

North Korea's Plan for Unification by Federation: What It Really Means

Tara O, Ph. D.
East Asia Research Center

Abstract

North Korea has long pursued “unification by federation.” This has been a non-kinetic option of dominating the entire Korean Peninsula under North Korea’s Kim Family Regime’s totalitarian rule and creating a socialist society. Kim Jong-un even described this as the “One state, Two Systems” formula that China uses for Hong Kong. In Kim Il-sung’s Three Great Charters for Motherland Unification, the Koryo Federation Unification Scheme is one of the charters. The prerequisites to “unification by federation” include abolishing the National Security Act, dismantling the National Intelligence Service, legalizing pro-North Korea groups, and withdrawing U.S. Forces Korea--all to occur in South Korea. Kim Il-sung’s other two charters have a similar theme of expelling the U.S. military from South Korea. Over the years, North Korea has used different terms, such as Koryo Federation and Low-Level Federation. Surprisingly, South Korean Presidents Moon Jae-in, Rho Moo-hyun, and Kim Dae-jung have supported “Low-Level Federation.” This paper explains in detail what unification by federation entails, its history, and its ramifications. Unification through federation is dangerous, because it is about a unified Korea that is not free.

Keywords: North Korea, South Korea, federation, low level federation, Koryo Federation, Three Great Charters, unification, Three Great Principles, Ten Point Program, socialism, “One Country, Two Systems”

Introduction

Since its inception, North Korea has sought to unify the Korean Peninsula under the Kim Family Regime’s rule and its political-economic system. Pyongyang has used the term “Low-Level Federation” (or a Low Stage or Loose Form of Federation) and, more recently, “Confederation-Federation” to describe a means to unification. North Korea’s use of “low-level” in front of “federation” is part of Terminology Confusion Tactics to make it seem less than “federation,” but federation is what North Korea

really wants. For decades, the North Korean government has made federation its official position on unification. As recently as February 17, 2019, North Korea’s official mouthpiece, *Rodong Shinmun*, praised Kim Jong-il for establishing the “Three Great Charters for Motherland Unification” and for building the “Arch of Unification,” thereby providing “a solid foundation for achieving Kim Il-sung’s deathbed instructions for motherland unification;” this includes unification by federation.¹ In 2018, the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea held lectures for senior officials on unification by federation, describing Kim Jong-un’s federation unification plan as “one country with two systems, just like China and Hong Kong.”²

Before examining North Korea’s objective to unify the Korean Peninsula via federation—to include “Low-Level Federation” and “Confederation Federation”—it is important to define the terms confederation and federation.

Table 1: Confederation vs. Federation

Factors	Confederation	Federation
Central Authority	A weak body appointed by the member states	A federal government governs the member states; member states are subordinate
Powers of the Central Authority	Usually joint foreign policy & defense	Foreign policy, defense, economic, & legal spheres (determined by the Constitution)
Sovereignty	Member states	Federal government, no longer with member states
New Constitution	No	Yes
Resolutions	Not laws, not binding	Laws, binding
Association	Loose	Strong

Source: Developed by the author from multiple sources.

As shown in Table 1, a federation is a stronger form of association, while confederation is a looser form. In both systems, a new central authority is formed. In a confederation, the central authority is appointed by the member states, but the central body’s authority is weak, and the members states are not subordinate to it. The central authority usually

handles external matters on behalf of its members, such as foreign policy and defense from external threats.³

In a federation, the central authority becomes the higher authority that governs the member states; member states are subordinate to the new central authority. The central authority handles not only external matters, but also domestic matters, such as laws and domestic economic policy.

Thus, decisions affecting the Republic of Korea would be made at the federal government level, but to a different degree. Because the central authority makes external policy decisions, even the more limited confederation scenario could affect Seoul's alliance with Washington as the alliance is based on the Mutual Defense Treaty between the ROK and the U.S.

As the federal government is established, it would also create its own constitution. Resolutions passed by a federation would become laws that are binding. Resolutions passed by a confederation are not laws, therefore not binding for the member states.⁴

In a confederation, sovereignty rests with each member state. In contrast, in a federation, a supra entity—a federal government—is created and has the sovereignty over the member states.⁵ This means that under a federal system, a supra entity over the South Korean and North Korean governments will be created, with the new entity having sovereignty over both Koreas. The South Korean flag would no longer be the flag of the country, but of a province. It means the end of the Republic of Korea (ROK) as a sovereign country; in essence, South Korea becomes a province of the federation, as does North Korea.

Unification by federation, whether preceded by “low level” or not, is a formula for a North Korea-dominated united Korean Peninsula, not a freedom based unified Korea.

Three Great Charters for Motherland Unification

Arch of Unification in Pyongyang

The Arch of Unification in Pyongyang was built in 2001 to commemorate Kim Il-sung's unification proposal called the “Three Great Charters for Motherland Unification.” In Korean, the arch is more descriptively translated as “The Great Charters for Motherland Unification Commemoration Tower,” rather than the simpler Arch of Unification.

