

Ulrich Beck and the Metamorphosis of the Korean Peninsula^{*,**}

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This paper attempts to deal with the metamorphosis of the Korean Peninsula under way today, which shows complex issues entangled in multiple temporalities. Its main objectives are three: 1) to develop a social scientific concept of metamorphosis hinging upon, and moving further from, the legacy of Ulrich Beck; 2) to construct a three-stage model of metamorphosis along the insights offered by the I Ching, a Chinese classic, and examine the current Korean metamorphosis in 2018 from the vantage point of Kim Dae-jung, who opened the first round of metamorphosis in 2000; 3) to clarify the root problems of the difficulties and uncertainties related to the issue of denuclearization, together with the enabling and constraining factors of the Korean metamorphosis. The paper will show where the old geopolitical framework of strategic interests faces its limit in solving the North Korean nuclear problem and why we need to look at the Korean Peninsula from a new, unbiased perspective of communication.

Keywords: *The Korean metamorphosis, Ulrich Beck, Kim Dae-jung, I Ching, Donald Trump, Kim Jung-un, Moon Jae-in, communicative justice*

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Introduction

The word metamorphosis is derived from the Greek “meta” (change) and “morphē” (form), denoting a change of form. It means a form-breaking transformation (Beck 2016a, p. 6, footnote). The complex nuances of this term can be well illustrated in certain fields of natural science. A good example is the life cycle of a butterfly. A butterfly lays its eggs on a plant and the eggs hatch into caterpillars. Each day, the caterpillar eats as much as it can, growing and molting several times, splitting the skin and crawling out of it. The caterpillar then goes into a resting state in a silk cocoon, which may last two weeks or longer. Finally, the butterfly emerges from the cocoon and flies off into the sky. This shows that the butterfly follows several stages of bodily transformation. The eggs, caterpillars, cocoons, and butterflies belong to the same species, but their physical forms are completely different.

Mythologies offer fascinating imaginations of metamorphosis in the West and the East as well. In literature, Kafka’s novel *Metamorphosis* is well known (Richardson 2008). In linguistics, this term has been used to explain the nonlinear upgrading pattern of cognitive capacity related to language acquisition and desire (Njiokiktjient, 2007; Jangizahy & Afroughheh 2013). But in social science, the term metamorphosis has rarely been used. Even if it is used (Hanappi 2017; Farrar 1973), it tends to be more figurative than explanatory. Perhaps, it is Ulrich Beck who has made the first attempt to develop a social scientific concept of metamorphosis.

For this reason, this paper will start by paying attention to Beck (2015; 2016) who intensively dealt with the Western experience of a risk society. He tried to work out the concept of metamorphosis primarily relying on this historical context. Thus, our method of reading is selective and eclectic: we take from him some relevant analytic distinctions, and by linking them with others, formulate a conceptual framework as the basis of our study of the Korean metamorphosis. We will then suggest a three-stage model of metamorphosis from the *I Ching*, a Chinese classic displaying profound imaginations of change (Legge 1899; Mueller 1965). Based on these conceptual works, we will move to Kim Dae-jung, who led the first round of the Korean metamorphosis in 2000 (Han 2011; 2012; 2018) and compare the current pattern of change. In this regard, we will pay attention to the interactions among Donald Trump of the United States, Kim Jung-un of North Korea, and Moon Jae-in of South Korea. We will then come back to our conceptual framework and discuss salient issues from a comparative

perspective. The concluding remarks will follow.

Towards a Social Scientific Conceptualization of Metamorphosis

For a social scientific understanding of the Korean metamorphosis, we need an adequate conceptual scheme. Beck sensitizes our attention to a global risk society, of which the North Korean nuclear threat is a perfect case. Beck (1944-2015) passed away on the first day of January, 2015, and we find it important to relate his theories to concrete historical and empirical studies (Han 2017; Shim 2017; Mythen and Walklate 2016). This paper is perhaps the first attempt to upgrade his theory of metamorphosis (Beck 2016). For this, above all, we need to immerse Beck in the Korean context of metamorphosis. According to him, metamorphosis is neither a revolution nor an evolution. It is more dynamic than continuity, but not so radical as discontinuity. What is crucial for metamorphosis is not the intended, but the unintended consequences of human decisions. In particular, he emphasizes the positive function of something bad. He shifts attention from “the bads of good” to “the goods of bads,” so to speak (Rasbrog 2018).

Climate change is a good example (Honeybun-Arnolda 2017). It refers to a negative consequence of the positive progress of industrial society. It manifests destructive pathologies in various forms such as global warming, the rise of sea level, stormy weather and tsunamis, and other economic and social losses. Nevertheless, this danger and threat opens another track moving in the opposite direction. It fosters a cognitive and moral awakening to the normative value of human survival. Such an alarming shock works as a catalyst of the hope for sustainable development. In short, metamorphosis does not start from the benign intention of a human actor, but from a survival imperative (Mythen 2018a; 2018b). Given the global context of the risk society in which we live, this insight can serve as a valid starting point for our study on the Korean metamorphosis.

