

## An Overview of Inter-Korean Relations

Kuri Sravan Kumar

Doctoral candidate, Department of East Asian Studies, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India.

### ABSTRACT:

The Korean subject cannot ignore in international affairs, and the recent changes in international politics made Korean affairs tilt an uncompromised platform for big powers again.

Inter-Korean relations have zig-zag curves, which are always influenced by external factors. Initially, Korea was divided due to bloc politics, and then two separate ideologies dominated the peninsula. Later, two new nations (South Korea and North Korea) were established, and constant civil conflicts triggered the Korean War.

Korean War made a temporary mark into an unerased line in the peninsula. After onwards, several changes occurred in the concept of unification between South Korea and North Korea. The Cold War end brought two nations to a new level of understanding and joined as United Nations members. The Inter-Korean summits of 2000, 2007 and 2018 were initiated to bring peace, stability, and prosperity to the peninsula and discussed issues such as Northern Limit Line( NLL), Denuclearisation and reunification and others; the summits between America and North Korea are crucial in the enhancement of Inter-Korean relations.

It examines the Inter-Korean relations from the Cold War and post-Cold War period, including the nuclear problem and reunification of the Korean peninsula and their possibilities. It urges Inter-Korean relations to be the only way to raise a long-term plan of prosperity in the peninsula, and it is the first step to sketching the reunification map.


**Keywords:** *Korean War, Denuclearisation, Reunification, Summits.*

### INTRODUCTION:

The Korean peninsula was divided into South Korea and North Korea, and two different ideologies started influencing the peninsula with their principles. North Korea established the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK); here they emphasised the word Choson which is an essential chapter in Korean history, whereas as in South Korea established as the Republic of Korea (ROK) here they emphasised on the word Dae, it means great, which followed on the Korean identity and history. Nevertheless, Koreans believe their history began with the Tangun, whereas the Choson and Koryo dynasties are essential chapters in Korean history. Korean society is a working society, and Confucius's principles heavily influence the society's objectives. Confucianism is a

pillar in the nation-building process and brings stability and instability to the region.

After establishing two Koreas in the peninsula, there was an identity crisis, and both sides claimed as real Korea. North Korea chose Chosongul as their script in

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<b>Address for correspondence :</b> <b>Kuri Sravan Kumar</b> , Doctoral candidate Department of East Asian Studies, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India E-Mail ID: <a href="mailto:kuri.shravan@gmail.com">kuri.shravan@gmail.com</a> <b>ORCID ID:</b> 0009-0005-3486-8945			
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the Korean language, and South Korea chose Hangul as their script; subsequently, cultural language Vs standard Korean began in the Korean peninsula and then followed by others (Hong, 1991). The ideology, history, and societal subjects are crucial to understanding Inter-Korean relations.

Both the constitutions emphasise that the Korean peninsula belongs to them, and where the South Korean constitution's article 3 points that the Korean peninsula belongs to South Korea and whereas the North Korean constitution's article 1 points that North Korea represents all the people of Korea (Kim, 2004 p. 160-161). Initially, both claimed the rights on the entire Korean peninsula, blamed each other's government for illegal occupation, and had several conflicts.

### **Cold War**

In 1945, Japan was defeated in World War II, following the end of Japanese imperialism in the Korean peninsula. Then Soviet Union (SU) entered into the Pacific war and marched towards the northern part of Korea (Cumings, 1997 p. 187). And then United States of America (USA) started to expand from the southern side of the peninsula. In 1945, America began to bargain with the Soviet Union on the Korean peninsula (Gupta, 1977 p. 2); and following Korea got split up into two halves at the 38th parallel line without concern for the Korean people and then followed the two different ideologies as communism in North and capitalism in South are influenced in the peninsula.

Then, a four trusteeship was formed to address the Korean issue, but they failed; which led America to bring the Korean issue into the United Nations (UN) and it established United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) and then United Nations Commission on Korea (UNCOK) in Korea to lay unification in the peninsula (Gupta, 1977 p. 11). In 1948, an election was conducted on the southern side and established the ROK, and then the northern side formed the DPRK. The big powers indirectly dominated UNTCOK and UNCOK, so the UN organisations could not perform, leading to failure, further reflected in the Korean War. Some civil conflicts happened between South Korea and North Korea, which later spread into Korean War and extended into a big war.