The Three Great Charters for Motherland Unification was first officially mentioned in the New Year's Statement in 1997 and widely

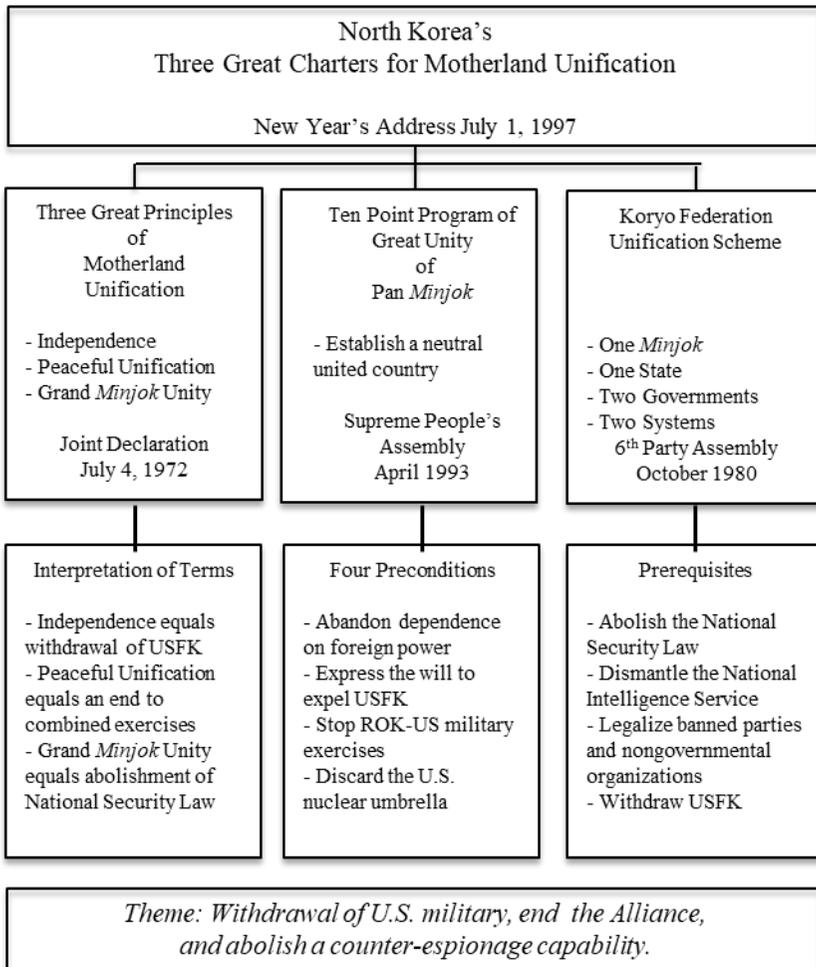
published in the official propaganda media, including *Rodong Shinmun*, *Korean People's Army*, and *Kim Il-sung-Kim Jeong-il'ism Youth Alliance* newspaper.

Figure 1: Arch of Unification in Pyongyang



Source: Nicor, Creative Commons

Figure 2: North Korea's Three Great Charters for Motherland Unification



Source: Bae Jeong-ho and Je Seong-ho, eds. *Unification by Federation and Peace Agreement*, amended by the author.⁶

- Three Great Principles of Motherland Unification
- 10 Point Program of Great Unity of Pan *Minjok*
- Koryo Federation Unification Scheme

The Korean term *minjok* is translated as “people” or “nation.” North Korea uses the term *minjok* in a narrower sense to mean ethnic Koreans. Specifically, it is used to exclude the U.S., and is often used with another code word “independent,” to mean “without the U.S.” North Korea’s use of the term *minjok* is closer to the meaning of tribalism. Thus, throughout this paper, the term *minjok* will be used to better reflect North Korea’s meaning of the word rather than “people” or “nation.”

Joguk is another term that North Korea uses in a narrow sense. *Joguk* means one’s country, homeland, motherland, and fatherland. In North Korea, the idea of “mother,” rather than “father,” predominates as described in B R. Myers’ *Cleanest Race*.⁷ As such, the term used in this paper for *joguk* will be “motherland.”

Three Great Principles of Motherland Unification

The Three Great Principles of Motherland Unification are independence, peaceful unification, and grand *minjok* unity. The Principles were first revealed to the public through the South Korea-North Korea Joint Declaration signed on July 4, 1972.⁸ On October 10, 1980 at the 6th Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK), Kim Il-sung officially put forth his vision of the “Koryo Democratic Federal Republic,” which entailed a unified Korea based on “independence,” “peace,” and “grand *minjok* unity.”⁹

As North Korea widely uses Terminology Confusion Tactics, also called Terminology Deception Tactics, the terminology of the Three Principles needs an explanation.¹⁰ As noted, North Korea’s use of the term “independence” means without the U.S., underscoring Pyongyang’s efforts to unify Korea under its terms. North Korea’s propaganda emphasizes that “south *Josen*” (South Korea) is “occupied” by the “imperial U.S.” that infringes on *minjok* independence, breaks “peace,” and blocks unification.¹¹ Because American forces deter North Korea from unifying the peninsula through force or coercion, Pyongyang uses the term “independence” to mean the withdrawal of U.S. forces in Korea. The desire to force the U.S. from Korea was also expressed by Kim Il-sung in Japan’s daily *Mainichi Shimbun* and monthly magazine *Sekai* as well.¹² The pursuit of a “peace treaty,” “peace regime,” and “end of war declaration” also are efforts to remove American troops from South Korea by trying to dispense with the very reason for the United Nations Command and the U.S. Forces Korea.¹³

