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Predicting the Effects of Korean Reunification by Examining the Fall of the Berlin Wall

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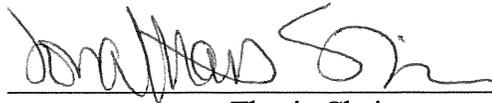
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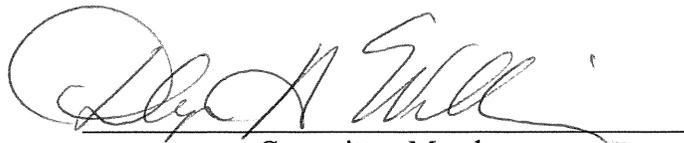
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the title of
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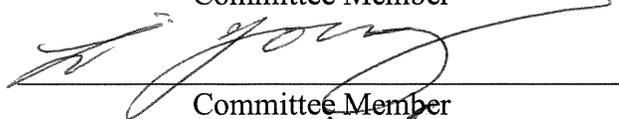
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Predicting the Effects of Korean Reunification by Examining the Fall of the Berlin Wall

The Berlin Wall fell on November 9th, 1989, marking the end of over 30 years of division between the German Democratic Republic, also known as East Germany, and the Federal Republic of Germany, also known as West Germany. The two states were remarkably different: East Germany's economy was dictated by communism, and West Germany's by capitalism.¹ A similar situation exists today between North and South Korea, with the North ruled by communism and the South by capitalistic markets.² Many experts believe that the two Koreas are destined to eventually reunify as well. However, there are widely differing opinions on how such a reunification would occur. Should it occur, there would be massive economic consequences, both regionally and globally.³ Therefore, preparation for reunification is essential.

By examining the fall of the Berlin Wall, one may be able to glean insight into how this Korean reunification may unfold. This is the essence of this study's hypothesis: whether an in-depth examination of the major events surrounding the divisions of Germany and Korea and the effects those divisions had on each country economically and socially, as well as an examination of the reunification of East and West Germany, will provide a model for Korean reunification in the future.

Division of Germany and Korea

The completion of the Berlin Wall on August 13, 1961 officially sealed off all connections residents living in communist East Germany had with the West. Thousands of dissatisfied East Germans had been relocating to the "island of

capitalism" that was West Berlin, but the East German government, fearing an imminent regime collapse, built a wall to prevent any more defections.⁴

The Berlin Wall was four meters tall, extending over 150 kilometers both through and around Berlin. More than one wall comprised the Berlin Wall, however; two walls were built alongside each other, with a space from 15 to 150 meters in between containing anti-tank barriers, a guard tower, and vehicle barriers. So fortified was the border that most East Germans never saw the West Berlin Wall until over thirty years later, when the Berlin Wall collapsed.⁵

A comparable, heavily militarized border was built between communist North Korea and capitalist South Korea in 1953, following the end of the Korean War. This border, however, is far larger and even more closely guarded than was the Berlin Wall. It spans 248 kilometers in length and has an average of 4 kilometers of space separating the two countries in what is essentially no-man's land. It contains a very heavy military presence, and hundreds of deaths have occurred on both sides since the end of the Korean War in isolated incidents.⁶

Effects of living in a communist state

Although the German and Korean borders were established for different reasons, they share a commonality in their separation of the communist regime from the more economically free state. Both East Germany and North Korea implemented aggressive measures to keep their citizens from defecting soon after their borders were built. The effects this isolation imposed on citizens of the communist states is notable and important when considering an integration with a less restrictive state.

Marilyn Rueschemeyer, a professor of sociology *emerita* at the Rhode Island School of Design, conducted 14 years of research in East Germany between 1975 and 1988. She described it as “an authoritarian state” and outlined the difficulties and tensions surrounding her study of sociology in East Germany, which until around the time of her arrival had been banned; Marxism-Leninism, Rueschemeyer explained, had “long substituted for social analysis.” During her research, more than once she claimed she was advised not to ask certain questions for fear of causing “trouble.”⁷

Despite this, however, there was a certain degree of openness to be found in the country; feminism became more advanced than in many other Western nations due to the importance placed on women being in the workforce. Rueschemeyer also stressed that she had “unlimited” access to East Germany from West Berlin for many years, an unheard of privilege for visitors to North Korea.⁸

Kang Chol-hwon, a North Korean who grew up in a North Korean concentration camp and later defected to South Korea, describes the brutality of the North Korean regime in his autobiography, *The Aquariums of North Korea*. He asserts that the lives of every citizen and visitor are completely controlled by the regime, and anyone who condemns or criticizes the regime, resident or foreigner, is taken away to one of several concentration camps (which North Korea denies exist) that are scattered throughout the country.⁹ Because virtually all permissible activity in North Korea is determined by the state, one does not have the freedom to visit universities or conduct interviews with citizens at will, as Rueschemeyer did in East Germany.

