

# International Essay Competition:

## Peace On The Korean Peninsula And Public Diplomacy

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## Introduction

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This essay focuses on the significant barriers to South and North rapprochement. Three different types of views as to why the progress of South and North rapprochement has been slowed down will be suggested in this essay. This includes the fundamental differences between South and North created after the division since 1946, a cynical, pervasive view on rapprochement from South and North people, and the interference and disturbance from the interested international parties. This essay will analyse these three major problems which are contributing to the unsuccessful rapprochement and suggest approaches which both South and North governments could take in order for a peaceful rapprochement in the Korean Peninsula.

## Fundamental Differences between South and North Korea Created after the Division Since 1946

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Seventy-four years of the division since 1946 within the nation after the Japanese rule between 1910 to 1945 caused significant differences to all areas of the two divided countries, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). The tension on the Korean Peninsula had heightened as the United States backed South Korea, and the Soviet Union backed North Korea, with their ideologies to increase influence in Northeast Asia. The Korean War was one of the results from increased tension which brought significant changes to the world as a divided nation due to different ideologies. After the war, the two Koreas started to have rapid changes in different forms, causing economic and cultural differences. The major categories of differences after the division discussed in this essay are cultural, economic, and ideological differences in Korean society.

Two governments were established in the Korean Peninsula, taking over power from the United States and the Soviet Union, who temporarily occupied the nation after the surrender of Imperial Japan across the 38th Parallel. Syngman Rhee, a strong supporter of anti-communism, was elected to the first President of the Republic of Korea. At the same time, Kim Il-Sung, a communist activist, was designated as the premier of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by the Soviet Union. The two governments were required to unite their people within the country to keep their regime safe from the other country in the peninsula and to gain continuous backup from their strong supporters of each ideology, the

United States and the Soviet Union. North Korea started adopting the idolizing strategy of their leader, Kim Il-Sung, as the nation's father to keep their power and create a strong bond in their people. North Korea proclaims that its people are "descendants of Kim, Il-Sung" not "descendants of Dangun", the legendary founder of Gojoseon, the first-ever Korean kingdom (Nam et al., 2019, p.154). Since the founding legend of the nation is one of the first curriculums of the primary stage of child education in many countries, there are difficulties for South and Korean people to feel they have the same root, although their history tells them that they have formed one country for hundreds of years. An ethnic group shares cultural homogeneity that provide "we-feeling" among the constituents. An ethnic group living in two different political systems without contact ends up having different ways of living and culture, which in turn undermines national homogeneity (Nam et al., 2019, p.23). North Korea also adopted the term 'Chosun Nation First Policy' to highlight the exclusive and isolated national policies (Park, 2014). Therefore, North Korean idealism in history education disturbs the creation of unity through sharing the same history. Both South Korea and North Korea experienced cultural influences from their supporters, the United States and the Soviet Union. The influences continued in the Korean language. "Konglish" in South Korea included English based vocabulary, such as "juseu" (juice) and "two-piece" (two-piece outfit). Ideologies influenced the language, as well as history. "Dongmu" (friend) started to be used as "comrade" in North Korea (Reddy, S., 2019). Communism feeling in vocabulary resulted in South Korea to reject using this word because it could give a feeling of communist speech. The Gyeoremal-keunsajeon Committee was established in 2005 to create a single Korean dictionary to overcome the South and North Korean language differences. The Gyeoremal-keunsajeon project shows that the two countries' cultural differences can be overcome by a joint effort in the cultural fields. Overcoming cultural differences is considered as the most likely achievable difference between South and North Korea. Therefore, cultural exchange in public fields such as sports can be the foundation stone of building trust between the two countries and finding solutions to understand differences created during the seventy years of division.