“Peaceful” unification also means that there is no combined (ROK-U.S.) capacity to defend or defeat North Korea’s offensive capabilities. Thus, it is equivalent to halting the ROK-U.S. combined military exercises, which Pyongyang often demands, despite North Korea continuing to carry out its own military exercises, including practice invasions.¹⁴ It also means no military modernization and the reduction of forces in South Korea.¹⁵

Grand *Minjok* Unity connotes the unification of all ethnic Koreans (one *minjok*). However, as Kim Il-sung revealed, Grand *Minjok* Unity is “freedom for pro-North Korean subversive and revolutionary groups to operate in the ROK.”¹⁶ A former agent from North Korea points out that the terms *uriminjok* (our *minjok*) or *uriminjokkiri* (our *minjok* by ourselves) are used frequently for anti-South Korea propaganda. *Uriminjok* has the broader meaning of excluding other *minjok*; i.e., Koreans in the U.S. and Japan. At the same time, it has a narrower meaning of “Kim Il-sung *minjok*”—those in North Korea and South Korea, who agree and support the Kim family’s line of thought.¹⁷ In other words, they include those who are anti-U.S. and pro-North Korea, but not certain groups, such as the military officers or business owners, as the latter groups are seen as “stooges” of the “U.S. imperialists,” and thus, anti-*minjok*.¹⁸ Consequently, Grand *Minjok* Unity involves dismantling South Korea’s capability to counter subversion. This includes dismembering the National Intelligence Service and abolishing South Korea’s National Security Act, without which it would be difficult to monitor, investigate, and prosecute North Korean agents and spies.

Ten-Point Program of Great Unity of Pan *Minjok*

Mentioned in the Supreme People’s Assembly in April 1993 and credited to Kim Jong-il, North Korea asserts the Ten-Point Program of Great Unity of Pan *Minjok* contains practical steps to realize unification. From North Korea’s perspective, there are four preconditions that must be agreed upon or resolved:¹⁹

- Abandon the policy for foreign dependence
- Express the will for the withdrawal of U.S. forces
- Stop the ROK-U.S. combined military exercises
- Abandon the U.S. nuclear umbrella

The preconditions focus on the withdrawal of American forces from Korea and ending the ROK-U.S. alliance. The deterrent effect of the

alliance is so strong that the Kim regime knows that it cannot coerce South Korea into a North Korea-dominated, unified Korea as long as the ROK-U.S. alliance is strong and American troops are in South Korea.

Koryo Federation Unification Scheme

The third charter is the Koryo Federation Unification Scheme, which was announced at the 6th Party Assembly in October 1980. As early as 1960, Kim Il-sung had suggested a federation. Since then, North Korea has advocated for a federation scheme under various names: the South-North Federation during the 1960s; the Koryo Federation in the 1970s; the Koryo Democratic Federation in the 1980s; and the Modified Koryo Democratic Federation in the 1990s. Since 2000s, North Korea has used the terms Low Level Federation and Confederation Federation, in an effort to make “Federation” seem more palatable.²⁰ These federation unification ideas are conceived from the Revolutionary Democratic Base Theory and the South Joseon (South Korea) Revolutionary Theory.²¹ North Korea purports that “federation” is one *minjok*, one state, two governments, and two systems. In reality, it means one state, one federal government.

From North Korea’s perspective, “one state” is the most important element of any federation scheme. As mentioned, a federation has an overarching central authority that has sovereignty. As such, there is one federal level government. While Pyongyang talks of two governments, it really means the government of the Republic of Korea and the government of the DPRK becoming two provincial governments subordinate to the authority of a federal government. In reality, North Korea means one state, one federal government.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to merge two diametrically opposed systems, one based on safeguarding individual freedoms and private property and the other one designed to suppress individual freedoms and dispense with private property. Hong Kong, which has operated under a policy of “one state, two systems” since the handover from the United Kingdom to the People’s Republic of China in 1997, provides a good example. Hong Kong citizens were far wealthier and freer prior to and during the early days following the handover. In recent years, China has taken strong-handed measures to destroy Hong Kong’s free democratic system and dominate the Special Administrative Region by force, imposing its system of communism and suppressing freedom and human rights.²²

Kim Il-sung was not the first to conceive a federation as a way to unite separate sovereign states. Lenin saw federation as a way for a “complete victory of communism” all over the world, creating a single world socialist republic.²³ Whereas Lenin’s perspective was international, Kim Il-sung emphasized the nationalistic element by including “one *minjok*” in the formula. As noted, the purpose of adding “*minjok*” is to exclude the U.S.

Now his grandson, Kim Jong-un, is advocating a unification plan that creates one country with two systems, similar to China and Hong Kong. The Workers’ Party of Korea’s Central Committee even conducted lectures for senior cadres that the Korean Peninsula will be federally unified. According to Radio Free Asia (RFA), the written lecture summary shows “North Korea will be in China’s position, and South Korea will be in Hong Kong’s position in a China-Hong Kong style unification, so there will be one country with two systems”²⁴ They use the phrase “federal unification,” but it can be interpreted as a unification of Korea by North Korea absorbing South Korea.

