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IMPOSSIBLE TRIANGULATION

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REVIEW ESSAY

North Korean Engagement in Africa during the Cold War: A Survey of Recent Historiographical Analyses

Seung Hwan Ryu
Graduate School of East Asian Studies, Freie Universität Berlin

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Abstract
This review essay presents a historiographical analysis of the scholarly works on North Korean engagement in African countries during the Cold War from the 1970s to the present. Although North Korea-Africa relations were initiated in the early 1960s, the topic did not receive much scholarly attention up until the last decade. While earlier works illustrated their connections in the context of the inter-Korean competition for international legitimacy, Benjamin R. Young's Guns, Guerillas, and the Great Leader (2021) has highlighted hitherto neglected but equally important dimensions, such as the role of North Korea's image as a postcolonial developmental model and its economic support of African countries. Despite the notable achievements of existing works, this reviewer concludes that further research is necessary to uncover the full implications of North Korea-Africa entanglement on other globalization projects of socialist governments in African countries and the connections between Kim Il Sung and the African socialist leaders.

> *"May the militant friendship between Korean people and Tanzanian people continue to grow and blossom in days to come."* (Excerpt from Julius Nyerere's Message to Kim Il Sung on September 9, 1968)[1]

1. Introduction

The South Korean film *Escape from Mogadishu* (2021) dramatically represents short-lived cooperation between South Korean and North Korean diplomatic officials to safely evacuate from Somalia after the outbreak of civil war in 1991. This movie's historical context is North Korea's engagement with and the inter-Korean diplomatic competition in African countries during the Cold War era. At the time, this did not gain much public nor scholarly attention. Earlier scholarly works generally understood until the 1990s that both North and South Korea endeavoured to establish a greater number of diplomatic relations with the newly independent countries, because the two Koreas considered their support crucial in order to gain international legitimacy but also for the inter-Korean race to join the United Nations as the only accredited member on the Korean peninsula.[2] This review essay examines previous scholarly works on the North Korean engagement

1. National Archives of Australia: A1838, 154/11/91.

2. Benjamin R. Young, *Guns, Guerillas, and the Great Leader: North Korea and the Third World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021), 5.

Corresponding author
Seung Hwan Ryu
Graduate School of East Asian Studies
Freie Universität Berlin
Hittorfstr. 18
14195 Berlin
Germany
Email: seunghwan.ryu[at]fu-berlin.de

in Africa during the Cold War. This topic has not been a prominent topic within the international history of the Cold War nor the history of inter-Korean relations. However, more recently a number of insightful scholarly works have been published.

This review focuses on the literature analysing the transregional entanglement during the Cold War period, instead of the articles on the current North Korea-Africa relations, even though these articles usually begin their narratives with the origins of the relations in the 1960s and 70s.

Previous works have only tentatively historicized the North Korean entanglement with African countries during the Cold War. The significance of this topic is multifaceted. First, research on North Korea-Africa relations is deeply involved with current approaches to the historiography of the Cold War, in which the agency of the "Third World" takes center stage rather than being seen as the marginalized states dependent on superpowers. For example, Odd Arne Westad emphasized both the intervention of the United States and the Soviet Union in the Third World and the Third World's implications on the patron states during the Cold War.[3] Similarly, North Korea tried to intervene in the Third World, sometimes as a partner of the anti-colonial struggle, at other times as a self-interested party eager to gain the support of African states in reciprocity for North Korean military assistance and economic support. This relation provides important clues for researchers of the Cold War confrontations in other Third World areas, considering the fact that the role of small states has been underestimated and understudied compared to the patron states.

Second, North Korea's African policy from the late 1960s to the 1980s implies shifts within its foreign policy, especially after North Korea departed from the international socialist division of labour and experienced the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s.[4] As North Korea's relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc deteriorated, Kim Il Sung sought a way to overcome looming isolation without relying on the patron states like the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China. Bomi Kim describes North Korea's principle of its foreign policy in the mid-1960s as *Chajuoegyo* (Self-supporting diplomacy), but Kim does not mention how this principle impacted North Korea's engagement in Africa during the 1970s.[5]

Third, historical connections between North Korea and the African countries shed light on the remaining closeness between them today. As Benjamin Young points out, political analysts tend to focus more on the "economic benefits of cheap DPRK-made arms and military assistance" than on the historical roots of solidarity.[6] For some African countries, North Korea was not only a country that provided economic support and military assistance, but also a model of postcolonial development that had achieved an eye-catchingly successful economic development in the 1960s.