The Korean War was one of the most significant historical events in Korean history. After three years of battles and fights on the Korean Peninsula, both South and North Korea were put in a miserable situation of destroyed economy and infrastructure. While South Korea achieved the world's 13th largest economy through the "Miracle on the Han River", North Korea struggled with the March of Suffering between 1994 to 1998, after the dissolution of

the Soviet Union, resulted in the world's 140th economy (Nam et al., 2019, p.252). The Constitution of the Unified Korea will be applied to all Korean in both the South and North part of the country. Since South Korea has a much stable and stronger economy than North Korea, it is a burden for the South to pay for closing the significant economic gap between the two countries. The unification cost includes rebuilding the North Korean economy structure and infrastructure to provide stable government operation in North Korea. National Health Insurance (NHI) offers nationwide healthcare services to South Koreans. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that 25 percent of the North Korean population suffer lack of access to essential healthcare, with 1.7 million children, including infants and toddlers, at risk of deadly diseases from “12 Forgotten Crises to Remember” (Cho, 2019). The report shows that most of the North Korean population will need to be covered by the National Health Insurance as the North Korean government is unable to provide essential healthcare services to their people. It will also be a burden for South Korea to fund essential welfare services for North Korea. Some experts estimate that the unification cost of South and North Korea will be more than one trillion USD (Hong, 2011). One trillion dollars is a few million dollars more than two years of South Korean government budget. South Koreans will suffer from unification tax to support 25 million more populations for their minimum life, including food, shelter, and healthcare services as Germany has been from 1990. Therefore, taking pressure to fund the broken North Korean economy is required to gain support from South Koreans. To sum up, the significant economic gap between South and North Korea should be resolved by synchronizing the economic situation to prepare for the unification in order to prevent one side sacrifice for a greater good.

The most significant between the first leaders of South Korea and North Korea was political ideology. The nation was divided by the two rising ideologies in the 1940s. The Workers' Party of Korea, led by Kim Il-Sung took power in the communist North, while Syngman Rhee led the presidential representative democracy South. The meaning of “independence” is different in the two Koreas due to different ideologies. “Independence” is recognized as a ‘socio-political life’ under the Supreme Leader based on Juche ideology in North Korea. On the other hand, South Korean “independence” refers to an individual life with human dignity (Park, 2014). Therefore, each government comes up with contrary viewpoints on unification in the Korean Peninsula. South Korea approaches ideological differences with a gradual, step-by-step and peaceful way without the use of force. The primary goal of the South

Korean unification policy is to encourage change in North Korea. However, North Korea is a communist country under the dictatorship of Kim Il-Sung, Kim Jong-Il and Kim Jong-Un. Dictatorship requires a strong military power and support from its people to keep the regime. North Korea developed nuclear weapons to build such power in the region and to take privilege as a country with a weak economic base despite the United Nations restrictions. The dissolution of the Soviet Union affected North Korean policies on unification to be less offensive from communizing the Korean Peninsula as a whole (Park, 2014). Since the first contact in 1971, South and North Korea achieved five inter-Korean summits in 2000, 2007 and 2018. However, both governments still have totally different perspectives on unification as both governments are still in power and the people support their ideology. Therefore, the difference in national ideology is the fundamental barrier to South and North rapprochement, bringing critical changes in the governing system if changed within the two different countries.

The Berlin wall was demolished on 9th November, 1989. It was a historical moment to many countries as well as South and North Korea, in terms of a sign of the end of the Cold War and possibility of the unification of Korea. An unfortunate incident happened recently near Yeonpyeong Island. A South Korean official was killed by North Korean soldiers unexpectedly. The North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un apologized for the death but the South Korean population was divided, urging strong actions or keeping the peace. The inter-Korean relationship has been a cycle of reconciliation and tension for decades due to summits and military actions. However, the nation has been divided for more than 70 years and there are still many people who miss their home and family on the other side of Korea, no matter who governs the other side. Both governments should keep contact with each other to preserve the relationship and build trust to overcome the difficulties together for one unified country as they were in the thousands years of history.

### A negative, pervasive views on rapprochement from South and North people

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After the division of Korea in 1945, both South and North tried to communicate and held conferences to solve the problem. However, despite the efforts towards peaceful reunification, the results were not successful due to the negative and pervasive views on rapprochement from South and North people. Positive progress has been made up after the

meetups between North and South. However, even positive progress has been made. There were significant incidents between South and North that caused to break all the positive progress towards rapprochement and give negative views on rapprochement to people.