While North Korea talks of one *minjok*, one state, two governments, two systems, that is a fallacy. Pyongyang really means one state, one government, one system. Its emphasis on one *minjok*, or ethnic Koreans by themselves, or “*uriminjokkiri*,” means no foreign powers, specifically, no Americans. The Kim family regime knows that it cannot achieve a North Korea-dominated unified Korea as long as there is the U.S.-ROK alliance and the U.S. military presence.

For North Korea to achieve the Koryo Federation, North Korea has identified Four Prerequisites that must occur in the South:

- Abolish the National Security Act
- Dismantle the National Intelligence Service, and other similar organizations
- Legalize political parties and organizations currently not allowed under South Korean law
- Withdraw U.S. Forces Korea

Again, the prerequisites for the Koryo Federation include the withdrawal of American forces from South Korea. North Korea has long viewed that for unification to occur, U.S. forces must be withdrawn. The *Joseon Rodongdang* (Korean Workers’ Party) publication states: “Only when the U.S. military withdraws from south Joseon (South Korea), can we

maintain our country's stable peace and solve the issue of the peaceful unification of Joseon (North Korea-dominated Korea)."²⁵

Pyongyang also calls for destroying Seoul's capability to detect and prosecute subversive elements in South Korea that aim to overthrow South Korea's system of liberal democracy and market capitalism. Thus, it focuses on abolishing South Korea's National Security Act. Absent the Act, it would be difficult or impossible to prosecute agents sent by North Korea or pursue South Korean domestic elements loyal to Pyongyang's objectives. It also seeks to dismantle the National Intelligence Service (NIS) and the Defense Security Command, both organizations that catch North Korean spies under the National Security Act. It also aims to strengthen the radical elements in South Korean society that actively support North Korea's goals by demanding that they be legalized.

Themes

Two themes run through the Three Charters. One is weakening and eventual severing ties with Washington, including stopping combined military exercises, withdrawing the U.S. military from South Korea, and the removing the U.S. nuclear umbrella. The other is eliminating Seoul's ability to protect its sovereignty by dismantling organizations that can monitor and prosecute subversive elements in South Korea; Pyongyang seeks to give subversive elements greater power by legalizing them.

North Korea has not changed its goal of unification under the Kim Family Regime's rule, and the Three Great Charters for Motherland Unification are still in effect. For instance, in a plea letter in 2016, North Korea's Kim Jong-il-Kim Il-sung'ism Youth Alliance Central Committee called on the Korean youth all over the world to "lead and take a new turn for...motherland unification by immortalizing the Three Charters for Motherland Unification and the historic North-South joint declarations as the great doctrine for motherland unification."²⁶

The Dangers of Federation

The Kim Family Regime's unification by federation means a North Korea-dominated Korea. Published in Pyongyang in 1985, *Great Juche Ideology Collections, Vol. 5: The Theory of Constructing Socialism and Communism* underscores the consistency of this approach. The book introduces the plan to establish a federal system as a theory of motherland unification, and makes clear that the federation system plan is a means of building socialism and communism.²⁷

According to a Korean Workers' Party publication, Kim Il-sung sees that the federal government controls the unified military.²⁸ Kim also envisioned a federated state run by a unification government consisting of the Supreme *Minjok* Federation Committee and the Federation Permanent Committee, with a rotating chairmanship for both committees.²⁹ Not only does Kim see two overarching entities over South Korea and North Korea, but he also envisions these bodies instructing and guiding the “two regional governments.”³⁰ In this version, South Korea is no longer a sovereign state, but becomes a regional government. Kim envisions that the Federation Permanent Committee is formed by the Supreme *Minjok* Federation Committee, and the latter is formed by an equal number of representatives from South Korea and North Korea, with additional “appropriate” numbers of ethnic Koreans from overseas.³¹

The math: Supra Committee

For simplicity, leaving out ethnic overseas Koreans, assume 50 representatives are sent from South Korea and North Korea (which are now provinces), respectively, to the federation committee, for a total of 100 members. North Korea is dominated by one party—the Workers' Party of Korea, and they vote as a block. South Korea has multiple parties, thus the representatives would vote differently. Even if only one southern representative votes with the North Korean block, at 51 to 49, North Korea would have a majority. The Democratic Party of Korea (Deobureo Minjoo Party), and some of the smaller parties in South Korea, have been introducing and voting for bills that benefit North Korea. As such, North Korea obtaining even a two thirds majority may have a high possibility under a federated state.

The math: Electing the Leader

As for selecting the head of the supra entity, “democratically” selecting the leader could well lead to electing Kim Jong-un or his designate. (M=million)

- Population: South Korea (50M); North Korea (25M)
- North Korea, Kim receives 100% of 25M votes + % from SK
- South Korea: Multiple candidates, <100% voting rate
- Moon Jae-in received 13.4M votes out of 32.7M votes (41%)
- 25M+ (North Korea) > 13.4M (South Korea)
- If 100% voting rate in South Korea, then 41% of 50M=20.5M.