It is ironic that the North Korean nuclear capability has opened up the space for the metamorphosis of the Korean Peninsula, simply because it can threaten American security. There is no reason to welcome this. But it can be asked whether there was no opportunity to solve this problem earlier. It could have been solved earlier, perhaps, with cheaper costs if the parties concerned, particularly the United States, had paid more appropriate attention at the

right time with well-concerted policy instruments. But all have failed.¹ Meanwhile, North Korea has made efforts to build its nuclear capability. Only after things happened this way did the United States begin to pay serious attention to the Korean Peninsula, maximally mobilizing surveillance and sanctions against North Korea.

For a proper analysis of the Korean metamorphosis that is multidimensional, we should first pay attention to the global geopolitical field in which the hegemonic powers try to manage and control world affairs by their strategic interests. Beck endlessly put emphasis on the material and structural dimensions of metamorphosis, saying that the contradictions of various forces irreducible to human intention are in operation. This material and structural dimension is deeply related to the rise of China as a G-2 power. Against this background, we can understand the complicated and conflicting responses of the United States, China, and Japan to North Korea's nuclear weapons development.

For instance, Kim Jung-un made his fourth visit to China in less than a year from January 7 to 10, 2019 at the invitation of Xi Jinping (Hindustantimes 2019). The strategic implications in terms of calculating and representing national interests are profound. In addition, the United States today is different from the past in that it increasingly mixes security interests and commercial interests. The material and structural dimensions of metamorphosis include two levels: geopolitics and strategic interest calculation.

Second, Beck's concept of normative metamorphosis is imaginative and useful. What is at stake is the function of norms and imaginations which yield a profound influence on human action and international politics, too. This dimension is ideal compared with power relations and stays at the opposite end of the material and structural dimensions of metamorphosis. What is crucial for the former is a discursive and symbolic formation of identity and desire built into history and culture. This dimension also includes two components: one is cultural formation and another is communicative action. The logic of cultural norms is very different from that of geopolitics, as much as communicative action differs from strategic action. The concept of "categorical" metamorphosis used by Beck (2016, p. 76) means a fundamental shift in looking at the world. Categorical means that we clearly recognize the limit of the old geopolitical framework and take another

¹ In this regard, we can talk about 'organized irresponsibility' in line with Beck. The North Korea's nuclear threat was certainly an anticipatable risk. Nevertheless, all stakeholders have failed because they were more or less preoccupied with their state-centered narrow strategic interests. Consequently, the old paradigm of geopolitics still remains but does not work at all properly.

approach to the Korean Peninsula from a normative vision of peace in East Asia. This change is categorical in the sense that it offers an epistemological foundation of a new world view.

More specifically, the metamorphosis of culture means that the surface hostility and hatred deeply associated with geopolitics is replaced by the value of peace, as a result of a paradigmatic change in value priorities. When the mindset of the Cold War prevailed, the value of peace could stay only in the backstage of social consciousness. Depending on the success of metamorphosis, however, it can be transferred to its frontstage, thereby serving as a normed goal of the Korean metamorphosis.

Third, Beck's concept of institutional metamorphosis needs to be interpreted broadly. One aspect is a behavioral metamorphosis of leadership. Political interaction is increasingly dominated by affection. In 2017, as an example, Trump spurted out an extreme emotion like "fire and fury" toward Kim Jung-un but swiftly turned to "falling in love" with him in 2018. Much evidence shows the unpredictable nature of his leadership. Perhaps a kind of mutation is happening in political behaviors. Kim is no less surprising. Seen from his family background as the ruler of North Korea, the sudden change in his style of self-presentation from a horrible dictator to a global political player has been beyond imagination to many observers.

The digital mode of communication facilitates the emotional flows of politics, as an aspect of metamorphosis. Politicians now present themselves not merely as traditional leaders, but as if they are friends with deep emotive nuances. Digital communication changes the way in which people present themselves to others, express their feelings, and appeal to others. As a consequence, politics is increasingly driven by emotive feeling rather than rational deliberation (Thompson 2005). For instance, Trump has mastered the use of digital media for expressing emotion and appealing to emotion. Kim Jung-un and Moon Jae-in are all front runners in this regard.

Generally speaking, the repertoires of institutional metamorphosis are diverse. They include those mechanisms, declarations, and policies opening up new relations between South and North Korea as well as among the geopolitical actors. Summit meetings, exchange programs of various kinds including exports, businessmen and tourists, together with economic cooperative initiatives, can be good examples. This dimension is conceptually located in-between the structural and cultural dimensions of metamorphosis.

Finally, the future can't be said to be determined in any sense. It is open to many possibilities. The future can go in a progressive as well as regressive direction. The driving force of metamorphosis can foster new forms of

