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Abubakar Olajide Adebayo, Mari Einberg, Hardi Hansalu, Madli Mirme, Reigo Mond, Peter Nikkonen, Hendrik Tali

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Supervisors: Benjamin Klasche, Terry McDonald

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# Introduction

This paper has been written as part of a LIFE project in the University of Tallinn. The name of the LIFE project is “Sports in International Politics” and the authors of this paper form one group in the mentioned LIFE project. The authors have chosen one specific event in sports history to show the geo-political impact it had or still has. The event the authors have chosen is the formation of Team Korea for the women’s ice hockey team at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics of 2018, that consisted of players from both South and North Korea. The events will be analysed through an International Relations theory chosen by the authors, which is Liberalism.

The authors will first give a brief overview of the history of the two Koreas followed by the general description of the international relation theory of liberalism and the overview of Team Korea. The event will then be analysed through the international theory of liberalism and finally the authors will give an overview of the results of the event.

The aim of this paper is to show that international politics might affect different aspects of the social lives of people and that trivial events in the world of sports could point to changes in international politics.

# History and relations of the two Koreas

In the history part of this paper the authors will not elaborate about united Korea, but will instead give an overview about how it got divided.

When World War II ended with the Japanese surrender on 15 August 1945, the Korean people were divided along the 38th parallel into two military occupation Zones. The 38th parallel decision was masterminded by U.S. policy-makers as the best means of preventing the Russians from occupying the entire peninsula of Korea. President Harry S. Truman secured Marshal Joseph Stalin's promise to honour the 38th parallel on 16 August without ever having consulted a Korean (Lew, 2000). Although the world powers professed to give priority to Korean independence, it was never clear just how Korean autonomy was to be reinstated, as the phrase "in due course" connoted (Lew, 2000). During World War II, American leaders had entertained the idea of placing Korea under a joint trusteeship of four powers, the U.S., the USSR, China, and Great Britain, for an unspecified period of time before granting Korea full-fledged independence (Lew, 2000). It was this idea that ultimately became the basis of the Moscow Agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union (Lew, 2000).

All Koreans, with the exception of communists under Soviet influence, opposed the trusteeship plan and unable to break the impasse in the Korea situation through the Joint Commission, the United States opted to refer the issue to the United Nations, which was done in September 1947. ‘The result was that the United States forsaked its trusteeship plan in toto.

A Korean National Assembly thus formed and adopted the constitution in July and elected Syngman Rhee as the first president of the Republic of Korea (ROK) (Lew, 2000). President Rhee proclaimed the birth of the ROK on 15 August 1948 (Lew, 2000). The UN recognized the ROK on 12 December 1948 and the United States recognized the ROK on 1 January 1949 and withdrew its troops from the peninsula by late June of that year.

In December 1945, Kim became the head of the North Korean Branch of the Korean Communist Party, and in February 1946, he assumed the chairmanship of a de facto North Korean regime, styled as the North Korean Provisional People's Committee. In its first few years of existence, the regime maintained the facade that its three major political factions supported a united front (Lew, 2000). Thus, by February 1946, North Korea had a de facto government that was completely alienated from the political activity in the south (Lew, 2000). The northern leaders did not formalise their regime as a separate government until after the United Nations took the lead in creating the ROK (Lew, 2000). In August 1948, a nation- wide election was held to establish the Korean Supreme People's Assembly, and this Assembly ratified the constitution and elected Kim Il-sung as its premier, who then proclaimed the inauguration of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on 9 September 1948. The two regimes that emerged in Korea represented two conflicting ideological orientations (Lew, 2000). Both were committed to national reunification but only within their own separate ideological specifications (Lew, 2000).

Although Stalin was initially reluctant to support a North Korean attack on the South, he agreed to buttress Kim Il-sung and Pak Hǒn- yǒng's strategy "to reunify their fatherland" by recourse to a blitzkrieg in April 1950 (Lew, 2000). The North Korean leaders, who had a decisive edge over the South in military strength, launched the Korean War with a surprise attack on 25 June 1950 (Lew, 2000). On 1 October 1950, the UN forces crossed over the 38th parallel in hot pursuit of the North Korean invaders, deliberately violating the truce line (Lew, 2000). By the spring of 1951, a military stalemate developed around the 38th parallel (Lew 2000). The United States government responded to a Soviet initiative for truce talks in mid-1951 without consulting Korea. The negotiations commenced at Kaesǒng in July 1951 and dragged on for two years at P'anmunjom until armistice was signed on 27 July 1953 (Lew, 2000). South Korean leaders, including President Rhee, were virulently opposed to ending the war because they felt that too many casualties had been made to end the war. The U.S. appeased South Korean leaders by signing a mutual defence treaty in October 1953 (Lew, 2000). But a peace treaty was never formally signed and so the two Koreas are still at war.

