



WHY EU'S MULTILATERALISM MATTERS IN KOREA'S PEACE PROCESS

Sunhee Park¹
Seoul National University

Abstract

Despite South Korea's expectations to gain the EU's support during the 2018 momentum for peace on the Korean peninsula, the EU exhibited reluctance to lend its support. In light of this event, this study looks into why the positions of South Korea and the EU differ on the Korean peace process to gain a better understanding of the EU's approach. Specifically, this study examines how, for the EU, the Korean Peninsula is a topic to be approached within the EU's multilateral principle framework on external relations, unlike the approach taken by the United States. Through a review of the EU's multilateral approach, this study suggests how South Korea may be able to request the EU to take a more active role, albeit a limited role due to the US's powerful influence over the Korean peninsula, in supporting South Korea's peace-building process such as the Northeast Asia Plus Community of Responsibility.

Keywords: Korea Peace Process, European Union, multilateralism, Northeast Asia Plus Community of Responsibility

Título en Castellano: Porqué el multilateralismo importa en el proceso de paz de Corea

Resumen

A pesar de las expectativas de Corea del Sur de obtener el apoyo de la UE durante el impulso del proceso de paz realizado en 2018 en la península coreana, la UE mostró reticencias en prestar su apoyo. A la luz de este acontecimiento, este estudio examina por qué las posiciones de Corea del Sur y la UE difieren en el proceso de paz coreano para comprender mejor el enfoque de la UE. Concretamente, este estudio examina cómo, para la UE, la península de Corea es un tema que debe abordarse en el marco del principio de multilateralidad de la UE sobre las relaciones exteriores, a diferencia del enfoque adoptado por los Estados Unidos. Mediante una revisión del enfoque multilateral de la UE, este estudio sugiere cómo Corea del Sur puede solicitar a la UE que asuma un papel más activo, aunque limitado debido a la poderosa influencia de los Estados Unidos sobre la península coreana, en apoyo al proceso de consolidación de la paz, como la iniciativa Comunidad de Responsabilidad del Noreste de Asia Plus.

Palabras Clave: Proceso de paz en Corea, Unión Europea, Multilateralismo, Comunidad de Responsabilidad del Noroeste de Asia

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¹ Sunsee Park is Research Associate at EU Centre, (Seoul National University)

E-mail: <europaparksh@gmail.com>

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1. Introduction²

The inter-Korean and the North Korea-United States (US) Summits in 2018 brought a new momentum for peace on the Korean Peninsula, a much-welcomed breakthrough to thaw the tension in the region which was at its heights after the exchange of a string of incendiary threats between the US and North Korean leaders. The 9th South Korea-EU Summit and the 12th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), which took place in October 2018, and South Korean President Moon Jae-in's state visits to European nations during this period, presented opportune chances for South Korea to call for the EU's support in its vision for peace-building on the Korean Peninsula. In an interview with the British BBC just before his visit to Europe, South Korean President Moon mentioned that he "believe[s] if North Korea continues to take sincere denuclearization steps and when it is believed to have reached a point of no return, the UN sanctions may start to be eased," hinting at the direction which the South Korean government hoped to take the discussions on the North Korean issue.³ However, South Korea's call for a stronger support of its policies on denuclearization in the Chair's statement at the 12th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) was met with little response from the EU, and, likewise, at the 9th South Korea-EU Summit in October 2018, discussions on North Korea's denuclearization and building a peace regime did not unravel as the South Korean government had hoped. Customarily, the South Korea-EU summits conclude with an adoption of a joint press statement, however, the 9th South Korea-EU Summit did not conclude with joint statement.⁴

President Moon met with the leaders of European countries over the ASEM period including those of France and the United Kingdom (UK), during which the president delivered the message that efforts are being made to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula and what is needed now is to lift some of the sanctions imposed on North Korea. France and the UK have the functional authority to relieve sanctions as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and are also potential candidates to participate in the process of dismantling and verifying North Korea's nuclear facilities and nuclear weapons, which means that they can lend actual strength in reducing the sanctions against North Korea. However, in response to South Korea's call for support, France made clear that the country will promote North Korea's denuclearization by the means of easing UN sanctions if it is ascertained that North Korea's denuclearization has come to an irreversible stage.⁵ A few days later, at the South Korea-UK summit on the sidelines of the ASEM, then-Prime Minister Theresa May repeated the need for complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantling (CVID), with no mention of possible easing of sanctions.⁶ The EU continued to maintain its silence during the 2019 North Korea-US Hanoi Summit.⁷ Although the South Korean government sought to take the opportunities for establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula by gaining the EU's active

² This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2016S1A3A2923970).

³ Kim b, Jeongwon: "President Moon promotes the 'ease of North Korea sanctions' through Europe", *Hankook Ilbo*, 16 October 2018, at <https://www.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/201810161766723166>. "Moon says N. Korean denuclearization includes giving up existing weapons", *Korea Herald*, 12 October 2018, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20181012000658>.

⁴ Kim, Byungjoo: "No joint statement released at the Korea-EU Summit...problems in Korea-EU relations? or procedural issue?", *Yonhap News*, 21 October 2018, at <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20181021052600098>.