Berlin Wall collapse

Willy Brandt, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany from 1969 to 1974, has been credited for “single-handedly revers(ing) German policy toward Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union” by strongly discouraging West Germany’s policy of cutting all diplomatic ties with countries that chose to recognize East Germany. Although he would come to accept the division of Germany and ultimately make a treaty with the Soviet Union, Brandt also continued to advocate for “some easing of the barriers between the German states.”¹⁰

The collapse of East Germany was aided in part by the failure of its monetary system, something all Soviet Union regimes experienced as well; the communist government lost control when it instituted an “administrative distribution of resources” to the population instead of money, which inadvertently created a dependence on barterable goods like coffee and meat that was simply impossible for the government to control.¹¹

By 1989, the iron grip that the East German government held over its population practically ceased to exist; more and more East Germans were allowed to visit West Germany, which, critically, allowed them to “see first-hand how...better life there was.”¹² Communism had gradually become less and less popular in East Germany, and the frustration of East Germans with their government culminated on November 9, 1989, when they stormed the Wall after an East German press spokesman mistakenly declared travel to West Berlin open to all.¹²

Could a similar revolt by North Koreans occur? The social situation differs from the one East Germany had in terms of the power the North Korean government

continues to hold over its population; the “social control, however vicious, remains solid,” with “few observable signs of protest,” as North Korean expert Victor Cha, who has visited North Korea several times, asserts. Ruling through fear, the government employs concentration camps throughout the country that deter citizens from speaking out against the regime in any form, further decreasing the chance of a large uprising.¹³

The North Korean government has, however, loosened restrictions on its citizens somewhat in recent years. Some citizens may own cell phones, wear Western clothing, or even operate their own non-state sponsored markets (an action that would have been severely punished a few decades ago).¹⁴ Though these freedoms are not nearly as liberal as the ones East Germany had bestowed to its citizens by 1989, they are progressive nonetheless.

Reunification of Germany

Although many East Germans felt euphoria during the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent reunification with the more economically prosperous West Berlin, the feeling dissipated in subsequent. The economic costs proved to be daunting, and social tensions and psychological stresses brewed between West and East Germans. There was even a certain “nostalgia” that some East German intellectuals and writers shared for their old country, preferring to defend East German values instead of working towards advancing the reunification process.¹⁵

The economic results of reunification for East Germany have been mixed. In the years immediately following reunification there was significant economic success in the form of increased wage income and productivity. However, two decades after reunification, East Germany continues to experience economic difficulties compared with West Germany: wages are lower, unemployment is twice that of West Germany, and competitiveness in the East German economy is low.¹⁶ Life satisfaction has also been reported on average to be significantly lower in the East than in West German federal states, partly due to the differences in unemployment mentioned previously and in differences in household income.¹⁷ East Germany's lack of exposure to international trade also likely hampered the reunification process; two-thirds of its capital was worthless after reunification, following an unsuccessful attempt to equalize wages through public policy.¹⁸

Despite these lingering gaps between East and West Germany, the country as a whole has become a significant global power since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Germany currently has the largest GDP in Europe, and the fifth largest in the world, in terms of purchasing power parity. Germany also has the 15th largest labor force in the world, employing over 45 million people.¹⁹ Although the reunification process is still ongoing, the East and West German reunification has been a success overall for the country and its people.

Prospects of Korean reunification

A variety of different factors, including factional clashes in the leadership and spontaneous uprisings, may precipitate a collapse of the North Korean regime. In the

event that North Korea does collapse, there is a possibility that it will be absorbed by China, thus bypassing the entire prospect of reunification with South Korea and resulting in a great gain in territory for China.²⁰ China wields a significant amount of power in Korean relations, and reunification of the two Koreas will not happen unless China allows it. China fears a North Korean collapse, however, and would prefer the North Korean regime to continue to rule; China envisions United States responding as it did with the German reunification, where the United States took advantage of Germany by pushing its Cold War alliances closer to the failing Soviet Union. Therefore, China hopes to avoid a similar scenario occurring along its own borders.²¹

There is no consensus among researchers and scholars regarding exactly when, or even if, North Korea will collapse. Although several initiatives have been undertaken by the South Korean government to push for reunification, or what President Park Geun-hye has called “trustpolitik” (taken directly from the policies surrounding German reunification), there has been no progress to report whatsoever in the advancement of reunification. Discussions anticipating North Korea’s impending collapse date back more than two decades; in 1995, former CIA Director John Deutch said, “It is no longer a question of whether North Korea would collapse, but when.” Two years after this statement, the commander of U.S. forces in Korea, Gen. Gary Luck, said, “North Korea will disintegrate, possibly in very short order.”²² Despite those predictions, however, North Korea continues to exist nearly 20 years later.