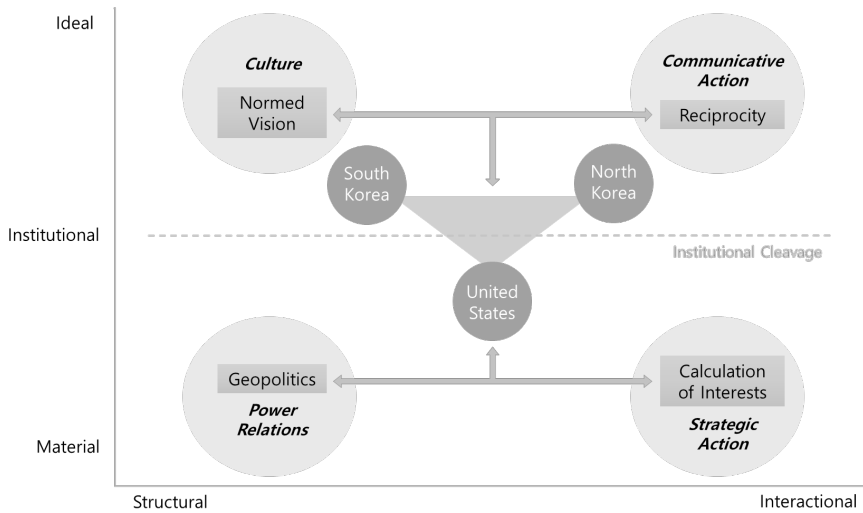


FIG. 1.—Conceptual Model of the Korean Metamorphosis

solidarity and cooperation, but also exacerbate cleavages, further deteriorating insecurities. The conceptual framework of metamorphosis should include this aspect of uncertainty. <Figure-1> shows a cleavage in the institutional dimension between the world of culture and that of geopolitics. The world of culture is steered by communicative action, while the world of geopolitics is governed by strategic action. An institutional cleavage is found between these two dimensions of the Korean metamorphosis.

The *I Ching* and the Three Stages of Metamorphosis

Cultural inspiration is no less important than analytic distinctions for understanding the process of metamorphosis. Thus, I want to pay attention to the *I Ching* (易經), a Chinese classic, to explore a culture-sensitive developmental logic of metamorphosis (Chen 2008; Legge 1899; Mueller 1965). The phrase “*Qiong ze Tong*” (窮即通), presented in chapter 2, number 15 of the second book of the *Great Commentary* deserves particular attention. Here, the term *Qiong* means both the objective situation of being locked up and helpless and the practical effort to open a closed road. *Tong* actually means opening a road repeatedly by crossing over interlocked bars. To reiterate, *Qiong ze Tong* presupposes the situation of catastrophe as a threat to

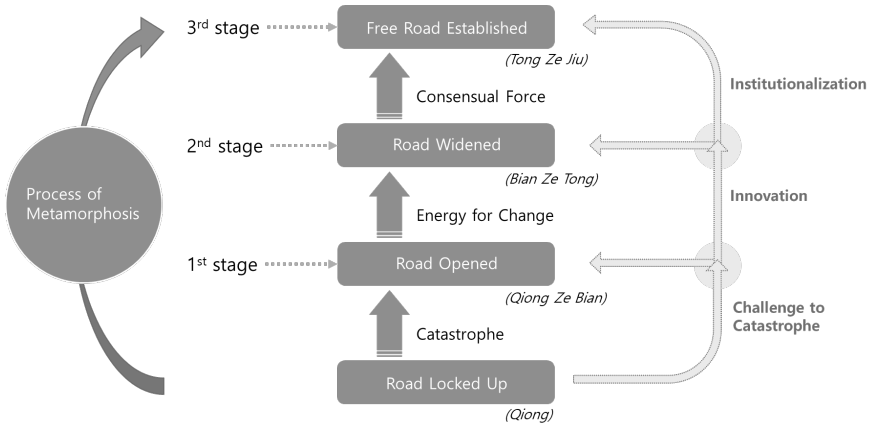


FIG. 2.— Three Stages of Metamorphosis along the *I Ching*

human life and challenge to keep a society running. This means a combination of the objective and subjective factors of metamorphosis.

In the *I Ching*, metamorphosis is composed of three stages: *Qiong ze Bian* (窮則變), *Bian ze Tong* (變則通), and *Tong ze Jiu* (通則久). Originally, these expressions described how the emperors led changes in the classical age of Yao and Shun in China, accepting the people's demands and educating them spiritually not to become wearied. The logic behind it is expressed metaphorically: "When a series of changes have run all their courses, another change ensues. When it obtains free course, it will continue long" (Legge 1899, p. 180). On September 22, 2015, Xi Jinping cited this old phrase with wisdom in an interview with *The Wall Street Journal* to explain how China should continually transform itself. His purpose was to foster a culture of flexible adaptation and successful innovation (Cao 2015; Zhao 2016).

In our work, however, the first question we face is what the word *Qiong* in *Qiong ze Bian* means. We can explore its meaning with the analogy of "the road locked up." We are so completely closed that we cannot move even an inch. This metaphor virtualizes the state of catastrophe. Since catastrophe poses a serious threat to human life, it also invites a challenge to it from society. Then, metamorphosis begins by "opening" such a closed road. If we take Toynbee's "challenge and response" perspective, catastrophe means challenge and human confrontation means response. Once the door is open, we move to the next stage, *Bian ze Tong*, in which the driving force is produced internally by way of innovation. The second stage can be described as "the road opened widely." The driving force then moves further to the last

stage of institutionalization. At this stage, consensual energy spreads widely, so that we can speak of “a free road” being established. Based on this reading, I propose the following three stages of metamorphosis.