⁵ Ibid. Irish, John & Pennetier, Marine: "France says it could help North Korea denuclearize if it sees real commitment", *Reuters*, 16 October 2018, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-southkorea/france-says-it-could-help-north-korea-denuclearize-if-it-sees-real-commitment-idUSKCN1MP23Q>.

⁶ "President Moon calls for easing sanctions against North Korea necessary for further progress in denuclearization... UK Prime Minister May responds 'North Korea needs to prove its commitment to CVID'", *Hankyung*, 19 October 2018, at <https://www.hankyung.com/politics/article/2018101945181>.

⁷ Doh, Jong Yoon: "Why was the EU silent about the Hanoi Summit?" *Seoul Pyeongyang News*, 18 March 2019, at <http://www.spnews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=17893>.



support, its hopes were not realized despite the efforts to persuade and publicly discuss with the international community about the necessity for easing the sanctions against North Korea in return for the progress in denuclearization.

Soon after President Moon was inaugurated, the Moon administration sent envoys to the EU with the mission to convey the Moon administration's diplomatic vision and policy direction and to seek cooperation with the EU concerning the security threat on the Korean Peninsula. This was the first time that a diplomatic envoy was sent to the EU after the inauguration of a South Korean president,⁸ revealing the value the Moon administration places on the EU as its key partner for peace-building on the Korean peninsula. The reason South Korea views the EU as an important actor for Korean peace process, even though the EU is not a powerful political security actor worldwide, is because the EU is less invested in the region, a "non-threatening partner."⁹ The direct stakeholders surrounding the Korean Peninsula include the US, China, and Russia, who are considered global superpowers, as well as Japan, and the intertwined interests of these four countries tend to complicate the path to finding a solution to the North Korean nuclear issue. Moreover, with China's growing economic and military influence, each of these nations have been adapting different ways of responding to the security issues surrounding the Korean Peninsula, resulting in sharp bursts of previously-hidden conflicts among allies. China's military expansion, North Korea's nuclear armament, as well as Japan's attempts to strengthen its military power even if it takes an amendment to the constitution and become a 'normal state' all show that the region is heading toward the security dilemma rather than forming a security community.

Under these circumstances, the EU, as an uninterested party, has a role to play in bringing peace on the Korean Peninsula. The present article takes into account the discussions by scholars such as Doh, Kim, Pacheco, Casarini, and Reiterer on the role of the EU in the peace process in Northeast Asia.¹⁰ Specifically, this article recognizes that the EU is more faithful to the principle of effective multilateralism than the channel of bilateralism in creating a peace momentum on the Korean Peninsula and explores where the EU's principle of multilateralism may coincide with South Korea's plans and the role the EU may play to bring peace in the Northeast Asian region.

⁸ "Diplomatic Convoy Cho Yoon-je meets EU leadership... 'Korea-EU Summit to be held at the G20 Meeting in July', *Yonhap News*, 19 May 2017, at <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20170519199200098>.

⁹ Weissmann, Mikael: "Towards East Asia: Moving from good intentions to action", *Occasional UI Papers 19* (April 2013), p. 2.

¹⁰ Doh, Jong Yoon: "A new blueprint for South Korea-EU relations: Northeast Asia Plus Community of Responsibility and the recovery of regionalism", *JPI Policy Forum*, No. 42 (August 2017), at http://www.jpi.or.kr/kor/regular/policy_view.sky?code=papermorgue&id=5565. Kim, Nam-Kook (2017): "Trust Building and Regional Identity in Northeast Asia", in Casarini, Nicola (ed.), *Promoting Security Cooperation and Trust Building in Northeast Asia: The role of European Union*, Rome, Edizioni Nuova Cultura, pp. 75-93. Kim, Si-Hong (2017): "NAPCI and Trilateral Cooperation: Prospects for South Korea-EU Relations", in "*ibid.*", pp. 137-149. Casarini, Nicola: "Europe's comprehensive approach to Northeast Asia's security", *Monde chinois*, Vol. 1, No. 53 (2018), pp. 94-102. Pacheco Pardo, Ramon: "NAPCR and ROK-EU cooperation in the non-proliferation of WMD", presentation paper in 2018 HUFJ JMCE International Conference entitled "NAPCR and EU-East Asia Relations", Seoul, (27 April 2018). Reiterer, Michael: "The NAPCI in the volatile security environment of the North-East Asia: which role for the European Union?", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 20, n° 4 (2015), pp. 573-590.



2. South Korea-EU Relations: The EU's Preference of the Multilateral Approach

South Korea-EU relations have mainly been based on an economic rationale. The relations between South Korea and the EU began to take full-fledge at the same time the European Commission adopted the “Towards a New Asia Strategy” in 1994, which embraced the need for an active strategy towards Asia, the region of economic growth. It was also in this period that the discussions to hold the ASEM as a region-to-region approach for the EU to catch up with the strong ties between the US and Asia began. Unlike its interest towards most Southeast Asia countries which were former colonies of Europe, the EU sought to form relations with South Korea as it began to see Asia as a region of interest.

