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Nemesis in the Korean Peninsula

ANUSHKA BHATT¹

ABSTRACT

The rivalry between the two nations, who once fought together to end the Japanese rule in their homeland is unparalleled, the two Koreas which were a cooperative machine can't even see eye to eye today, let alone sit and discuss their differences. This cold war relic which still persists in the 38th parallel (the border dividing the two nations). The divide which cracked in the Korean peninsula can be purely called ideological difference taking place during the cold war, north joined hands with communist forces, and south was influenced by capitalist ideas of USA. Both the countries continue to play blame game Pyongyang has condemns sinking of several North Korean vessel by south. And, south has blamed north for espionage after finding various tunnels under DMZ.”²That is the reason sometimes we see leaders of both the nations smiling and posing to the camera, and behind the walls of their offices are plotting against each other. There has been both good and bad times for the north and the south in their international relations. But the fact still remains that even after various diplomatic missions there is no peace treaty between both the nations. Even arch rivals Israel and Egypt overcame each other's differences and signed a peace treaty for a greater good.

It should be noted that the reunification of the nation has been one of the major political aims of the governments on both sides of the armistice line since its division in 1948 (Lee 2010; Merkel 2008). But their international policies towards each other don't really justify their actions, South Korea is continuously increasing its military programme, and has constantly ranked under top 10 military programs in the world, and North Korea has its own nuclear programme. One hand they talk about reunification of both the Koreas, and on the other hand they are stockpiling weapons.

I. ACT OF AGRESSION

(A) The Korean War

The Korean War was the most devastating war of the century which led 2-3 million people on their deathbed. In 1945, 35 years of Japanese rule ended in Korea. And, so did World War II. And, the rise of United States and Soviet Union was evident, even though both the countries

¹ Author is a student at Tamil Nadu National Law University, Trichy, India.

² Zagoria, Donald S., and Young Kun Kim. "North Korea and the major powers." *Asian Survey* 15.12 (1975): 1017-1035.

fought together in the 1st world war; the same was not evident in its after math. As we say there is only one king in the Jungle. And, both the nations were adamant to be world hegemon. And, at the time when this race was in its full scale, Korea was an untouched territory, without any specific ideology or an ally. And, as we are well aware that controlling land brings power. Both the superpower jumped on the peninsula as if it is their prey and tried to influence the leaders. Soviet sided with North Korea and America with the south. And as a result A capitalist state, the First Republic of Korea, was established in the south under the authoritarian leadership of Syngman Rhee, and a socialist state, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was established in the north under the totalitarian leadership of Kim Il-sung. A capitalist state, the First Republic of Korea, was established in the south under the authoritarian leadership of Syngman Rhee, and a socialist state, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was established in the north under the totalitarian leadership of Kim Il-sung. And, both the countries claimed to run legitimate government for the Korea. And, in lieu to this North Korean forces entered the south. And, this act was seen as an invasion by the United Nations. And, it sent its peace keeping forces to south to tackle the north Korean army, the forces comprised of 21 countries, During the war, Seoul the capital city of south Korea which is just 30 miles away from the 38th parallel was captured 4 times by the communist regime, but they were pushed back every time.

Both the countries were hell bent in proving their legitimacy through war. In one very important aspect, however, technology did make a difference in the outcome of the “Korean War: without Allied air power over the battlefield and control of the sea lanes there can be little question that US and Republic of Korea forces would have been driven off the peninsula by September 1950. As it was, up to and just beyond the very day of the Inchon landings behind enemy lines, UN forces, although enjoying numerical supremacy and total control of the air, could still have lost the war. Air power made the difference, but even here, it was not a particularly futuristic air power. Aside from the jet to-jet air combat, the first in history, over “MiG Alley.”³

(B) Korean airline YS-11 hijacking

“The Korean Air Lines YS-11 hijacking occurred on 11 December 1969. The aircraft, a Korean Air Lines NAMC YS-11 flying a domestic route from Gangneung Airbase in Gangneung, Gangwon, South Korea to Gimpo International Airport in Seoul, was hijacked at 12:25 PM by

³ Cumings, Bruce. *The Korean War: A history*. Vol. 33. Modern Library, 2010.