In the following, I proceed to discuss the recent publication by Benjamin R. Young, who provided the first comprehensive monograph on North Korea-Third World relations from the 1950s to the late 1980s (2.). While the book tackles North Korea's foreign policy toward the Third World in general, I focus on the author's argument regarding North Korea-Africa connections. The third section examines works that analyse the North Korean engagement in Africa as a part of the "inter-Korean competition" (3.). They are representative of earlier understandings of this entanglement, particularly until the early 1990s. The fourth section draws together recently published articles, which include case studies of North Korea's foreign relations with individual African countries, and cultural diplomacy as North Korea's strategy to reinforce these ties (4.). The conclusion evaluates the achievements and limitations of previous literature, and offers a

3. Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007 [2005]), 3-5.

4. According to Ah Reum Park, North Korea is assumed to depart from COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) in July 1962, along with Albania, People's the Republic of China, and North Vietnam, because Khrushchev forced all socialist countries to join the Socialist division of labour. Still, North Korea maintained its status of observer. Ah Reum Park, "Analysis of Democratic People's Republic of Korea's departure from the 'International Socialist Division of Labor' in 1962," *Critical Studies on Modern Korean History* 45 (2021): 457.

5. Bomi Kim, *Kimilsŏnggwa chungsobunjaeng—Pukhan chajuoegyoŭi kiwŏn'gwa hyŏngsŏng* (1953-1966) (Seoul: Sŏgangdaehakkyoch'ulp'anbu, 2019), 442-456.

6. Benjamin R. Young, "Special Report: North Korea in Africa: Historical Solidarity, China's Role, and Sanctions Evasion," *United States Institute of Peace* 490 (February 2021): 6.

tentative suggestion for a new approach: analysing the North Korean engagement as its own "globalization project"[7].

2. A New Stepping Stone: *Guns, Guerillas, and the Great Leader*

Many new aspects of North Korea's foreign policy toward Africa were recently uncovered by the book *Guns, Guerillas, and the Great Leader* written by Benjamin R. Young, a professor in the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University. In this book, Young provides the first comprehensive analysis of North Korea-Third World connections from the 1950s to the 1980s. Although it does not exclusively tackle Africa as a partner of North Korea, it devotes a good deal of space in every chapter to introduce the multifaceted entanglement and connections between North Korea and Africa during the Cold War. Although Young himself acknowledges Charles Armstrong's *Tyranny of the Weak: North Korea and the World, 1950-1992* as a stepping stone,[8] it is Young's publication that becomes a true milestone for those who research North Korea-Third World relations. Particularly, Young analyses both a number of North Korean sources and archival materials from the United States, Mexico, South Korea, the United Kingdom, Canada, Sweden, Australia, and the former Eastern bloc. Thereby Young is able to reconstruct the trajectories of historical solidarity that had hitherto not been fully discovered.[9]

Whereas earlier scholarly works primarily paid attention to the inter-Korean competition, where North and South Korea endeavoured to establish diplomatic relations with a greater number of the newly independent countries, Young additionally sheds light on less well-known themes of North Korea's Third World policy: North Korea as a developmental model, its acts of solidarity with national liberation movements, and Kim Il Sung's personal relations with the Third World leaders. Understanding North Korea as a model of postcolonial development based on "national autonomy and socialist modernity" is significant for historical analysis, because this factor could provide a rationale why many African countries preferred Pyongyang to Seoul, when both governments aimed to establish relations.[10]

