

# *Austria-DPRK Relations: From Early Contacts to Diplomatic Recognition (1960-1974)*

Sabine Burghart

## Article history

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## Abstract

This article reconstructs the evolution of Austria's relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK, or North Korea) from 1960 – the year when the first Chamber-level trade agreement was signed – until formal recognition in 1974. Moreover, it discusses the Austrian government's deliberations regarding its approach towards North Korea, especially the question of recognition. Against the background of normalisation of relations with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the German Democratic Republic in 1972, this article also examines possible reasons for Austria's decision to postpone the recognition of North Korea. More generally speaking, this study contributes to the emerging scholarship on the history of the DPRK's relations with Europe's neutral states during the Cold War period.

The findings show that the Austrian government took a passive stance towards the DPRK's diplomatic advances during the 1960s to avoid any actions that would have been construed as an implied recognition and, consequently, created irritation in the U.S. and also the Republic of Korea. From the late 1960s on and in light of a more favourable international environment, the Austrian government became apparently less concerned about the possibility that certain actions could be interpreted as a *de facto* recognition. Political and economic interests, especially the Austrian government's close coordination with Switzerland on the question of establishing diplomatic relations with North Korea and growing trade with South Korea, led to the DPRK being recognised (only) in 1974.

This study is primarily based on documents from the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In addition, selected North Korean sources and archival material of the Austrian Parliament and the Swiss Federal Department for Foreign Affairs were used for the analysis.

## Corresponding author

Sabine Burghart

Centre for East Asian Studies,

University of Turku, Finland,

sabine.burghart@utu.fi

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See e.g. Seppo Hentilä, "Maintaining neutrality between the two German states: Finland and divided Germany until 1973," *Contemporary European History* 15, no.4 (2006): 473-493; Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl, Marco Wyss, and Sandra Bott, "Choosing Sides in the Global Cold War: Switzerland, Neutrality, and the Divided States of Korea and Vietnam," *The International History Review* 37, no.5 (2015): 1014-1036; Ann-Marie Ekengren, *Av hänsyn till folkrätten? Svensk erkännandepolitik 1945-1995* (Nerenius & Santérus Förlag, 1999).

2

Schaufelbuehl et al. "Choosing Sides," 1017; 1023-1024. Schaufelbuehl et al.'s study mostly concerns Switzerland's recognition policy but also includes Austria and Sweden.

3

For an overview, see e.g. Seung Hwan Ryu, "North Korean Engagement in Africa during the Cold War: A Survey of Recent Historiographical Analyses," *Korea Europe Review* 2 (2022): 1-11. Jae Kyu Park, Byung Chul Koh, and Tae-Hwan Kwak, *The Foreign Relations of North Korea: New Perspectives* (Westview Press/Kyungnam University Press, 1987); Dae-Ho Byun, *North Korea's Foreign Policy: The Juche Ideology and the Challenge of Gorbachev's New Thinking* (Seoul Computer Press, 2001); Domin Kim, "1950nyöndae chunghuban nam-pukhanüi 'chungnipkuk' oegyöü chön'gaewa sönggyök: tongnamasia, chungdong, ap'ürik'a chiyöögü chungsimüro," [Diplomacy of South and North Korea towards 'Neutral Countries' during the 1950's: Southeast Asia, Middle East and Africa], *Asia Review* 10, no.1 (2020): 155-184; Balázs Szalontai, "North Korea Discovers the Maghreb: Propaganda Narratives in the Formative Phase of Pyongyang's Northwest African Diplomacy," *Acta Koreana* 27, no.1 (2024): 125-64; Tycho van der Hoog, *Comrades Beyond the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 2025); Moe Taylor, *North Korea, Tricontinentalism, and the Latin American Revolution, 1959-1970* (Cambridge University Press, 2023); Benjamin R. Young, *Guns, Guerillas, and the Great Leader: North Korea and the Third World* (Stanford University Press, 2021); Seung Hwan Ryu, "Between Second and Third World: North Korean Use of 'Imagined Affinity' in the Socialist Globalization Project with Regard to Tanzania (1965-1970)," *Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 33, no.3 (2023): 359-376.

## 1. Introduction

During the Cold War, relations with divided countries, especially the communist part, posed a challenge to Europe's neutral states.<sup>1</sup> The neutrals' political and economic interests generally impeded the recognition of the communist halves.<sup>2</sup> Until the late 1960s, the German question, together with West Germany's *Hallstein Doctrine* and its economic relevance, constituted the primary concern. It was the broader political and economic interests that largely defined the Republic of Austria's (hereafter: Austria) position towards divided Korea and that required pragmatic approaches to balance different interests. This article examines Austria's relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK, or North Korea) from 1960 – the year when the first Chamber-level trade agreement was signed – until formal recognition in 1974. More specifically, by reconstructing the evolution of Austria's relations with North Korea, this study investigates the Austrian government's gradually changed attitude towards the recognition question, also in the light of international developments, relevant other actors, and Austrian interests. Particular attention is paid to the Austrian government's deliberations against and in favour of recognition. Furthermore, this study discusses possible reasons for the Austrian government's decision to postpone the recognition of the DPRK. Although Austria had recognised the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1972, it took two more years before Austria took this step regarding the DPRK.

Existing scholarship on the DPRK's relations with neutral and non-aligned countries during the Cold War concerns mostly the so-called Third World.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, few studies examine the relations between Europe's neutral states and North Korea.<sup>4</sup> Scholarly literature on European neutrals' relations with North Korea mostly concerns Sweden-DPRK relations. Andersson and Bae provide a brief historical background on Sweden-DPRK relations and they regard the recognition of the DPRK as a logical consequence of the Olof Palme government's foreign policy.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Härstedt, Sweden's former ambassador to the DPRK, argues that the government's decision to establish diplomatic relations with North Korea reflected Sweden's independent foreign policy "that managed to break free from the American hegemon in the West as well as its communist counterpart."<sup>6</sup> Apart from political motives, humanitarian and commercial aspects are said to have played a role.<sup>7</sup> Ekengren examines Sweden's (non-)recognition policy towards the communist halves of divided countries more in depth. Although her study focuses on the GDR and North Vietnam, it also briefly discusses the Korean case including the role of domestic actors supporting and also lobbying for the recognition of the DPRK.<sup>8</sup> Schaufelbuehl et al. examine relevant factors informing Switzerland's position on the (non)recognition of North Vietnam and North Korea; their study, which also considers Austria's and Sweden's stance on this matter, shows the tensions between the neutrals' (aspired) universality maxim and their interest-led political, security-related and economic compromises.<sup>9</sup> Burghart and Sava analyse Finland's relations with the DPRK during the Cold War through the prism of Finland's national role conceptions. Their study shows proactive diplomatic lobbying by North Korean officials from the late 1950s on and passiveness on the Finnish side.<sup>10</sup> By taking the perspective of the European neutrals, these studies consider only to a limited extent North Korea as an equally relevant actor in the history of bilateral relations.

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See e.g. Åke J. Ek, Hans C Pettersson and Erik Linander, *Kostbart diplomatisk (Ut-)spel? En studie i propaganda, handel och diplomati i förhållandet Sverige – Nordkorea* (Studentlitteratur, 1980); Sabine Burghart, and Ville Sava, "We are realists': Finland's role conceptions, neutrality policy, and North Korea," in *Bridging Asia-Europe Relations – Exploring Shared Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Sameer Kumar (Springer Nature, 2025)

5

Magnus Andersson, and Jinsun Bae, "Sweden's Engagement with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," *North Korean Review* 11, no.1 (2015): 42-62.

6

Kent Härstedt, "Sweden's Enduring Relations with North Korea: Establishing Trust for Peace." In *Engaging North Korea*, ed. Lam Peng Er (Routledge, 2024), 231.

7

Ibid.

8

Ekengren, *Av hänsyn till folkrätten?*, 130ff. Ekengren analyses three case studies: Sweden's non-recognition of the GDR and both its non-recognition and recognition of North Vietnam. She concludes that "when a decision of recognition is handled in a situation where foreign policy goals are threatened, decision makers pay less attention to international law than to security and economic issues," 324.

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Schaufelbuehl et al., "Choosing Sides," 1017.

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Burghart and Sava, "We are realists'," 54-63.

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Ek et al., *Kostbart diplomatisk (Ut-)spel?*, 72. Their book was published in cooperation with Svenska Koreaföreningen.

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Based on Nowotny's insights in the working of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the 1970s it is assumed that the content of the ASA documents reviewed here is the result of several revisions, approved by different levels of hierarchy (Eva Nowotny, "Diplomats: Symbols of Sovereignty Become Managers of Interdependence: The Transformation of the Austrian Diplomatic Service," in *Austrian Foreign Policy in Historical Context*, ed. Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka and Michael Gehler (Transaction Publishers, 2006), 30.

13

BMAA files on Austria's relations with the ROK for the year 1963 were not available at ASA (email communication with ASA staff on 9 January 2025).

An exception is Ek et al., who pay more attention to North Korea's diplomatic strategies and the different channels that were used to lobby for the establishment of diplomatic relations with Sweden.<sup>11</sup>

Building on a large body of archival material, this study contributes to existing scholarly literature on the relations between Europe's neutrals and the DPRK during the Cold War. The main research questions are: How did relations – from early contacts to formal recognition – between Austria and the DPRK evolve? Based on the primary sources reviewed here, what were the Austrian government's deliberations against and in favour of recognition of the DPRK? Considering the fact that Austria had recognised the DRV and GDR already in 1972, why did it take two more years for Austria to normalise relations with the DPRK? This study provides new knowledge on the history of Austria-DPRK relations in particular, and Austria's (unofficial) relations with the communist halves of divided countries in general. Although the focus is – as dictated by the primary sources – on the Austrian perspective, the findings of this study contribute, at least to a limited extent, to the scholarly discussion on North Korea's foreign relations and diplomatic history during the Cold War.

In the following section, the primary sources are introduced. Section 3 provides relevant background on Austria's Western-oriented neutrality and its policy towards divided states as well as North Korea's independent foreign policy. Section 4 presents a chronological overview of the different phases of the development of Austria-DPRK relations until recognition. The contacts between Austria and North Korea prompted queries and interventions by the United States (U.S.) and the Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea) which are discussed in Section 5. Section 6 analyses Austria's deliberations against and in favour of recognising the DPRK. The study's findings are summarized and discussed in Section 7.