### **Korean War:**

On June 25, 1950, the North Korean Army (6th Division) crossed the 38th parallel line with an invasion force with large troops; within a few days, Seoul had fallen under

North Korea (Cumings, 2011 p. 9); initially, the 6th Division was unstoppable. Subsequently, **United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted a resolution that North Korea immediately withdraw its force from the 38th parallel line and support South Korea** (Gupta, 1977 p. 21).

In July 1950, the UNSC established a unified military command under the United States of America (USA), and 16 nations contributed to the command. It comprises America, Canada, Colombia, Belgium, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Turkey, South Africa, Ethiopia, Philippines, Thailand and Australia, and medical units were India, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Italy (Gupta, 1977 p. 27).

In November 1950, China entered into the Korean War, as China was against the United Nations forces to cross the 38th parallel. Subsequently, the war was extended; however, on July 27, 1953, the Armistice Agreement was signed at Panmunjom, and it broadly covered two issues about Prisoners of War (POW) and the location of Demarcation line (Gupta, 1977 p. 70). The Korean War redline is called a DMZ (De-Militarise Zone) of four kilometres and sea, also divided as Northern Limit Line (NLL) (Roehrig, 2009 p. 9). The Armistice Agreement is not a peace treaty but a provisional cease of hostilities. The Armistice agreement was signed by North Korea, China, and the United Nations but not South Korea. South Korea had not signed the agreement, so a permanent peace treaty was not constructed between the sides, and a notion of constant thread and conflict continued between both Koreas.

### **After Korean War:**

After the Korean War, both sides' top priorities were to rebuild their countries, and the North Korean leader Kim Il-sung learned several lessons from China and the Soviet Union during the Korean War. Therefore, Kim Il-sung initiated the Juche idea, an extreme version of nationalism. Kim Il-sung projected himself as a liberator of the Korean people who dedicated himself to fighting for Korean independence; he created an abstract to justify his actions under Juche as self-reliance (Kang 2003, 43).

Kim Il-sung followed Stalin's model, and North Korea adopted the Soviet Union model of economic development, which focused more on heavy industry; just like Stalin, Kim Il-sung also used several tactics to prolong his rule in DPRK; and the Soviets called him

“Korean Stalin” reflects the depth of the relationship between both the nations. (Lim, 2009 p. 19).

South Korean President Syngman Rhee also learned some lessons from Korean War; therefore, he signed a Defence Treaty with America, and it made America take responsibility for the external security of South Korea, and American forces started residing in South Korea (Heo & Roehrig, 2014 p. 53). Syngman Rhee erased communism from South Korea with different methods to remove the competition.

From the initial division onwards, both sides’ top priority is to reunify the father’s land. In the early 1970s, South Korea and North Korea were progressing in economic strength, and both realised that unification by forceful absorption was no longer a feasible solution. Therefore, Kim Il-sung proposed 10 times about “Confederation Government” or “Federation” emphasised through the “Supreme National Committee” organised by the two governments’ common state function “Cultural and Economic Development Whole of Korea”, and South Korean President Park Chung-hee established the National Unification Board to discuss unification (Srivastava, 1982 p.76-79).

On July 4, 1972, as the change of world affairs, both sides signed an agreement of cooperative policies between South Korea and North Korea, and some of the key points were about reunification without foreign nations and others (Heo & Roehrig, 2014 p. 31). In 1972 South Korea -North Korea Joint Communiqué, an agreement to improve relationships and promote exchanges (Kim, 2004 p. 10). However, both sides should have implemented the policies of trust and non-provocation, which will further Inter-Korean relations.

In further, Park Chung-hee and Kim Il-sung, the two top leaders of both sides, proposed some important policies on reunification, such as the seven-point declaration by Park Chung-hee, whereas Kim Il-sung proposed a five-point program (Srivastava, 1982 p.76-79).

In 1973, Park Chung-hee stressed unification policy. On the other hand, Kim Il-sung pushed for the “Democratic Federal Republic of Koryo” (Heo & Roehrig, 2014 p. 32). Both sides started several proposals for reunification, but none was discussed thoroughly and restricted to papers; however, they understand that reunification is the only way to trust and progress. The highest level of military tension raised between South

Korea and North Korea between 1960s and 1970s (Heo & Roehrig, 2014 p. 30-31)

During South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan’s period, he invited Kim Il-sung to Seoul and want to discuss the Korean relationship based on the East and West Germany model as Seoul wished to develop a relationship with Pyongyang; however, the thing did not proceed as expected result, and once again the gaps continued between South Korea and North Korea relations (Heo & Roehrig, 2014 p. 32-33). South Korean President **Roh Tae-woo’s** government attempted to relax in the peninsula and announced the Declaration for National Self-Esteem, Unification, and Prosperity (Heo & Roehrig, 2014 p. 35). However, the policy failed, and talks never began. During this period, several thoughts were brought into the picture between the Koreas but were not implemented.