Of course, as can be seen from the fact that the EU's first FTA with an Asian country was the South Korea-EU FTA, South Korea-EU relations saw significant progress under a bilateral framework. In fact, in 2017, South Korea represented the EU's eighth largest import and export market.¹¹ Although South Korea-EU relations developed much later than other Asian countries, the bilateral relationship has seen noticeable development in a short period of time. South Korea has become the only country in Asia which has an institutional agreement with the EU in all three areas of economy, politics, and security. Specifically, the institutional agreements concluded between South Korea and the EU are the 1994 and 2010 Framework Agreements between South Korea and the EU, the latter being an upgraded version of the 1994 Agreement; the 2011 Korea-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA); and the 2014 Agreement between the Republic of Korea and the European Union Establishing a Framework for the Participation of the Republic of Korea in European Union Crisis Management Operations (FPA).¹² The FPA, in particular, laid the legal basis for South Korea's participation in the EU's crisis management activities, more specifically, for South Korea and the EU to cooperate in military and security operations. Accordingly, in 2017, South Korean Navy *Chunghae* Unit's multipurpose destroyers were deployed in anti-piracy military operations with the EU.¹³

Through the deepening bilateral relations between South Korea and the EU and, more specifically, through the 2010 Framework Agreement, South Korea became the EU's Strategic Partner in Asia¹⁴ along with China, Japan, and India.¹⁵ According to Czechowsk, strategic partnerships are the closest possible relationships in bilateral relations: “A bilateral relation, characterized simultaneously by institutional flexibility, exceptional closeness, and intensiveness of relations between subjects that keep their legal sovereignty.”¹⁶ On the other hand, however, it is also pointed out that being a Strategic Partnership country in relation to the EU is merely a rhetoric.¹⁷ Also, compared to the other countries in Strategic Partnerships with the EU, the relationship between South Korea and the EU is less close. Of the EU's ten Strategic Partners, South Korea is among the only four countries that have not issued a Key Joint Statement on Security Issues, alongside Mexico, South Africa, and Brazil, which may come as

¹¹ European Commission, “Trade in goods with South Korea”, (16 April 2018), at http://tradeec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113448pdf.

¹² The FPA established the legal basis for South Korea to participate in the EU's risk management operations and thereby enabled South Korea and EU to take practical actions in their political and security cooperation efforts.

¹³ It should be noted that this operation (called Operation Atlanta) cannot be considered purely a bilateral cooperation as the multinational Combined Task Force 151 of the US-led Combined Maritime Forces and NATO's anti-piracy Operation Ocean Shield, etc. were also involved.

¹⁴ For the discussion on South Korea-EU strategic relations, see Chung, Sae Won & Lee, Jae-Seung: “Building the pillars of the EU-South Korea strategic partnership”, *Asia Europe Journal*, Vol. 17, n°3 (2019), pp. 327-340.

¹⁵ The ten strategic partners of the EU are: Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, South Korea and the US.

¹⁶ Czechowska, Lucyna: “Cooperation vs. rivalry – the theoretical perspective: the concept of strategic partnership as an input in modern alliance theory”, *Copernicus Journal of Political Studies*, Vol. 2, n° 4 (2013), p. 47.

¹⁷ Schmidt, Anna: “Strategic Partnerships – a contested policy concept”, *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Working Paper 7*, (2010).



a surprise considering the situation surrounding the Korean peninsula. In addition, the fact that the EU adopted the Joint Declaration on Non Proliferation with the US, Japan, and China but not with South Korea,¹⁸ a highly-implicated party concerning nuclear proliferation on the Korean peninsula, further raises questions on the EU's position regarding the Korean Peninsula. According to Renard, Strategic Partnership refers, among other things, to a relationship which pursues cooperation on security issues with key global powers.¹⁹ In this context, it cannot be helped but to wonder why not even a minimal gesture was made by the EU to South Korea, its Strategic Partner, concerning the cooperation over the denuclearization and peace-building on the Korean Peninsula.

As the South Korea-EU FTA shows, the EU has a concrete and practical strategy in its bilateral relations with South Korea on economic issues, however, the bilateral relations remain at a formality concerning security issues. It is possible to presume that this standstill development is due to the EU's preference for a multilateral approach in responding to the security problems on the Korean Peninsula. As an example, the EU has issued two declarations to support peace-building on the Korean peninsula in a multilateral framework rather than in a bilateral setting such as the South Korea-EU Summit. Both declarations were made under the framework of the ASEM where the EU is the most important key actor: the Seoul Declaration for Peace on the Korean Peninsula was adopted at the ASEM held in Seoul in 2000 and the Political Declaration on the Korean Peninsula at the 2002 Copenhagen ASEM. However, at the ASEM talks held in Brussels in October 2018, amidst breakthrough in the situation surrounding the Korean Peninsula, the Chair's Statement merely reiterated the principle of CVID, despite the hopes of the Moon Jae-in administration to gain the EU's support, and the EU did not adopt a declaration concerning the Korean peninsula. The prospect of cooperation after the sharp discord of words between Trump and Kim Jong-un which had the potential to lead into a nuclear warfare situation on the Korean Peninsula received no comment from Europe.

In the past, however, the EU played an important role in the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), an organization established in 1995 to address the nuclear threat as part of a multilateral effort by South Korea, the US, and Japan to implement the 1994 North Korea-US Agreed Framework following North Korea's declaration to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in March 1993. The EU participated in KEDO as part of the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC) in 1997 until 2006 when the organization came to an end.²⁰ The EAEC played a critical role in KEDO, which aimed to build two light-water reactors in North Korea and supply heavy oil during the construction period. Although the EU was not one of the four major powers directly related to the Korean Peninsula, it not only served as an Executive Board Member alongside Korea, Japan and the US, but also provided significant financial assistance as shown in the chart below (see Table 1).