## 2. Overview of Primary Sources

This study is primarily based on documents created by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs (*Bundesministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten*, BMAA or BMfaA) on relations with North Korea between 1960 and 1974.<sup>12</sup> More specifically, primary sources include internal communication, memos, reports from Austrian embassies abroad, communication with other countries, and other documents. The study also considers – to a limited extent – letters and other documents issued by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (*Bundeskammer für gewerbliche Wirtschaft*, hereafter: Chamber). Moreover, the analysis takes into account aide memoires and other documents issued by foreign governments, especially the DPRK, ROK and the U.S. In addition, material on Austria-South Korea relations covering the same time period was screened and relevant files were included to complement the analysis.<sup>13</sup> The materials were collected in the Austrian State Archives (*Österreichisches Staatsarchiv*, ASA). In addition, North Korean sources as well as documents of the Archive of the Austrian Parliament (*Parlamentsarchiv*, AAP) and the Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland (*Diplomatische Dokumente der Schweiz*, DDS) of the Swiss Federal Department for Foreign Affairs (*Eidgenössisches Politisches Departement*, EPD)<sup>14</sup> were accessed in libraries and via online databases. All references include the original title of the respective document.

In a first step, all available ASA material concerning Austria's relations with North and South Korea was scanned and arranged in chronological order. Then,

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DDS documents were accessed via the Dodis online database. The reference includes a permalink to the respective file.

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ASA files use different terms for the DPRK (e.g. *Koreanische Volksdemokratische Republik*, *Volksdemokratische Republik Korea*, *Demokratische Volksrepublik Korea*, *Volksrepublik Korea*) and there is also some inconsistency with regard to Korean names. In cases where the name in *hangŭl* is known, McCune-Reischauer is used for romanisation. Translations from German, Korean and French into English were made by the author.

16

For a discussion of neutrality politics during East-West bipolarity and periods of tensions and détente see e.g. Harto Hakovirta, *East-West Conflict and European Neutrality* (Clarendon Press, 1988): 40ff.

17

To Austria, this meant not joining any military alliance nor accepting any installation of military bases of foreign states on its territory (Bundesgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich 1955, no.57 (4 November 1955), 1151. For a comprehensive discussion on ordinary (“gewöhnliche”) and permanent neutrality see e.g. Rudolf L. Bindschedler, “Neutralität im modernen Völkerrecht,” *Zeitschrift für ausländisches öffentliches Recht und Völkerrecht* 17 (1956/57), 1-37. See also Sandra Bott, Jussi M. Hanhimäki, Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl and Marco Wyss (ed.), *Neutrality and Neutralism in the Global Cold War: Between or within the blocs?* (Routledge, 2016) and Efraim Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2011).

18

Karin Liebhart, “Transformation and Semantic Change of Austrian Neutrality: Its Origins, Development and Demise,” in *Neutrality in Austria* ed. Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka and Ruth Wodak (Transaction Publishers, 2001), 16ff.

19

Rathkolb, “Austria – Sieve to the East,” 23.

20

Michael Gehler, “From Non-alignment to Neutrality: Austria's Transformation during the First East-West Détente, 1953-1958,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7, no.4 (2005), 121.

21

Michael Gehler and Günter Bischof, “Austrian Foreign Policy after World War II,” in *Austrian Foreign Policy in Historical Context*, ed. Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka and Michael Gehler (Transaction Publishers, 2006), 2-4.

the files were screened for relevant content and key files identified. The third step involved a closer reading of the key files and the drafting of summaries for analysis.<sup>15</sup> To support the interpretation of ASA files, AAP and DDS sources on specific matters were also reviewed. The following overarching themes were identified: commercial interests and trade, avoiding “implied recognition,” coordination with other neutrals, relations with the U.S. and ROK, and deliberations against and in favour of recognition. Since the focus of this article is on bilateral aspects of Austria-DPRK relations, BMAA communication on the Korean question at the UN is only considered here for a better understanding of the Austrian government's attitudes towards North Korea.

Although other domestic actors such as Austrian companies, the Austrian Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Österreichs*, KPÖ) and the Korea-Austria Friendship Society (*chosŏn ojiri ch'insŏnhyŏphoe*) were involved in economic, political and cultural exchanges with the DPRK, a thorough discussion of their role would require an additional set of documents. Therefore, this study is limited to presenting the Austrian government's perspective on the subject matter.

### 3. Background

From the signing of the Chamber-level trade agreement in 1960 to recognition in 1974, Austria's relations with North Korea evolved during periods of tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and during détente.<sup>16</sup> The degree of international polarisation and U.S. foreign policy orientations largely defined the boundaries of Austria's interactions with the Korean peninsula. Moreover, the Federal Republic of Germany's (FRG) *Hallstein Doctrine* impacted on Austria's dealings with divided states. Similarly, North Korea's foreign policy was informed by great power relations, but also by national interests. From the late 1950s on, the DPRK sought to expand relations with non-aligned countries in the Third World and neutral states in Europe.

#### 3.1 Austria: Neutrality and (Initial) Approach to Divided States

On 26 October 1955, Austria formally declared and enshrined permanent neutrality (“*immerwährende Neutralität*”) as a law (*Neutralitätsgesetz*).<sup>17</sup> Although Switzerland's neutrality served as a model for Austria, in practice, Austrian political leaders' interpretation and implementation of neutrality politics showed more flexibility.<sup>18</sup> In contrast to Switzerland, Austria joined the UN in December 1955 and the Council of Europe in April 1956. Because of its orientation towards the West, Austria was commonly described as “a Western actor in neutral clothes”<sup>19</sup> and as “[o]fficially [n]eutral, but '[n]ot [n]eutral at [h]eart'.”<sup>20</sup> Especially under Foreign Minister Bruno Kreisky (1959-1966) and Chancellor Josef Klaus (1964-1970), Austrian foreign policy became more globally oriented.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Austria's Western-oriented Neutrality*

Neutrality was a precondition for the conclusion of the State Treaty with the Allied and Associated Powers in May 1955 and, thus, for re-establishing Austria's sovereignty and its territorial integrity after the Second World War (1938-1945).<sup>22</sup> With the *Anschluss* declaration of 13 March 1938, Austria had been annexed by

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Martin Senn, "Österreichs Neutralität," in *Handbuch Außenpolitik Österreichs*, ed. Martin Senn, Franz Eder, and Markus Kornprobst (Springer VS, 2023), 30-31. See also "State Treaty for the re-establishment of an independent and democratic Austria," Vienna, 15 May 1955, Treaty Series No.58 (1957), London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office.

23

John W. Boyer, *Austria 1867-1955* (Oxford University Press, 2022), 953ff; Gehler and Bischof, "Austrian Foreign Policy," 1.

24

Gehler, "From Non-alignment to Neutrality."

25

Gehler and Bischof, "Austrian Foreign Policy," 1-4.

26

Bruno Kreisky and Johannes Kunz, *Bruno Kreisky: Ansichten des sozialdemokratischen Staatsmannes*. 1st. edition (Verlag der Österreichischen Staatsdruckerei, 1993), 177.

27

Boyer, *Austria 1867-1955*, 956.

28

Paul Luif, "Austria's Permanent Neutrality – Its Origins, Development, and Demise," in *Neutrality in Austria*, ed. Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka and Ruth Wodak (Transaction Publishers, 2001), 132.

29

Boyer, *Austria 1867-1955*, 957.

30

Moscow Memorandum: <https://www.unesco.at/kommunikation/dokumentenerbe/memory-of-austria/verzeichnis/detail/article/moskauer-memorandum-1955>

31

Gehler and Bischof, "Austrian Foreign Policy," 2-4.

32

Günter Bischof and Peter Ruggenthaler, *Österreich und der Kalte Krieg: Ein Balanceakt zwischen Ost und West* (Leykam, 2022) quoted in Marion Foster, "Die österreichische Neutralität zwischen Strategie und Identität," *OZP – Austrian Journal of Political Science*, 53 (2024), 2. See also Gehler, "From Non-alignment to Neutrality."

33

Kreisky regarded contribution to regional and global security by mediating in international crises and conflicts, participation in UN peace missions and an active 'Amtssitzpolitik' as one of the most important tasks of Austria's security policy. The aim was to "convince [...] the great powers of the relevance of the existence of an independent and neutral Austria" (Foster, "Die österreichische Neutralität," 2).

Nazi Germany.<sup>23</sup> In 1945, Austria found itself – geographically and geopolitically – in an "intermediate position."<sup>24</sup> With the establishment of four occupation zones that were controlled by the Allied Powers (U.S., United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union), "a quasi-Iron Curtain"<sup>25</sup> divided the country for about a decade. Due to rising tensions between the great powers, there was a real possibility that Austria would become divided between the antagonistic blocs and their zones of influence.<sup>26</sup> Negotiations on the State Treaty took several years due to the parties' inability and also unwillingness to resolve key issues. As Boyer notes, "[n]ot only had small Austria become a pawn in the Cold War, but Austria was a hostage to the resolution of the larger German question."<sup>27</sup> Demands by the USSR that linked the withdrawal of its troops from Austria to the solution of the German question and the Soviet Union's request to include a neutrality clause into the State Treaty were unacceptable to the Western Allied Powers and Austria.<sup>28</sup> After Stalin's death in 1953 "significant movement"<sup>29</sup> came: on 15 April 1955, the Moscow Memorandum<sup>30</sup> was signed between the USSR and Austria and on 15 May 1955, the State Treaty with the Allied Powers.<sup>31</sup> From the end of the 1950s on, Austria's foreign policy started to emancipate itself from the signatory powers of the State Treaty.<sup>32</sup> As Foreign Minister (1959-1966) and Chancellor (1970-1983), Kreisky stated the Austrian government's intention to pursue "an active foreign policy."<sup>33</sup> Thus, with time, "active neutrality" became a central orientation of Austria's foreign policy, and also of the country's national identity.<sup>34</sup> The Austrian government's active neutrality was linked to supporting a policy of coexistence, i.e. the goal of establishing stable relations with people's democracies while also emphasizing the ideological differences. During the 1960s, Austria managed to establish good relations with the Eastern bloc.<sup>35</sup> The Austrian government changed its self-declared restraint towards recognition of divided states in the early 1960s when it recognised the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) and the ROK.