- 1) The Initial Stage of *Qiong ze Bian*. Catastrophe, understood as being trapped and helpless, threatens human survival here. The initial change takes place through human practice to open the closed road. *Bian* can be interpreted as challenging action. The idea of *Qiong* has something to do with Beck’s concept of anthropological shock. *Qiong* produces immense threats, insecurities, and dangers to human society. To link the *I Ching* to the Western imagination, catastrophe can be interpreted as condensed and complex contradictions. The concept of catastrophe should be well clarified as the most crucial condition of metamorphosis. That is why the first stage bears particular significance. We need to investigate how catastrophe manifests itself, and where and how human challenges to catastrophe unfold as the driving force of metamorphosis.
- 2) The Growth Stage: Sustainability is important in this second stage. Not all changes are sustainable. For the stage of *Bian ze Tong* to bear fruit, energy for change must be produced internally through continuous innovation. There must be concrete policies, projects, and mechanisms by which the road of metamorphosis can be kept open as widely as possible.
- 3) The Complete Stage: this refers to the stage of *Tong ze Jiu* in which change becomes rooted and institutionalized. We can explore its meaning by taking South Korea as an example. South Korea’s **economic modernization and political democracy deserves global attention. Nevertheless, the division of the nation still brings about an asymmetry between a negative and positive chance of expressing themselves. In relation to North Korea, the emotion of hostility has been easily reinforced, while reconciliation and coexistence have faced serious difficulties. Unleashing from this restraint and hence the normalization of life offers the primary meaning of the institutionalization of metamorphosis. This means that North and South Korea pursue a new developmental pathway individually or in cooperation. The driving force of economic development and the basic framework of security will change significantly.**

The Korean Metamorphosis in 2000 and 2018

It is now the time to examine the Korean metamorphosis in 2000 and 2008 by employing the conceptual models we have developed. The starting point is to examine the state of affairs of catastrophe. The key question is whether there has been any significant change in the structured relations of power and how catastrophe has produced the driving forces of metamorphosis. This is equivalent to clarifying challenge and response in the situation of *Qiong ze Bian* in 2000 and 2018. The structural background - "the road locked up" - is quite similar, even though the content of the threat is not the same. As we noted earlier, the threshold to metamorphosis can be opened only by human practices. Kim Dae-jung in 2000 and Moon Jae-in in 2018 offer good examples.

Kim Dae-jung opened the first round of the Korean metamorphosis by visiting Pyongyang and holding a summit meeting with Kim Jong-il on June 15, 2000. Eighteen years later, Moon Jae-in took the initiative for the *Panmunjum* summit meeting with Kim Jong-un on April 27, 2018. Starting from this, Donald Trump of the United States and Kim Jong-un of North Korea officially opened the second round of the Korean metamorphosis with their historical summit meeting in Singapore on June 12, 2018.

A comparative look at 2000 and 2018 yields some points of divergence and convergence. Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine Policy of rapprochement and reconciliation was aimed at the "soft landing" of North Korea into international society. This policy yielded strong normative appeal and thus got global recognition and support. He implemented various policies and programs with considerable outcomes. Unfortunately, however, this project faced serious difficulties with the policy of Bush administration of the United States, which defined North Korea as part of "an axis of evil," and also with the succeeding conservative governments in South Korea. Compared to this experience, Moon Jae-in has some advantages as well as disadvantages. One disadvantage is that he is subject to the maximum sanctions that the United States imposed on North Korea. The caterpillar has to eat as much as possible to grow, but there seems to be almost nothing to eat, except such humanitarian aid of urgent need as anti-tuberculosis drugs. Yet he has the advantages of institutional know-how and the policy programs handed down from the past democratic governments.

The most striking difference between 2000 and 2018 is related to the nature of the security threat. In 2000, it was clear that North Korea was

developing its nuclear program, but it was not clear whether they would successfully produce a nuclear weapon. We remember that in September 1991, South and North Korea simultaneously joined the United Nation. Soon thereafter, the two Koreas issued a joint declaration on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The general observation at that time was that North Korea was deeply shocked by the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the East European socialist regimes and that North Korea wanted to develop a nuclear capability as a means for regime security. However, its technical capability was generally underestimated. The first nuclear crisis erupted in 1993 when North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. The U.S. government considered a preemptive military strike on the nuclear facilities under construction but concluded that a strike would be too risky. In addition, North Korea suffered severely from floods and famine resulting in large number of starving people. Speculation about regime collapse was circulating. The key words at that time were fear and anxiety that North Korea expressed.

In December 1997, when Kim Dae-jung was elected as the 15th president of the Republic of Korea, two streams of public perception were observed. On the one hand, the successful story of political democracy after steady economic growth for several decades was indeed something to be proud of. On the other hand, the pathological and destructive consequences of the division of the nation were still very real. This led Kim Dae-jung to the Sunshine Policy as a proactive measure to release the tension on the Korean Peninsula (Han 2012). This policy was meant to be an invitation for North Korea to take a new road of reconciliation and common prosperity.

However, the situation in 2018 differs dramatically. When Trump was inaugurated in January 2017, Kim Jung-un conducted a sixth nuclear test in September, claiming that it was a hydrogen bomb. In November, Trump redefined North Korea a state sponsor of terrorism and threatened a military strike. Kim reacted by declaring that the North had nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles that could reach U.S. soil. The catastrophic volatility emerging from this is incomparable to that in 2000. The road was completely locked up far beyond the reach of Moon Jae-in.

Seen through today's eyes, it is regrettable that no solution to the North Korean nuclear problem has been worked out despite many efforts, consuming considerable time. One can speculate about what might have happened if the United States didn't take such aggressive policy as defining North Korea as an "axis of evil." In fact, the recurrent pattern of North Korea's strategy of brinkmanship has put the Western countries in a predicament.