North Korean agent Cho Ch'ang-hŭi.”⁴ The North Korean hijackers abducted South Koreans in order to protest against the policies of the South Korean president Park Chung Hee. It was speculated by the police that the co-pilot helped the North Koreans to hijack the plane. And, later the people who were sent back to South Korea revealed that they had classes for 4 hours every day to indoctrinate them with North Korean ideology. And, in response to this attack 100,000 people took to streets to protest despite the chilling weather and burned effigy of North Korean dictator Kim-il-Sung.

These are just few act of aggression between the rivals. Both the countries have been into each other's throat, waiting for either side to falter. Through years there have been several violations in the border. Infiltration of spies in both the sides by both the nations. Depending on their international relations they increase and decrease. “Since 1971 the military confrontation of North Korea towards south has dropped, but this was increased in late 1974 and early 1975. Pyongyang has condemns sinking of several North Korean vessel by south. And, south has blamed north for espionage after finding various tunnels under DMZ.”⁵

TABLE 1: North Korean Armed Violations in DMZ

NORTH KOREAN ARMED VIOLATIONS IN DMZ	
1967	– 829
1968	– 761
1969	– 134
1970	– 106
1971	– 58
1972	– 1
1973	– 7
1974	– 9
1975	– 17 (through August)

SOURCE: Gregory Henderson, “Korea: Militarist or Unification Policies” in William Barnds (ed.), *The Two Koreas in East Asian Affairs* (New York: New York University Press, forthcoming).

The question which must be answered here is regarding the purpose these countries continuously strike each other` (1) Like every cliché neighbor rivalry this one is also because both the countries want to prove their ideology is supreme. According to people who defected from North Korea they say that under the indoctrination programme of North Korean government they teach school kids that socialism is the greatest way to live life. And, everyone must help South Korea to teach importance of community work rather than capitalism. (2)

⁴ "2 Sides Meet in Korea", *the New York Times*, 1970-01-27.

⁵ Zagoria, Donald S., and Young Kun Kim. "North Korea and the major powers." *Asian Survey* 15.12 (1975): 1017-1035.

Problem of legitimacy, before the independence there was a sole Korea, now the divided Koreas want to prove their legitimacy and the sole proprietor of the United Korea. Thus, North Korea always charged South Korea to be the puppet government of United States. “Pyongyang moreover not too subtly warned that socialist states cannot deal with puppets, let alone recognize them.”⁶

II. PEACE EFFORTS

(A) Sunshine policy

Sunshine policy is South Korea’s policy towards the North Korea. It’s sometimes even known as the embracing policy. The goal of the policy was to improve inter-Korean relation; the policy was formulated with three things in mind (1) no armed aggression from north will tolerated. (2) A takeover or absorption of North Korea will not be committed, neither by the South Korea nor its allies. (3)The focal point will be expansion of Inter-Korean relations. Though the main motive of the plan was not reunification, but starts a comprehensive process towards the reunification. The hidden motive behind the Dae-Jung government to launch this comprehensive plan for peace was because during the tenure of Kim Dae-Jung (1998-2003), south Korea’s economy took a backtrack, due to Asian financial crisis, which hit the country in 1997, even though it got over, then again GDP growth stalled to 3.8%⁷ in 2001, due to 9/11 terrorist attack in United States and at this point the country could not afford any violence from north, as that would have led to diversion of resources to military to protect country’s sovereignty. Thus, this policy was a smart move from the South Korean government. For which the former president Kim Dae-Jung got a Nobel peace prize for stabilizing inter Korea relation and East Asian international relations in general.

(B) Mt. Kumgang Tourism project

In this project tourism was used as a catalyst to tie both Koreas into peace and harmony, as both countries had harsh travel restriction imposed on each other’s citizens. After the Korean War in 1953. There has been almost no communication and no travel across the border. Even sporadic meetings between the two sides were held in the third countries like China or European countries. Thus allowing travel in form of tourism could have bolstered the already shattered relations between the rivals. The project was to build a ski-resort in Mt. Kumurang, which was endorsed by a pvt. Corp. Hyundai. This project was the Ž first major commercial deal between the two Koreas since their division in 1945. Hyundai volunteered for the Mt.