Hope for reunification was the primary reason that the people of Korea took up arms and fought each other, however, the way that this internecine conflict was concluded made reunification an even more remote possibility. The war never resolved any of the central issues and resulted in tension- ridden post-war relations between North and South Korea (Lew, 2000). After 1953, the two rival regimes each came to amass armed forces of more than half a million men, each well-equipped with costly weapons to fight the other should fighting recur, which resulted in transforming two Koreas into heavily armed military camps, spawning military-dominated, authoritarian political cultures.

In December 1994, a neutral cabinet under Prime Minister Hyon Sung-jong supervised the presidential election, and Kim Young-sam, a civilian statesman of the ruling Democratic Liberal Party, became Korea's new leader. Today, the ROK is a member of the global village, maintaining diplomatic relations with a lot of countries, including the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Republic of China.

As the South made headway in achieving stability as a liberal democracy, North Korea was transformed into a socialist state through a series of reforms undertaken with Soviet military backing (Lew, 2000). Initially in the 1960s and 1970s, the DPRK registered steady economic growth, particularly in the field of agriculture, however, its socio-economic progress eventually stagnated. This was due to the state's dogmatic adherence to socialist Juche (autonomy) ideology, its lopsided emphasis on heavy industry, the reduction of foreign economic assistance, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the prolonged dictatorship of Kim Il-sung (Lew, 2000). The DPRK today remains one of the world's most impenetrable regimes, and since the mid-1990s, its population has experienced one of the worst famines of the 20th century (Lew, 2000).

Tension between the ROK and the DPRK eased somewhat in July 1972, when the two governments pledged to participate in a program of peaceful reunification (Lew, 2000). This concession, however, was never actuated: there was too much mutual distrust to overcome, aggravated by the fact that their supporters, the USSR and the U.S., were engaged in a chilling Cold War (Lew, 2000). North and South Korea resumed bilateral talks in 1989 in the hope of achieving a new age of reconciliation and cooperation. A series of high-level talks consequently hosted in Seoul and Pyǒngyang resulted in joint declarations for non-aggression and denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The death of Kim Il-sung in July 1994, coupled with improved relations between the U.S. and North Korea, makes the reunification of Korea an imminent reality and no longer a source of despondency for the Korean people (Lew, 2000).

## Inter-Korean Sports Diplomacy

Sport and the Olympic Movement were one of the fields for rivalry between the two governments, which resulted in numerous boycotts and fierce competition between athletes. On 20th of June 1947, the ROK was officially accepted as a member of the Olympic Movement. On 1st of July 1947, the Korean Olympic Committee was officially recognised. After 1948, the IOC did not recognise North Korea, so only South Korean athletes participated in the Olympics. North Korea was eventually recognised in 1962 by the IOC, because of a lot of pressure from the communist countries. But North Korea could participate in the Olympics only together with South Korea as a unified team, though South Korea did not initially agree and because of the threats from the IOC, negotiations began in 1963. In February 1963, initial agreement had been made but the discussion about the unified flag remained and so the negotiations failed. After that the IOC agreed both Koreas individually could participate in the Olympics. Inter-Korean negotiations from 1963 are regarded as one of the causes of the establishment of sports exchanges between North and South Korea in the future (Kobierecki, 2018). As a result, it can be perceived as one of the reasons for the view concerning the capability of sport to overcome diplomatic barriers (Kobierecki, 2018).

The inter-Korean ideological competition in the field of sport in an indirect way eventually began to create an opportunity for establishing sports cooperation between the two countries (Kobierecki, 2018). Mostly it has been hosting the sports events. There were many negotiations for Seoul Olympics 1988 that were initiated by North Korea, but that resulted in failure, as North Korea demanded too much and then failed to approach the deadlines, so as a result they boycotted the Olympic games, but in this situation there was some negotiation between North and South Korea. From March 1989 until February 1990 negotiations to form a joint team for the 1990 Asia Games in Beijing were held. The initiator was North Korea, as China agreed to take some help from South Korea on the organising part, by fearing to be left out. Although they agreed on the team name, the flag and the anthem to be played, the unified team was not formed at that time, since both parties could not agree on the time frame and that South Korea could not participate separately. Those symbols were to be used during more successful efforts of inter-Korean cooperation during sports mega-events, but the case of collaboration between fans from both Korean states should also be stressed, as they agreed on the flag and anthem.

Football ‘unification matches’ were held in October 1990 in both states’ capitals and constituted the first such exchange. Soon, new sports exchanges were arranged and in 1991 eventually a joint team was created for table tennis World Championships in 1991 (Kobierecki, 2018). The 1991 table tennis championships held in Japanese Chiba resulted in a historic victory by a unified Korean team, as a women’s double team representing both nations won a gold medal (Kobierecki, 2018). Creating a joint team for the event was a breakthrough in the mutual sports cooperation between two Koreas, as for the first time diplomatic negotiations on creating a joint team for a sports event succeeded (Kobierecki, 2018). Unfortunately, there was a serious deterioration of inter-Korean relations shortly after (Kobierecki, 2018).