For this reason, a tendency has emerged to push the North Korean problem aside rather than treating it as one of the most urgent issues to be resolved. The lack of proper attention or the marginalization of the issue has made it possible for North Korea to accelerate its nuclear development.

North Korea improved its ballistic missile capabilities with more tests of short-, medium-, and long-range missiles while the Obama administration (2009-16) opted for “strategic patience” with the policy of ratcheting up sanctions to North Korea. But the impact of this policy was less significant than expected, as evidenced by the record of North Korea’s nuclear weapons tests from 2006 to 2016. The estimated yield of the nuclear weapons tests continually increased from 0.5 to 1 kiloton in 2006 to 11 to 12 kilotons in 2016. During 2016, 17 tests were carried out from January 6 to October 20, including nuclear tests and launching long-range ballistic missiles. Four of these failed, but they achieved significant technological progress.

The initial stage of the second round of the Korean metamorphosis in 2018 is thus circumscribed narrowly with far more constraints and sanctions than 2000. Moon Jae-in has done his best on his part to improve relations with Kim Jung-un based on mutual trust and expand the points of contact between South and North Korea. They held summit meetings three times in a short span of time from April to September, 2018. In particular, the September 19 Pyongyang Declaration is significant in that both leaders agreed “to expand the cessation of military hostility in regions of confrontation such as the DMZ into the substantial removal of the danger of war across the entire Korean Peninsula and a fundamental resolution of the hostile relations.” They agreed on where the root problem of the Korean Peninsula lies. But the Korean metamorphosis remains highly uncertain. Trump regarded Obama’s strategic patience a complete failure. So, he imposed the maximum sanctions on North Korea and wants to keep them. This severely limits the policy leverage that South Korea has. In 2000, Kim Dae-jung was relatively free from international constraint. The project of the Korean metamorphosis seemed sustainable, but now it faces uncertainties.

Yet a few points of hope can be suggested. The metamorphosis of the Korean Peninsula requires sustained support from neighboring countries. This requires a cosmopolitan vision from the beginning (Delanty 2009). In this sense, it may not be too bad that in 2018 the process of metamorphosis was not led by the two Koreas, but by a cosmopolitan system of checks and balances. Once it has happened that we have gone through the first testing period, the future may look more stable and sustainable than in 2000. Since Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un share an important and rare opportunity

that they cannot either lose or fail for their future, they can be said to have crossed the Rubicon.

The Communicative Aspect of Metamorphosis

Now we turn to the right axis of our conceptual model. The key issues are communicative and strategic actions. Strategic action is deeply related to geopolitics and communicative action to culture. The former is governed by calculating interests, whereas the latter is governed by valid norms. The United States and China see the Korean Peninsula from different strategic points of view. China sees North Korea as a buffer zone against American military influence, whereas the United States sees it as a potential threat. No party is in a position to dictate where to go and how. The possible equilibrium matrix is complex and uncertain. Valid norms are derived from culture and history and require consensus. Consensus presupposes a fair and reciprocal process of communication.

Negotiation in terms of interests still prevails in geopolitics, but we can sense a gap between strategic interests and communicative consensus. Metamorphosis means that this gap increases significantly. Every talk proceeds on the basis of previous talk. Once an agreement is reached, it serves as a basis for further negotiation. If one party tries to impose its strategic interests with a selective and arbitrary focus on the agreement, conflict is likely to emerge.

An interesting point to note is the Singapore summit agreement between the United States and North Korea signed by Donald Trump and Kim Jung-un on June 12, 2018. According to the agreement, the two leaders “conducted a comprehensive, in-depth and sincere exchange of opinions on the issues related to the establishment of U.S.-DPRK relations and the building of a lasting and robust peace regime of the Korean Peninsula.” Based on these efforts, Trump “committed to provide security guarantees to the DPRK” and Kim Jung-un “reaffirmed his firm and unwavering commitment to complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” They specified four specific points of agreement: 1) the commitment “to establish new U.S.-DPRK relations in accordance with the desire of the peoples of the two countries for peace and prosperity;” 2) the willingness to “join their efforts to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula;” 3) “reaffirming the April 27, 2018 Panmunjom declaration, the DPRK commits to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” and 4) “recovering POW/MIA

remains, including the immediate reparation of those already identified.” No procedural flaw has been found. The next task is to explore how to interpret the agreement and how to move further from this for a follow-up agreement.

Needless to say, different interpretations are possible. But it may be problematic if one party selectively focuses on only one or two points while ignoring other points, thereby forcing its strategic interests in a one-sided manner. The counterpart can raise its righteous claim originating from the agreement. This is exactly what has happened. The United States has reason to defend its strategic interests in maintaining the maximum sanctions against North Korea. Trump assumes these as the only means to achieve the final goal of a “complete denuclearization” agreed by Kim. In principle, it is possible to ask North Korea for a full reporting of nuclear weapons and the verification process. Washington obviously wants to thoroughly track down the North Korea’s nuclear weapons development. Whether such a demand will be accepted by North Korea depends on mutual trust and the scope and contents of compensation to be given in exchange for this disarmament. From the point of view of communication, however, a problem emerges if and insofar as the United States continues to emphasize its strategic interests backed up by its geopolitical power, while completely neglecting other points of consensus they produced. This can be seen as a case of distortion of communicative justice.