The first battle of Yeonpyeong and the second battle of Yeonpyeong are significant conflicts that gave a huge shock to people. The first battle of Yeonpyeong has occurred due to seven North Korean gunboats repetitively crossing the boundary of North and South' sea, which is located near Yeonpyeong Island (Mizokami, 2014). South Korea sent 16 petrol boats to eject North Korean gunboats; however, the conflict has escalated to physical bumping. To make North Korean boats back across the border, South Korean ships tried to forcefully push the North Korean boats (Mizokami, 2014). During the process of pushing out the North boats, four North Korean boats were destroyed while three South Korean boats were destroyed. The conflict gets more serious as North started shooting on the 15th of June, 1999. More bumping was happening on that day, and suddenly, one of the North Korean boats called PT-381 started shooting using machine guns and a 25mm cannon. This battle lasted for 14 minutes and resulted in an overwhelming victory for South Korea as there were only 9 injuries while around 20 North Koreans died and 30 got injured (Lee, 2015). The first battle of Yeonpyeong was very surprising news to people as North and South were having a positive relationship as 1999 was under the rule of President, Kim Dae Jung, who took the first step of rapprochement of South and North. However, the battle did not arise as a huge issue in South Korea at that time as the battle ended as a definite victory of South Korea and relatively had fewer injuries. The first battle of Yeonpyeong has ended, but the other battle occurred in Yeonpyeong in 2002. This is called the second battle of Yeonpyeong, which occurred three years after the first battle. On 29th of June 2002, two North Korean boats crossed the boundary again, and they started to attack a South Korean Patrol boat called Chamsuri (Mizokami, 2014). This battle lasted for 25 minutes, and it caused 7 South Korean sailors to lose their lives and 38 casualties (Lee, 2015). When the second Yeonpyeong battle occurred, the whole nation was busy with cheering for the 2002 FIFA World Cup. Therefore, people were not aware of the second battle of Yeonpyeong in the early stage, and when people got the news about the second battle, it gave a shock to people.

As president, Kim Dae-Jeung made some positive changes and showed some progress in rapprochement along with the Sunshine Policy, people trusted the relationship between North and South is getting better (Min, 2017). Therefore, The Yeonpyeong battle gave a huge

disappointment to president Kim Dae-Jeung and people. Today, It is considered as one of the significant conflicts that gave a negative view of the rapprochement of South Korea and North Korea. There were numerous Northern Limit Line (NLL) conflicts between two countries to dispute west sea areas (Mizokami, 2014). The Yeonpyeong battles show that the conflicts can arise at any time, and it reminds how it is difficult to make a concrete rapprochement of North and South.

Another significant incident between North and South occurred on the 26th of March, 2010. On that day, Korean naval warship called ROKS Cheonan was sunk after the attack from North Korea (Kim, 2014). The Cheonan warship split into two parts and sank near Baekryeong Island in the West Sea. This incident occurred ten years ago, but people's rage still remains today as it took 46 sailors' lives, and another 58 sailors got injured in South Korea (Sudworth, 2010). A North Korean submarine and other six ships had disappeared, and they attacked ROKS Cheonan using torpedoes. Nearly 100 sailors were in the ROKS Cheonan, and by 9:22 pm, the warship had exploded within five minutes of the blast (Mizokami, 2014). So far, The sinking of ROKS Cheonan had the most deadly attack by the North in recent history as it caused around 100 casualties. In addition, North Korea denied responsibility, and this creates more anger. This incident gave a significant impact on the South to make people have a negative view of the North.

Start with the Cheonan incident, 2010 marked as the most turbulent year between North and South in recent (Panda, 2020). In November, which is the seven months after the Cheonan incident, north Korean artillery opened fire on the South Korean island of YeonPyeongdo. The Bombardment of YeonPyeong also caused significant damage and many injuries to people who live in YeonPyeong island (Panda, 2020). This incident is considered as one of the worst clashes between North and South since 1953 when the Korean war ended. As this was the first incident that North directly attacked the South's territory and it took common people's lives as well, people in South were extremely furious, and it made people have more negative views towards the rapprochement of North and South (Sudworth, 2010).