¹⁸ Table 2 in Renard, Thomas: "Partnering for Global Security: The EU, Its Strategic Partners and Transnational Security Challenges", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 21, n° 1 (2016), pp. 17-18.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-34.

²⁰ The other members of KEDO are Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Indonesia, Chile, Argentina, Poland, Czech Republic, and Uzbekistan. Finland was also a member but only from 1995 to 2001.

**Table 1: Total Financial Support by Country (March 1995 through December 2005)**

Country	U.S. dollars (million)
South Korea	1,455
Japan	498
United States	405
EAEC	122
Australia	14
Canada	5
New Zealand	3

Source: Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (2005): 2005 Annual Report. http://www.kedo.org/pdfs/KEDO_AR_2005.pdf.

Later, the EU was not included in the Six-Party Talks to resolve the North Korean issue despite its expression of willingness to participate, however, as it had actively supported KEDO, the EU expressed its strong endorsement of the multilateral Six-Party Talk framework. In actuality, in support of the talks, the EU provided €1.7 million to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 2007 towards the verification of North Korea's nuclear dismantlement.²¹ Indeed, although the EU is not one of the four major powers surrounding the Korean Peninsula and was excluded from the Six-Party Talks, it lent the most support in realizing the decisions made at the talks. The EU's passive stance on the Korean Peninsula in recent years (i.e., repeating only the CVID principle) is not that the issue lacks importance or relevance for the EU but, rather, arises from the gap between the EU's preferred approach – multilateralism – and the support expected and hoped for by South Korea.

3. EU's Multilateral Way

The European Security Strategy (ESS),²² announced in 2003, is the first document published on the EU's global security strategy. This document is meaningful in that it reveals the EU's extended scope of foreign, security and defense policy beyond the boundary of Europe. In addition, it shows the EU's confidence as an actor in ensuring global security, as its announcement also coincided with the launch of the EU's first military operation. The EU also announced the EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD strategy)²³ in the recognition that “meeting this challenge (of WMD) must be a central element in the EU's external action.” Both the ESS and WMD strategy emphasize effective multilateralism as the approach for European security challenges, which favors rule-based multilateralism endorsed by the UN preference for formal and legally binding commitments agreed upon in multilateral fora. Although multilateralism may seem as a mere rhetoric or principle, the year 2003 was a time which called for multilateral approaches in dealing with the situations occurring globally and on the Korean Peninsula.

²¹ Fitzpatrick, Mark: “North Korean Proliferation Challenges: The role of the European Union”, *Non-Proliferation Papers*, n° 18 (June 2012), p. 12, at <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2012/eu-non-proliferation-papers/north-korean-proliferation-challenges-role-european-union>.

²² Council of the EU, “Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy”, (12 Dec. 2003), at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents-publications/publications/european-security-strategy-secure-europe-better-world/>.

²³ Council of the EU, “Fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction: EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction”, (10 Dec. 2003), at https://www.hcoc.at/documents/WMD_STRATEGY_EN.pdf.



In February 2003, French Minister of Foreign Affairs De Villepin made an appeal at the UN that the US's imminent invasion of Iraq was unreasonable and that access to Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) should be pursued through UN agencies and IAEA nuclear inspections. In his speech to the UN, De Villepin likened the UN to a sacred church, arguing that the issue of Iraq should be settled "in the temple of the United Nations (*dans ce temple des Nations*)," that is, a temple of multilateralism. In April 2003, ten years after 1993 when North Korea first declared its intention to withdraw from the NPT, North Korea became the first country to opt out of the NPT. To the NPT system, which was built for the countries that already have nuclear weapons (such as the US, the UK, France, China, and Russia) to maintain an upper-hand in security issues and ensure nuclear stability, North Korea's declaration presented an unprecedented challenge. The first Six-Party Talks (which consisted of South Korea, North Korea, and their four neighboring countries -- the US, Japan, China, and Russia -- as parties) was launched in August 2003 as a new multilateral framework for dealing with North Korea's nuclear issue after its withdrawal from the NPT system.

The EU's preference for multilateralism was not born as an outcome of situations which unraveled in 2003. The second security strategy document following the ESS, entitled "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy," points out that multilateralism is part of the EU's DNA,²⁴ reflecting the EU's long-standing preference for multilateralism. Europe has sought multilateral solutions in the field of security far before it declared the idea of effective multilateralism in 2003. The EU not only supported KEDO but also participated in the US-led Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program which provided technical expertise on securing or eliminating nuclear weapons to the Soviet Union after its collapse. In addition, although the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) adopted by the UN in 1996 did not meet the conditions for entering into force due to the US's refusal to ratify it, the EU made a positive contribution in helping the operations of the CTBT Organization as well as the efforts to strengthen the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Perhaps what most prominently shows the EU's role in global security issues is the Iran nuclear deal framework. Five years after the ESS was announced, the ESS implementation report "Providing Security in a Changing World," published by Javier Solana, the then-Secretary-General of the Council of the EU, described the EU's role in concluding the Iran nuclear agreement as follows: "The EU has been very active in multilateral fora, on the basis of the WMD Strategy, adopted in 2003, and at the forefront of international efforts to address Iran's nuclear programme."²⁵ In this sense, the Iranian nuclear deal framework led by the UN Security Council and the IAEA is a good example of the EU's principle in approaching security issues: the EU's approach to nuclear disarmament is to enable these two multilateral bodies to fulfill their roles. The EU actively lent its support in the next ten years of negotiating the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran, and even after the US's withdrawal in May 2018, the EU continued its trade with Iran despite the US sanctions so that Iran can continue to implement the JCPOA.²⁶

²⁴ Council of the EU, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy", (June 2016), at https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/sites/globalstrategy/files/regions/files/eugs_review_web.pdf.