In fact, the minister of foreign affairs of North Korea, Lee Yong-ho (2018), expressed in Singapore on August 4, 2018 how North Korea observed the situation after the Singapore summit consensus. First, he insisted that North Korea had done some actions ahead of the United States, such as stopping nuclear bomb tests and launching missiles, and dismantling the Punggye-ri nuclear test site and the Tongchang-ri missile engine testing facility. Second, he rebuked the United States for having done nothing except further tighten the sanctions. He maintained that a “new U.S.-DPRK relationship” aspired to by the consensus can’t bear fruit if the United States only prioritizes the third and fourth points while neglecting the first and second points. Third, he declared that North Korea will never act alone as in the past and never surrender under this unfair condition. Furthermore, Kim Jung-un also showed the same attitude during his fourth summit talk with Xi Jinping in Beijing in January 2019. According to a statement issued by the official news agency Xinhua, Kim hoped “that the relevant parties will attach importance to and positively respond to the DPRK’s legitimate concern.”

What the term “legitimate” means is an open question. Since all parties accept the Singapore consensus as a valid foundation of negotiation, the term

legitimate may be internally related to this. One can certainly argue that what North Korea did unilaterally was of relatively low importance. But it is still true that North Korea did something ahead of the United States. To foster a new relationship between the two countries, it may be necessary for the United States to respond in a positive way to allow reciprocity to grow (Haggard 2019). No party can prevent other voices from getting global attention insofar as communication remains open. The United States is required to listen to what North Korea says as much as North Korea is required.² Here we find a potential conflict between strategic and communicative actions in the process of the Korean metamorphosis.

The above discussion owes much to Habermas' theory of communication (Habermas 1979). Practically, however, the political philosophy of Kim Dae-jung (2012; 2018) is important. His idea of politics as communication is rooted in a sympathetic understanding of the partner's anxiety (Han 2011; 2012). According to him, we can properly understand a partner only when we feel his or her anxiety in his or her shoes, not ours. This is, in fact, a living tradition of Confucianism and Buddhism (Kim 2018; Ward 2013). What makes Kim distinctive is that he learned it through his experience as a suppressed political leader and acted it out not only with his political oppressors in South Korea, but also to North Korea (Dunn 2018).

The communicative metamorphosis of Kim's life can be found during his stay at Cambridge University in England after he lost in his third presidential campaign in 1992. At that time, he realized the unintended consequences of German reunification by absorption and felt sympathetic toward North Korea's anxiety over the question of whether South Korea would follow the German model of reunification.³ When he became the 15th president of the Republic of Korea and proposed his Sunshine Policy, he drew careful attention to this anxiety and left out the idea of absorption. While this effort continued up to the Berlin talks in 2000, the closed road was finally opened, as an instance of *Qiong ze Tong*.

His commitment to communicative justice can be well illustrated by his visit to China in 2009, just a few months before his passing (Han 2018, pp. 285-298). The starting point was the 9.19 agreement that the "six-party talks" held in Beijing produced in 2005. The talks were held at a time when U.

² Kazianis (2019) demonstrates the importance of this communicative approach in his reflection on Kim Jung-un's New Year Address of 2019. The part of his essay was published in JoongAng Daily, Seoul on January 4.

³ This is shown in author's essay, "German Unification and the Korean Dream: Six Days with Kim Dae-jung in Berlin" included in Han (2012, pp. 80-89).

S.-North Korea relations became severely damaged due to the North Korean nuclear project. China initiated the talks and the United States joined in. The essence of the agreement was a step-by-step, simultaneously reciprocal action. Though it was not fully implemented, from the perspective of communicative action, this agreement could serve as a valid model for resolving conflicts. Thus, he made the last visit to Beijing in May 2009 to persuade China as the midwife of the 9.19 agreement that the only way of reducing tension was to return to that agreement. This episode demonstrates how faithful he was to the value of communicative justice.

Kim Dae-jung has shown the communicative driving force of metamorphosis. His contribution is significant. First, the negotiation partners are equal in terms of the rules of communication. They should be free in expressing their opinions reciprocally and should listen to each other. Second, they are required to try to find common interests behind the apparent disagreement on the surface. Third, they should respect the agreement arrived at through fair procedures. Fourth, they should continue to negotiate based on the previous agreements. Fifth, therefore, not only arriving at consensus but also sincere implementation is equally important. For instance, if Trump “kicks the door open and storms out” of the talks, as he said he might do in the past, the U.S.-initiated international pressure on North Korea will certainly be damaged. Likewise, if Kim Jung-un does it, he will also lose all the good things he has gained so far. The international system of open communication can deter such deviations.

The Institutional Dimension of Metamorphosis

The institutional dimension of metamorphosis refers to all aspects of interaction and negotiation between South and North Korea and among the countries concerned in terms of policy and program. This interaction is affected by such background factors as geopolitical power, strategy, culture, and communication. Given the hostility and antagonism in extreme forms prevailing on the Korean Peninsula, all these interactions can be meaningful. In particular, all aspects of the Sunshine Policy from 2000 to 2007 belong to this.