In the event of reunification with North Korea, however, South Korea will undoubtedly be ill-equipped to deal with it. Economically, the two Koreas are

drastically different, and the over 20 million North Koreans that have been isolated under the communist regime for more than six decades would require a massive endeavor by South Korea to acclimate them to a new capitalist environment. However, South Korea already struggles with such acclimation today simply with a limited number of North Korean refugees.²³

The United States, South Korea's largest ally, would be forced to play a major role in mitigating the reunification process; however, it would have to be very careful not to precipitate a repeat of the Iraq War of 2003. North Korea has one of the world's largest biological and chemical arsenals, as well as stockpiles of anthrax, cholera, and a 1.2-million-man army, creating strong parallels to the situation in 2003 Iraq, and the United States would have to carefully balance its support of South Korea in order to avoid becoming involved in a second Korean War.²⁴

Germany as a basis for Korean reunification

A Korean scholar at Seoul's Research Institute for National Reunification described German reunification as "a good example of the worst case" for Korean unification. The costs of a unification would total trillions of dollars, and economists worry that bridging the massive gap in incomes and living standards between the two countries would be insurmountable.²⁵

Research indicates, however, that many South Koreans view the model of German reunification favorably when comparing it with their own potential reunification. South Korea instituted the so-called "northern policy," modeled directly after West Germany's "ostpolitik," in an attempt to open negotiations with North

Korea, much as West Germany did with East Germany during the 1980s. South Korean politicians, scholars, journalists, and business leaders also traveled to observe the changes in Germany following reunification, and many Germans have been invited to South Korean universities and research facilities to gain more information about the reunification process.²⁶

Former South Korean president Park Geun-hye favorably mentioned German reunification in a 2014 address given in Dresden, Germany, stating that “years of preparation by the people of East and West Germany eventually succeeded in turning the great dream of unification into reality” and that “these are the images of one Germany that encourage those of us in Korea...that unification must come on the Korean Peninsula.”²⁷ However, it is not clear whether a situation similar to the reunification of Germany would occur; there is no evidence to suggest that the two Koreas would attempt to equalize wages, as was done in Germany, especially given that North Korea is more isolated from South Korea than East Germany was from West Germany. The post-reunification North Korean economy would also likely become more “distorted” than the post-reunification German economy, primarily because North Korea has had even less exposure to international trade than East Germany had.²⁸

The Present Study

Scholars and researchers acknowledge the striking similarities between the situation in Germany before the fall of the Berlin Wall and the current situation in Korea. The lessons learned from uniting a divided but ethnically similar population and

overcoming major economic disparities will be invaluable in the event Korea finds itself in such a position, which many scholars and experts believe is inevitable. This is where a comparison between the divided Germany of the Cold War and the currently divided Korea can provide insight into how Korea will respond to a potential reunification, which would help to make the reunification as successful and smooth as possible.

Method

The most significant developments pertaining to the initial divisions of Germany and Korea and subsequent repercussions of those divisions will be analyzed in a comparative case study and content analysis. The comparative case study will allow for a simple yet comprehensive side-by-side comparison of three major factors pertaining to the divisions of each country, which will aid in building a clearer picture of a potential future Korean reunification. These three factors are as follows: degree of cultural division between the two cultures, economic differences between the two countries, and relations between the two countries. The independent variable will be the information included in the comparative case study and content analysis, and the dependent variable will be the number of consistencies between the divisions of Germany and Korea. The total number of perceived commonalities and disparities will then be totaled in the content analysis in order to determine whether the effects of the fall of the Berlin Wall can be used to accurately predict Korean reunification.

The sources that will be used to create the comparative case study and subsequent content analysis have been identified using scholarly databases on the web and published books. Deductive reasoning will be utilized at the end of the study to

determine whether, based on the information included in the aforementioned sources, the German model for reunification can indeed predict a possible Korean reunification. The convergent validity and discriminant validity of the study will be measured at the end as well to determine and compare the results to any similar studies that embody the current existing literature.

One potential issue with this research may be the accidental inclusion of bias, as the scholarly articles and publications that were used to report the historical events in this research were included at the author's discretion. This bias may take the form of either confirmation bias or publication bias. The publications and scholarly works which make up the foundation of this study will be reviewed by my thesis committee, which will help to mitigate confirmation bias; publication bias will be more difficult to eliminate, however, as there may be data that has not been published but would affect the results of this study. Therefore, measures have been taken to include sources that were not published but are nonetheless significant.

A potential sampling issue would be that the majority of the sources used in this study were published in English. Efforts were made to select the most prevalent and representative works from the existing literature for this study using the online search engine Nexus Lexus, which offers translations of works published in other languages; however, an important study that has been published in Korean or German may have been excluded, which could negatively impact the internal validity or construct validity of the study.

Cultural divisions in Germany and Korea

Germany has succeeded in reconnecting its Eastern and Western cultures. Interestingly, there wasn't a significant cultural divide to begin with. While it remained split for 28 years, Germany was largely able to keep the framework of its culture and language whole. Families separated during the building of the Wall were able to reunite relatively easily after its fall, and no significant language barriers developed. Such reunions were likely aided by the fact that West Germans had been permitted to visit the East on a more or less routine basis, thus easing the pains of separation. Current literature on East and West Germany, therefore, primarily addresses governmental and political differences between the two, not cultural. East Germany was regarded in the West as "not German" because it was "authoritarian in character," as opposed to major differences between the German populations.²⁹ As a result, although its people lived under very different styles of rule for nearly three decades, German culture did not truly become a hindrance in its reunification efforts. Perhaps the most supportive aspect of this notion is that, despite the East German government's sincere efforts to create a new state, its people continued to chant "We are one people" and demand reunification with the West.³⁰

This is not to say, however, that cultural differences were not present between East and West Germany after reunification. A 2010 study for the *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* found that "East Germans appear to have a slightly greater dislike of hours spent working and seem to have a lower esteem for academic education relative to vocational education," the result of which "may have have negative effects on income and growth levels."³¹ The study also found that "East Germans differ from

West Germans in ways that may be seen to reflect values instilled during communism,” such as East Germans being “more favorable to being divorced or widowed.”³¹ In examining whether these cultural differences ultimately hampered the economic prosperity of East Germans after reunification, however, the research found no significant causation. One can therefore conclude that cultural differences are inevitable between one ethnic group living under two separate regimes, but that successful integration may be achieved if these differences are not too great.