²⁵ Council of the EU, "Report on the Implementation of European Security Strategy: Providing Security in a Changing World", (11 December 2008), at https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/reports/104630.pdf.

²⁶ Geranmayeh, Ellie: "Why the Iran Nuclear deal still matters for Europe", *European Council on Foreign Relations* (16 January 2019), at https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_why_iran_nuclear_deal_still_matters_for_europe_jcpoa.



As mentioned in the ESS, North Korea is a “distant threat” but still one of the EU’s areas of concern. The Korean Peninsula experienced an unprecedented threat of potential nuclear warfare in 2017. The imminence of this threat is well described in a fictional piece written by Philip Gordon, former adviser to Obama, entitled “A vision of Trump at War,”²⁷ which was published in *Foreign Affairs* and describes a possible scenario where North Korea bombards Seoul in December 2018. All efforts, including the NPT, KEDO, and the Six-Party Talks, to achieve a peaceful denuclearization process in North Korea proved to be unsuccessful, and as a result, the situation in 2017 seemed to point to a possible military counteraction including the use of nuclear warheads, despite the dangers posed by military solutions.

By reigniting dialogues in the midst of this nuclear crisis, the Moon Jae-in administration actively reclaimed the path of stability and change pursued by the past progressive government, diverging from the policies of the preceding conservative South Korean government which sought to bring North Korea’s early collapse through pressure and containment. Moreover, the Moon Jae-in administration, which took power in the midst of this threatening situation, made it a top priority to actively bring about stable changes in North Korea. Under this goal, the Moon government sought to ease the UN’s sanctions against North Korea and hoped to gain Europe’s support, rather than to persuade the strong-headed US, in creating an atmosphere for lifting UN sanctions before North Korea’s complete denuclearization.²⁸ In this context, the Moon government had high expectations for the EU to stand by its side, but the response it received from the European side was not quite what it had expected. As can be seen from the table below (Table 2), the statements made by the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the ASEM Chair’s Statements all stress North Korea’s commitment and delivery of CVID.

Table 2: Korean Peninsula Peace Dialogues and the EU’s Reactions

Event (April 2018 – June 2019)	Statement issued date	Main Contents
1st Inter-Korea Summit (April 2018)	27 th of April	CVID
2nd Inter-Korea Summit (May 2018)	No comment	
North Korea-U.S. Summit Singapore (June 2018)	12 th of June	CVID IAEA CTBT
3rd Inter-Korea Summit Pyongyang (18-19 Sept 2018)	19 th of September	CVID “in the presence of experts from relevant countries, which should involve relevant multilateral institutions, is an important step.”
9th Korea-EU Summit Brussels (19 Oct 2018)	No joint statement	
ASEM (Brussels)	19 th of October	CVID
North Korea-U.S. Summit Hanoi (Feb 2019)	No Comment	
North Korea-U.S.-South Korea (June 2019)	No Comment	

²⁷ Gordon, Philip: “A vision of Trump at war”, *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2017).

²⁸ Kim a, *op. cit.*



The statements also reiterate that North Korea's denuclearization is a broader global problem than that can be resolved through bilateral dialogues within the triangular relations of South Korea, North Korea, and the US. Furthermore, they highlight the importance of multilateral frameworks such as the UN-led IAEA and the CTBT. In the way that CVID stands for a multilateral approach first adopted by the UN Security Council Standing Committee in 2006²⁹ to become the international community's practical solution and demand to North Korea, these statements show the EU's view that relevant multilateral institutions which can provide necessary support for the denuclearization process, such as the IAEA and CTBT, are the most effective frameworks to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

The EU's position on North Korean nuclear issue may seem to the South Korean government as a mere principle, but it clearly expresses the belief that a multilateral framework is more effective. Coincidentally, however, on June 12, 2018 when the North Korea-US summit was held, Head of EEAS Mogherini also addressed the European Parliament on the Iran nuclear deal framework.³⁰ The nuclear agreement with Iran, which deals with a similar issue as that of North Korea but which is one of the EU's more successful outcomes as a mediator, was making progress in Iran's denuclearization under the JCPOA established in accordance with UNSC resolution 2231. But in May 2018, the US unilaterally opted out of the JCPOA. To maintain the existing nuclear negotiation framework of the JCPOA, it became impossible for the EU to see North Korea's denuclearization as being separate from Iran. That is, just as the EU approached the Iran issue, a problem that requires the attention of both the US and the EU, the EU found itself in the inevitable position of advocating a multilateral framework for resolving the North Korean nuclear problem.