⁶ FBIS, Trends in communist propaganda, January 15, 1975, p.30.

⁷ *"Total Economy Database". 2009.*

Kumgang tourism project out of patriotism despite the high risk of the venture. It has the exclusive rights to use land and facilities around Mt. Kumgang and develop its tourism business for 30 years. Hyundai also receives preferential treatment which includes the rights to use facilities related to Mt. Kumgang tourism project without paying any customs. The Hyundai Group, in return for its exclusive rights and a variety of preferential measures, was scheduled to pay \$942 million to the North Korean government in monthly installments over six years and three months until 2005. Although the project ended up being in red due to restrictive policy of the North Korean government, and also inflow of people was highly monitored, as the communist regime feared there people getting in contact with foreigners, and subsequently lose their socialist values, around which Kim il-sung managed to make his dynasty almost immortal. That is why a South Korean woman was detained for six days by the north in allegation of persuading a North Korean tour guide to defect to south. After seeing the poor performance of the project Hyundai pushed North Korean government to allow the management to open casinos and clubs, but the request was outright denied, due to the socialist values held by the North Korean state.

III. DIPLOMACY THROUGH SPORTS

Sports can play a very volatile role in international relation of two countries; sports really bring the heat between the nations, and bring diplomacy to an open field for everyone to see. In the Korean context sports had played a clover role. (1) Fight of ideological supremacy. (2) Means to prove nation's legitimacy, (3) means to facilitate inter-korean relationship. (4) For countries to find common grounds on culture, and embrace their shared heritage.

Large chunk of Korean people on the either side of border think their culture is very homogeneous, so is their face and heritage, and consider the current divide to be a temporary situation which can be solved through correct diplomacy, and eventually result in unification of the divided peninsula. Sports also has the same view with bringing both the countries in the same ground they can actually embrace their commonness and act as one, but sometimes it can also bring the ugly side of international relations, which can facilitate mistrust in either side, and can make breaking ice in future more solid. (Lee and Maguire 2009; Merkel 2008)

One of the most interesting cases that demonstrate this sporting rivalry would definitely be the 1966 FIFA World Cup Finals. In this competition, the North Korean football team advanced to the quarter finals, beating the top-notch Italian football team in a group stage match. For the North Korean Government, this was a remarkable sporting success, which enabled the regime to display the existence of the Korean communist state to the world, especially asserting its

superiority over the state's southern sibling. Given that the football match took place at the height of the cold war, the political benefit that the successful football campaign brought to the North Korean regime was invaluable. For the South Korean Government, however, the North Korean achievement at the Football World Cup Finals was seen as a serious political challenge. Seeing this South Korean government started to foster elite athletes in a lieu that by winning games and trophies, in international forum, South Korea will gain international recognition. The 1966 FIFA world cup also triggered arm race between the two nations. After 1966 world debacle. The right to sport the 1970 Asian games was conferred upon South Korea, and this move by the Olympic council of Asia sounded like a threat to Kim regime in the north. Thus they ended up hinting possibility of war and aggression to their southern member, 1968, a group of North Korean commandos infiltrated into Seoul to assassinate the then South Korean President Park Chung-hee. Although the communist's military mission failed, 66 South Korean soldiers were martyred in the military operations while defending the capital and the sovereign. This North Korean invasion was the event of shock and horror for the most South Korean people and moving forward the security became the priority policy in the country. This act by their northern neighbors led South Korean government to bow out from organizing the Asian games, because the sporting competition potentially made Seoul more vulnerable to further North Korean threats. This was a misfortune to the South Korea as by hosting the game they could have gotten international spotlight, and a stronger position in the East Asian region. Finally South Korea hosted Asian games in 1986; even North Korea made a bid to host the games, which was later hosted by South Korea. And, on 14 September 1986, a week before the commencement of the Seoul Asian Games, a bomb exploded at the Gimpo International Airport in Seoul killing 5 civilians and more than 30 people injured due to explosion. Given that the airport was the main gateway for athletes to arrive in South Korea and it was just few days before the commencement of the game, and athletes and officials from different Asian countries were arriving to participate. South Korea immediately increased the level of security alert at the airport. More security measures were also taken to safeguard sporting venues against further attacks. Later, it was revealed that it was an act of terrorism by North Korean agents in order to interrupt a successful delivery of the Asian Games.