The book divides North Korea's Third World policy into the five periods, and the loci of Young's analysis in the first period during the mid-1950s and early 1960s are Indonesia, Cuba, and Vietnam. North Korea's engagement in Africa is discussed after this period, when Kim Il Sung's absolute authority and the Monolithic Ideological System were secured after the Kapsan Group Incident in 1967.[11] In the second period during the late 1960s and early 1970s, North Korea primarily developed a global propaganda campaign promoting Kim Il Sung as a Third World leader. North Korea utilized newspaper advertisements, photo exhibits, and film screenings in different countries, and some African officials, from Tanzania in 1968 and from Somalia in 1971, visited Pyongyang to learn about its developmental path, so that they could possibly apply the same methods for their own local developments.[12] However, Young critically evaluates North Korea's propaganda campaign in terms of its efficacy and productiveness, because the Third World people found its effort "out of touch, outlandish, and at times threatening".[13]

In the third period during the 1970s, North Korea deployed military specialists, technical experts, and agricultural specialists all over Africa to provide practical support, such as military training, building factories and palaces, and aiding rural developments. North Korea also promoted its *Chuch'e* (usually spelled *Juche*, meaning self-reliance) ideology, which contributed to bolster Kim

7. Although this article uses "globalization" to historicize North Korea's internationalist approach during this period, North Korea does not use the term "globalization" [*Segyehwa*] to describe its solidarity with Third World countries. While North Korea condemns "globalization" as an imperialist strategy of the United States, its media use the term "South-South Solidarity" [*Namnamhyŏpcho*] to illustrate the solidarity among Third World countries. See Ch'ŏl Kang, "Uri sik sahoejuŭiŭi sŭngninŭn hwakchŏngjŏgida [The victory of our Socialism is evident]," *Rodong Shinmun*, July 12, 2018; Hangnam Li, "«Segyehwa» nŭn chegukchuŭijadŭrŭi segyejep'aejŏlyagida ['Globalization' is an imperialist's strategy of global domination]," *Rodong Shinmun*, March 26, 2018; Sujin Kim, "Namnamhyŏpchojŏngsinŭl parhwihayŏ [Exercising the spirit of South-south solidarity]," *Rodong Shinmun*, May 2, 2019.

8. Benjamin R. Young, "The Struggle for Legitimacy: North Korea's Relations with Africa, 1965-1992," *BAKS Papers* 16 (2015): 98.

9. Young, *Guns, Guerillas, and the Great Leader*, 11-12.

10. *Ibid.*, 9.

11. *Ibid*., 47. Tae Seob Lee also contends that Kim Il Sung's leadership reached its peak in the late 1960s, subsequent to several political and economic crises in the 1950s and 1960s. Similarly, Young Chul Chung also argues that *Suryŏng* (Supreme Leader) System was institutionalized through historical processes and especially two critical junctures in 1956, August Factional Incident, and 1967, Kapsan Group Incident. See Tae Seob Lee, *Kimilssŏng ridŏsip yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Tŭllyŏk, 2001), 440-441; Young Chul Chung, "The Suryong System as the Institution of Collectivist Development," *The Journal of Korean Studies* 12, no. 1 (2007): 43-74.

12. Young, *Guns, Guerillas, and the Great Leader*, 53-62.

13. *Ibid*., 71.

Il Sung's global status as the leader of world revolution.[14] Young contends that from the mid to late 1970s, North Korean Third World diplomacy shifted from the personality cult of Kim Il Sung toward political mission and self-interest, and Kim Il Sung expected the counterpart's political support in international organisations.[15] The author refers to the testimony of Ko Young-hwan, the former head of the Africa section in the DPRK's Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1985 to 1987, that Kim Il Sung expected African delegates to the UN to vote for the pro-DPRK items, such as the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea and recognising North Korea as the sole legitimate government on the Korean-Peninsula.[16] North Korean efforts paid off when it was accepted as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)[17] in 1975. This acceptance was considered a victory, since South Korea's application was denied at the same conference in Lima.[18] However, North Korea's overemphasis of the Korean questions during the meetings caused frustrations on part of other participants.[19] Young assesses that North Korea's use of NAM to settle its self-interest represents its "Korea First" policy in the 1970s, which would eventually lead to the deterioration of its relations with Third World countries.[20]