By contrast, the situation in Korea differs dramatically. East Germans may have been physically separated from their Western counterparts behind the Iron Curtain, but their regime was not so repressive as to completely prevent information from filtering across the border. North Koreans, however, living under the suffocating grip of Kim Jong Un, are almost wholly ignorant of life in South Korea, and indeed life everywhere else in the world. It is true that the North Korean regime’s very survival depends on this repression; its people must remain convinced that their regime is the best in the world and that life in the South is nothing short of a living hell (when the opposite scenario is far closer to the truth). One 16-year-old North Korean refugee was quoted as saying, “In school, we were taught that people in South Korea and Japan are so poor that they went around selling body parts to survive.”³² The author noted that after the girl said this she “giggled, now realizing how silly it sounded.”³²

Indeed, North Korean refugees often experience serious issues in readjusting to life outside of North Korea, such is the extent and effectiveness of the North’s brainwashing capabilities. A seven-year follow up on the mental health of North

Korean defectors in South Korea found that “the cultural aspect of the current stresses experienced by North Korean defectors in South Korea seems to be unique, despite their common ancestral background.”³³ Additionally, the study found that North Korean defectors “commonly react with anger as a result of having been deceived for a lifetime by the North Korean government.”³³

Other problems encountered by North Korean refugees are often related to jobs, education and social adjustment, which are surely not aided by the South Korean government’s recent shift from encouraging to discouraging defections from the North.³⁴ Adding to North Korean defector issues is the fact that the Korean language has changed; the effects of globalization on the South and the isolationism of the North has resulted in the creation of two very distinct dialects. This creates pressure for defectors to acquire a more Southern accent, as South Koreans often look down on those with a North Korean accent. One defector even said that he “wouldn’t have made any friends” if he didn’t make an adjustment to his speech.³⁵

North Koreans are also forced to attend weekly *hakseup* (literally, “education”) sessions where they, in the words of one North Korean, “meet in small groups to memorize and to write a number of things” like Kim Jong Il’s speeches.³⁶ This bears striking similarity to the tyrannical practices of Mao Zedong’s regime in the People’s Republic of China, and is worth noting as an interesting parallel between two East Asian dictators. In both cases, the purpose of the sessions was to glorify the regime under which the people lived. The sessions had the effect of both creating respect for the regime as well as creating a deep sense of fear; any form of dissent was (and in the

case of North Korea still is) seen as a traitorous act against the regime, which was often met with extensive punishment, torture or death in a prison camp.³⁷

A commonality between East Germany and North Korea that bears mentioning is prison camps. East Germany had 250,000 political prisoners during its existence, 72,000 of which were jailed due to trying to escape East Germany illegally. There are also reports of psychological torment and post-traumatic stress suffered as a result of these East German prisons.³⁸ However, most of the punishment from the regime toward its dissidents involved “tight observation by the secret police and the active manipulation of opposition groups by undercover agents and spies.”³⁹ In North Korea, by contrast, even the most minor offense can lead to one’s arrest, such as singing South Korean pop music, listening to a foreign radio broadcast or sitting on a newspaper photo of the North Korean leader.⁴⁰ Conditions in North Korean prison camps are also far worse than those which were reported in East Germany. Starvation is an everyday occurrence, with people forced to eat bugs and feral animals to survive. Most prisoners are assigned to some form of forced labor which is designed to quickly kill them off, and all sleep in disease-infested cells.⁴¹

Though there is evidence that East Germany sentenced many political prisoners to jail for crimes against the regime and sometimes treated them unfairly, the highly uncivilized and cruel form of punishment that instills a deep-seeded fear in the North Korean people and keeps the country’s regime in power was simply nonexistent in East Germany. In the event of reunification with South Korea, North Korea would have a major issue in acclimatizing its people to the South Korean culture (which, as

mentioned earlier, many North Korean refugees can already attest to). By contrast, due to the better conditions of its political prisons and the lack of a major cultural gap with the West, East Germany was able to reunify without its political prisoners posing a serious roadblock.

Economic divisions in Germany and Korea

As is the case with both the German model and Korean model, the country ruled by an authoritarian regime (East Germany and North Korea) lagged economically behind the more liberal and free country (West Germany and South Korea). This economic lag creates obvious complications for an attempt at reunification between two very different regimes; however, as the German model indicates, it is not only possible but can be achieved with a great amount of success.