- 25M+ (North Korea) > 20.5M (South Korea)

South Korea has twice the population of North Korea, so it may seem a representative from South Korea would get the most votes to be a leader of a federated Korea. Despite having 50 million people, not every South Korean would vote. There would be multiple candidates, and the votes would be split among them, as well as the candidate from North Korea, as some in South Korea could also vote for the candidate from the North Korean province. The North Korean population of 25 million would vote as a block for their single candidate, and they must vote. Kim Jong-un or his designate would get 100% or 25 million votes. Of the 32.7 million votes in the South Korean presidential election in 2017, Moon Jae-in received 13.4 million votes or 41% of the votes.³² Even if all 50 million people in South Korea were eligible to vote and voted, and a South Korean candidate received 41%, that would be 20.5 million votes. The South Korean candidate would have significantly less votes than 25 million for the North Korean candidate, giving election victory to Kim Jong-un or his designate.

In reality, not everyone can vote; the scenario described does not take into account underaged citizens. However, assuming that the percentage of younger voters is approximately the same on both sides of the Demilitarized Zone, the northern candidate would still win. Accordingly, a federation is a formula for North Korea-dominated unification. Perhaps that is why North Korea so keenly pursues unification by federation.

South Korea has long seen federation as a tactic by North Korea to unify it under its rule, based on revolutionizing and communizing South Korea and unifying the entire peninsula under the Kim regime of North Korea.³³ Thus, it is surprising that a number of South Korean leaders—Moon Jae-in, Rho Moo-hyun, and Kim Dae-jung—have broken from South Korea’s traditional stance and strongly supported North Korea’s federation formula.

Federation and the Moon Jae-in, Rho Moo-hyun and Kim Dae-jung Administrations

South Korean presidents have generally favored unification based on the South Korean system, i.e., unification by absorption of North Korea. This principle is even reflected in the constitution. Article 3 states, “The territory of the Republic of Korea shall consist of the Korean peninsula and its adjacent islands.”³⁴ Article 4 states, “The Republic of Korea shall

seek unification and shall formulate and carry out a policy of peaceful unification based on the principles of freedom and democracy.”³⁵ These articles establish the framework for a unified Korea based on the same liberal democratic system and market economy of South Korea, not the socialism, communism, or dynastic totalitarianism of North Korea.

Further, Article 10 states, “All citizens shall be assured of human dignity and worth and have the right to pursue happiness. It shall be the duty of the State to confirm and guarantee the fundamental and inviolable human rights of individuals.”³⁶ North Korea is noted for its wide-spread and systematic human rights abuses. A united Korea under the Kim Family Regime would violate Article 10, among many others in the South Korean Constitution. Moreover, South Koreans who yearn for unification want the end state to be like South Korea—free and prosperous, not like North Korea. Pyongyang’s economic failures, famine, and wide-spread human rights violations not only make North Korea’s system an undesirable one to live under, but also it would be against the ROK constitution to do so.

Despite the unconstitutionality and undesirability of unification through federation, three South Korean presidents—Moon Jae-in, Rho Moo-hyun, and Kim Dae-jung—have supported North Korea’s unification strategy. Furthermore, they have pursued many of the prerequisites that North Korea has been seeking, such as dismantling the NIS and weakening the relationship between the U.S. and South Korea.

Moon Jae-in has made his desire for low-level or a loose form of federation clear in numerous public statements. Moon’s key advisors and his political party support it. On February 2, 2011, Moon Jae-in then Democratic United Party Standing Advisor, talked about federation, when he said, “the South and North are closer to peaceful unification through the Kim Dae-jung and Rho Moo-hyun administrations. We can now hope to achieve confederation or Low Level/Loose federation.”³⁷

As the Democratic United Party presidential candidate, Moon Jae-in attended Kim Dae-jung’s Third Anniversary Memorial Ceremony at the National Cemetery in Seoul on August 18, 2012. Moon brought up federation again, “I will achieve without fail the confederation or low-level/loose form of federation that former president Kim Dae-jung dreamt about during the next administration through a government power change.”

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As the Democratic Party's (*Deobureo Minjoo* Party) presidential candidate, Moon Jae-in made the following statement in Cheongju on January 22, 2017:

I promised during the last presidential campaign that, even if I have to revise the constitution, I will pursue the policy of a federation-conforming *jibang boonkwon* (decentralization of power to the regions) and a strong policy of balanced national development, and that is still in effect.”³⁹

Even if he has to change the constitution, Moon is intent on pursuing a federation. Indeed, in early 2018, as his administration was busy overseeing the PyeongChang Olympics and hosting high-level delegations from North Korea and the U.S., both his party operatives and Blue House officials took on another significant task: changing the constitution. Among lengthy changes, one stood out the most—they wanted to delete “freedom” from the constitution. In fact, the ruling party wanted to adopt deleting “freedom” from the constitution as its party platform. The measure would reduce the gap between the constitutions of South Korea and North Korea, by removing a key difference—freedom—in their political and economic systems. In the face of strong opposition, the ruling party withdrew the proposal after four hours and the constitution was not changed. Afterwards, the Blue House also separately tried to change the Constitution, but that failed as well. Moon then instructed taking executive and administrative measures at the national and local levels to make the changes reflected in their proposals, despite not having popular support, indicating his strong will to bring about a federation.