### *(Initial) Approach towards Divided States*

In 1960, the Austrian government declared utmost restraint concerning the recognition of divided states due to its delicate political character.<sup>36</sup> According to the BMAA, from a political point of view the establishment of diplomatic relations with (non-communist) Korea and Vietnam had never been considered due to considerations about setting a precedent for the communist halves. Therefore, the BMAA did not expect any change of Austria's stance on the matter and considered the maintenance of the status quo as appropriate ("ausreichend").<sup>37</sup> However, within three years following this statement, Austria established diplomatic relations with South Vietnam (1962) and the ROK (1963). The normalisation of relations with Vietnam's and Korea's non-communist halves was preceded by an "implied recognition" in 1955 and 1962, respectively.<sup>38</sup> The reasons underlying Austria's and other neutrals' one-sided recognition are discussed by Schaufelbuehl et al.:

The main factors that explain the one-sided recognition policy [...] were clearly not security interests. Economic considerations did play a role, although only marginally in terms of trade with the Vietnams and Koreans. It was the massive financial and commercial interests at play with West Germany that brought all three neutrals [i.e. Austria, Sweden and Switzerland] to count the risk of disrupting them into their policies towards the divided Asian countries. The shadow of Europe thus loomed over the neutrals' policies in the non-European cold-war theatres.<sup>39</sup>

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Senn, "Österreichs Neutralität," 23. See also Paul Luif, "Neutrality and External Relations: The Case of Austria," *Cooperation and Conflict* 21, no.1 (1986), 30; and Erwin A Schmidl, "Lukewarm Neutrality in a Cold War?," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18, no.4 (2016), 36-50; Gehler and Bischof, "Austrian Foreign Policy," 2-4.

35

Rathkolb, "Austria – Sieve to the East," 23.

36

BMAA, "Republik Korea; Ansuchen um Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen," 11 August 1960, Zl.81529-6/Pol, ASA, AdR/01, BMfAA, Sektion II-Pol, 1960, South Korea, Box 635.

37

Ibid.

38

See e.g. BMAA, "Schreiben des nordkoreanischen Außenministers an den Herrn Bundesminister," 15 September 1969, Zl.163563-6(Pol)69.

39

Schaufelbuehl et al., "Choosing Sides," 1029.

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In 1953, Austria signed a trade agreement below the state-level with the GDR, and in 1954 a quasi-private trade office (*Kammer für Außenhandel*) was established in Vienna. For Austria's trade relations with the GDR see e.g. Rathkolb, "Austria – Sieve to the East" and Otmar Höll, "Die Außenpolitik gegenüber Deutschland, der Schweiz und Liechtenstein," in *Handbuch Außenpolitik Österreichs*, ed. Martin Senn, Franz Eder, and Markus Kornprobst (Springer VS, 2023).

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The FRG's *Hallstein* policy line was aimed at isolating the GDR and it regarded the establishment of diplomatic relations with the GDR as an "unfriendly act" against the FRG.

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From BMAA to Austrian Embassy [Moscow, Tokyo, Beijing], "Zur Frage einer Anerkennung der Demokratischen Volksrepublik Korea," 29 January 1973, Zl.31.570-6(Pol)73, ASA, BMfAA, Pol/73, North Korea, Box 2064.

43

Schaufelbuehl et al., "Choosing Sides," 1028-1029.

44

From Austrian Representation to the UN to BMAA, "XVI. Generalversammlung, Koreafrage," 5 December 1961, Zl.706-Res/61, ASA, AdR/01, BMfAA, Sektion II-Pol 1962, South Korea, Box 791.

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Byun, *North Korea's Foreign Policy*, 43; See also Balázs Szalontai, "In the Shadow of Vietnam: A New Look at North Korea's Militant Strategy, 1962–1970," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 14, no.4 (2012): 130.

Between 1955 and 1969, the FRG's *Hallstein* policy line made it practically impossible for Austria to develop relations with the GDR beyond commercial exchanges.<sup>40</sup> Recognition of North Korea (and North Vietnam) would have set a precedent for Austria's relations with the GDR.<sup>41</sup> Eventually, Austria established diplomatic relations with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV or North Vietnam, 1 December 1972) and the GDR (21 December 1972).<sup>42</sup> However, it took two more years until Austria formally recognised the DPRK.

From a legal perspective, as Schaufelbuehl et al. argue, neutral states like Austria could "hide behind the vagueness of international law on the question of politically divided states;" from a political perspective, however, "this taking of sides in favour of the non-Communist halves of the two Asian countries was in flagrant contradiction to the neutrality maxim of universality that the neutrals had implicitly or explicitly adopted."<sup>43</sup> This dilemma is, to a limited extent, also reflected in the ASA files reviewed for this study. For example, Austria regarded the Korean question at the UN as a test case ("*Testfall*") for Austria's neutrality.<sup>44</sup> Yet, ASA documents on Austria's relations with Korea rarely refer explicitly to the aspect of neutrality (or universality).

### 3.2 North Korea: Independent Foreign Policy and Trade Relations

The DPRK officials' contact-seeking with Austria has to be understood in the context of broader (geo-)political and economic developments, especially the former's volatile relations with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC). In particular, the Sino-Soviet split, the Cuban Missile Crisis and Soviet concessions to the U.S. as well as the "defiant Chinese attitude"<sup>45</sup> towards the North Korean leader during the Cultural Revolution created concerns in the DPRK about its neighbours' reliability. Moreover, domestic considerations including systemic competition with South Korea and the pursuit of a social revolution informed North Korea's foreign policy objectives.

#### *North Korea's Independent Foreign Policy*

Since its foundation in 1948 until the mid-1950s the DPRK's foreign relations were mostly limited to the socialist bloc, and diplomatic relations existed with a dozen socialist states.<sup>46</sup> At the Third Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) in 1956, Kim Il Sung presented a new approach towards countries with different social systems.<sup>47</sup> From the late 1950s on, the DPRK's relations gradually expanded to the Third World. Apart from international developments, political events exposing Soviet and Chinese interference in North Korea's internal affairs prompted the DPRK to pursue a more independent foreign policy.<sup>48</sup> A *Rodong Sinmun* editorial published on 12 August 1966 stressed the WPK's independence in international and domestic affairs and also confirmed the continuous pursuit of an independent line.<sup>49</sup> The Second WPK Representatives' Conference in October 1966 reiterated the pursuit of a policy of self-support and self-reliance, in line with the *chuch'e* idea.<sup>50</sup> North Korea's "independent foreign policy" that was proclaimed in the mid-1960s became further enhanced a decade later when the DPRK became a member of the Non-Alignment Movement.

For the expansion of its foreign relations the DPRK considered non-aligned and neutral states relevant.<sup>51</sup> An article that appeared in the KPÖ-newspaper *Volksstimme*

46

Daniel Wertz, JJ Oh, and Insung Kim, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations," *Issue Brief*, National Committee on North Korea, August 2016, 3.

47

D.M. Kim, "1950nyöndae chunghuban nam - pukhanüi 'chungnipkuk' oegyoüi chôn'gaewa sönggyök,"

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D.M. Kim, "1950nyöndae chunghuban nam - pukhanüi 'chungnipkuk' oegyoüi chôn'gaewa sönggyök," 161; Ryu, "Between Second and Third World," 366; see also Eung Seo Kim, "1960nyöndae chungban pukhanüi chajuoeogyonosön ch'aet'aegae kwanhan yôn'gu" [Study on the Decision of North Korea's Self-Reliance Foreign Policy in the Mid-1960s], *Journal of World Politics* 16 (2012): 237-288.

49

E.S. Kim, "1960nyöndae chungban pukhanüi chajuoeogyonosön," 278.

50

Ryu, "Between Second and Third World," 365.

51

Cabinet of the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, "Österr. Beziehungen zur VRK (Nordkorea)," Amtsvermerk, 14 December 1972, ZI.816-K/72, ASA, BMfA, Pol/73, North Korea, Box 2064.

52

"Für Beziehungen Nordkorea-Österreich," *Volksstimme*, 15 October 1969, ASA, AdR/01, BMfA, Sektion II-Pol 1969, North Korea, Box 1523.

53

DPRK MFA, "Ojirigonghwaguk oemusang k'urüt'ü waldühaime kakha," 3 July 1969, ASA, AdR/01, BMfA, Sektion II-Pol 1969, North Korea, Box 1523.

54

Jong-Woon Lee, "North Korea's Trade Expansion," 101-103.

55

See e.g. Chang Joon Ok, "naengjôn'gi pukhanüi sangsang chiriwa 'p'yöngyang sônôn'," *Journal of Peace and Unification Studies* 12, no.1 (2020), 10.

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The Asian Economic Bureau, "Second Asian Economic Seminar of Delegates of Asian Economic Bureau and Participants from Asia, Africa and Oceania, Pyongyang June 16th to 23rd 1964," Vol.2 (October 1964), 235.

57

D.M. Kim, "1950nyöndae chunghuban nam - pukhanüi 'chungnipkuk' oegyoüi chôn'gaewa sönggyök," 162. In 1957, North Korea sent its first trade delegations to non-socialist countries including Indonesia, India and Burma.

in 1969 quotes the DPRK Foreign Minister Pak Sung Chul (Pak Söng Ch'öl) saying that the neutral states were an important link in the development of North Korea's international relations.<sup>52</sup> In a letter to Austrian Foreign Minister Kurt Waldheim, Minister Pak stressed that "as an important principle of its foreign policy, the DPRK established state relations with all countries based on the principles of respect for sovereignty, mutual equality and reciprocity" (*chosönmninjujuüünmin'gonghwagugün chajugwönüi chonjunggwa hosangp'yöngdöng hohyeüi wönc'h'inesö modün naradül'gwa kukkagwan'gyerül maennün'gösül chagidaeojeöngch'aegüi chungyohan wönc'h'igüro samgoissümnida*).<sup>53</sup> To develop relations with non-socialist including neutral countries, trade became an important means.