In an analysis by Rüdiger Pohl for *Study Abroad* completed five years after East Germany fell, it was determined that “the dynamic development of economic activity in eastern Germany reflects an economic transformation that is heading towards success.”⁴² Remarkably, East Germany was the fastest growing region in Europe at that time, and Pohl predicted that by the year 2010 the Eastern German economy would have “merged with the economy of western Germany to such an extent that it will no longer be separately identifiable.”⁴³ As a disclaimer, however, Pohl added that East Germany was still “far from self-sustaining” and would have to temporarily rely on special government programs to help it catch up to the West.⁴³

By the year 2000, former East Germany had seen even more improvements in its economic situation. A study from *Applied Psychology: An International Review* found that

there were more suppliers in the unified Germany as well as a “significant decrease of organizational problems.”⁴⁴ Although a noticeable increase in workload may have contributed to higher levels of stress, the increase in job resources (such as job control and complexity) likely made up for those negative effects.⁴⁴

Finally, a study published in the *British Journal of Sociology* found that although there had been a minor increase in income inequality experienced in transitioning to a free market economy, former East Germany was better off post-reunification in terms of household income. Between May 1990 and March 1992 roughly 65 percent of a sample of East German households saw an increase in their real household equivalent incomes. On average, the study showed, “equivalent incomes increased at an annual rate of 8.4 percent; a high growth rate by normal international standards.”⁴⁵

However, some negative effects are still being felt within Germany well over two decades after its reunification. Unemployment rates in East Germany remain above those in West Germany, and former East Germans struggle in comparison to their Western counterparts.⁴⁶ Sociologists at Bielefeld University reported that despite East Germans representing 20 percent of the population, under five percent comprise the so-called “elite” in fields like politics, business and science.⁴⁷ Another study found that “beliefs and attitudes regarding gender roles, have...been shown to persistently diverge between West and East Germans, with East Germans embracing more egalitarian gender roles.”⁴⁸ Therefore, although German reunification has been a largely successful endeavor economically, it has not occurred without drawbacks.

The economic division between North Korea and South Korea, however, runs far deeper than that which existed between East and West Germany, and thus is more problematic for a potential reunification. What is not commonly known, however, is that originally South Korea was the impoverished, struggling nation, and North Korea was the more economically successful of the two. According to an article from *Soundings*, this was largely due to North Korea's reliance on "the foundations of coal, steel and cement," and until as late as 1984, the North had the ability to aid South Korean flood victims.⁴⁹ South Korea, meanwhile, remained devastated from the Korean War for decades and did not even develop a market-based economy until the 1970s.

The turning point came with the collapse of the Soviet Union, one of North Korea's largest trading partners. During that time, the North Korean economy "went into meltdown," producing a devastating famine that killed upwards of three million North Koreans.⁴⁹ This unfortunate development begged the question of whether North Korea would finally change its extremely isolationist tendencies and institute badly needed reforms to ease its suffering. A study for the *Australian Journal Of International Affairs* published in 2009 found that North Korea could potentially have avoided the famine but "deliberately missed out on a number of good opportunities to succeed in such reforms," choosing instead to "consistently (lay) the blame upon external threats" such as the United States' so-called "imperialism."⁵⁰ Interestingly, however, the article further claims that both Western governments and the South Korean government did not do "enough to urge, or pressure, North (Korea) to embark on comprehensive economic reforms."⁵⁰

The result is a country which has been broken economically for over 20 years. The North Korean regime has simply been unable to provide many basic needs for its own people, forcing many citizens to risk their lives and create their own businesses in order to survive. Research from *Pacific Review* shows that this development of private enterprise in North Korea has continued since the famine of the 1990s: while the regime “prevented grassroots capitalism from reaching its full potential,” the new informal economy supplied almost three quarters of necessities during the famine.⁵¹ Even members of the North Korean elite have resorted to relying on illegal markets, and many of the hundreds of thousands serving in the military “eke out a basic existence akin more to ‘conscripted laborers rather than professional combatants.’”⁵²

Predictably, the North Korean regime was not pleased with the development of these informal markets. A study for the *Journal of East Asian Studies* found that “marketization wreaked havoc with North Korea’s existing social system...reduc(ing) the significance of hereditary family background,” a concept which the North Korean regime has heavily relied on to keep certain individuals in power and all others out.⁵³ North Korea thus finds itself in a highly unique predicament: it must balance its incredibly restrictive policies with a certain tolerance for the informal economy. Perhaps this can help to explain why many North Korean guards engage in (and often get away with) “prophylactic bribery”; that is, they are paid off by the new North Korean entrepreneurs in exchange for not reporting the entrepreneurs’ activities.⁵⁴ If North Korea wishes to prevent another crippling famine or, far more dangerously for those in power, a total collapse of its economy, this forced tolerance is the price it must pay.

Following a Korean reunification, the economic issues reported in the German model would no doubt be far more intense for the Korean population and government. Though North Korea does not publish reliable reports of its own economic situation, the World Factbook published by the Central Intelligence Agency estimates the country's GDP (purchasing power parity) at around \$40 billion.⁵⁵ By comparison, South Korea's GDP (purchasing power parity) lies just under \$2 trillion.⁵⁶ Reunification between two countries with such a massive economic disparity between them would be an unprecedented effort, with the integration of the North Korean population into the South Korean economy clearly posing the most daunting challenge. The fact that former East Germany, a geographically smaller and far less populous region than North Korea, continues to lag in certain respects behind the rest of Germany, is not good news for the North Korean people should their own country collapse.