In the end, North Korea boycotted the Asian Games in Seoul and a number of communist allies including Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Mongolia, South Yemen and Syria followed suit in support of the North Korea's anti-Seoul campaign.

After the heated atmosphere during 1986 Asian games, both the countries decided to sort the matter as it is better to "bore each other sometimes with their words rather than bore holes into

each other on the battlefield”⁸ “Therefore From March 1989 to February 1990, 15 inter-Korean sporting talks in relation to the Beijing Asian Games took place. Some notable agreements were made at the meeting. These included the official name of the unified Korean team at the event, the use of the Korean Peninsula flag at the ceremonies at the Asiad, and the use of Korean traditional folk song, Arirang, as an anthem for the Korean delegation (Lee 2000)”⁹. These were important progress in the relations between the two Koreas because, in consideration of the political significance of symbolism in national identity politics

“The 2002 Busan Asian Games was a significant political breakthrough because it was the first time in Korean history that North Korean athletes took part in an official international sporting competition held in South Korea (The Economist 2002)”¹⁰. Before this time, North Korea had continually boycotted any international sporting contests taken place in the south as the communist regime had not formally recognized the political legitimacy of the South Korean Government. This attitude began to change after the 2000 inter-Korean Summit, which recognized the existence of the two separate governments in the Korean Peninsula. This mood change was assisted because of Sunshine policy of Kim dae Jung government to bring cordiality between the two nations. Basketball teams from the two Koreas travelled to Seoul and Pyongyang in 1999, respectively, and the inter-Korean table tennis friendly was organized by the north in its capital city in 2000. Notably, at the opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000, the two Korean states marched together bearing the Korean Peninsula flag even though they participated in this sporting event separately. But marching together as one and showing one representation is a victory in itself, as we never see two arch rivals which were once showing such deep act of solidarity, the act was a huge diplomatic victory in itself.

IV. CONCLUSION

Through above contention we can conclude that this war of differences of ideology can only be fixed with continuous deliberation and diplomatic attempts, but above all the most important thing is will to improve inter-korean relations on the either side of the DMZ. Without which nothing is possible. And, as highlighted in series of talks and view by the authors and Korean citizens, they like to believe this division to be of temporary basis, but in reality there has to miracle to unite these countries, as both the countries can't change their ideology and embrace other's as these ideologies have stark differences, and considering the mood and actions of the

⁸ Shashi tharoor. “International organization”. NCERT. Class11. 89.

⁹ Lee, Jung Woo. 2002. “The Use of the North Korean Flag during the Asian Games Must Be Allowed”. The Hankyoreh, August 20, 6

¹⁰ The Economist. 2002. “The Asian Games: The Koreas United for a Day.” The Economist, October 5, 39

country one can be sure that there is room for improvement but not for complete change. As, north Korea continues pile its stock of weapon of mass destruction, and south Korea continues to bolster its army for any upcoming attack which might happen, north Korea has also become a nuclear, state . This fact can be slightly worrisome for the South, but since they are part of NATO and also an integral US ally, there is nothing to fear, but we never know when United States will stop giving military aid to south, the way they did in Afghanistan. Though South Korea has all means and raw material to produce warheads, but they have decided not to. But possessing nuclear weapons can also act as deterrent, especially if your enemy has truckloads of it. The international standing of south and north actually improve with the coming of Kim Dae-Jung's government, as he was an astute pacifist and has consistently pursued a policy of absolute rejection of any war or major military conflicts on the Korean peninsula. "He has repeatedly argued that nothing can justify war and that it should be prevented at all cost. In a similar vein, he has called for the removal of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear and bio-chemical ones. War can destroy all that we have achieved. It could bring about a national unification, but the unification achieved through violent means is likely to breed seeds of hatred and another national division."¹¹

¹¹ Moon, Chung-in. "The Kim Dae Jung Government's Peace Policy towards North Korea." *Asian Perspective* 25.2 (2001): 177-198.

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