Soviet precedence, and largely due to its own economic situations, China also requested that North Korea make pur-

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[89]Ilpyong J. Kim, "China in North Korean Foreign Policy," in Kim, *North Korean Foreign Relations*, 106.

[90]Yong-Sup Han, "China's Leverages over North Korea," *Korea and World Affairs* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 246.

[91]Kim, "China in North Korean Foreign Policy," 107.

chases in hard cash in 1992. However, Beijing continued to accept soft currencies and raw materials from Pyongyang, knowing that the latter could not afford to carry out transactions in hard currency.[92]

Third, the ally's commitment is felt by its partner when the former continues to support the latter's key diplomatic agenda. A state standing by its ally's vital foreign policy agenda will earn the partner's trust, and the one adopting independent views and policy will lose faith. Agreeing with its ally on important foreign policy issues may dampen the potential discord between the two whereas advocating independent policy lines may harm bilateral relations further. In short, the Soviet Union failed to practice the norm of supporting its old friend while China managed not to provoke its partner.

In general, the Soviets began to develop independent opinions on several key issues pertaining to inter-Korean issues. The divergence in foreign policy orientations between the USSR and the DPRK was all the more painful for the Kim government because prior to *perestroika* the Soviets used to blindly support Pyongyang's views regarding the Korean Peninsula. The Kremlin started to have a more realistic evaluation of the situation on the peninsula. Some liberal analysts in Moscow saw Pyongyang's policy as extremely dogmatic and unrealistic.[93] The Russians' unswerving support for Pyongyang's position on Korean unification issues began to shift gradually. Some Russian scholars commented that U.S. troops stationed in South Korea played a constructive, deterrent role between the two Koreas and against potential Japanese expansionism.[94]

China, however, assumed a different attitude toward Pyongyang, and toward Seoul as well. Even though having decided to establish diplomatic relations with Seoul based on economic rationale, Beijing maintained military ties with Pyongyang. The Chinese did not intend to make concessions to Seoul in order to attract capital and technology from the South at the expense of Pyongyang in the North. On the economic dimension, South

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[92]See note 90 above.

[93]Bazhanov, "Soviet Policy towards South Korea under Gorbachev," 84-85.

[94]Ibid., 77.

Korea had become a more important partner for Beijing than North Korea by the mid-1980s. Yet, on the political and military levels, Sino-North Korean ties were as strong as ever. The Chinese official media kept reporting Pyongyang's brilliant achievements in economic development and in building a socialist society. They praised the DPRK's "correct" unification policy and self-reliant foreign policy. In May 1991, after the Seoul-Moscow recognition and before Seoul-Beijing recognition, Li Peng paid a four-day official goodwill visit to Pyongyang. He reassured the North Korean leadership that the PRC would stand by the DPRK and support Kim Il Sung's unification policy.[95]

During the North Korean nuclear crisis in the early 1990s, how Pyongyang's allies were inclined to resolve the issue became a litmus test as to whether the regime could be trusted as a serious strategic partner. The difference between Russia and China in dealing with the North Korean nuclear issue was unmistakable. Russia was much more aggressive and uncompromising toward Pyongyang than was China, which in due course thus angered and frustrated Pyongyang. In discussing the nuclear issue, Moscow increasingly took a position that was irreconcilable with Pyongyang's. Moscow was less apprehensive of Pyongyang's security anxiety than was China. The Soviet Union advocated the idea of transforming the Korean Peninsula into a nuclear weapons-free zone. Moscow pressed Pyongyang to accept international inspections of the suspected nuclear sites by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).[96] Pyongyang described Russia's nuclear diplomacy as "threat and pressure" and complained that "Russia had joined in the criminal pressure by the enemies of the DPRK."[97]

China also wanted to see the Korean Peninsula denuclearized and was wary that North Korea's nuclearization might provide a justification and rationale for Japan to go nuclear. Yet, the PRC showed restraint and sympathy toward Pyongyang, which helped China to maintain friendship

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[95]Lee, *China and Korea*, 120; Lee, "China's Changing Relationship with North Korea," 281.

[96]Bazhanov, "Soviet Policy towards South Korea under Gorbachev," 87.