Along with the increase in people's attention about the relationship between North Korea and South Korea, various broadcasting media in Korea and other countries continuously reveal the problem between South and North. However, as each media has different values and perspectives, the atmosphere and the contents are different. Today, the media has enormous

power to enhance other's thoughts and perspectives. Therefore, excessively taking one side can influence people's thoughts negatively. Broadcast channels have responsibilities to deliver the right information rather than their personal thoughts to people, so people can think about the problem between North and South seriously rather than follow what the other people and media say. Sometimes, broadcasting media are attempting to water down people, and this became a problem as the media has such strong power and it may influence people to have opposing views on the rapprochement of South and North.

The combination of various significant incidents between South and North and the water down within people creates an excessively negative view on the rapprochement of South and North. As we are living in a democratic country in the 21st century, it is important to listen to everyone's opinion and follow the majority decision. Due to repetitive provocation from the North, many people in the South turn their back from the rapprochement and oppose it. Negative views towards rapprochement became a significant barrier of the rapprochement today.

### The interference and disturbance of the interested international parties

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From early 2018, 7 months after Moon Jae In became a President of South Korea, a positive signal between South and North have been observed. Through a consistent effort to increase the level of communication between South and North by President Moon, North showed a sign to the world that they are willing and ready to have some conversations. This resulted in many positive signs of progress between South and North such as several conferences between high-class officials, a visit to South by Kim Yo Jong, who holds significant power in North, and most importantly, the April 2018 Inter-Korean Summit. The Panmunjom Declaration for peace, prosperity, and unification of the Korean peninsula presented during this summit seemed a real success. Countries all around the world paid attention to the Korean peninsula as both the South and the North were the only countries in the world who were still at war. A promise of declaring an end of the war was included in the Panmunjom declaration, and this meant a lot not only to both countries but also, to the world. Although there were no actual military actions between the two countries since 1956, the truce agreement still being practical, left a potential risk on the Korean peninsula. However, in 1955 when the 6.25 war began, it was not just South Korea who was the subject to the

declaration of war by the North, but also, it was the United States, China, and Russia. They played a significant role in this war and therefore, declaring an end of the war could not be done just by two countries. As this example suggests, there are many stakeholders in peace in the Korean peninsula, and they may conflict with each other as they have different interests in the status of the Korean peninsula.

The United States is the most significant influencer in the relationship between South and North. As they are the world's leading country, their potential influence may be a threat to North Korea. For example, the United States has many hard-line policy options, such as enforcing the Human Rights Act to North Korea or economic sanctions (Lee, 2010). These options were a direct threat to North Korea and were used to negotiate the denuclearisation of North Korea (Lee, 2010). The United States having these options to put pressure on North Korea, did not always have adverse effects. Some experts assess that financial stress has brought the North to communicate with the United States and South Korea as they simply could not afford to live without any national income (Silberstein, 2019). The actual example of this which the whole world observed was the 2018 North Korea-United States Singapore Summit, where Kim Jong-un, the leader of North Korea, met Donald Trump, the leader of the United States for the first time in history. However, when the United States holds these options to give pressure to the North, it means that they may be used not solely for the peace on Korean peninsula, but, for the economic, political benefit of related parties. This means the stance of the United States, who holds a key to solving the relationship between the South and North, may be a barrier to a peaceful rapprochement. While every party looks for their gain, the fact that the United States, who is not a country directly involved in the relationship between South and North, has the most power to manage the relationship is in some way, an ironic situation. Having said that, we cannot deny that the United States holds the key for the peace on the Korean peninsula, and both South and North Korea have to cooperate with the United States achieve the optimal outcome that satisfies everyone. As the United States can influence the relationship between the South and North, the United States must operate as a control tower on the peace of Korean peninsula. As a control tower and a problem solver, the goal of the United States from the early 1970s was to denuclearise North Korea. Researchers and officials were dedicated to searching for a most successful way to denuclearise North Korea completely but yet, could not find any practical solutions (Lee, 2010). There were some positive signals as a series of agreements and presidential announcements such as Geneva Agreed Framework and Six-Party Talks occurred, yet, the returning result was

another nuclear experiment or a missile launch from North Korea (Lee, 2010). Indeed, North Korea cannot get away from international blames for these actions just because they believe that their only protection from external invasions (Ahn, 2010). However, it is not solely North Korea's fault to break the denuclearisation agreement as their actions were a reflection of a message to the United States, to negotiate fairly.