After Kim Jong Il's position as the imminent successor of Kim Il Sung became evident in the fourth period during the early 1980s, Kim Jong Il's influence on foreign policy strengthened. Young argues that Kim Jong Il's diplomacy "prioritized revolutionary violence", which caused North Korea's foreign policy to take "a more terroristic path".[21] North Korea continued its internationalist effort in the 1980s, even though the country experienced gridlock in the domestic economic development. Several African leaders, as discussed in the fourth chapter, were attracted to the Mass Games[22] and introduced the spectacle to neighbouring countries, after they were invited to watch the Mass Games during their visits to North Korea. Kim Jong Il developed his father's Mass Games and promoted them to the foreign leaders, since the game was "a tool to mobilize youth and bolster national unity".[23] North Korea also sent instructors to African countries, to help develop their own Mass Games.[24] In the fifth chapter, North Korea's military support for Mugabe's Zimbabwe, Mengistu's Ethiopia, and South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) during the fifth period in the late 1980s is analysed. Young describes North Korea's foreign policy's turn toward "a more opportunistic, economically motivated path" after the emergence of Kim Jong Il. This made North Korea assist any forces, regardless of political ideologies, to gain hard currency.[25]

In conclusion, Young sees North Korea's Third World policy as double-faced. Even though its economic development and military expertise after the colonial period and the Korean War should be "admirable" for the Third World people, North Korea's "oppressive and brutal" political system harmed its persuasiveness as a developmental model.[26] In terms of the historiography of North Korean internationalism, Young points toward deep-seated problems within the Western-centric history writing. North Korea's influence as a provider of "an alternative socialist system that stressed national autonomy and anti-colonialism" was marginalized by the "prioritisation of the industrialized Global North as the starting point of political, ideological, and cultural diffusion".[27]

3. North Korea's African Policy as a Part of the "Inter-Korean Competition"

Unlike Benjamin Young's argument of the complexity of North Korea's Third World policy, many experts have understood North Korea's engagement in Africa during the Cold War as a method to gain international legitimacy over

14. *Ibid*., 79.

15. *Ibid*., 72-74.

16. *Ibid*., 75.

17. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was founded in 1961 as a group of countries that support national self-determination against colonialism and imperialism. A large number of members were newly independent countries in the wave of decolonization after World War II, and they established NAM to counterbalance the Cold War confrontation led by the two superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union.

18. Young, *Guns, Guerillas, and the Great Leader*, 89.

19. *Ibid*., 91.

20. *Ibid*., 92.

21. *Ibid*., 96.

22. North Korean Mass Games, which was formerly named "The Grand Mass Gymnastics and Artistic Performance Arirang" since 2002, features around 100,000 performers—mainly schoolchildren—with placards to convey revolutionary slogans in the background while artistic dances and performances are staged in the foreground. Vicki Sung-yeon Kwon comments that the Mass Games domestically imbue nationalism and are used as a means of cultural diplomacy and promoting Juche in international settings. See Vicki Sung-yeon Kwon, "Guyanese Mass Games: spectacles that 'moulded' the nation in a North Korean way," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 20, no. 2 (2019): 185.

23. Young, *Guns, Guerillas, and the Great Leader*, 98.

24. *Ibid*., 104.

25. *Ibid*., 135.

26. *Ibid*., 149.

27. *Ibid*., 150.

South Korea, especially before the end of the Cold War and declassification of archival materials. Therefore, this competition between North and South Korea to establish more relations with the newly independent countries was often described as the "inter-Korean competition" or even a "diplomatic war" between the two Koreas.

Earlier works primarily refer to the voting results in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to describe the inter-Korean competition in international organisations. Indeed, North Korea considered gaining supporters for demanding the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea as a top priority of its international activities. Sang-Seek Park's research goal is to identify "the nature of African non-alignment and the African perception of the cold war, especially as related to divided countries" and to analyse how the non-aligned African states reacted to the approach of North and South Korea.[28] Sang-Seek Park, a former chancellor of the Diplomatic Academy (formerly the IFANS) at the Foreign Ministry, South Korea, regards Nixon's visit to China in February 1972 as a turning point, as North Korea soon initiated "a massive diplomatic offensive" in the Third World. Sixteen out of thirty-six countries that North Korea established diplomatic relations with over the course of the next two years were located in Africa.[29] However, Sang-Seek Park did not describe the specific progress of how North Korea gained popularity among Third World countries, such as North Korea's application of socialist ideology and propaganda campaign. This limitation might be inevitable, considering the types of sources Sang-Seek Park referred to: published documents on official diplomatic and economic relations, UN voting records, and personal interviews with the South Korean officials working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Almost ten years after Sang-Seek Park's article, Jae Kyu Park, currently the President of Kyungnam University in Masan, South Korea, and the former Unification Minister and National Security Council Chairman of South Korea, devoted a fresh effort to offer an explanation why North Korea regarded African states as primary counterparts of its foreign policy. In Jae Kyu Park's assessment, North Korea's foreign policy was founded on different ideologies, including Marx's Dialectical Materialism, Lenin's theory on Imperialism, Stalin's Preparatory Power Theory, and Kim Il Sung's Juche Ideology.[30] North Korea aimed to exploit African anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism in order to persuade these states to support pro-North Korea policies. Another goal, according to Jae Kyu Park, was to gain heightened international status, using the strong voice of African countries in the United Nations.[31]