### **Post-Cold War**

In 1991, both Korean governments were officially recognised by the UN and simultaneously recognised each other’s government. Seoul and Pyongyang also signed an agreement on non-aggression, reconciliation and exchange and cooperation and a Joint Declaration on the Denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula (Heo & Roehrig, 2014 p. 35). In the post-Cold War, Denuclearisation is a top priority subject in Inter-Korean relations.

On April 6, 1993, the official resource of North Korea, Kim Il-sung, proposed the 10-Point Program for Korean Reunification (Korean Friendship Association). Kim Il-sung’s 10-Point Program is essential to understand North Korea’s stand on reunification, and this is the last reference to reunification by North Korea. Kim Il-sung is the founder and top respected leader of DPRK, and other leaders of North Korea were not much commented on reunification. So therefore, Kim Il-sung’s 10-Point Program was essential; hence, it may give enough space to improve Inter-Korean relations.

North Korea’s nuclear ambitions made Inter-Korean relations a nonmotile. After the end of the Cold War, multilateralism began in the Korean peninsula; however, the lack of trust and external pressure continued to blame politics. **In 1999 and 2000, military tension escalated between South Korea and North Korea in the West Sea (Yellow Sea). After Korean War**, on the maritime border, a Northern Limit Line (NLL) was created to separate North Korean forces from (Baengnyeong Island, Daecheong Island, Socheng Island, Yeongpyeong

Island and Woo Island) the United Nations Command (UNC) and this five islands controlled by South Korea (Roehrig, 2009 p. 9). In later days, NLL became a severe conflict between South Korea and North Korea.

In 2000, South Korean President Kim Dae-jung promoted more significant engagement with North Korea through the Sunshine policy. The Sunshine policy includes three principles as “peaceful coexistence, peaceful exchange, and peaceful unification”, and the three stages of unification formula as “the union of the state, union by federalism, and complete unification” (Heo & Roehrig, 2014 p. 37).

On June 15, 2000, Kim Dae-jung met Kim Jong-il in North Korea and had the first Inter-Korean summit. The key points of the summit were about unification, promotion of economic cooperation and others (Heo & Roehrig, 2014 p. 39). In 2003, the first Inter-Korean industrial complex was established in Kaesong, North Korea, which improved economic investment in North Korea. However, the Sunshine policy failed to reach its goal and invested money was transferred to North Korea’s nuclear missile program.

South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun proposed Peace and Prosperity policy for North Korea, and he met Kim Jong-il in 2007 and had the second Inter-Korean summit. The key points of the summit are about the Northern Limit Line (NLL), a reunion of separated families and economic cooperation and others (Heo & Roehrig, 2014 p. 43). Roh Moo-hyun’s government promoted the economic exchange between South Korea and North Korea and improved the trade and reunions for separated families between North Korea and South Korea.

South Korean President Lee Myung-bak revised the engagement policy with North Korea, followed reciprocity and Denuclearisation, then the Inter-Korean cooperation. If North Korea follows South Korean guidelines, it will support North Korea’s development programs and policy named “No Nuclear, Opening, 3000 plan” (Heo & Roehrig, 2014 p. 45).

South Korean President Park Geun-hee’s followed the Trust Process in North Korea, and the preceding government followed her policies (Heo & Roehrig, 2014 p. 48). In 2013, North Korea conducted its third nuclear test; in 2016, its fourth and fifth nuclear tests; in 2017, the sixth nuclear test and announced it became a nuclear force (Chronology of North Korea, 2017). In response, the entire Inter-Korean economic exchange and cooperation were shut down.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in’s followed long-term peace and prosperity in the Korean peninsula, including North Korea (Ministry of Unification, Moon Jae-in’s). Under the Moon Jae-in government, Inter-Korean relations were enhanced towards long-time peace and progressive talks, which led to Inter-Korean summits and America-North Korea summits.

The joint military exercise between South Korea and the USA is a key concern in Inter-Korean relations. During the Pyeongchang Olympics, the military exercises were stopped to make a peace initiative for DPRK to join in the Olympics and have a safe game; this step succeeded in bringing DPRK to the negotiation table.