[97]Yevgeniy Aleksandrov, "Reflections on Relations between Russia and the DPRK," *Pravda* (Truth Daily) (Moscow), July 1, 1993, in *FBIS-SOV*, July 2, 1993, 22-24.

with North Korea. Beijing favored the idea of a peaceful settlement through dialogue and consultations, instead of pressure and sanctions. When UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali visited Beijing in December 1993, Chinese Premier Li Peng made this point clear.[98]

In the 1993-94 North Korean nuclear crisis, China was an important and integral actor who tamed Pyongyang's aggressiveness and persuaded Pyongyang to negotiate with the United States. In contrast to Russia, Beijing avoided pushing Pyongyang to the brink. The PRC sought to remain neutral and act as an honest broker between North Korea and the rest of the world. China was quite neutral in both the IAEA and the UN.

Alternative Security Provisions

Reassurance from the engaging senior partner toward the junior helps ease tensions and suspicions that engulf the latter in time of adversarial engagement. The client is more likely to increase conflict with the patron when reassurance is not offered by the latter. Yet, another variable is critical in determining the nature of alliance relations: whether the minor party is capable of finding an alternative security partner. The presence of such an alternative may make the client bold and confrontational toward its patron whereas any absence may suppress the minor power's intention and capacity to retaliate against its ally.

During the South Korean-Soviet normalization process, North Korea was able to criticize and keep the Russians at a distance because Pyongyang could depend on Beijing as a reliable security partner. As North Korean-Russian relations worsened, the DPRK was closely drawn toward China. The collapse of the Soviet empire meant suffering for North Korea in terms of a shortage of energy and industrial parts; Pyongyang thus sought help from China.[99] The abrupt breakdown in Russian-North Korean

[98]Alvin Rubinstein, "North Korea's Nuclear Challenge," *Korea and World Affairs* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 32-33.

[99]Lee, "China's Changing Relationship with North Korea," 273-74.

relations raised the relative importance of China as a strategic and economic partner.

During the South Korean-Chinese normalization process, North Korea found itself dependent on China for both security and economic assistance. "The DPRK had become painfully aware that the PRC was the only remaining socialist ally in a military sense as well as the foremost source, for the time being, of economic cooperation and ideological solidarity."[100] China's opening toward Seoul did not undermine cohesion in the China-North Korea alliance. China let Moscow lead the way in approaching Seoul and taking the heat from Pyongyang, and then following Russia's path.[101] As Pyongyang had already distanced itself from Russia and could not find alternatives from other regional powers, North Korea had to maintain close relations with China. Pyongyang-Beijing cohesion was kept afloat as a reaction to the deterioration in Pyongyang-Moscow relations.

Conclusion

This comparative case study on triangular interstate exchanges has focused on two triangular events with similar independent variables that yield different outcomes. The primary goal has been to explain why and how alliance relationships change differently in response to the same stimulants. From the standpoint of China, engagement with South Korea was a success story. Beijing, from a strategic partner in a stable marriage, came out transformed into a pivot player in a romantic triangle. For the years to come, Beijing will be able to exercise influence on both Koreas and be an integral player in the post-Cold War East Asian regional politics. In contrast, Russia did not gain much. Moscow had been a partner in a stable marriage with Pyongyang before rapprochement with Seoul and became an economic partner with Seoul but estranged from Pyongyang (at least for a while) after rapprochement.

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[100] Koh, "Trends in North Korean Foreign Policy," 63.

[101] Jia and Zhuang, "China's Policy toward the Korean Peninsula," 1140.

As the last remnant of the Cold War system is on its way to disintegrating in Northeast Asia, some adversaries are trying to engage each other. North Korea, having survived its worst domestic as well as diplomatic setbacks, is vigorously pursuing more intimate relations with Japan and the United States as well as with the rest of the Western world. From this author's perspective these are the events that may trigger triangular responses. Foreign policymakers and theorists alike may ask the following questions: If Pyongyang and Tokyo recognize each other, how would this change affect Seoul-Tokyo relations? How would the normalization of Pyongyang-Washington ties affect Seoul-Washington alliance relations? [102] The theoretical framework proposed in this article should shed some light on these hypothesized engagement cases.

To sum up, engagement with an adversary generates an intriguing set of reactions from the states involved. In a triangle entailing extended deterrence, cross-bloc recognition has a potential for engendering strains in alliance politics. The actual realization of intraalliance conflict is determined by the major partner's successful reassurance and the minor partner's possession of alternative security provisions.

[102]For recent moves by the Clinton administration to step up diplomatic and trade relations with Pyongyang, see the *New York Times*, September 5 and 18, 1999.