Jae Kyu Park further argued that North Korea already began its new, aggressive diplomatic approach in the late 1950s, robustly expanding it in the 1960s alongside the shifts in the international political order, such as the Sino-Soviet Split or the newly gained independence of states in the Third World.[32] Indeed, Kim Il Sung reiterated the importance of developing diplomatic relations with independent countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, both in September 1961 and in October 1962.[33] While Jae Kyu Park provided an accurate description of the formation of North Korea's African policy, the author did not offer much detail on the contents of conversations, exchange, and connections between North Korea and African countries. His analysis mainly relied on Kim Il Sung's speeches in drawing up the trajectories of the diplomatic relations, but how Africans perceived North Korea's engagement has not been sufficiently analysed in Jae Kyu Park's text.

28. Sang-Seek Park, "Africa and Two Koreas: A Study of African Non-Alignment," *African Studies Review* 21, no. 1 (1978): 73.

29. *Ibid*., 77

30. Jae Kyu Park, "North Korea's Foreign Policy toward Africa," in *The Foreign Relations of North Korea: New Perspectives*, eds. Jae Kyu Park, Byung Chul Koh, Tae-hwan Kwak (Boulder: Westview, 1987), 437-439.

31. *Ibid*., 445.

32. *Ibid*., 447-450.

33. *Ibid*., 441.

Unlike the two articles previously discussed, Jide Owoeye, a specialist in Afro-Asian Relations and currently Professor of International Relation at Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria, illustrates the contents of the North Korean engagement in African countries, which had developed as time passed. According to Owoeye, North Korea initiated these relations with goodwill mission diplomacy in the early 1960s, ahead of the formal establishment of relations.[34] The author also emphasizes North Korea's economic and technical cooperation assistance and military support as crucial factors in the facilitation of ties between North Korea and African states.[35] Owoeye's work also breaks new ground as it draws on material from African newspapers, including *East African Standard*, *Ghanian Times*, and *Ethiopian Herald*.

Recently, Do-Min Kim, a researcher in the Institute of Humanities at Seoul National University, South Korea, provides an overview of North and South Korea's diplomacy with the non-aligned countries from 1948 to 1968. Kim analyses the primary sources produced in North Korea and archival materials from South Korea and former Eastern bloc countries, in order to retrace the emergence of the non-aligned countries in the diplomacy of the two Koreas. He also sought to identify the trajectories of their respective diplomatic policies as Cold War confrontations intensified globally.[36]

This approach of analysing inter-Korean competition in Africa as a "diplomatic war," has advanced general knowledge on the historical development of diplomatic policies and their outcomes in the international organisations, especially the United Nations. Still, focusing on diplomatic relations could not sufficiently explain the rationale which led African states to agreeing to establish diplomatic relations and build solidarity, without much prior knowledge of North Korea. Such instrumental interpretation, Shine Choi argues, also has a danger of underestimating North Korea's aspiration to contribute to the "international history of resistance against hierarchy" through the solidarity with other anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles in the Third World.[37]

4. Recent Scholarship: Cultural Diplomacy and African Archives

As more archival materials are becoming available to the public, a number of new aspects of North Korean engagement in Africa are uncovered. Several experts have published articles on North Korea's cultural diplomacy that sought to establish and reinforce ties with African states. North Korea's exploitation of its cultural assets includes, but is not limited to, Juche Ideology, the Mass Games, and the monuments constructed by the state-owned construction company Mansudae Overseas Projects. Other scholars have analysed North Korea's relations with respective African countries, including Zimbabwe and Botswana. The fact that some of these researchers refer to the primary sources in the African archives is noteworthy, since these archives have not received much attention, compared to the archives located in North America and Europe, by relevant scholarship until recently. The literature reviewed in this section also shows the recent diversification of research topics concerning North Korea's African policy during the Cold War period.