East-West German and North-South Korean relations

An article written for *International Affairs* in 1987, two years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, commemorated the 750th jubilee of the city of Berlin's founding. Though the city had been physically divided for over two decades and ideologically divided for even longer, there had existed "a long period of peace which many other regions of the world have simply not known."⁵⁷ The author himself had served the West German government by negotiating over a dozen agreements with East Germany aimed at reinforcing the "strong bonds" it already had with West Germany.⁵⁸ Despite the glaring differences that existed between East and West Germany, the two states had a clear history of working together on policy measures in an amicable fashion.

This close relationship continued during the reunification process. In an article for *Harvard International Review*, it was noted that West Germany had a “constitutional and moral commitment to one Germany” and had previously offered East Germans automatic citizenship (and the wealth of social welfare benefits which that entailed) if they were able to cross into West Germany.⁵⁹ From a political perspective, an article for *German Politics* determined that “reunification has had little or no perceptible impact on the European policy of Germany.”⁶⁰ Many of the highest positions in the German government (such as those in the Ministry of Finance) did not change in the years following reunification, and the consensus of the article was that “political stability (was) underpinned by technocratic stability.”⁶⁰ In short, although economic problems inevitably plagued Germany’s reunification (as outlined in the previous section), the generosity of Western Germany and the passion for a united Germany harbored by East Germans significantly eased the pains of reunification.

The relationship between North Korea and South Korea, however, has been far more strained and contentious. The most obvious and dramatic example of their antagonism towards each other was the Korean War, although a series of incidents along the North-South Korean border, as well as continued provocations from North Korea, have added to the tensions between the two countries.

Following the Korean War, an armistice, not a formal peace treaty, was signed, meaning North Korea and South Korea are still technically at war with each other.⁶¹ North Korea is often blamed for provoking its neighbor and subsequently worsening inter-Korean relations throughout the years since the Korean war, and rightfully so.

One study published in *Pacific Relations* found that North Korea began to institute guerrilla-style warfare against the South during the 1960s.⁶² In 1966 the North Korean army killed six American soldiers and a South Korean soldier in a raid; in January 1968 the North made an assassination attempt on South Korean president Park Chung-Hee; and only two days later successfully captured an American reconnaissance vessel.⁶² State Department intelligence also revealed that North Korea hoped to prevent the South Korean government from sending combat troops and aiding the Americans during the Vietnam War through “military infiltration.”⁶³

These findings were confirmed by a separate study published for the *Journal of East Asian studies*, claiming that North Korea’s “rhetoric and behavior is routinely aggressive and militaristic.”⁶⁴ The study also dismissed the idea that United States-South Korean joint military exercises in close proximity to the Korean border provoked the aggressive responses seen periodically from the North, with the author stating that North Korea’s “response to US and South Korean joint exercises is not unique and not systematically different from regular (North Korean) activity.”⁶⁵ Therefore, whether the exercises take place or not, the United States and South Korea should continue to expect the usual barrage of hostile signals from North Korea.

Perhaps the worst blow to inter-Korean relations since the signing of the armistice in 1953 came in 2010, with the sinking of South Korean vessel *Cheonan* (which killed 46 people) and the shelling of South Korean island Yeonpyeong (which killed four people).⁶⁶ This spurred a buildup of the South Korean army and a strengthening of South Korean-American relations. The event also underlined an important facet of the

military divide between North and South Korea: an article published in the *Naval War College Review* found that while the North had the advantage in terms of numbers and the South in terms of quality, “an overall comparative assessment of asymmetric quality and quantity shows that the two sides are roughly equivalent.”⁶⁷ The number of hostilities between the two countries, as well as their differences in military makeup, would therefore complicate any reunification attempt.

Another important component of the North-South Korean relationship is the contrast in the two countries’ stances on human rights. A study published for *Critical Asian Studies* found that the two countries embody wholly different philosophies on the subject: in the North, economic, social, and cultural rights (ESCR) are emphasized, while in the South it is civil and political rights (CPR) that are accorded precedence.⁶⁸ Despite this, however, both countries are guilty of repressing freedom of speech. In the 2014 book “*The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*,” the author discloses that under Park Chung-Hee’s administration, “security organs worked hard to stifle the Korean press...Korean Central Intelligence Agency operatives came daily to major newspapers...to tell them what news they could or could not report.”⁶⁹ Further, those who dissented “were called in for grilling and often beaten.”⁶⁹

Particularly relevant to this research, however, is the discourse the two countries have exchanged regarding potential reunification efforts. There was a brief period during the 1970s when North and South Korea engaged in secret talks dealing directly with the subject, with delegations from both countries covertly crossing the border repeatedly for negotiations. Perhaps the most important of these meetings occurred in

1972 between Kim Il Sung, the founder and supreme leader of North Korea, and Lee Hu Rack, then head of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency. The dialogue between the two men broached reunification, with Lee declaring that “unification should be achieved by ourselves without interference of the four powers.”⁷⁰ Kim agreed with this sentiment, and, though he dubiously claimed he had no knowledge of it, also took the time to apologize for the assassination attempt on President Park. In hindsight, the talks clearly did not culminate in reunification, but they did reveal that both countries, nearly 20 years after the end of the Korean war, did seriously consider reunification.