### *Building Relations through Foreign Trade*

Since its foundation in 1948, the DPRK had relied on massive financial, material and technical assistance from the Soviet Union and the PRC. Especially after the Korean War, aid from socialist countries contributed considerably to the country's reconstruction and economic growth. However, the subsequent decline of foreign aid, North Korea's estrangement from the USSR and the increasing domestic demand for machinery, equipment and raw materials to achieve the targets set by the First 7-Year Plan (1961-1967 [1970]) required the DPRK government to look for alternative sources of advanced technology and also capital.<sup>54</sup> In 1964, the Pyongyang Declaration that was adopted at the Second Asian Economic Seminar<sup>55</sup> advocated for the "construction of an independent national economy by relying on one's own efforts [which] does not exclude economic co-operation between nations [...]"<sup>56</sup> As scholarly literature shows, North Korea proactively sought trade and cultural agreements not only with non-aligned countries in Asia,<sup>57</sup> but also Western capitalist countries.<sup>58</sup>

Apart from the goal to develop a self-reliant national economy and the need for modern technology to develop industrial capacity, the expansion of trade relations also had political objectives. In 1965, Premier Kim Il Sung stated that North Korea's trade was not only an important way to realise economic cooperation with other countries but also greatly contributed to the development of political relations between countries (*uriüi muyöngün tarün naradül'gwaüi kyöngjejökh'yöpchorül sirhyönanün chungyohan pangdoro toel ppunanira kukkadül'ssaiüi chöngch'ijökkwan'gyerül paljön sik'inün t'edo k'üge abajihagoissümnida*).<sup>59</sup> More specifically, Kim stressed that the development of friendly relations between countries begins with trade, and in turn, political relations are established (*kukkadül'ssaiüi ch'insön'gwan'gye paljönün honhi ch'öüme muyöngürobüt'ö sijaktoemyö kürihayö chamch'a chöngch'ijök kwan'gyekkaji maetke toenün'gösümnida*).<sup>60</sup> This statement indicates that a central objective of the North Korean government's efforts to form trade relations was the establishment of political relations. At the fifth session of the Supreme People's Assembly in December 1967, Kim Il Sung reiterated the DPRK's interest – though not priority – in developing trade relations and conducting business with countries of different social systems, i.e. including capitalist countries:

"... we will develop trade relations and commercial exchanges with all countries with differing social systems, if they respect our sovereignty and desire economic ties with our country. Nevertheless, the economic [and] business relations with capitalist countries should always be of secondary importance in the foreign trade of socialist countries."<sup>61</sup>

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Owen Miller and Natalia Matveeva, "Trade Relations between the DPRK and the UK, 1961–1969: The Debate in Whitehall," *NKEF Policy and Research Paper Series* (2023), 1–11. Burghart and Sava, "We are realists," 55.

59

Il Sung Kim, "Muyögilgundürüi tangsangül tallyönhamyö taemuyögesö chajusöngül t'ünt'ünhi kyönjihalde taehayö, 1965nyön 1wöl 28il," *Uri hyöngmyöngesöüi chuch'ee taehayö* (Chosölldongdangch'ulp'ansa, 1970), 310.

60

Ibid.

61

Il Sung Kim, "Let us embody more thoroughly the revolutionary spirit of independence, self-sustenance, and self-defense in all fields of state activity," 16 December 1967, in *North Korean Modern History: A Sourcebook*, Vol. 2, ed. Dae-Sook Suh, Wan Bom Lee and Seung Hyun Lee (The Academy of Korean Studies Press, 2018), 509.

62

See D.M. Kim, "1950nyöndae chunghuban nam - pukhanüi 'chungnipkuk' oegyoüi chön'gaewa sönggyök," 163 on DPRK's trade agreements with Indonesia, India, Burma and Egypt; Miller and Matveeva, "Trade Relations," 3.

63

In 1969, the BMAA gave green light to the Chamber to sign the Long-Term Trade Agreement. Although the 1969 Agreement used the term "Democratic People's Republic of Korea" which was not the case in the 1960 Trade Agreement, the legal status of the North Korean trade office was not changed. To avoid any misinterpretation the BMAA asked the Chamber to make sure that in line with art. 5 of the Agreement the name of the North Korean trade office would be "Representation of the Korean Committee for the Promotion of International Trade" – a request that was not followed through as e.g. North Korean business cards show. (From Austrian Federal Economic Chamber to BMAA, "Titelführung der nordkoreanischen Handelsvertretung," 13 April 1970, ZI.HA-33.109/70/R/Haj, ASA, BMfaA, Pol/70, North Korea, Box 1639); and BMAA, "Errichtung einer nordkoreanischen Handelsmission in Wien; Vorsprache des südkoreanischen Botschafters," 21 April 1970, ZI.85.342-II/70, ASA, BMfaA, Pol/70, North Korea, Box 1639). For Sweden see e.g. Ek et al., *Kostbart diplomatisk (Ut-)spel?*

64

From 1966 on Austria was governed by single-party governments: the conservatives/ÖVP in 1966–1970, and the social-democrats/SPÖ in 1970–1975.

From the late 1950s on, the (North) Korean Committee for the Promotion of International Trade (*chosön'gukchemuyöckch'okchin wiwönhoe*, hereafter: Korea Trade Promotion Committee) signed trade agreements with governments and quasi-private organisations in the United Kingdom, India and Austria.<sup>62</sup> Trade agreements usually included a provision on opening an (un)official trade representation in the signatories' country. The trade or information offices allowed North Korea to establish a more or less official representation and to pursue regular contacts with the host country's government officials.<sup>63</sup> ASA files show that the Korea Trade Promotion Committee's activities in Vienna were not limited to commercial aspects but also included political and cultural tasks.

#### 4. Development of Austria-DPRK Relations: From Early Contacts to Recognition

Consecutive Austrian grand coalition governments (1959–1966)<sup>64</sup> took a passive and cautious stance towards political contacts with the DPRK. After a negative decision in 1959, the BMAA eventually approved the Federal Economic Chamber's request to develop commercial exchanges with North Korea. In 1960, the Chamber and the Korea Trade Promotion Committee concluded the *Trade Agreement Between the Federal Economic Chamber of Austria and the Korea Committee for the Promotion of International Trade* (hereafter: 1960 Trade Agreement) with the objective to "expand and develop mutual economic relations."<sup>65</sup> The BMAA, especially the Ministry's economic policy unit (*Wirtschaftspolitische Sektion*), principally viewed opportunities for the expansion of trade with the DPRK as favourable. However, the Ministry's primary political objective was to avoid that the 1960 trade agreement and the opening of a North Korean trade office in Vienna would lead to a *de facto* recognition of the DPRK.<sup>66</sup> In 1964, the Korea Trade Promotion Committee opened an office in Vienna that was eventually closed in 1967.<sup>67</sup> In 1969, the Chamber and the Korea Trade Promotion Committee signed a new *Long-term Agreement of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and the Korean Committee for the Promotion of International Trade for the Promotion and Extension of Economic Relations between the Republic of Austria and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (hereafter: 1969 Long-Term Trade Agreement).<sup>68</sup>

##### 4.1 North Korea's Diplomatic Advances and Austrian Passiveness

From the late 1950s on, DPRK diplomats proactively visited diplomatic representations of European neutral countries in the Soviet Union and East European states.<sup>69</sup> Several ASA files report "private visits" by DPRK officials to Austria's diplomatic representations, for example, in Prague in 1960 and 1962, in Moscow in 1964 and in Bucharest in 1967.<sup>70</sup> During these visits, the North Korean diplomats spoke about the state of affairs in North Korea and on the Korean peninsula; moreover, the DPRK government's view on the question of unification was conveyed. Austria's diplomatic missions also received unsolicited DPRK publications, aide memoirs and other propaganda material on issues of DPRK concern.<sup>71</sup> In 1964, DPRK Ambassador to Moscow, Li Son Un, stated his government's wish to not only expand commercial and cultural contacts, but also to exchange government delegations.<sup>72</sup> His Austrian counterpart, Haymerle, (erroneously) responded that

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"Trade Agreement between the Federal Economic Chamber of Austria and the Korea Committee for the Promotion of International Trade" [attached to ZI.71.626-6/64], ASA, AdR/01, BMfA, Sektion II-Pol 1964, North Korea, Box 919.

66

BMAA, "Österr.-nordkoreanisches Kammerabkommen v. 7.12.1960; beabsichtigte Errichtung einer nordkoreanischen Handelsvertr. in Wien," 7 August 1964, ZI.76.117-6/64, ASA, AdR/01, BMfA, Sektion II-Pol 1964, North Korea, Box 919.

67

According to ASA files, the North Koreans mentioned the high rent of their office at Schwedenplatz. Suggestions that the closing down of the trade representation was linked to the opening of the ROK's diplomatic representation in Vienna (1 December 1966) could not be confirmed. The tasks of the trade office were moved to the DPRK Embassy in Prague. (BMAA, "Auflösung der Handelsvertretung der DVR Korea in Wien," 19 July 1967, ZI.147.548-8/67, ASA, AdR/01, BMfA, Auswärtiges/01, Wirtschaftspolitische Sektion).

68

Negotiations on the 1969 long-term trade agreement were undertaken already in summer 1968 in Vienna but interrupted because the North Korean delegation did not return to Austria after a short visit to Prague.

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See e.g. Burghart and Sava, "We are realists," 56.

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[From Austrian Delegation Praha to Federal Minister], "Korea-Debatte vor den Vereinten Nationen," 24 November 1960, ZI.45-Pol/60, ASA, AdR/01, BMfA, Sektion II-Pol 1960, South Korea, Box 635; From Austrian Delegation Praha to BMAA, "Übergabe von Dokumenten durch den nordkoreanischen Botschafter," 6 July 1962, ZI.246-Res/62, ASA, AdR/01, BMfA, Sektion II-Pol 1962, North Korea, Box 791; From Austrian Embassy in the USSR to BMAA, "Besuch des nordkoreanischen Botschafters," 28 January 1964.

71

From Austrian Delegation in Jakarta to BMAA, "Propagandamaterial der Volksrepublik Nordkorea," 20 February 1962, ZI.296-A/62, AdR/01, BMfA, Sektion II-Pol 1962, North Korea, Box 791.

72

DPRK advances can be seen against the backdrop of the normalisation of Austria-ROK relations in 1963.

Austria's neutrality would *not* permit the establishment of diplomatic relations with *either* of the Korean states.<sup>73</sup> Li's successor, Ambassador Kim Ben Dik, reiterated his government's aim to normalise relations with Austria.<sup>74</sup>

The BMAA assumed that the private visits occurred on instruction of the DPRK government<sup>75</sup> and there were concerns that these actions would constitute an implied recognition ("*implizite Anerkennung*") of the DPRK.<sup>76</sup> The objective was to avoid creating any precedent that would have had larger implications for Austria's relations with other divided countries, especially Germany. Therefore, Austrian embassies received detailed instructions on how to behave in such circumstances.<sup>77</sup> More specifically, Austrian officials were advised to limit personal contacts with North Korean diplomats to ordinary societal exchanges and to emphasize the personal nature of such contacts.