At the time, Juche clearly became a central principle around the North Korean society in the mid-1960s, Kim Il Sung actively promoted the concept when establishing diplomatic relations and promulgating his leadership.[38] For example, Kim mentioned Juche as the core principle in North Korea's ideology during his visit to Indonesia—his first visit to a non-socialist country—to demonstrate the completeness of revolutionary ideology: "While resolutely fighting in defense

34. Jide Owoeye, "The Metamorphosis of North Korea's African Policy," *Asian Policy* 31, no. 7 (1991): 634.

35. *Ibid*., 637-642.

36. Do-min Kim, "A study on the diplomacy of South and North Korea towards 'neutral countries' from 1948 to 1968." (Seoul National University: Unpublished Dissertation, 2020), 20-26.

37. Shine Choi, "The Art of Monument Politics: The North Korean State, 'Juche' and International Politics," *Asian Studies Review* 45, no. 3 (2021): 441.

38. Chuch'e, romanised in North Korea as Juche, is the core ideology of North Korea, which is often translated as self-reliance. Jae-Jung Suh contends that Juche is "best understood as subjecthood or being a master of one's own fate". See Jae-Jung Suh, "Making Sense of North Korea: Juche as an Institution," in *Origins of North Korea's Juche: Colonialism, War, and Development*, ed. Jae-Jung Suh (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 2. Cheehyung Kim encapsulates the core message of Juche Ideology: "one's life is determined by oneself, and by extension, the course of the nation and the state are determined by the people." See Cheehyung Kim, "Total, Thus Broken: Chuch'e Sasang and North Korea's Terrain of Subjectivity," in *Mass Dictatorship and Modernity*, eds. Michael Kim, Michael Schoenhals, and Yong-Woo Kim (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 255-56.

of the purity of Marxism-Leninism against revisionism, our Party has made every effort to establish Juche in opposition to dogmatism and flunkeyism towards great powers. *Juche in ideology, independence in politics, self-support in the economy and self-reliance in national defense*—this is the stand our Party has consistently adhered to."[39]

Following this speech, Juche has always been reiterated as the core principle as well as ideology in North Korea, and a number of Juche Idea Study Groups were later established as a part of North Korea's Third World diplomacy, disseminating Kim Il Sung's leadership and ideology.

After the first Juche Idea Study Group was established in Bamako, Mali, in April 1969, North Korea extended its influence to the local intellectuals, who were fascinated by the ideology.[40] For instance, a Pan-African Seminar on Comrade Kim Il Sung's Juche Idea was held in December 1972 in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Despite the small number of participants, Igor Dobrzeniecki sees this seminar as a crucial propaganda tool for North Korea and for establishing North Korea as a source of inspiration for African people.[41] North Korea managed to establish around 1,000 Juche Idea organisations by the end of the 1970s, but most African politicians eventually concluded that Juche Ideology could not be applied to the reality of postcolonial Africa and criticized the North Korean method of promoting Juche as too aggressive. Although the influence of North Korea and Juche Ideology significantly decreased in the 1990s, some study groups are still actively operating in Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda as of today.[42]

Along with Juche Ideology, Mass Games and unique monuments were adopted to bolster the ties between North Korea and African states. As aforementioned, the Mass Games afforded eye-catching spectacles for African leaders. Before Benjamin Young's investigation, Moe Taylor, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Postdoctoral Fellow at University of Wisconsin-Madison, had already emphasized the importance of the Mass Games for North Koreans and their Third World policy in an article in 2015. Taylor, however, did not investigate North Korea's connection with African countries but Guyana, which later adopted the Mass Games as a part of an effort to facilitate education and cultural revolution.[43] While these sports and gymnastic events were employed to spread the excellence of North Korea and its regime, and to promote socialist values like selflessness and solidarity, sub-Saharan African leaders considered the Mass Games as tools to mobilize youth populations and to foster patriotism in their own countries.[44] Therefore, North Korean-style Mass Games were sometimes represented in African countries by African local performers, after Somali president Siad Barre and Ugandan leader Idi Amin became fans of the massive events.[45]