Finally, an extremely important issue that warrants mentioning is North Korea’s nuclear capability. In response to a North Korean long-range missile test on February 7, 2016, South Korea suspended operations of an inter-Korean manufacturing park and initiated discussions with the United States regarding the installation of a missile defense system known as THAAD. There has been much debate in South Korea about whether these decisions are appropriate, with the author of an article for *World Affairs* calling them “the right calls at the wrong time.”⁷¹ However, it is telling that South Korea feels compelled to take such actions against North Korea; the closure of one of the few inter-Korean businesses in existence is a clear sign of the very strained relations between the two countries.

Content analysis

As mentioned in the methods section, the content analysis portion of this research is to help quantify the results of the various studies and information gathered in the comparative case study. Below is a graph which identifies the three variables examined in the comparative case study and the major themes associated with the German and Korean models (indicated by the sources associated with each variable).

Korean Model	German Model
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cultural divisions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indoctrination/brainwashing in North Korea - Torture camps prevalent in the North, similar to Mao's China - Major ideological split - communist in the North, democratic in the South - Language divide – the Korean culture remains largely intact, but refugees from North Korea encounter serious issues when attempting to integrate <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Economic divisions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - North Korea the stronger country until 1984, now the South's economy dwarfs the North's. - North Korea survived the fall of the Soviet Union, but its economy irreversibly collapsed. - Refusal from North Korea to implement meaningful economic reforms. - North Korea is now forced to tolerate black markets to a greater extent than ever before. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cultural divisions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significant ideological differences between the East and West - Secret police prevalent in East Germany; thousands of political prisoners taken between 1961 and 1989. - Language remained intact despite division - Reunification ameliorated by unity of German culture <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Economic divisions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communist East Germany very underdeveloped when compared to the West - Economy grew substantially following reunification - was the fastest growing region in Europe - East Germany still currently lags behind the West in terms of unemployment and overall prosperity
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Inter-Korean relations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extremely hostile relationship dating back to the Korean War - Brief, failed attempts to negotiate reunification during the 1970s - Technically both Koreas are still at war with each other - North Korean nuclear threat 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Inter-German relations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ideologically and physically divided, though the East-West German border was somewhat permeable - Mostly peaceable relationship - idea of "one Germany" - Reunification facilitated by willingness from both sides (particularly the West) to work together

Upon examination of the graph, one can easily discern that the Korean and German models share a surprising number of commonalities. In particular, despite the presence of a North and South Korea and an East and West Germany, the Korean and German cultures remained preserved as single entities. Additionally, both communist regimes implemented a form of secret police to control their populations, lagged economically behind their Western counterparts to a significant degree, seriously considered reunification at some point in their pasts and could be contrasted with their democratic, capitalist counterparts. Based on the sources from the comparative case study, then, there appear to be five major similarities which the German and Korean models of reunification share.

In terms of Korea's culture, North and South Korea's division in the 1940s appears to have occurred relatively recently when one considers that the two countries had been unified for thousands of years prior. Therefore, it is unsurprising that Confucianism, which has been a presence on the peninsula for centuries, has continued to manifest itself in both North and South Korea. For example, in a publication for *Korean Studies* it was claimed that the rigorous North Korean "Juche" ideology imposed by founder Kim Il Sung had elements which reflected those espoused by Confucianism, particularly those of "authority, bureaucracy, hierarchy, patriarchy, and respect for elders."⁷²

Similarly, an article for the *Journal of Contemporary Asia* wrote that South Korea's major economic development after the Korean War was due to the need for "new workers to accept industrial norms of work discipline, punctuality, (and) management

authority” - all of which reflect Confucian ideals.⁷³ In addition, all South Korean businesses are structured hierarchically, where workers are expected to give an almost suffocating degree of respect to their superiors.⁷⁴ Yet in South Korea, times are beginning to change; it was noted in an article for *Pacific Affairs* that today, “Korea has an unusually large elderly workforce and a disproportionately small young workforce.”⁷⁵ Should that trend continue, the extent of Confucianism’s presence in Korea may prove to be a division rather than a similarity between the North and the South.

In terms of the German culture, it was noted in the case study that the preservation of Germany’s culture was aided by a more porous border and a comparatively brief period of division between the East and West. Though Confucianism is not prevalent in German society as it is in Korea, the German culture remained linked via a common language, a largely nonviolent coexistence and a willingness by the German population on both sides of the border to reunify. Though cultural differences inevitably did emerge between the two countries (such as an unwillingness by many East Germans to accept democracy over socialism), none were so great as to display two distinct German cultures within one Germany after reunification.⁷⁶

Clearly, however, there are also important differences. For one, East and West Germany never declared war against each other, whereas the Korean War continues to define the very essence of the relationship between North and South Korea. North Korea is also far more of an isolationist nation and even more economically destitute

than East Germany ever was, and its longstanding division with South Korea has led to the result of two distinct Korean dialects (whereas the German language remained essentially unchanged). Finally, North Korea has developed, tested and threatened the use of nuclear weapons, all of which are demonstrations of power that never existed in the East German regime. In total, the content analysis indicates that there are at least eight major differences between the German and Korean models of reunification.