What makes 2018 very different from 2000 is the dynamic role of Kim Jung-un. Insofar as his role in the North Korean metamorphosis is concerned, he represents a rare case showing a complete overhaul of leadership from a terrible dictator to a global star. His decisions could be described as sharp and

decisive. He appears to be capable of acting strategically and speaking communicatively. Globally minded, he knows how to present himself to the global media. While his father, Kim Jong-il, played only an auxiliary role in the first round of the Korean metamorphosis, Kim Jung-un sits in the driver's seat together with Donald Trump. Many of the fixed stereotypes of North Korea are breaking down, affected by this, as an important aspect of the Korean metamorphosis.

As we know, North Korea frequently withdrew from the negotiation table in the past. It returned in 2018. Why? A typical answer is that the external pressure was so severe that Kim Jung-un found no other exit than this. To make it simple, they finally turned around as an involuntary adjustment to this environment. This thesis is valid, of course, to a certain extent. With this alone, however, it is difficult to understand how such skillful performances as global-minded leadership, shrewd diplomacy, strategic calculation, and turning attention to economic development have been made possible. These episodes may imply the ongoing North Korean metamorphosis. What has happened in North Korea? How could those unusual changes emerge? Some bigger transformations may operate under such observable slices of change.⁴ A certain kind of rationality may be growing from within, paving the road to a more rational development. The performance of Kim Jung-un reflects not just his idiosyncratic characteristics but may be based on, and supported by, some kinds of infrastructural changes that we don't know well yet. Then, enforced adaptation to the external pressures is inherently limited. We can sense as well a proactive dimension of the North Korean metamorphosis moving forward to a new direction of state formation.

Generally speaking, the institutional dimension of metamorphosis includes the software, knowledge, wisdom, and elite networks handed down from the past, which can also be used for development in the future. The institutional makeup is important because it enables people to cooperate together, offering a driving force for change. Moon Jae-in has already benefited much from the institutional legacy of past democratic governments, particularly Kim Dae-jung's communicative ethics. Moon tried to read Kim Jung-un in the same way as Kim Dae-jung did. Moon has been deliberative and careful not to force Kim Jung-un to accept what he could never do. Instead, he tried to form, expand and deepen mutual trust by following the

⁴ The study of the Korean metamorphosis requires the in-depth analysis of internal transformation of North Korea which includes the change in ruling elites, economic reforms, the social change in class relation and urbanization, cultural transformation, and the impact of digital technology.

principles of communicative ethics. Though the current situation is extremely complicated, it is clear that once the international sanctions are lifted, he will make use of the various institutional know-how and expert networks available to him. The Kaesong Industrial Complex can be reopened in a new way. The tourist programs suspended can restart easily. Further development projects linking South and North Korea, further extending to Manchuria and Siberia, can start.

The core problem, however, lies in the question of denuclearization. This is indeed a tough issue. No viable solution is in sight yet, but two references have been established. First, all parties agreed to deal with the North Korean nuclear issue through dialogue and consultation. It excludes the use of force and violence. Second, The U.S.-DPRK Singapore consensus serves as a valid starting point for further dialogue. A subsequent agreement can be reached to modify or expand the original agreement, but the second summit meeting in Hanoi on February 28, 2019 abruptly ended with no agreement.

Consequently, the future looks gloomy at best. First, the methodology and time frame are radically different. The United States maintains the position that thorough verification must come first and lifting sanction follows. North Korea finds it unacceptable from a security point of view. With no mutual trust as we find today, it will be dangerous to reveal all of its nuclear capabilities. Thus, against this, North Korea advocates a so-called “phased and synchronized” pathway to denuclearization, which takes considerable time. This idea is similar to the action-for-action style of solution taken in the September 19 declaration of the six-party talks in Beijing in 2005. The gap is very large. It remains to be seen how these contrasting ideas can be compromised in a way that satisfies both parties (Ahn 2018; Foster-Carter 2018; Snyder 2018).

Second, the substantive gap is also large. At present, it is extremely difficult to figure out how the United States’ demand for complete (or permanent), verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization and the North Korean demand for complete, verifiable, and irreversible regime security can be exchanged in reciprocally verifiable steps and procedures. In other words, the asymmetry of the main objectives between the United States and North Korea is so deep and profound that a solution, if conceivable at all, would require a genuine paradigm shift.

Third, we can see a tendency of institutional cleavage between two patterns of institutional interaction (Choi et al. 2018). Insofar as North Korea remains firm about not giving up its nuclear capability and stays in the track of negotiation, stopping nuclear bomb tests and repeating the propaganda

that “it will not threaten any other country unless hostile forces of aggression violate its sovereignty,” there will be no excuse for a military attack against North Korea. This means that a protracted game is coming ahead. Of course, dialogue and consultation go on and can produce significant yet narrowly framed compromises to satisfy certain needs of certain countries. But it cannot mean complete denuclearization. In this situation, institutional cleavage is likely to emerge, particularly in South Korea, between between the societal pattern of prioritizing the value of normed peace on the Korean Peninsula and another geopolitical pattern of prioritizing strategic alliance.⁵

The Normative Vision of the Korean Metamorphosis

It is in this context that we need to think about the metamorphosis of the Korean Peninsula from a broader and deeper perspective. This is to ask about the ultimate goal of metamorphosis. In what follows, I will briefly show that the Korean metamorphosis is a historical project with deeper and broader significance than denuclearization. It has cultural or civilizational roots and orientations.