Monuments constructed by Mansudae Overseas Projects are conspicuous examples that demonstrate the connections between North Korea and Africa. These monuments can still be seen in various African cities today and some of them were even constructed only after the end of the Cold War in 1991. Previous works on these monuments focused on their likeness to North Korea's *Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery* in Pyongyang. Tycho van der Hoog, for example, investigates the historical background of the North Korean firm's construction of the *National Heroes' Acres* in Zimbabwe and Namibia. Van der Hoog, a PhD candidate at Leiden University, the Netherlands, opposes the idea that Mansudae construction company was chosen because of cheap prices and the visual spectacle of socialist realism, but instead highlights the importance of the role of historical solidarity between North Korea and these countries.[46] In addition,

39. "On Socialist Construction in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the South Korean Revolution, Lecture at the 'Ali Archam' Academy of Social Sciences of Indonesia, April 14, 1965," in *Kim Il Sung Works 19* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1984): 263 (emphasis added).

40. Igor Dobrzeniecki, "Juche Ideology in Africa: its origins & development," *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* 32 (2019): 126-27.

41. *Ibid*., 128.

42. *Ibid*., 132.

43. Moe Taylor, "'Only a disciplined people can build a nation': North Korean Mass Games and Third Worldism in Guyana, 1980-1992," *Asia-Pacific Journal* 13, issue 4, no. 2 (2015): 13.

44. Young, *Guns, Guerillas, and the Great Leader*, 100.

45. *Ibid*., 102.

46. Tycho van der Hoog, *Monuments of Power: The North Korean Origin of Nationalist Monuments in Namibia and Zimbabwe* (Leiden: African Studies Centre Leiden, 2019), 13-14.

Carey Park, a professor of North Korean Culture and Arts, Social and Cultural Exchanges at National Institute for Unification Education, South Korea, has argued that Namibians recognized North Korea as a comrade in the struggle for Namibia's independence. This historical background made Namibians less hostile to the design of the *National Heroes' Acre*, which resembles the North Korean cemetery.[47]

Next to the broader topic of cultural diplomacy, some experts have explicitly focused on North Korea's relations with select African countries. One example is Lyong Choi and Il-yeong Jeong's article on North Korea-Zimbabwe relations. These relations were established on the basis of mutual strategic interests. For North Korea, socialist ideology in these cases was less important than gaining support of pro-North Korean voices in international society.[48] Another example is Boga Thura Manatsha's article on the visit of Seretse Khama, the first president of Botswana (1966-80), to North Korea and Kim Il Sung in 1976. Manatsha concluded that this visit had geopolitical implications, where Khama built a friendship with Kim in spite of the difference in ideology.[49] Although the article did not provide a comprehensive insight into the history of North Korea-Botswana relations, the analysis is highly commendable in terms of the usage of archival materials from *Botswana National Archives and Records Services* (BNARS). The author demonstrates that the archival records shed light on Khama's individual impression on North Korea. Manatsha also mentions how Khama became familiar with North Korea and Kim Il Sung—inspired by Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere and Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda.[50]

5. Conclusion

In short, this essay conducted the historiographical analysis of the previous works that discussed the North Korean engagement in African countries during the Cold War period. This review encapsulated scholarly works that were published in different periods and tackled different issues within this historical engagement, in order to pinpoint the achievements and limitations of previous works and to suggest a new research agenda.

The scholarly works until the 1990s could not delineate the specific progress of North Korea's engagement in Africa and the historical background which facilitated Kim Il Sung's close relationship with African leaders, due to the lack of accessibility to the archival materials. However, those works published in the 2010s truly provided far-reaching understandings of this topic, since they uncovered new issues like North Korea's position as a developmental model and its use of cultural diplomacy.