On the other hand, it can be argued that it is possible to apply bilateralism in parallel (or complementarily) to multilateralism even if the multilateral approach is preferred. However, in terms of North Korea, there is a lack of 'situational necessity' for South Korea and the EU to cooperate under a bilateral framework. Unlike the case of the US to whom North Korea's nuclear armament is a direct threat to its domestic and political security, North Korea does not pose a direct threat to the EU. Also, unlike in 1997 when Europe provided funds for the construction of light-water reactors in North Korea, there was no rational motive (e.g., North Koreans' exposure to famine due to worsened economic conditions) for the EU to support the easing of the economic sanctions posed on North Korea. Moreover, since Europe was excluded from Trump's big deal with North Korea without prior coordination, there was no reason for the EU to go out of its way to lend its support in bolstering the sudden atmosphere for dialogues so that the US could improve its bilateral relations with North Korea. The EU cannot predict what direction Trump's big deal will go, but it believes that a multilateral framework is necessary to make the two parties involved in this bilateral deal commit to their promises for the deal and see actual and stable progress. This belief arises not only from the unpredictability of Kim Jong-un but also the lack of guarantee that the next US government, after Trump leaves office, will be faithful to the agreements made with North Korea. In this sense, the multilateral approach remains as a valid pursuit for the EU concerning the North Korean nuclear issue.

²⁹ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1718 (14 October 2006), at https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/unsres_14102006.pdf.

³⁰ Doh, Jong Yoon: "The EU's assessment and policy toward Korea after the June 12 North Korea-US Summit", *JPI Policy Forum*, No. 29 (June, 2018), pp. 1-7, at http://www.jpi.or.kr/kor/regular/policy_view.sky?code=papermorgue&id=5648.



4. South Korea's Multilateral Peace Initiative and the European Union

After the North Korean nuclear crisis reached its peak and before the sudden phase of dialogue between the US and the North and South Korea in 2018, South Korea had sought to build a multilateral framework for Northeast Asian peace cooperation with the ultimate goal of bringing about North Korea's denuclearization. The Korean peninsula had been split into two as a result of the power struggles between superpowers, and despite the end of the Cold War, the momentum for the two Korea's reunification has been in a stall due to the continued race between global superpowers to gain the political upper-hand. South Korea has had no choice but to accept the regional order established by superpowers, despite the fact that the issues on hand are national and domestic in their nature. Thus, South Korea has been actively seeking to build a new multilateral cooperation for the stable security of the East Asian region and to take initiative in constructing a plan for peaceful cooperation in Northeast Asia.

Prime examples of such efforts include the Park Geun-hye administration's North Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI), the Korean Peninsula Trust-building Process (*Trustpolitik*), and the Northeast Asia Plus Community of Responsibility (NAPCR) which was envisioned at the launch of the Moon Jae-in administration. The Park Geun-hye administration's Korean Peninsula Trust-building Process and the NAPCI are interconnected.³¹ The NAPCI aimed to launch a multilateral dialogue process centered on soft issues as a way for Northeast Asia to overcome the political conflicts that the region still suffers and establish a lasting cooperative system for peace in the region, despite the increasing economic capacity and deepening interdependence. As such, it sought to support the Korean Peninsula trust process in building the climate for resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. The NAPCI was open to countries other than the US and Northeast Asian countries and did not focus solely on resolving the North Korean nuclear issue as in the case of the Six-Party Talks. However, as the North Korean nuclear issue has a major impact on the security of Northeast Asia, the NAPCI was also able to broadly address North Korea's nuclear development.

Although the NAPCI was founded upon the specific circumstances of Northeast Asia, it was influenced by the European Helsinki Process, which began as a multilateral negotiation framework of 35 countries, which included not only European nations but also the US and Canada, and paved the way for peace and cooperation among European nations. On March 28, 2014, President Park Geun-hye gave a speech entitled "An Initiative for Peace Unification on the Korean Peninsula" in Germany, which was unified as the outcome of the Helsinki Process, stating, "We could also build on the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative to address North Korea's Security concerns through a multilateral peace and security system in Northeast Asia."³² To publicize the NAPCI, President Park presented the initiative at the US congress (on May 7, 2013) and worked in collaboration with various research institutes on the academic level,³³ but her impeachment in March 2017 put a stop to further developments of the NAPCI.

The Moon Jae-in administration, which came to power in May 2017, announced multilateral diplomacy in Northeast Asia as its most important task and presented the NAPCR initiative which advanced the NAPCI while maintaining its basic framework.³⁴ The three

³¹ The Park Geun-hye administration placed the greatest weight on *Trustpolitik*. See Reiterer, *op. cit.*