With respect to reunification, then, it would appear that the disparities outlined in this content analysis are significant. North and South Korea have been divided for over 60 years, maintain a warlike attitude toward each other, are economically incomparable and have evolved into culturally separate entities. Though Germany experienced many of these issues, they were never to the extreme degree present in the Korean model. West Germany was able to successfully reincorporate East Germany and helped to develop its economy at a remarkably quick pace. The East German regime was also complicit, allowing a full takeover of Western ideals and capitalism. Given the history of power-hungry practices and the deep-seeded hatred of the West present in North Korea, it is difficult to imagine that such a transformative process would occur as smoothly as it did in Germany.

Another finding from the content analysis is the clear discrepancy in the isolation of the communist regimes populations. Many East Germans were well-educated, lived relatively well and had regular employment. The vast majority of North Koreans, however, are wholly ignorant of much of the world, including the state of international affairs in general, as well as the history and politics of their own country. The fact that

North Korean defectors encounter so many issues when attempting to integrate into South Korean society should serve as a clear warning sign to South Korea and its neighbors; if North Korea were to disappear tomorrow and its 24 million people had nowhere to go, it could easily become the world's most serious humanitarian crisis. It would also have enormous cultural effects, most of which would certainly be negative; the blunt hostility of the North towards the South and the apathetic attitudes of the South towards the North could provide the catalyst for another war. At the very least, however, it would prove to be an overwhelming task for South Korea to handle and manage on its own.

Conclusions

Many published works on North Korea broach the topic of Korean reunification briefly, some of which were mentioned in the literature review. Other studies address Korean reunification much more directly. For example, a study by Jin-Wook Shin from Chung-Ang University, entitled "Lessons from German Reunification for Inter-Korean Relations: An Analysis of South Korean Public Spheres, 1920-2010," analyzed in-depth the many varying opinions of South Korean intellectuals, journalists, and policymakers regarding German reunification.⁷⁷ According to Shin, in the years following German reunification, progressives in South Korea tended to view the so-called "unification by absorption" of East Germany negatively, claiming that West Germany "achieved unification as a result of the capitalist logic and bankruptcy of people's consciousness."⁷⁸ Conservatives took the opposite approach, however, and this division among South Korea's intellectuals led to the "constructive learning process" becoming

“seriously hindered.”⁷⁹ Another hindrance Shin details is that many of the people and newspapers espousing these views did so merely for political motivation, and therefore with little to no real consideration given towards a potential reunification. In the end, Shin concludes, “...in South Korea, much has been said about German unification but little has been learned from it.”⁸⁰

Similarly, a study conducted by Stefan Niederhafner from Seoul National University found that South Korea would in all likelihood not be able to follow the German model of reunification. This conclusion was reached by identifying factors that proved to be challenging in German reunification and analyzing them under the South Korean umbrella. Issues discussed included the application of South Korean law on North Korea, which could result in the potential imprisonment of literally “every North Korean citizen outside the North Korean political prison camps,”⁸¹ as well as the dissolution of North Korean political parties and the reconciliation of the two countries’ monetary and economic systems. Ultimately, Niederhafner found that “...it is in South Korea’s own interests to continue to approach North Korea and keep offering cooperation,” but that “a sudden implosion of the North Korean system...would threaten the functioning, if not the existence, of the South Korean system as well.”⁸²

Careful review of the two sources cited above, as well as those explored in the comparative case study and the findings of the content analysis, indicates that the German model for reunification is largely inapplicable to the potential Korean model for reunification. Despite the many similarities shared by the two models, such as the ideological and physical divisions that once defined Germany and continue to define

Korea, as well as the fact that both the Korean and German cultures have remained intact despite division, there are an equal if not greater number of differences which make the comparison very limited at best.

The uncertainty surrounding the likelihood of a Korean reunification has added considerable difficulty to this research. As outlined earlier, the academic community remains highly divided on the subject; some scholars posit that a North Korean collapse will occur inevitably, while others argue that it can theoretically continue to subsist on its meager economy and with the aid of China indefinitely. The fact remains, however, that were North Korea to collapse, the events immediately following it would unfold very differently than the fall of the Berlin Wall and East Germany's subsequent reunification with West Germany did.

North Korea's severe isolation and the lack of reliable data surrounding the conditions inside the country also hampered this project. East German data was similarly opaque, but with the advantages of hindsight one can make judgments regarding its accuracy far more easily. It is difficult to discuss, critique and evaluate a country when so little information is known about it. Although unlikely, the emergence of scientifically valid data about the general state of North Korea, its economy and population would greatly improve the reliability of the Korean model in this research.

The findings of this comparative case study and content analysis may still prove useful in forwarding the discussion of potential Korean reunification. It would be in South Korea's best interest to look beyond the German model when taking steps to prepare for reunification. Tolerable relations with the other country, a willingness of the

people at large to reunify and the economic preparedness necessary to absorb the enormous shock of the collapse of the failing country are factors that are simply nonexistent in South Korea, yet those are the variables which enabled West Germany to successfully reunify with East Germany.

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