#### 4.2 Period of Semi-official Relations

The Austrian government's reserved attitude towards North Korean advances gradually waned, and its approach shifted from "currently undesired" to "being examined".<sup>78</sup> In 1968, the BMAA made possible a meeting between its Secretary General for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry's Head of the Political Section, and Kim The Hi (Kim T'ae Hŭi), DPRK Ambassador to Romania and former Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs. One year later, Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Kurt Waldheim, for the first time, received a high-ranking DPRK government representative, Ambassador to Czechoslovakia (CSSR) Kim Yeng Sik (Kim Yŏng Sik), and also accepted a letter from DPRK Minister of Foreign Affairs and Vice Premier, Pak Seung Tcheul (Pak Sŏng Ch'ŏl).<sup>79</sup> Similar high-ranking meetings continued at the request of the DPRK government in the following years.<sup>80</sup> ASA sources indicate that personal contacts between diplomats also played a role. Especially, Austrian Foreign Minister and later Federal President Rudolf Kirchschläger, in his previous position as head of mission (*Gesandter*) of Austria's delegation in the CSSR (1967-1970), reportedly had numerous confidential conversations with his North Korean counterpart that were continued in Vienna ("*zahlreiche vertrauliche Unterredungen... denen dann weitere Gespräche in Wien folgten*").<sup>81</sup> Another ASA document refers to the Foreign Minister's "good contacts" ("*gute Kontakte*") to the North Korean ambassador in Prague.<sup>82</sup> While the Austrian government emphasized that such exchanges would not change the status of relations, one could argue that some of these (inter-)actions went beyond the objectives of the BMAA's internal instructions.

Since 1964, North Korean diplomats had repeatedly expressed their government's wish to expand contacts with Austria in different areas and to establish formal relations.<sup>83</sup> In 1970, Ambassador Kim Yeng Sik reiterated in a persistent manner his government's readiness to elevate relations to state level ("[Kim YS]... *kam auf dieses Thema noch mehrmals mit Insistenz zurück*").<sup>84</sup> His proposal to elevate the status of the North Korean trade office to one with diplomatic privileges was rejected by the BMAA's Secretary General.<sup>85</sup> Austria's recognition of the DRV and the GDR in 1972 created new hopes among North Korean officials.<sup>86</sup> An enquiry by the head of the Korea Trade Promotion Committee in Vienna, Pak Riong Ho, about the implications of Austria's proclaimed policy of normalising relations with all divided countries for the DPRK received a vague response.<sup>87</sup> The BMAA emphasised that decisions on that matter were made after very careful considerations and an

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At the time of Haymerle's remarks Austria and the ROK had already established diplomatic relations. (From Austrian Embassy in the USSR to BMAA, "Besuch des nordkoreanischen Botschafters," 28 January 1964).

74

Austrian Embassy in the USSR, "Antrittsbesuch des neuen nordkoreanischen Botschafters KIM BEN DIK; Verkehr mit Missionen von Staaten, mit denen Österreich keine diplomatischen Beziehungen unterhält," 21 April 1964, ZI.163-RES/64, ASA, AdR/01, BMfaA, Sektion II-Pol 1964, North Korea, Box 919.

75

From Austrian Embassy in the USSR to BMAA, "Besuch des nordkoreanischen Botschafters," 28 January 1964.

76

BMAA, "Hinterlassung nordkoreanischer Dokumente in der österreichischen Botschaft," 12 July 1962, ZI.69.897-6(Pol)/62, ASA, AdR/01, BMfaA, Sektion II-Pol 1962, North Korea, Box 791.

77

These instructions were based on the BMAA's 1962 instruction *ad omnia* (Runderlass) on rules of behaviour concerning advances of GDR officials towards Austrian representatives. For example, letters or other forms of written communication conveyed by representatives of a state that Austria had not recognised usually remained unanswered (BMAA, "Überreichung einer Denkschrift der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik an österreichische Vertretungsbehörden – Regelung des Verhaltens der österreichischen Vertretungsbehörden," Runderlass an alle effektiven Vertretungsbehörden, 20 June 1962, ZI.68.139-4(Pol)62, ASA, AdR/01, BMfaA, Sektion II-Pol 1963, North Korea, Box 852).

78

Cf. Schaufelbuehl et al., "Choosing Sides," 1023.

in-depth analysis of all circumstances. According to a memo of 1971, the BMAA expected that the question of recognition would gain relevance only after the Korean states' admission to the UN.<sup>88</sup> Thus, in the early 1970s, the recognition question remained at the status of "being examined." Yet, according to ASA files reviewed here, the Austrian government tacitly tolerated the gradual transformation of the North Korean trade office into a representation that, occasionally, also undertook consular tasks.<sup>89</sup>

#### 4.3 Recognition and Establishment of Diplomatic Relations

After the Nordic countries' recognition of the DPRK and the elevation of trade relations to government-level in Switzerland, Ambassador Pak Riong Ho saw, in October 1973, a new momentum for the establishment of diplomatic relations with Austria.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, the fact that Chancellor Kreisky and Minister for Foreign Affairs Kirchschläger received a delegation of parliamentarians led by the DPRK Minister for Higher Education created certain hopes that bilateral relations with Austria would be normalised in the near future.<sup>91</sup> With respect to the delegation's visit, the Austrian embassy in Beijing also proposed to the BMAA to consider the question of recognising the DPRK.<sup>92</sup> Internal BMAA communication concluded that the North Korean delegation's visit to Austria contributed to the development of "in a very formless way, a relatively good relationship" with DPRK representatives (*"Derart hat sich, auf eine sehr formlose Weise, zu Vertretern der DVRK ... ein relativ gutes Verhältnis entwickelt"*).<sup>93</sup> According to ASA files, the Austrian government would have been ready in 1973 to normalise relations with the DPRK.<sup>94</sup>

During the early 1970s, the DPRK's request for diplomatic recognition also became increasingly attached to the country's planned orders from Austrian companies. In 1973, the DPRK government informed the Austrian Trade Counsellor about the possibility that large business orders could become conditional upon diplomatic recognition.<sup>95</sup> This announcement made the Chamber and Austrian companies support DPRK's call for recognition. After formal recognition on 17 December 1974, Austria and the DPRK normalised relations on 27 December 1974.

In sum, the first period of Austria-North Korea relations was marked by North Korean proactiveness and Austrian passiveness and restraint that allowed only unofficial contacts between government representatives. The conclusion of the 1960 Trade Agreement formalised trade relations between the Chamber and the Korea Trade Promotion Committee. Austria's economic interests and commercial profit-seeking initially opened the door for DPRK officials to also gain direct access to interlocutors at the BMAA. The second phase is characterised by increasing contacts at the commercial and political level, the signing of the Chamber-level 1969 Long-Term Trade Agreement and its confidential aide memoire. From early on, the North Korean trade office in Vienna undertook political activities and with time also consular tasks. The third phase saw high-ranking visits of DPRK delegations to Austria, increased lobbying of Austrian officials and companies for formal recognition and normalisation of relations.

79

BMAA, "Besuch des nordkoreanischen Botschafters Kim Yeng Sik in Wien," 12 June 1970, ZI.88.378-6(Pol)/70, ASA, BMfA, Pol/70, North Korea, Box 1639. Waldheim's written response to DPRK Foreign Minister Pak was eventually withheld after careful deliberations within the BMAA. The main concern was that the written response could have been understood as Austria's intention to have relations with the DPRK at a higher political level. It would have also made it difficult to reject possible similar acts in the future and an increase of written exchanges at minister-level could have constructed the implied recognition of the DPRK (From Austrian Embassy in Baghdad to BMAA, "Botschaft der Demokratischen Volksrepublik Korea; Glueckwuensche zum Oesterreichischen Nationalfeiertag," 28 October 1970, ZI.188-Res/70, ASA, BMfA, Pol/70, North Korea, Box 1639).

80

BMAA, "Vorsprache des nordkoreanischen Botschafters Kim Yong-Sik in Wien; Arbeitsgespräch am 23.6.1970 mit Herrn GS," [probably 26 June 1970], ZI.88660-6(pol)70, ASA, BMfA, Pol/70, North Korea, Box 1639.

81

BMAA, "Überreichung des Beglaubigungsschreibens durch den nordkoreanischen Botschafter Li Won Bom an den Herrn Bundespräsidenten; Information," 14 October 1975, ZI.112.02.01/3-83/75, ASA, AdR, BMfA, 01/Auswärtiges, Politische Sektion, Konvolut Nordkorea und Südkorea.

82

BMAA, "Vorsprache des Botschafters der Republik Korea beim Generalsekretär," 9 July 1973, ZI.41.397-Pol73, ASA, BMfA, Pol/73, South Korea, Box 2064.

83

Austrian Embassy in the USSR, "Antrittsbesuch des neuen nordkoreanischen Botschafters KIM BEN DIK," 21 April 1964.

84

BMAA, "Vorsprache des nordkoreanischen Botschafters Kim Yong-Sik in Wien," [probably 26 June 1970].

85

Ibid.

86

BMAA, "Zur Frage einer Anerkennung der Demokratischen Volksrepublik Korea," 29 January 1973, ZI.31570-6(Pol)/73, ASA, BMfA, Pol/73, North Korea, Box 2064.

87

Cabinet of the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, "Österr. Beziehungen zur VRK (Nordkorea)," 14 December 1972.

## 5. Austria's Contacts with North Korea under U.S. and ROK Scrutiny

The governments of the U.S. and the ROK closely followed the evolving contacts between Austria and North Korea. The 1960 Trade Agreement prompted several inquiries from the U.S. State Department to the BMAA. An aide memoire expressed the U.S. government's "concerns ... that a liberal Western democracy such as Austria should take up any kind of relations with north [sic] Korea."<sup>96</sup> The U.S. government also emphasized that it was "particularly sensitive" in the case of North Korea.<sup>97</sup> More specifically, U.S. criticism of the 1960 Trade Agreement concerned the symbolic value that the DPRK could gain from having a trade representation – the first of its kind – in a Western democratic country.<sup>98</sup> In the view of the U.S. State Department, the establishment of a North Korean trade office in Vienna had little economic but considerable political relevance.<sup>99</sup> The U.S. government warned about the nature of such representation and its wider implications:

Since all aspects of north [sic] Korean life and economy are controlled and operated by the communist regime in power, this ruling group will unquestionably seek to utilize the relationship between its agency and the Austrian Federal Chamber of Commerce [*i.e. Federal Economic Chamber*] to serve the purposes of the unrecognized and outlawed regime. There is no such thing as a 'businessman' in north [sic] Korea with whom business relationships may be had in the usual Western sense of the word. The communists will undoubtedly endeavor [...] to use the Austrian example as a wedge to advance the north [sic] Korean cause elsewhere among the community of nations.<sup>100</sup>

While the U.S. government showed certain understanding for Austria's trade relations with the GDR, it did not have any understanding for the establishment of such relations with North Korea.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, the U.S. expressed its hopes that Austria would, first, not permit the establishment of a permanent North Korean trade office, second, not provide a loan with a loan period of more than five years and, third, not provide government guarantees for loans.<sup>102</sup> The U.S. government also reminded Austria of its obligations as a UN member and to respect the UNSC resolution of 25 June 1950.<sup>103</sup>