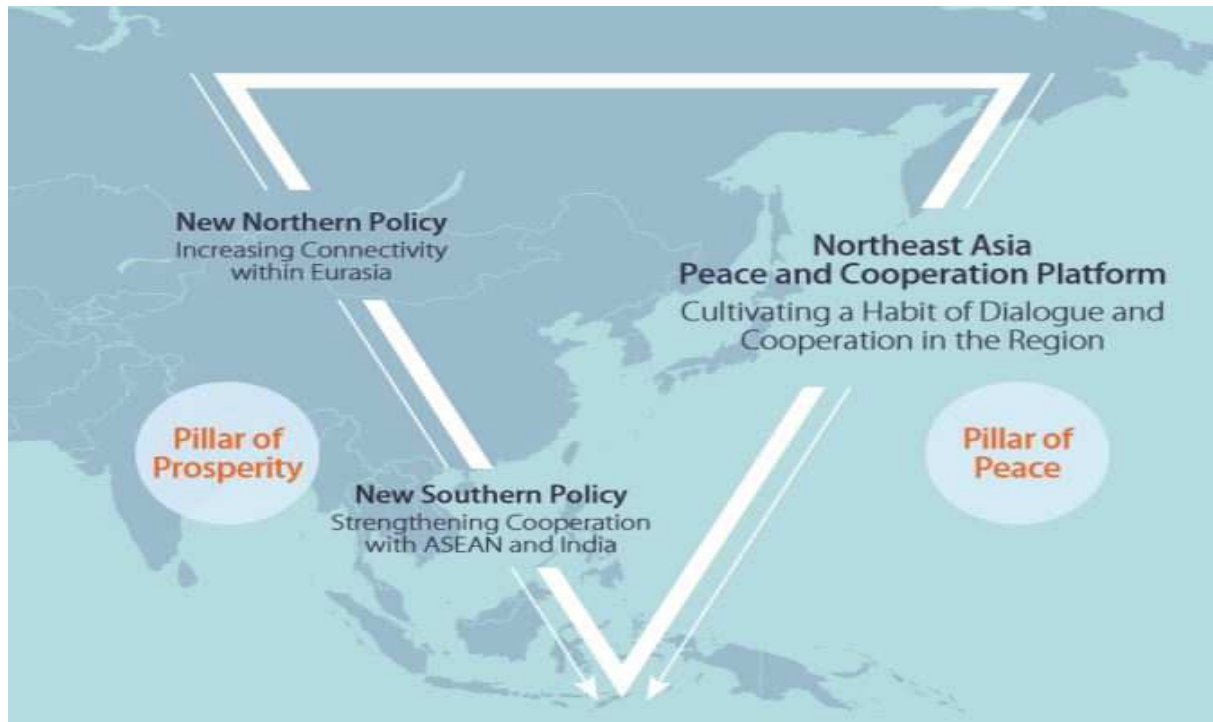
³² Park Geun-hye: "An Initiative for Peaceful Unification on the Korean Peninsula", Dresden (28 March 2014), at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20140328001400>.

³³ Asan forum (2014) and Centre of Strategic and International Studies (2016).

³⁴ Refer to Moon Jae-in's "Presidential Election Pledge", (2017), at http://theminjoo.kr/President/pledgeDetail.do?bd_seq=65856 and "Five-year Plan for the Administration of State Affairs", (2017), at <http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=2ahUKEwiZ3NWZ9PHkAhUjU>

factors that make up NAPCR, as shown in Figure 1 below, are the New Northern Policy, New Southern Policy, and Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Platform. The NAPCR consists of two pillars, the pillars of prosperity and the pillar of peace. The pillar of prosperity is the New Southern Policy, which emphasizes the need to strengthen South Korea's cooperation with the ASEAN countries and India. The New Northern policy, on the other hand, seeks to strengthen the South Korea's identity as the country bridging the ocean and the continent and set the northern region a new pillar of prosperity in response to the efforts to integrate the Eurasian region, such as China's One Belt One Road (一帶一路) initiative and Russia's 'new Eastern policy.'

Figure 1: Northeast Asia Plus Community of Responsibility



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROK (2018), *Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Platform*, http://www.mofa.go.kr/www/brd/m_20374/download.do?brd_id=20031&seq=16&data_tp=A&file_seq=2.

The other pillar of NAPCR, the pillar of peace, refers to the establishment of a Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Platform (refer to Figure 2 below). This multilateral framework is envisioned by South Korea so that it can take the lead in the Korean Peninsula peace process. The use of the term “platform” emphasizes the creation of a new engine of cooperation in which various partner countries can share their views on peace cooperation while maintaining an open structure that encourages free debate. As can be seen from the addition of Mongolia as a partner in the platform's inner circle alongside the four major powers surrounding the Korean Peninsula, this initiative seeks new partners and attaches importance to their new roles. The members of the platform's outer circle are envisioned to be multilateral and regional entities such as the UN, NATO, OSCE, EU, and ASEAN, in addition to Australia and New Zealand, reflecting the large weight this vision places on multilateral organizations. Although they do not have direct interests concerning the Korean peninsula compared to the inner circle, South Korea values their role as external actors in recognition of the need for a mid-to-long term

strategy to deal with the four major powers' increasingly-aggressive attempts to subsume Korea under their spheres of influence.

Figure 2: Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Platform



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROK (2018), *Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Platform*, http://www.mofa.go.kr/www/brd/m_20374/down.do?brd_id=20031&seq=16&data_tp=A&file_seq=2.

In particular, the EU can be expected to play a significant role as an external actor because the basic principles of NAPCR were influenced by regionalism, the driver of the EU's integration. Although the EU referred to North Korea's nuclear armament as a "distant threat" in the 2003 ESS report, the 2012 Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia states the EU's slightly shifted position by pointing out the EU's direct exposure to North Korean threats in noting "a number of threats to regional security [...] have a direct bearing on the interests of the EU" and the "DPRK[North Korea]'s nuclear and ballistic missile programs."³⁵ The EU has already shown its support for Korean peace process through the KEDO and the Six-Party Talks and expressed its support of the NAPCI in the joint declaration announced on November 8, 2013 in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of South Korea-EU diplomatic relations.³⁶

The NAPCR of the current Moon Jae-in government develops the NAPCI initiative further and has already been exploring ways to cooperate with the EU at the academic level.³⁷

³⁵ Council of the EU, "Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia", (15 June 2012), at http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/asia/docs/guidelines_eu_foreign_sec_pol_east_asia_en.pdf.