As Moon mentioned, Rho Moo-hyun and Kim Dae-jung also talked of Low Level Federation. At a press conference on April 26, 2004, a reporter asked Rho Moo-hyun what he thought about Prime Minister Goh Kun suggesting Seoul would be ideal as the capital of unified Korea, and Rho replied, “Our unification will definitely be different from the German style unification by absorption... We will each have local governments within the confederation state system for a long time, and we’ll make the capital after unification in the Kaesong area in a very symbolic way.”⁴⁰

The concept of the confederation state system based on the premise of the two Koreas becoming local governments—meaning there is another entity above both local governments—looks more like “unification by

federation” proposed by North Korea, and is different from the previous South Korean government's official concept of unification—the National Community Unification Plan. The National Community Unification Plan, which successive ROK governments have legitimized through National Assembly resolutions, is to form a “South Korea-North Korea confederation”—so two separate states—and through it eventually decide on the unification government based on the unified constitution.⁴¹ It is important to note that South Korea-North Korea confederation is a concept of cooperation, not the concept of “federation” of turning national governments into local governments under a newly created “one state.”⁴² In effect, Rho Moo-hyun used the term “confederation,” but he actually meant “federation,” which is pursued by North Korea.

Even prior to Moon, Kim Dae-jung also tried to suggest that the two terms—confederation and federation—are similar. In fact, he put it in writing in the June 15, 2000 South-North Joint Declaration, when Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong-il met. Paragraph 2 of the Declaration states:

“For the achievement of reunification, we have agreed that there is a common element in the South's concept of a confederation and the North's formula for a loose form of federation. The South and the North agreed to promote reunification in that direction.”⁴³

Thus, Kim Dae-jung blurred the line between confederation and federation.

At the “Civilization and Peace” Conference on December 5, 2005, Kim Dae-jung stated, “As declared at the 6.15 South-North Summit, we must integrate south side's South-North confederation and north side's Low Level Federation to enter the first stage of unification.”⁴⁴

In fact, Kim Dae-jung envisioned three stages to unification: 1. South-North confederation, 2. South-North federation, 3. Centralized System.⁴⁵ This means that the discussion of “Low Level” Federation is a play on words, as he agrees with the Kim Family Regime's federation, which is a formula for a unified Korea under North Korea's totalitarian system.

Moon Jae-in also supports Kim Dae-jung's position by stating “I don't think the Low Level Federation system is that different from the confederation we are asserting” during a presidential election debate on April 25, 2017.⁴⁶

In reality, they differ. South Korea has had views that two states peacefully co-exist, with greater exchanges, and eventually getting to

unification; North Korea wants the South Korean and North Korean governments to lose their sovereignty as independent states, and to give the national sovereignty and accompanying authority to a higher overarching central entity, and then for North Korea to dominate that central authority. Calling the federation “loose form” or “low level” indicates it will move on to a higher level, which is federation, which means a strong central authority. North Korea insists on federation, because it is likely to control the central authority. By stating that confederation and a loose form of federation are similar, Kim Dae-jung essentially accepted North Korea’s long-sought formula for unification by federation.

The 2000.6.15 South-North Joint Declaration also contains a clause that North Korea has long pursued. Paragraph 1 states “The South and the North have agreed to resolve the question of reunification *independently* (author italicized for emphasis) and through the joint efforts of *uriminjokkiri* (our *minjok* by ourselves), who are the *masters* of the country.” It also contains multiple references to “peaceful unification” as well as “*minjok*” in the one-page declaration.

In using “independence,” “peaceful” and “*minjok*,” long-time Korea analyst late Stephen Bradner points out the importance of this terminology and how it became part of the joint declaration. According to Bradner,

We should not think it inconsequential that North Korean negotiators insisted on the inclusion of this terminology in the agenda for the June 2000 summit, as each term represents a pivotal node in the struggle for dominance.⁴⁷

North Korea also uses the phrase “people (proletarians) are the masters” in its Terminology Confusion Tactics. For instance, *Rodong Shinmun* carried an article titled “To protect the well-being of the *inmin* (proletariat) and the safety of the motherland; With the view that everyone is the master” to mobilize and encourage the factory workers to faithfully sanitize and carry out emergency quarantine projects.⁴⁸

Rho Moo-hyun followed up on the 6.15 Declaration with his 10.4 South-North Joint Declaration signed on October 4, 2007 in Pyongyang during his summit with Kim Jong-il. It is also known as the Declaration on the Advancement of South-North Korean Relations, Peace and Prosperity.

Paragraph 1 of the 10.4 Declaration focuses on the implementation of the 6.15 Declaration, which is about unification through federation and excluding the U.S. It states:

“The South and the North will adhere to the June 15 Joint Declaration and actively implement it.”

“The South and the North decided to independently solve the problem of reunification according to the spirit of *uriminjokkiri*, and value the dignity and interests of the *minjok*, and aim everything in that direction.”

“The South and the North decided to come up with a plan to commemorate the 15th of June, reflecting the unwavering willingness to implement the June 15 Joint Declaration.”