The ROK embassy in Vienna also stressed the trade office's non-private character and pointed to the Korea Trade Promotion Committee's close affiliation with the DPRK Trade Ministry.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, South Korean interlocutors emphasised the ROK government's central policy objective to internationally isolate North Korea. They also underscored that the relevance of the matter for Austria-ROK relations should not be underestimated.<sup>105</sup> While the closing of the North Korean trade office in 1967 received positive reactions, the conclusion of the 1969 Long-Term Trade Agreement and the reopening of the trade representation that carried the official name of the DPRK (*Handelsvertretung der Koreanischen Volksdemokratischen Republik*)<sup>106</sup> provoked considerable diplomatic lobbying by the ROK. An aide memoire warned of North Korea's "hidden intentions" to achieve diplomatic recognition.<sup>107</sup> ROK Ambassador Yoo Yangsoo requested the BMAA to stop or at least delay the reopening of the North Korean trade office by several years – a request that was not met.<sup>108</sup>

Responding to U.S. and ROK concerns, BMAA officials repeatedly emphasized the private nature of the trade agreement that allowed the opening of a trade office.<sup>109</sup> Referring to the existing GDR trade office, they also underscored the non-exceptionalism of the matter.<sup>110</sup> To the surprise of the U.S. interlocutors, the

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The BMAA acknowledged that the *Alleinvertretungsanspruch* of both Korean governments would exacerbate the problem (BMAA, "Schweizerische Kontakte mit Nordkorea; österreichische Haltung in der Koreafrage," 23 September 1971, ZI.118.462-6(Pol)/71, ASA, BMfA, Pol/71, North Korea, Box 1787).

89

BMAA, "Frage einer Anerkennung der Demokratischen Volksrepublik Korea," 6 June 1973, ZI.38.844-6(Pol)73, ASA, BMfA, Pol/73, North Korea, Box 2064.

90

Cabinet of the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, "Vorsprache des Leiters der nordkoreanischen Handelsvertretung," Amtsvermerk, 24 October 1973, ZI.643-K/73, ASA, BMfA, Pol/73, North Korea, Box 2064.

91

Ibid.

92

From Austrian Embassy in Beijing to BMAA, "Frage der Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen zwischen Österreich und der DVRK," 2 July 1973, ZI.249-RES/73, ASA, BMfA, Pol/73, North Korea, Box 2064.

93

BMAA, "Frage einer Anerkennung der Demokratischen Volksrepublik Korea," 6 June 1973.

94

EPD, "Visite officielle de M. Erich Bielka, Ministre fédéral des affaires étrangères de l'Autriche en Suisse, du 28 au 30 août 1974," DDS, dodis.ch/40546.

95

From Austrian Embassy in Beijing to BMAA, "Frage der Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen zwischen Österreich und der DVRK," 2 July 1973.

96

Embassy of the United States of America, Vienna, "Aide Memoire," 1 February 1961, ASA, AdR/01, BMAA, Sektion II-Pol 1961, North Korea, Box 710.

97

BMAA, "Handelsabkommen zwischen der Bundeskammer der gewerblichen Wirtschaft und einer nordkoreanischen Handelsdelegation; Demarche der amerikanischen Botschaft," [probably 16 February 1961], ZI.18536-4/61, ASA, AdR/01, BMAA, Sektion II-Pol 1961, North Korea, Box 710.

98

Embassy of the United States of America, Vienna, "Aide Memoire," 1 February 1961.

99

BMAA, "Kammerabkommen mit Nordkorea," 18 January 1961, ZI.16939-6/61, ASA, AdR/01, BMAA, Sektion II-Pol 1961, North Korea, Box 710.

BMAA also argued that similar North Korean trade representations existed in other states.<sup>111</sup> The Austrian government's stance was that the opening of the trade office would not change the existing (unofficial) relations with North Korea.<sup>112</sup>

After the Nordic countries' decision to recognise the DPRK, a South Korean diplomat conveyed his government's great concerns ("*große Sorgen*") that Sweden's decision would accelerate similar steps by other European neutrals, especially Austria and Switzerland.<sup>113</sup> A few months later, the new ROK ambassador to Austria called the act of recognition "very unpleasant" ("*sehr unangenehm*") for his country, and expressed his government's gratitude to Austria (and Switzerland) for not having followed the Scandinavian example ("*sehr froh und dankbar*").<sup>114</sup> The ROK government requested Austria to postpone the recognition of the DPRK until after the 1974 UN General Assembly, which eventually happened, but for different reasons as will be shown below.<sup>115</sup>

## 6. Austria's Deliberations Against and in Favour of Recognition of the DPRK

The BMAA repeatedly emphasised that the question of Austria's relations with North Korea was to be assessed from Austrian interests.<sup>116</sup> To provide a more comprehensive perspective on the Austrian government's deliberations on this matter, AAP and DDS documents were also reviewed and analysed.

### 6.1 Deliberations Against Recognition

While taking a favourable stance on the development of commercial relations with North Korea at Chamber-level, the BMAA's objective was, first and foremost, to avoid upsetting the U.S. government. Moreover, the Austrian government was concerned about the possible implications of an implied recognition of the DPRK for its relations with divided Germany. In addition, Austria considered its political and economic relations with the ROK, which were becoming increasingly relevant for Austrian businesses. In his report to Parliament (*Nationalrat*) in 1974, Foreign Minister Erich Bielka emphasized that political considerations as well as Austrian export interests in North and South Korea had to be considered.<sup>117</sup>

*Not to upset (too much) the U.S. and ROK*

As shown above, the BMAA faced diplomatic pressure concerning the Chamber-level trade agreements and the North Korean trade office.<sup>118</sup> According to ASA files, the U.S. State Department attached greatest importance to these matters.<sup>119</sup> The ROK government also underscored that the relevance of the matter for Austria-ROK relations should not be underestimated.<sup>120</sup> BMAA files show internal deliberations on possible political and economic consequences of exchanges with North Korea for Austria. Referring to a letter from U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk to Foreign Minister Kreisky, an internal memo discusses the question of granting loans to North Korea with regard to the UN resolution (1 February 1951).<sup>121</sup> The BMAA's unit for political affairs notes that:

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Embassy of the United States of America, Vienna, "Aide Memoire," 1 February 1961.

101

BMAA, "Handelsabkommen zwischen der Bundeskammer der gewerblichen Wirtschaft und einer nordkoreanischen Handelsdelegation; Demarche der amerikanischen Botschaft," [probably 16 February 1961].

102

From Austrian Embassy in Washington to BMAA, [no title], Fernschreiben, 24 June 1964, ZI.73882, ASA, AdR/01, BMfaA, Sektion II-Pol 1964, North Korea, Box 919.

103

More specifically, the aide memoire said that "[t]he (UNSC) in a resolution on 25 June 1950 ..., which is still in effect, called upon all members of the United Nations to refrain from giving assistance to north [sic] Korean authorities." (Embassy of the United States of America, Vienna, "Aide Memoire," 1 February 1961).

104

BMAA, "Besuch einer nordkoreanischen Handelsdelegation in Österreich; Vorsprache des südkoreanischen Geschäftsträgers," 31 July 1968, ZI.123327-6/Pol, ASA, AdR/01, BMfaA, Sektion II-Pol 1968, North Korea, Box 1368.

105

From Austrian Embassy in Tokyo to Federal Minister, "Beziehungen Oesterreichs zu Nord- und Südkorea," 9 November 1964, ZI.44-Pol/64, ASA, AdR/01, BMfaA, Sektion II-Pol 1964, North Korea, Box 919.

106

From Trade Representation of the Korean People's Democratic Republic [sic] in the Republic of Austria to the Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria, 10 October 1973, ASA, BMfaA, Pol/73, North Korea, Box 2064.

107

Embassy of the Republic of Korea, Vienna, "Aide Memoire," 16 December 1969, ASA, AdR/01, BMfaA, Sektion II-Pol 1969, North Korea, Box 1523.

108

BMAA, [no title, *Bericht über Vorsprache ROK Botschafter* on 27.12.1969], [no date], ASA, BMfaA, Pol/70, North Korea, Box 1639.

109

Art. 5 of the 1960 Trade Agreement provides the possibility for the Korea Trade Promotion Committee to establish a representation in the capital of the Republic of Austria, Vienna.

From a political standpoint, it would have to be considered whether a deeper irritation, as indicated in the letter of [U.S.] Secretary of State Rusk would, in the long run, not harm Austria more [...] compared to the] benefits for Austrian businesses that would result from state-backed guarantees...<sup>122</sup>

The BMAA also discussed whether certain business deals with North Korea would lead to a deterioration of relations with the U.S. and ROK in general, and also jeopardise other Austrian business projects in particular. In 1969, Foreign Minister Waldheim instructed the BMAA to exert influence on the Chamber to exercise restraint in its dealings with North Korea to avoid negative consequences for VÖEST's (United Austrian Iron and Steelworks) negotiations with South Korea.<sup>123</sup> In line with the BMAA's objective that "[...] the improvement of relations with one country does not result in the deterioration of relations with another country,"<sup>124</sup> the Austrian government also discussed possible concessions to South Korea. Although the BMAA regarded the Chamber-level agreement as not ideal, in view of Austria's relations with the ROK it was *politically* the only viable solution.<sup>125</sup>

### *The Elephant in the Room: Divided Germany*

The political and economic costs of setting a precedent by recognising North Korea would have had implications for Austria's relations with the FRG. Although the GDR is rarely explicitly mentioned in the ASA files reviewed here, secondary literature suggests that the Austrian government's persistence regarding the question of (non-)recognition was rooted in its approach towards divided Germany. Austrian political leaders like Julius Raab and Leopold Figl understood that "the FRG's strictly pro-Western course was beneficial for Austria, and they therefore sought to prevent sharp conflicts with West Germany."<sup>126</sup> This stance had relevance for the recognition of the DPRK, as Schaufelbuehl et al. note: Foreign Minister Kirchschläger "saw no reason to change Austria's Korea policy: the main priority was, according to him, 'not to compromise our relations with the FRG.'"<sup>127</sup> Kirchschläger's statement is in line with the Swiss and Swedish Foreign Ministers' view that "the matter of the GDR was incommensurably more important."<sup>128</sup> Internal BMAA communication urges caution to avoid the impression that Austria's stance could be more lenient towards the recognition of North Korea – or at least interpreted as such – than towards other non-recognised states, especially the GDR and the PRC.<sup>129</sup>

## 6.2 Deliberations in Favour of Recognition

High-level negotiations, U.S.-USSR summitry and agreements on arms control in the early 1970s created a favourable environment. In particular, the U.S. government's change in its non-recognition policy regarding the PRC, the Four-Power Agreement on the status of Berlin, West German Chancellor Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, as well as the Basic Treaty (*Grundlagenvertrag*)<sup>130</sup> expanded the room for Austria to reconsider its position on the recognition of the DPRK. In addition, as scholars have pointed out, the Austrian government acknowledged the emergence of Third World countries as a relevant political force:

Only in the context of East—West rapprochement and with the growing international political role of Third World governments, did the neutrals re-evaluate their recognition policy. And even then, it only happened because they had the reassurance of not disrupting their relations with the United States.<sup>131</sup>

110

See BMAA, [no title, *Bericht über Vorsprache ROK Botschafter* on 27.12.1969]; Austrian Embassy in Washington to BMAA, "Kammerabkommen mit Nordkorea," 2 February 1961, ZI.1059 A/61, ASA, AdR/01, BMAA, Sektion II-Pol 1961, North Korea, Box 710.

