

Is there a Realistic Way to Re-Unite the Two Koreas?

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The unification between North and South Korea seems imminent, but considering all the political, social and economic realities, this union may not be sustainable let alone being attainable. Recently, North Korea accepted an invitation by the southern side to attend the Olympics, a move that was widely applauded as an indicator for a possible unification soon. Nevertheless, the reunification of North and South Korea may not be realistically possible because the two countries are vastly different and the course would cost trillions of dollars at the expense of the economically advanced South Korea.

At the outset, South Korea is wealthier and more politically organized compared to her counterpart. The societies of these two arch rivals have grown far apart, and unification would imply that South Korea will need to invest massively in terms of finances to rebuild the Northern society, reeducate its people and raise all the financial costs of the unification agenda (Harding, 2018). According to some analyses, the cost of reunification would be approximately three trillion dollars, an amount that would not be economically sustainable (Niederhafner, 2013). Therefore, there would be no pragmatic method that can be used in pursuing the re-unification agenda.

Moreover, South Korea has an annual economic output of approximately two trillion dollars, an amount that is 50 times more than that of North Korea. There are 50 million people in South Korea, and is also heavily cited as a nation with a high number of advanced manufacturing industries such as mobile phone technologies and automobiles (Harding, 2018). On the contrary, North Korea, which has an estimate of 25 million citizens is known to be among the most closed economies in the world. Its state-planned, agriculture-based economy has been limping over the year, and sanctions from different countries characterize it. The political regime pursues nuclear

ambitions while the government has been blamed for violation of human rights (Niederhafner, 2013). The economic growth of the country has also been affected by the government's commitment to the development of its defense while infrastructural development and other sectors have been ignored (Cha & Kang, 2018). Therefore, considering all the economic disparities among North and South Korea, there would be no economically viable means to reunite them in a way that does not harm the economy of the South.

Additionally, the unification heavily relies on North Korea's commitment to denuclearization. Denuclearization of the North is a process that will take decades given the advancement that the country has made so far nuclear development. It would mean that the economy of the south is improved first and democratic institutions strengthened (Harding, 2018). However, North Korea has an active military base and demilitarizing would have other negative implications for its population. Perhaps, making North Korea a capitalist nation would help, but this would not be practically possible given the social, economic and political implications involved.

In retrospect, the reunification of North and South Korean is an uphill task that would cost trillions of dollars and decades of planning considering the economic, social and political differences between the two nations. North Korea has strained relations with most of the countries in the world including South Korea and the United States and resolving the existing armed conflicts. The two nations are vastly dissimilar in the sense that North is based on dictatorship and isolation while the south is a democracy, manufacturing and a technology hub. Therefore, unifying them would be costly and unrealistic.

References

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