Paragraph 2 contains the idea of completely changing the laws and institutions in order to unify Korea via federation. It states:

The South and the North have agreed to overhaul their respective legislative and institutional apparatuses in a bid to develop inter-Korean relations in a reunification-oriented direction.

As we will see later, numerous changes are occurring in South Korea’s laws and institutions, in a way that is undemocratic.

It turns out Moon Jae-in played a key role in drafting the content of the 10.4 Declaration. On October 4, 2012, Moon stated, “At the time of the 2007 South-North Summit, I was the Chairman of the Summit Promotion Committee. I prepared the overall agenda topics to be discussed and the agreement document to be signed by the two heads of state.”⁴⁹

Other politicians in South Korea, who often have activist backgrounds, have also declared their support for unification through federation. When Rho Hoe-chan campaigned to be the Democratic Labor Party’s (now Justice Party) presidential candidate in 2007, he offered his vision of “the 7th Republic” within his “Unification Thesis.” He opposed unification by South Korea absorbing North Korea, and along with fellow party members Kwon Young-gil and Shim Sang-jung, made unification through

federation their presidential election pledge.⁵⁰ Specifically, Rho stated, “until the Korean Federation is established,” he will “construct Korean Confederation in 2012 as the first step” in preparation for Korean Federation.⁵¹ He viewed the constitution’s territorial provisions and the National Security Act as examples of legal and institutional barriers to unification, and asserted deleting and abolishing them.⁵² Rho hoe-chan envisioned a socialist state.⁵³ He pledged to incorporate into the constitution the following: government ownership of property and government provisions for education, health care, land and property, and employment, focusing on equality for the workers, farmers, and the property-less.⁵⁴ Rho hoe-chan also promised to dismantle the alliance.⁵⁵

North Korea emphasizes the Three Great Charters for Motherland Unification and the June 15th South-North Joint Declaration

North Korea has been emphasizing the implementation of the June 15th South-North Joint Declaration, which contains the language of the Three Great Charters for Motherland Unification, including unification through federation. As noted, in 2016, North Korea’s Kim Jong-il-Kim Il-sung’ism Youth Alliance Central called on Korean youth to “immortalize” the Three Charters for Motherland Unification and the South-North Joint Declarations as the doctrine of unification.⁵⁶

The joint declarations primarily refer to the joint declaration signed by Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong-il on June 15, 2000; this is often referred to as “the June 15th Declaration” or simply “6.15.” North Korea considers the June 15th Declaration so important that it celebrates the anniversary of its signing and calls the signing of the document “a remarkable incident with great significance in the execution of the feat of independent unification for our *minjok*.⁵⁷ According to the North Korean mouthpiece *Urimizokkiri*, on June 15, 2018 Kim Jong-un said;

For the first time since the division of our *minjok*, two reunions of the heads of the North and South were realized by the great general's noble will for unification and patriotism. With the adoption and announcement of the 6.15 Joint Declaration, which centers around the concept of *uriminjokkiri* (our *minjok* by ourselves and no foreigners), and the 10.4 Declaration, which is the execution doctrine of it, they were remarkable incidents that laid the historic milestones for independent

unification and opened the transitional phase of motherland unification.⁵⁸

In efforts to push its federation plan, North Korea created the North Side Committee for Implementation of the June 15th Joint Declaration. There is also the South Side Committee for Implementation of the June 15th Joint Declaration. This group refers to South Korea as “south side.” In addition to a headquarters in South Korea, the latter has offices in the U.S., Japan, Canada, China, Germany, Australia, and Europe to influence and promote the goal of implementing the June 15th Joint Declaration, namely unification through federation, which is North Korea-dominated united Korea.⁵⁹ Its logo has *Uriminjokkiri* written on it. It is unclear which one is the overall headquarters of the committee, but *Uriminjokkiri* is a phrase often used in North Korea’s propaganda against South Korea, as pointed out earlier.

In 2012, a South Korean court ruled that the South Side Committee for Implementation of the June 15th Joint Declaration (June 15th Implementation Committee) was an “*ijeok* (enemy aiding) organization” as it was led mainly by the National Association of University Student Councils and the Pan-Korea Alliance for Reunification (PKAR). The court previously ruled that both groups were *ijeok* organizations, and the June 15th Implementation Committee cannot be seen as different from the PKAR.⁶⁰

The rationale for the court’s designation of the National Association of University Student Councils as an *ijeok* organization is seen in the association’s policies and activities. For example, the association views the U.S. as a “colonial power” that is the main obstacle to unification. It conducts anti-American activities, including trespassing on U.S. military bases and burning American flags. At the same time, the association holds memorials to commemorate the anniversary of Kim Il-sung’s death.⁶¹ Interestingly, PKAR uses the term *ryonhap*, which means alliance, union, league, or confederation, using the North Korean spelling, instead of a South Korean *yonhap*. This could be indicative of the Northern branch being the real headquarters office overall.