Further distinct achievements should not be dismissed. First, these works provided extensive interpretations on the development of North Korea-Africa relations during the Cold War using archival sources. Unlike previous arguments on the inter-Korean competition to gain more votes in the United Nations, Benjamin Young and other experts unfolded the different dimensions, such as the Africans' perception of North Korea as alternative modernity, and North Korea's mobilization of cultural assets to bolster its status. Second, these works have referred to a substantial number of archival sources. They indirectly supported other scholars by envisaging how to compile primary sources by comparing and examining information from different archives. In other words, earlier works imply how to overcome the limited accessibility to the North Korean material through using foreign archives and referring to the outsiders' perspectives in analysing North Korea's diplomatic history.

47. Carey Park, "The Namibian Heroes Acre Created by North Korea's Mansudae Art Studio," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* 26, no. 3 (2021): 165-169, 178-179.

48. Lyong Choi and Il-young Jeong, "North Korea and Zimbabwe, 1978–1982: from the strategic alliance to the symbolic comradeship between Kim Il Sung and Robert Mugabe," *Cold War History* 17, no. 4 (2017): 348.

49. Boga Thura Manatsha, "Geopolitical Implications of President Seretse Khama's 1976 State Visit to North Korea," *Botswana Notes and Records* 50 (2018): 149.

50. *Ibid*., 143.

Still, previous works up until today had some critical limitations. None of these works have thoroughly investigated the implications of North Korea's Third World policy on its relations with the socialist neighbours, and vice versa. Benjamin Young briefly mentions the Eastern bloc's reaction to the North Korean engagement and North Korea's position as a less-threatening force in Africa compared to the patron states.[51] However, whether North Korean engagement caused conflicts with the Soviet Union's or China's projects in Africa to expand their influence has not been discussed in depth. It is also unanswered how other socialist states reacted to the friendship between Kim Il Sung and the African socialist leaders. For example, as an excerpt in the beginning of this review implies, Julius Nyerere, a prominent anticolonial activist and theorist, maintained a close relationship with Kim Il Sung for a long time, but experts have not discussed their connections in depth so far.

Furthermore, the majority of previous works made limited reference to archival materials and other African primary sources. Except for Manatsha's research on Seretse Khama's visit to North Korea, others tended to primarily use US archival materials or equally those produced in the former Eastern bloc that became publicly available through the Woodrow Wilson Center's *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive*. In order to restore the agency of Africans within this transnational entanglement, scholars should include sources with different voices and perspectives, in spite of the limited accessibility of African archives, particularly in the case of material published in the postcolonial period.[52]

Accordingly, a new research agenda is needed. As previous works did not reflect much on the connections between the North Korean engagement and other socialist countries' projects to engage in Africa, the subsequent research could examine North Korea's African policy from the perspective of the state-socialist globalization project. The concept of the state-socialist globalization project, according to James Mark, Artemy Kalinovsky, and Steffi Marung, refers to "a whole set of connections, interactions, trade links, and routes of circulation for ideas and people" within and around the socialist countries in the Eastern bloc.[53] Although several historians analysed different transnational connections between 'Second World' and 'Third world' during the Cold War period with this concept of the state-socialist globalization project[54], North Korea's African policy has not been thoroughly studied from this approach so far. From this perspective, North Korean engagement in Africa could be reviewed as the project to globalize its unique form of socialism, and be compared with other socialist countries' globalization projects, which were actively operated during the Cold War period. Therefore, this agenda could eventually identify the position of North Korea and its aspiration within the global history of socialism.

51. Young, *Guns, Guerillas, and the Great Leader*, 6-9.

52. For instance, Tanzania National Archives limited public access to the files "containing politically charged material", especially when they are published after 1965. Governmental corruptions in the 1970s and single-party rule after 1965, according to Paul Bjerk, also caused this limited public accessibility in Tanzania National Archives. See Paul Bjerk, "Archives and Historical Sources for Tanzania," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History.*

53. James Mark, Artemy M. Kalinovsky, Steffi Marung, ed., *Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020), 6.

54. Collective research coordinated by James Mark and Paul Betts was recently published as the comprehensive analysis of this connection. James Mark and Paul Betts eds., *Socialism Goes Global: The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

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