The main reason for the failure of the Geneva Agreement Framework is because of violation of agreed items from both parties. A breach of agreed items was first practised from the United States due to political reasons (Ha & Hwang, 2015). In the United States, for an agreement to be performed, it must pass the congress with majority votes. The Clinton administration confronted Republicans obtaining significant seats in the congress after the loss in the election. Republicans viewed the agreement as appeasement and were sceptical about fulfilling the agreement as agreed. Therefore, the agreement could not pass the congress, and the promise for suspending all actions and practices done by the United States could not be fulfilled. This resulted in North Korea to break the agreement since they were not receiving what it promised. Later, it was found by Clinton's interview, that at that time, the United States forecasted that the system North Korea would collapse before the agreement is completed. This shows the importance of the actions and practices taken by the United States as a key solver of the relationship between the South and North.

As stated previously, the United States has a significant influence on the relationship between South and North and historically, they take actions with purpose. Their primary goal, as a keeper of international security, is to denuclearise North Korea. Denuclearisation is not a problem that can be solved by the United States; instead, it is a global affair associated with international societies such as China and Russia (Park, 2018). Therefore, the United States would need to consider different views and approaches on denuclearising North Korea from other East Asian countries. It is well understood that the United States and China have different perspectives and approaches to the problems regarding North Korea nuclear issues (Park, 2018). Regardless of differences in methods, the main objective is the same; to denuclearise North Korea and bring peace to related countries. International societies should take a uniform approach to North Korea's nuclear problem so that the negotiation is fairly and quickly processed. However, through a series of diplomatic efforts between North and international countries for the past 40 years, we have observed no return. There was always a pattern where initially, the North agreed with denuclearisation terms and processes, and

violated the agreed items through a new missile launch or nuclear experiment. Mostly, the main reason for these actions is to use their atomic power on negotiation. The purpose of the North spending millions of resources into nuclear development is for their protection in diplomatic situations. Being recognised as a country which holds nuclear weapons brings them a more significant benefit in negotiation. Currently, they are using it to reduce the economic sanctions forced by UNSC. However, the approach from the United States is substantial and apparent where the removal of sanctions would only be possible when followed by the complete denuclearisation from the North. A massive gap between the two countries could not be narrowed down even after the two leaders of nations met in Singapore and eventually, led to a failure of the second summit in Vietnam, leaving the impression that both countries are not willing to negotiate and would walk their path.

South and North rapprochement is strongly linked with the United States and other international societies. The United States as a key player between the South and North, their actions and practices sometimes become a barrier between two countries. The difference in position between the United States and North Korea and showing little willingness to compromise resulted in 50 years of a long process of denuclearisation. For the past 50 years, there were some positive signals, and people hoped that this time, it should be solved. It is well understood that precondition of the South and North rapprochement is complete denuclearisation of North Korea. The negotiation progress for denuclearising North Korea should not be slowed down, and the United States should focus more on understanding the situation in North Korea and vice versa.

## Conclusion

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Whether or not there are issues and barriers to South and North rapprochement, the process should be consistently progressed. For a successful rapprochement, first, it is essential to know what are the issues that make the gap between the South and North. This essay touched on three aspects of barriers; the fundamental differences between South and North created after the division since 1946, a cynical, pervasive view on rapprochement from South and North people, and the interference and disturbance from the interested international parties. One commonality among these three barriers is that we cannot ignore the positive or negative interference from other countries since, fundamentally, the division of South and North was

the result of their actions. In conclusion, for a peaceful rapprochement, South Korea should keep its strategic position intelligently and collaborate with international society.

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