PKAR has conducted activities similar to the South Korean Federation of University Students Council, such as demanding the withdrawal of the U.S. troops from Korea and the dissolution of the National Security Act—both are preconditions for North Korea’s Three Great Charters for Motherland Unification.⁶² In fact, North Korea’s official mouthpiece

Rodong Shinmun has praised PKAR for its efforts since its inception in 1990 to achieve the “Three Great Charters of Motherland Unification” and “Five Courses of Action for Grand *Minjok* Unity.”⁶³ Interestingly, PKAR’s organizational structure and distribution are similar to the June 15th Implementation Committee; PKAR uses the same terms “Northern Side” and “Southern Side,” and has offices in the Americas, Japan, China, Australia, Canada, and other countries.⁶⁴ These similarities may have led the court to conclude that the June 15th Implementation Committee does not appear to be different than PKAR.

The South Korean constitution established the National Unification Advisory Council (NUAC) to advise the president on unification policy and implementation.⁶⁵ The president is chairman of NUAC. Accordingly, the committee’s emphasis and direction changes with each administration. The NUAC has chapters in 124 countries, including the U.S., with more than 3,600 members.⁶⁶ Interestingly during the Moon administration, some of the June 15th Implementation Committee members were also appointed to serve as chairmen of NUAC branches. For instance, Moon Jae-in appointed Lee Jae-su, a member of the June 15th Implementation Committee as the Chairman of NUAC in Washington, D.C.⁶⁷

With his actions, Moon emphasized the implementation of the June 15th Joint Declaration; i.e., unification by federation, beginning with a low-level federation. This is the same position held by the Kim Family Regime.

Conclusion

North Korea has long pursued unification through federation as a means to take over the Korean Peninsula, impose its totalitarian system of rule and install its socialist system of government ownership of property and central control. During this time, South Korea has become a wealthy and prosperous country, based on liberal democracy and market economy. At its core, South Korea’s system is based on individual freedom; the North Korean system is designed to suppress individual liberty. Thus, North Korea’s federation formula is not the end state that most of South Korea’s presidents and the public have wanted. It is therefore peculiar that three South Korean presidents have pursued the same federation formula that North Korea pursued.

To this end, North Korea has established preconditions for its federation scheme. These include the removal of American forces and capabilities from the Korean Peninsula and the destruction of South Korea’s capability to monitor and prosecute those working on behalf of

North Korea. The first precondition includes halting combined military exercises, withdrawing U.S. troops from Korea, removing the U.S. nuclear umbrella, and weakening, and eventually ending, the alliance. Elements of the second precondition include dismantling the National Security Act, removing key capabilities from intelligence and prosecutorial organizations that target North Korean agents and spies, such as the National Intelligence Service and Defense Security Command. North Korea will continue to intersperse terms such as “peace,” “independence,” and “cooperation” into pronouncements related to federation in order to confuse the audience.

North Korea’s “One state, Two systems” formula shows the Kim Family Regime’s intent to lure the unsuspecting into a union. Through deception and coercion, Pyongyang seeks to dominate the entire Korean peninsula. Accordingly, it is important to understand the real meaning behind “unification by federation.” It is not about peace and independence as purported, but about creating a unified Korea without freedom.

Appendix: Korean to English Translation

English	Korean
Confederation	연합제
Federation	연방제
Three Great Charters for Motherland Unification	3대헌장
Arch of Unification in PyongyangPyongya	조국통일 3대헌장 기념탑
one's country, homeland, motherland, and fatherland	조국
“Three Great Charters for Motherland Unification”	조국통일 3대헌장
Three Great Principles of Motherland Unification	조국통일 3대원칙
10 Point Program of Great Unity of Pan <i>Minjok</i>	전민족대단결 10대강령
South-North Federation	남북연방제
Koryo Federation Unification Scheme	고려연방제 통일방안
Koryo Federation	고려연방제
Koryo Democratic Federation	고려민주연방제
Modified Koryo Democratic Federation	수정된 고려민주연방제
Low Level Federation	낮은단계 연방제
Independence	자주
Peaceful reunification	평화통일
Grand Minjok Unity	민족대단결
Four Preconditions	전제조건
Kim Jong-il-Kim Il-sungism Youth Alliance Central Committee	김일성-김정일주의 청년동맹 중앙위원회
<i>Great Juche Ideology Collections, Volume 5: The Theory of Constructing Socialism and Communism</i>	위대한 주체사상총서 제5권 : 사회주의, 공산주의 건설리론

Supreme <i>Minjok</i> Federation Committee	최고민족연방회의
Federation Permanent Committee	연방상설위원회
decentralization of power to the regions	지방분권
local governments	지방정부
confederation state system	국가연합체제
June 15 th South-North Joint Declaration	6.15 남북 공동선언
North Korean Committee for Implementation of the June 15 th Joint Declaration	6.15 공동선언실천 북측위원회
South Korean Committee for Implementation of the June 15 th Joint Declaration	6.15 공동선언실천 남측위원회
<i>Uriminjokkiri</i>	우리민족끼리
enemy aiding	이적
National Community Unification Plan	민족공동체통일방안
Pan-Korea Alliance for Reunification (PKAR)	조국통일범민족연합 (범민련)
South Korean Federation of University Students Council	한국대학총학생회연합 (한총연)
National Unification Advisory Council (NUAC)	대한민국민주평화통일자문회의 (평통)

Notes:

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