The starting point has already been stated: namely, that the Korean metamorphosis means a challenge to the division of the nation. To move further, the division of the Korean Peninsula was decided by Franklin Roosevelt of the United States, Iosif V. Stalin of the Soviet Union, and Winston Churchill of Great Britain at the Yalta meeting in February 1945 with the purpose of disarming the Japanese army by the United States and Soviet Union, which were granted to occupy the south and the north, respectively. The Korean people struggled against Japanese colonial rule. Nevertheless, Korea was divided arbitrarily for the single reason that Japan ruled Korea with its imperial army. As we can see here, the modern history of Korea is marked by Japanese colonial rule (1910-45), national division (1945), and the Korean War (1950-53) that destroyed the Korean Peninsula as a whole completely. It is a real tragedy in world history. For this reason, as

⁵ This observation needs to be backed up by a sociological analysis of internal transformation which is beyond the scope of this paper. For instance, Beck (2016, p. 188) refers to the gap between different cohorts of people divided by digital technology and cultural sensitivity. Along this line, we should ask who the main actors of metamorphosis in South and North Korea are. We also find considerable disputes between the conservative and the progressive camps in South Korea as well as in the United States concerning the policies related to North Korea. All these will make significant impacts on the changing landscape of the Korean metamorphosis.

recently acknowledged by a Japanese bishop, Katsuya Daichi, in the occasion of the centennial anniversary of the March 1st independent movement in 2019, the metamorphosis of the Korean Peninsula is genetically related to the question of how to overcome the legacy of Japanese colonialism and the division of the nation (McComack 2012; Nariko 2012).⁶

The historical starting point of the Korean metamorphosis can be found in the nationwide independence movement called the March First Movement in 1919, which lasted for several months with several million participants. The goal of this movement was “to recover the nation’s sovereignty from Japan and to establish a liberated nation-state.” This movement was of particular importance for the identity of Korea for many reasons (Han 2018c). First, it clearly expressed the popular will. The indeterminate collectivity of people became thereby invented as the sovereign subject of history. Second, it soon gave rise to the Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai in April 1919. Third, the Preamble to the Korean Constitution stipulates that the Republic of Korea was founded upon the legitimacy of the independence movement and the provisional government.

An important fact is that this popular movement reflected and produced the concept of *Gwangbok* (光復). “*Gwang*” means light and “*Bok*” means restoration or realization. The standard interpretation is that *Gwangbok* refers to independence or liberation. There is no dispute about this. But the meaning of *Gwang* as light invites far deeper and broader imaginations. We still have no conceptual history. But the evidence clearly shows that from the March First Declaration of Independence onward, this term embraced the value of peace as its most fundamental component (Declaration of Independence 2000). However, this value remained rather marginal in the modern history of Korea, because Korea was subjugated to the global structure of the Cold War. As a result, hatred emerging from the Korean War has been unequivocally strong. Also, the leaders of the *Gwangbok* movement were pushed aside in the process of state building of South Korea. This shows that the dream of *Gwangbok* remains incomplete despite its strong hold in history and normative validity. This value is incompatible with the division of the nation.

As of today, therefore, we can reason that the normative vision of peace

⁶ As the concept of *Qiong zu Tong* implies, the metamorphosis presupposes the deeply interwoven processes and mechanisms by which the society is locked up within the enforced limit of variations, thus making it extremely difficult to go beyond these. The force of this structuration which is still very effective has a long history deeply entangled with the Japanese colonialism in Korea and the global structure of the Cold War.

can serve as the goal of the Korean metamorphosis. If the foundation of the Republic of Korea stands on the legacy and moral legitimacy of the Shanghai Provisional Government of Korea, we can assert that the *raison d'être* of the Republic of Korea lies in fulfilling the vision of *Gwangbok* as an unfinished project of a civilizational dream. In other words, the current metamorphosis of the Korean Peninsula can offer an opportunity for this highest norm built into the identity of the Republic of Korea to be liberated from the past bondage of the Cold War and fly freely like a butterfly does. We find here an inner motivation and possibility of the development of a cosmopolitan vision. We can firmly establish freedom and peace as the *raison d'être* of the Republic of Korea, and based on this highest norm and principle, we can coordinate state policies and make a new framework of international cooperation. This is actually what Kim Dae-jung left us as his most precious legacy (Han 2018b; 2018c).

Concluding Remarks

Ulrich Beck represents a sociologist most advanced in thinking of the complex meaning of metamorphosis and Kim Dae-jung represents a politician most advanced in moving ahead of others toward the metamorphosis of the Korean Peninsula. This paper is an attempt to link these two valuable resources to examine the Korean metamorphosis social-scientifically in a way that is politically challenging and meaningful. Before concluding, I want to briefly suggest what we can and should learn from the aspect of Kim Dae-jung's oversight.

First, he knew well that the Korean metamorphosis will look like **a house built on sand** if we fail to achieve **a balance between justice and reconciliation in South Korea. He knew that, but failed.** We should learn why he failed. Damages will be greater if we ignore this lesson. Metamorphosis is also a learning process which requires flexibility (Morais-Storz and Nguyen 2017). Second is the potential risk of South Korea which lies in a surplus of trust in North Korea. This takes the edge off when a cool and rigorous approach is required. We should learn a priceless lesson from this experience.

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