The North Korean leader Kim Jong-un’s sister Kim Yo-jong attended the Pyeongchang Olympics along with some top representatives of North Korea. North Korean representatives were heartfully welcomed by the South Korean. In the post-Korean War, she was the first Kim family member to visit South Korea, and she turned into a focus light during the Winter Olympics. She gave the letter to Moon Jae-in, which wrote by Kim Jong-un (Kim, 2018).

After the sixth nuclear test, North Korea claimed that its nuclear program was completed and, therefore, needed to focus on other goals; the next goal is economic reliance which can only be successful through South Korea. Now that DPRK has completed the security-self defence, it focuses on the economy-self reliance. Therefore, Kim Jong-un needs the support and cooperation of South Korea, China, America, Japan and others to enhance the development of economic programs in North Korea.

On April 27, 2018, a historic summit at Peace House, Panmunjom, South Korea, between Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in, reflecting all Koreans’ unanimous aspiration for peace, prosperity and reunification. The Panmunjom Declaration carries “national reconciliation and unity, peace and prosperity”, and Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in confirmed the “complete Denuclearisation, a nuclear-free Korean peninsula” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). By this summit, both Korea united on the one time-zone as North Korea moved 30 minutes forward to show the same time as South Korea (North Korea Goes, 2018). The summit discussed the most important thing, such as the end of the Korean War, the Maritime peace zone and others. The Maritime peace zone is the key turning point between Inter-Korean relations, an NLL issue.



On May 26, 2018, the fourth Inter-Korean summit in South Korea focused on the complete Denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula and others, and this summit led Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump to meet at the Singapore summit and then in the Hanoi summit (Ministry of Unification, Important).

On September 18-20, 2018, the fifth Inter-Korean summit in North Korea and Moon Jae-in visited Pyongyang, and both sides signed the September Pyongyang Joint Declaration. The agreement focused on military hostility, promotion of cooperation and exchanges in various fields, issues of separated families and nuclear issues and others (Pyongyang Declaration, 2018). The failure of the Hanoi summit between America and North Korea reflects the halt progress of Inter-Korean relations, and later on, the spread of Coronavirus made North Korea follow a strict isolation policy.

In 2022, South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol on Inter-Korean relations proposed the “audacious plan”, an economic plan for North Korea if they were ready to follow complete Denuclearisation (Yoon Suk-yeol, 2022). The Yoon Suk-yeol administration’s priority for inter-Korean relations is complete Denuclearisation in North Korea and then follow other topics.

In 2022, North Korea’s Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA) passed a resolution on legalising the state policy on nuclear force, which is a response to South Korea’s audacious plan (Second-day Sitting, 2022).

### **CONCLUSION:**

The seven decades of Inter-Korean relations have had several ups and downs. During the Cold War period, it was considered that the Korean conflict could be resolved only through reunification, but there were no Inter-Korean summits. However, several proposals were initiated from both sides and failed to be executed. In contrast, in the post-Cold War, Inter-Korean summits were implemented, the nuclear issue was over-occupied, and the preference was on co-existence and, after then follows, reunification.

The Korean peninsula’s reunification is a dream of Korea, and it will be a long process with several challenges. The last reference to reunification by North Korea is in 1993 by Kim Il-sung on 10-Points Program, which reflects North Korea’s perspective. Whereas on the other hand, each president of South Korea has a different stand on the reunification policy. Therefore, there is a need for one comprehensive approach to

reunification, which can perform and progress under Inter-Korean relations. Both nation relations need to work as a sketch to the reunification map, and some points, such as NLL and time zone, are the achievements of Inter-Korean relations. The Inter-Korean relations are working with positive steps, and both sides agreed to work under one umbrella on various platforms but however unable to make significant progress. Inter-Korean summits policies are not implemented due to the change of governments in South Korea, external pressure and North Korea’s rigid approach. However, it is the only path to peace, stability and prosperity in the Korean peninsula.

North Korea generally follows the isolation policy; therefore, Inter-Korean summits are crucial to understanding North Korea’s objectives and requirements. Some must remember that North Korea’s most outstanding achievement is nuclear weapon development. They are now ready to engage in the progress of economic development as they need economic growth to achieve other goals. Inter-Korean relations must continue to improve North Korea’s plans and South Korea’s prospects and achieve the Korean dream of a reunited Korea.

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