111

BMAA, "Handelsabkommen zwischen der Bundeskammer der gewerblichen Wirtschaft und einer nordkoreanischen Handelsdelegation; Demarche der amerikanischen Botschaft," [probably 16 February 1961].

112

BMAA, "Österr.-nordkoreanisches Kammerabkommen v. 7. Dezember 1960; beabsichtigte Errichtung einer nordkoreanischen Handelsvertr. in Wien," 7 August 1964.

113

Cabinet of the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, "Gespräch mit dem Südkoreanischen Geschäftsträger," 27 April 1973, ZI.268-K/73, ASA, AdR, BMfA, Pol/73, South Korea, Box 2064.

114

Cabinet of the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, "Vorsprache des neuen Südkoreanischen Botschafters Dr. Pyo Wook Han," 13 July 1973, ZI.433-K/73, ASA, AdR/01, BMfA, Sektion II-Pol 1973, South Korea, Box 2064.

115

Bericht des Bundesministers für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten über die Frage der Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen zwischen Österreich und der Demokratischen Volksrepublik Korea," 30 October 1974.

116

Cabinet of the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, "Vorsprache des Leiters der nordkoreanischen Handelsvertretung," 24 October 1973.

117

"Bericht des Bundesministers für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten über die Frage der Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen zwischen Österreich und der Demokratischen Volksrepublik Korea," 30 October 1974, III-156 der Beilagen XIII GP – Bericht – 01 Hauptdokument, 4 November 1974.

118

On U.S.-Austria relations, the U.S. role in post-War Austria, and interference in foreign policy see e.g. Rathkolb, "Austria – Sieve to the East."

119

From Austrian Embassy in Washington to BMAA, [no title], Fernschreiben, 24 June 1964.

Other factors were also taken into account in the Austrian government's deliberations on normalising relations with the DPRK, particularly changes regarding South Korea's "Hallstein" policy, new developments concerning the Korean question at the UN, North Korea's rising international status, and the Nordic countries' decision to recognise the DPRK.

### *Inter-Korean rapprochement and dissolution of UNCURK*

The BMAA regarded the developments on the Korean peninsula in the early 1970s as positive, in particular the Red Cross talks, the evolving North-South dialogue and the July 4 (1972) South-North communiqué (7.4 *nambukkongdongsongmyōng*) as well as the ROK government's 1973 *Special Declaration on Foreign Policy for Peaceful Unification* (*p'yōnghwat'ongil oegyojōngch'aegae kwanhan t'ūkpyōlsōnōn* / 6.23 *sōnōn*). The latter formally marked the end of the ROK's "Hallstein" doctrine and, thus, was generally perceived as a significant shift in the ROK's foreign policy. Although Austria – like other Western states – observed the process of inter-Korean rapprochement with a favourable attitude, the BMAA's stated objective was to avoid disturbing this process by the act of recognition at the "wrong" time.<sup>132</sup>

The BMAA's stance on its relations with the DPRK was also informed by the (polarised) debates on the Korean question at the UN and the year-long deadlock. However, the dissolution of the United Nations Commission on the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea (UNCURK) in 1973 "freed the way for the establishment of diplomatic relations with the DPRK."<sup>133</sup> With the dissolution of UNCURK, the Korean states were "requested to seek a solution of the open questions regarding unification in direct contact."<sup>134</sup> Moreover, the apparent shift in the ROK's policy towards the North and the ROK government's active seeking to establish relations with (non-hostile) socialist countries provided a strong argument for Austria to consider the normalisation of relations with the DPRK. Based on the ASA files reviewed here it is difficult to assess to what extent the BMAA considered repeated requests by the ROK government to postpone North Korea's recognition. However, from the perspective of economic interests it is clear that South Korea became increasingly relevant for Austrian businesses.

### *North Korea's Rising International Status*

Before the five Nordic countries recognised the DPRK in 1973, North Korea had established diplomatic relations with more than fifty states.<sup>135</sup> In May 1973, the DPRK joined the World Health Organisation (WHO) – the first UN-affiliated agency to admit North Korea as a member – and later that year became a member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The DPRK was also admitted as an observer to the XXVIII UN General Assembly (1973). In a parliamentary session in October 1974, Austrian Foreign Minister Bielka argued that the incompatibility of North and South Korea's positions and the fact that unification was not to be expected in the foreseeable future had compelled numerous states to recognise the DPRK.<sup>136</sup> ASA files indicate that the Austrian government considered not only North Korea's rising international status, but also a certain change of attitude ("*gewisse Haltungsänderung*") at the international level.<sup>137</sup> In reference to a letter from Simmering-Graz-Pauker AG expressing support for the recognition of the DPRK, the BMAA stressed that North Korea's status in the international community

120

From Austrian Embassy in Tokyo to Federal Minister, "Beziehungen Oesterreichs zu Nord- und Suedkorea," 9 November 1964, ZI.44-Pol/64, ASA, AdR/01, BMfaA, Sektion II-Pol 1964, North Korea, Box 919.

121

UN General Assembly (5th sess.: 1950-1951: New York and Paris), 1951. "Intervention of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China in Korea," A/RES/498(V). Adopted at the 327th plenary meeting, 1 Feb. 1951, in *Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly during its resumed 5th session II*, 16 December 1950-5 November 1951. - A/1775/Add.1.

122

BMAA, "Wirtschaftsbesprechungen mit Nordkorea – Frage der Kreditgewährung im Lichte der UN-Resolution vom 1. Febr. 1951," 2 October 1964, ZI.78593-6/64, ASA, AdR/01, BMfaA, Sektion II-Pol 1964, North Korea, Box 919.

123

BMAA, "Südkoreanische Besorgnisse wegen Intensivierung der Kontakte Österreichs zu Nordkorea auf Kammerebene," 8 April 1969, ZI.154.933-6(Pol)69, ASA, AdR/01, BMfaA, Sektion II-Pol 1969, North Korea, Box 1523.

124

Cabinet of the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, "Vorsprache des Leiters der nordkoreanischen Handelsvertretung," 24 October 1973.

125

BMAA, [no title, *Bericht über Vorsprache ROK Botschafter on 27.12.1969*], [no date].

126

Gehler, "From Non-alignment to Neutrality," 110.

127

Schaufelbuehl et al., "Choosing Sides," 1026-1027.

128

Ibid.

129

From Austrian Embassy in Baghdad to BMAA, "Botschaft der Demokratischen Volksrepublik Korea; Glueckwuensche zum Oesterreichischen Nationalfeiertag," 28 October 1970.

130

The Basic Treaty between the FRG and the GDR was signed on 21 December 1972 and entered into force on 21 June 1973.

131

Schaufelbuehl et al., "Choosing Sides," 1029.

132

"Österr. Beziehungen zur VRK (Nordkorea)," Amtsvermerk, 14 December 1972, ZI.816-K/72, ASA, BMfaA, Pol/73, North Korea, Box 2064.

"naturally" played a role in the discussion about recognition.<sup>138</sup> In a meeting with Swiss government officials, Foreign Minister Kirchschräger emphasised that the two Koreas were most important for Austrian businesses in East Asia (*"les deux Corées sont les partenaires commerciaux les plus importants de l'Autriche en Extrême-Orient"*).<sup>139</sup> This indicates that Austrian economic interests in South and North Korea were a relevant factor to be considered.

### *"En tout cas pas être un des derniers": Moving with the Reference Group*

The Austrian government closely followed the other neutrals', especially Sweden's and Switzerland's assessments concerning the normalisation of relations with the DPRK. Similarly to Switzerland, Austria regarded Sweden's decision to establish diplomatic relations with the DPRK as a rushed step.<sup>140</sup> Earlier, the plan of a coordinated parallel action by the four members of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) to recognise the DPRK and the ROK had failed.<sup>141</sup> After Sweden's intention to recognise the DPRK became known, the Austrian ambassador to Stockholm anticipated that no extreme reaction by South Korea such as the breaking off of diplomatic relations was to be expected (*"... mit keiner extremen Reaktion, etwa in Form eines Abbruches der diplomatischen Beziehungen zu rechnen."*).<sup>142</sup> The ROK government eventually called back its ambassador from Sweden for "consultations," and there were rumours in diplomatic circles that South Korea intended to move its embassy to Oslo.<sup>143</sup>

The diplomatic documents show that Austria closely coordinated with Switzerland the approach towards the DPRK and later also the steps leading to normalisation of relations with the DPRK. Switzerland's decision to receive DPRK Ambassador Kim The Hi in 1967 for the first time likely supported Austria's decision to receive him in the following year.<sup>144</sup> ASA files indicate that the Austrian government would have been ready to recognise North Korea in 1973.<sup>145</sup> As a NNSC member, Switzerland was, however, in a different position and with the conclusion of an "Arrangement" on official commercial missions Switzerland had *de facto* recognised the DPRK in June 1973.<sup>146</sup> Therefore, the Swiss government saw no urgency for official diplomatic recognition.<sup>147</sup> In May 1974, Foreign Minister Kirchschräger suggested to his Swiss counterpart an early (*"baldige"*) simultaneous recognition of the DPRK.<sup>148</sup> For the sake of a closely coordinated and similar procedure (*"Zwecke einer möglichst gleichartigen Vorgangsweise"*) with Switzerland, however, the Austrian government postponed this step.<sup>149</sup> In the light of developments regarding the Korean question and previous decisions concerning the recognition of the DRV and the GDR, the (new) Austrian Foreign Minister Bielka emphasised that Austria would not want to be one of the last countries to recognise the DPRK (*"l'Autriche ne voudrait en tout cas pas être un des derniers pays à reconnaître la Corée du Nord"*).<sup>150</sup> According to Bielka, Austria and Switzerland intended to recognise the DPRK in a parallel action in the first half of 1974, but this step was delayed.<sup>151</sup> In sum, the Austrian government would have been ready to establish diplomatic relations with North Korea already in 1973 but postponed this step in order to be able to move simultaneously with Switzerland.