³⁶ Republic of Korea Policy Brief, "Korea-EU Summit... Announces 'Joint Statement on 50 years of diplomatic relations': Plans to expand trade and investment through FTA... EU "supports the Korean Peninsula Trust-building Process" (11 November 2013), at <http://www.korea.kr/special/policyFocusView.do?newsId=148769630&pkgId=49500581&pkgSubId=&pageIdx=1>.

³⁷ HUFS JMCE International Conference, "NAPCR and EU-East Asia Relations", Seoul (27 April 2018).



It may be possible to draw up a specific plan for cooperation with the EU by placing the NATO and OSCE, the two pillars of the European security system, at the outer circle of the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Platform. The NATO, in particular, is an organization which strongly reflects the US's interest, despite being a military alliance of mostly European countries. South Korea expects the EU to play an important role under the framework of this platform, should the NAPCR becomes operational. To South Korea, the EU's role is critical because the South Korean government remembers how, before the North Korea-US relations saw a breakthrough in 2018, the Trump administration played with the military card to bring out North Korea's denuclearization, placing South Korea and its neighbors under potential nuclear threat.³⁸ The US is open to a military scenario for North Korea's denuclearization, and the US's unilateral opt-out from the JCPOA framework of the Iran nuclear agreement in the past has shown how volatile the US policy on the North Korean issue can be. The likelihood that today's progress in peace-building may vanish into thin air at any moment,³⁹ regardless of how many meetings Washington and Pyongyang hold, means that South Korea cannot completely rely on the US's way of bringing about North Korea's denuclearization. The main reason why a multilateral security cooperation has not been realized so far in Northeast Asia is not because there exists a lack of need or importance for such cooperation but because of the competition among major powers to become the leader of global and regional order based on their national interests.

5. Conclusion

The Korean Peninsula was able to make a dramatic switch from the dire conflict situation to an atmosphere of dialogue, but it is unclear whether the present dialogues will continue on their current course. Meanwhile, North Korea's active willingness to engage in talks and improve its relations with China and Russia has deepened the involvement and competition of the major power surrounding North Korean nuclear issue and the Korean Peninsula. In addition, the progress in the inter-Korean dialogue has provided an opportunity for South Korea to observe the reactions of its neighboring countries concerning the possible reunification of the two Koreas, which have pointed to the possible escalation of conflicts in the region. One case of point is the recent clash between South Korea and Japan, which seem to have been caused by economic interests and past history issues on the surface. However, shelving the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) demonstrate that the fundamental reason of today's conflict is the two countries' lack of trust in each other concerning national and regional security. Unsurprisingly, although Korea's neighboring countries feel the need to find an active solution to North Korea's nuclear armament, they remain passive on the subject of peace-building on the Korean Peninsula through the two Koreas' reunification. The continued division of the two Koreas is necessary for the major powers and neighbors in the Northeast Asian region, especially amid the ever-growing contention between China and the US/Japan, to maintain the balance of regional order. As such, the South Korean government's efforts to solidify peace on the Korean Peninsula through reunification require actors who are not direct stakeholders.

The EU's influence in the international community and its distance from the conflicting interests surrounding Northeast Asia, in this sense, places the EU as an ideal and effective partner for South Korea. Moreover, South Korea and the EU both see multilateralism as the necessary path for building peace on the Korean Peninsula. However, the EU has remained

³⁸ Borger, Julian: "Democrats perturbed by Trump's threat of pre-emptive North Korea strike", *The Guardian*, 8 November 2017, at <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/nov/08/democrats-congress-trump-north-korea-strike>.

³⁹ Godement, Francois: "Trump-Kim Summit: A Gambler's diplomacy", *European Council on Foreign Relations* (13 June 2018), at https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_the_kim_trump_summit_gamblers_diplomacy.



silent during the changes brought by the inter-Korean and the North Korea-US summits from 2018 to early 2019, unlike what South Korea had hoped and expected. So far in the bilateral talks with North Korea, there was little room for the EU to engage in the peace process on the Korean peninsula, so the EU could only emphasize its principles such as CVID. To make a headway in engaging the EU, what is required is to expand the focus of the present dialogues, which is on North Korea's denuclearization, to the solidification of peace on the Korean Peninsula and bring the EU within the framework of multilateral talks. When the NAPCR begins to function not only as an idea but as a practical device for multilateral dialogues, the EU will show more willingness to embrace its role as an actor and partner in the ongoing Korean peace process. Although the US does not leave much space for the EU to become involved in the Korean peninsula peace-building process, the EU's potential role in multilateral frameworks led by South Korea, such as the NAPCR, cannot be overlooked. Especially if the bilateral talks between the US and North Korea encounter severe obstacles, or if the multilateral dialogues face an irreversible dissolution as in the case of Iran, the EU can intervene as a useful actor for sustaining the multilateral framework. Although it can be argued that the cases of the Korean peninsula and Iran are incomparable, what remains undisputable is the EU's effectiveness on multilateral platforms proven by the diplomatic success of EU foreign policy's in the Iran nuclear deal framework.

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