133

James E. Hoare and Susan Pares, *North Korea in the 21st century: an interpretative guide* (Global Oriental, 2005), 200.

134

"Bericht des Bundesministers für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten über die Frage der Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen zwischen Österreich und der Demokratischen Volksrepublik Korea," 30 October 1974.

135

Wertz, Oh, and Kim, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations," 3-4.

136

"Bericht des Bundesministers für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten," 30 October 1974.

137

BMAA, "Demokratische Volksrepublik Korea; Frage der Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen; Eingabe der Simmering-Graz-Pauker AG," 24 May 1973, ZI.38817-6(pol)73, ASA, BMfaA, Pol/73, North Korea, Box 2064.

138

Ibid.

139

EPD, "Visite officielle en Suisse de M. Rudolf Kirchschlaeger, Ministre fédéral des affaires étrangères de la République d'Autriche, du 2 au 4 mai 1974," DDS, dodis.ch/40545. According to ASA documents, trade between Austria and DPRK remained below expectations. In 1964, Austrian exports to DPRK amounted to 6.1 mio. öS (Austrian Shilling) and in 1965 to 22.7 mio öS. (Bundeskammer der Gewerblichen Wirtschaft, Referat Asien, Australien und Ozeanien, "Vorbereitung der Verhandlungen mit der DVR Korea über eine Modifikation des bestehenden Abkommens," HA-33.466/68/R/Som, 18 July 1968). In 1973 and 1974, Austrian exports to North Korea increased by 52.9% and 412% respectively (BMAA, "DVR Korea; Besuch einer Delegation; Information," 13 November 1975, ZI.112.24.01.01/2-III/1/75, ASA, AdR, BMfaA, 01/Auswärtiges, Politische Sektion, Konvolut Nordkorea und Südkorea).

140

EPD, "Aufzeichnung der Besprechung von 1. März 1973 über die Beziehungen zwischen der Schweiz und Nordkorea," p.B.15.11. Corée 1. – FK/au, DDS, dodis.ch/39285.

141

i.e. Sweden and Switzerland and Poland and the CSSR respectively.

142

From Austrian Embassy in Stockholm to Federal Minister, "Frage der Anerkennung der VR Korea durch Schweden," 12 January 1973, ZI.1-Pol/73, ASA, BMfaA, Pol/73, North Korea, Box 2064.

143

Ibid.

## 7. Concluding Discussion

The aim of this study was, first, to reconstruct the evolution of relations between Austria and the DPRK until recognition in 1974 and, second, to understand the 'delayed' recognition of the DPRK by analysing Austria's deliberations against and in favour of recognition. In the 1960s, relations between Austria and North Korea were basically limited to the Chamber-level. To Austria, the trade agreements primarily aimed at providing a formal framework for doing business; to the DPRK, the trade agreements with the Chamber were most likely regarded as a means to develop political relations with Austria as well, and the trade office in Vienna increasingly performed official representative functions.

Generally speaking, Austria's relations with North Korea (1960-1974) can be divided into three phases. The first phase is marked by North Korea's proactiveness and Austria's passiveness. Although the BMAA approved the Chamber-level trade agreement in 1960, the BMAA took a passive stance towards DPRK advances until the late 1960s and repeatedly stressed the private nature of exchanges. The Austrian government's primary objective was to avoid any actions that would have construed an *implied* recognition of the DPRK. Austria's objective was to avoid (too much) irritation of the U.S. and also, especially with regard to growing business interests, of the ROK. The interventions by the U.S. and ROK in the 1960s show that the Austrian government's assessments of the political sensitivity of the matter were realistic. Although ASA files reviewed here rarely connect the (North) Korean question explicitly with Austria's relations with divided Germany, it is clear that recognition of North Korea would have set a precedent. Thus, it would have had wider implications for Austria's relations with other non-recognised states and especially for its relationship with the FRG and GDR. During the second phase, political contacts between Austria and the DPRK gradually expanded and the Long-Term Trade Agreement was signed. The Austrian government showed a more open attitude thanks to a more favourable international environment and a pragmatic approach towards relations with socialist countries. ASA files also show that the BMAA became less concerned – at least judged by its officials' actions – about the possibility that certain actions could be construed as *de facto* recognition, and exchanges with DPRK officials at political level gradually expanded from the late 1960s onward. This period of semi-official relations saw visits of DPRK ambassadors to Austria and from 1969 on meetings with high-ranking BMAA officials. One could argue that the Austrian government sent contradictory signals to the DPRK: on the one hand, exchanges at political level gradually expanded, also involving high-ranking government representatives such as the Austrian Foreign Minister; on the other hand, the BMAA reiterated its unchanged stance concerning the DPRK's requests for diplomatic recognition. The third phase saw visits of DPRK delegations to Austria and the BMAA's intention of formally recognising the DPRK. Moreover, Austrian officials and business representatives increasingly demanded the normalisation of bilateral relations. In December 1974, the Austrian government recognised the DPRK.

The more favourable international environment of the early 1970s and developments in Europe (e.g. the 1971 Quadripartite Berlin Agreement, the 1972 Basic Treaty) provided a window of opportunity for Austria and other neutrals to recognise the communist halves of divided countries. Although the Austrian government was prepared to recognise the DPRK in 1973, it decided on a coordinated

144

BMAA, "Besuch des nordkoreanischen Botschafters Kim Yeng Sik in Wien," 12 June 1970.

145

BMAA, "Vorsprache des südkoreanischen Botschafters beim Herrn Bundesminister," 24 September 1973, ZI.45.476-4a(Pol)73, ASA, BMfAA, Pol/73, South Korea, Box 2064.

146

In June 1973, Switzerland concluded an "Arrangement" with North Korea to open official commercial offices, which was regarded as *de facto* recognition (EPD, "Notiz an den Departementchef," 29 April 1974, p.B.15.11. Corée 1 – HN/th., DDS, dodis.ch/39283; see also EPD, "Visite officielle en Suisse de M. Rudolf Kirchschlaeger," and EPD, "Visite officielle de M. Erich Bielka").

147

EPD, "Aufzeichnung der Besprechung von 1. März 1973."

148

EPD, "Visite officielle en Suisse de M. Rudolf Kirchschlaeger."

149

"Bericht des Bundesministers für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten über die Frage der Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen zwischen Österreich und der Demokratischen Volksrepublik Korea," 30 October 1974.

150

EPD, "Visite officielle de M. Erich Bielka." Compared to the reference group of other neutrals and especially Switzerland, Austria recognised the communist halves of divided countries later; one reason is that Austria regained sovereignty as a state only in 1955. For example, Switzerland recognised the PRC already in 1950 and North Vietnam in 1971, Sweden established diplomatic relations with the PRC in 1950 and North Vietnam in 1969, Finland recognised the PRC also in 1950 and North Vietnam in 1972, Austria took this step towards the PRC and North Vietnam in 1971 and 1972, respectively.

151

"Bericht des Bundesministers für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten über die Frage der Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen zwischen Österreich und der Demokratischen Volksrepublik Korea," 30 October 1974.

152

Schaufelbuehel et al., "Choosing Sides," 1014.

153

See Schaufelbuehel et al., "Choosing Sides" and Ekengren, *Av hänsyn till folkkrätten?*

154

Schaufelbuehl et al. "Choosing Sides," 1017; 1023-1024.

155

See e.g. Ek et al., *Kostbart diplomatisk (Ut-)spel?*; D.M. Kim, "1950nyöndae chunghuban nam-pukhanüi 'chungnipkuk' oegyoüi chön'gaewa sönggyök."

procedure with Switzerland. Earlier, Austria had followed other neutrals' acts of recognising the communist halves at a later point, but in the case of North Korea Austria chose to postpone recognition for the sake of a simultaneous move with Switzerland. Other factors underlying Austria's decision to recognise the DPRK were the latter's rising international status, including its membership in the WHO and IPU and its recognition by the Nordic countries, the ROK government's declared end of its version of the "Hallstein" policy, as well as developments concerning the Korean question at the UN, especially the dissolution of UNCURK in 1973.

Moreover, the DPRK government's proactive approach towards Austrian officials, continuous lobbying for normalisation of relations and steps taken to gradually upgrade relations with Austria (e.g. the status of the trade office, visits of high-ranking delegations) as well as personal contacts between officials constitute relevant factors in understanding the development of bilateral relations. In addition, economic interests and the DPRK's announcement to make business deals with Austrian companies conditional on diplomatic recognition prompted increased lobbying by different Austrian stakeholders at the BMAA. The role of these actors in the development of Austria-DPRK relations could be a topic for future research.

The findings of this study are largely in line with the conclusions of existing scholarly works on European neutrals' dealing with divided states. As Schaufelbuehl et al. argue, the neutrals' aim to strengthen neutrality "through the principle of universality" was applied in a pragmatic way rather than in a consistent manner.<sup>152</sup> Not only the universality principle but also international law were subordinated to political, economic and security interests.<sup>153</sup> Furthermore, competition between the neutrals for status and influence is said to have been one factor that eventually led to the recognition of North Korea and North Vietnam.<sup>154</sup> The documents studied here, however, do not provide enough evidence to fully support this claim with respect to the process of recognition of the DPRK. As ASA and DDS files show, the Austrian government considered it important to move with the reference group of other European neutrals, especially Switzerland. To what extent the Austrian government saw itself in competition with Switzerland or Sweden in its decision to recognise North Korea requires further study.

Finally, this study – through the BMAA's lens – provides insights into the DPRK's diplomatic strategies to achieve its foreign policy objectives. The 1960 Trade Agreement with the Chamber made it possible to establish a trade office in Vienna that also pursued propaganda activities – an observation that existing literature has made with regard to other countries.<sup>155</sup> While trade agreements were concluded at Chamber-level, representatives of the North Korean trade office gained direct access to Austria's Federal Foreign Ministry. In the long term, the conclusion of trade agreements with a Western capitalist country served North Korea's foreign policy objective of international recognition and the expansion of diplomatic relations during détente. At the same time, Austria's business lobby saw considerable opportunities in North Korea, and the trade agreements provided a formal framework for commercial exchanges. Future research could investigate the DPRK's efforts in building support for its cause among local (here: Austrian) stakeholders, especially business actors.

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