Another shift in inter-Korean relations happened at the end of 1990s, this time as a result of the so-called Sunshine Policy pursued by South Korean president between 1998–2003 Kim Dae-jung (Kobierecki, 2018). The longest period of cooperation and exchanges in sport between North and South Korea so far began at the time (Kobierecki, 2018). In December 1999 North Korean national team in basketball played in South Korea a series of 4 matches (Kobierecki, 2018). The concept of joint participation of national teams of both Koreas in opening ceremonies of sports events including Olympic Games, with simultaneous independent participation in those events, was one of the most remarkable effects of the rapprochement (Kobierecki, 2018). This was achieved for the first time during the Olympic Summer Games in Sydney in 2000 (Kobierecki, 2018). During the opening ceremony, athletes from North and South Korea marched together dressed in the same uniforms under a white flag with deep blue shape of the Korean Peninsula (Kobierecki, 2018). During the Busan 2002 Asian Games, similarly as at the Olympics in Sydney, North and South Korean athletes participated in the opening ceremony together, dressed similarly and marching under white flag with the shape of Korean Peninsula, although without the Olympic circles (Kobierecki, 2018). The Asian Games flame was lit by two athletes together – one from North and one from South Korea (Kobierecki, 2018). Athletes from both countries, similarly as during the Sydney Olympics, marched together at opening ceremonies of Olympic Games in Athens in 2004 and Torino in 2006, as well as during Asian Winter Games in Chinese Changchun in 2007 (Kobierecki, 2018). In 2000 a first unification basketball tournament was organised in the capital cities of both states, with men and women all-stars teams and the matches in Pyongyang were the first sports events in North Korea broadcasted by television. Inter-Korean sports diplomacy directed at political rapprochement peaked in the middle of the first decade of XXIst Century and this could be seen either in joint marches during various sports mega-events or in numerous sports exchanges.

As inter-Korean cooperation in the field of sport was developing very well, a concept that both states should compete together during the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008 appeared, but despite negotiations being held almost till the beginning of the Games, the initiative did not succeed – as a result of failing to compromise concerning the

method of selection of athletes. The North desired an even representation of both states, while the South opted for selecting representatives concerning their achievements (Kobierecki, 2018). Directly before the Beijing Olympics, the relations between North and South Korea worsened as a result of resignation from Sunshine Policy by the new South Korean president and with regard to the death of a South Korean tourist shot by North Korean soldier near Mount Kumgang in July 2008 (Kobierecki, 2018). The period of flourishing positive inter-Korean sports diplomacy was over.

A chance to utilise sport for the sake of shaping positive relations between North and

South Korea appeared again in 2014, in respect to the third Asian Games held on South Korean soil – in Incheon (Kobierecki, 2018). As a result of worse relations between two Koreas, Asian Games in Incheon lacked reconciliation symbols that were present during the event in Busan, as a result there was no joint march during the opening ceremony and North Korean national symbols could not be displayed publicly. But since some North Korean elite government officials also visited South Korea and their officials, new discussions started again.

# International Relations Theory of Liberalism

A fundamental part of the study of international relations, as in many other academic fields, are the theories. Perhaps the two biggest rivalries in IR are the realist school of thought and the liberal school of thought, in a shorter way, realism and liberalism. Especially after WWII, realism became a major theory in the study of international relations (Baylis et al., 2014). According to realism, the world consists of power-seeking sovereign nations that are competing with each other in an anarchic world system (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). Realists see power as a zero-sum game between states and the fundamental concern for states is survival. Therefore national interests are above all other interests. Realism dates hundreds of years back and classical realist thinkers are for example the ancient Greek historian Thucydides, the Renaissance philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli and the seventeenth-century English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). Although we’ve seen an increase of all kinds of international organisations and institutions such as the UN or the EU, realists see these actors as secondary compared to states who according to them are the primary actors of world politics.

 In our text, however, we will use liberalism, perhaps the best challenger for realism, as our theory. Liberalism disagrees with the realist assumption of *state-centrism*. Although liberalism doesn’t disagree with the importance of nation-states, they highlight the importance of other actors as well such as civil society, businesses or NGOs. Of course for liberalism also individuals are a really important focus of analysis. Liberalism also disagrees with the generalisation of states as always being of a certain kind. According to liberalism, like people, also states can have different characteristic features, some of them being more hostile and ready to use for example military means to achieve its goals, and some of them more friendly and tolerant, and therefore, we cannot make broad generalisations (Baylis, 2014 et al., p. 114). Therefore, whereas realists see states always competing with each other, liberalists think that states can also be friends and it’s more about cooperation than conflict. Liberalism is more optimistic with perceiving world politics and human nature in general and often emphasises the importance of democracy, human rights, economic modernization. Contrary to realism, liberalism doesn't see conflicts as inevitable – there’s always space for cooperation, progress and peace and goals can be achieved through *soft power* as well. For example the European Union is proof that states can also cooperate and even give away their power and sovereignty and instead focus more on cooperation. Also, if a conflict occurs, according to liberalism, the reason for this isn’t the anarchic world system of power-seeking nation states. The reason varies among liberals but three important reasons are imperialism, failure of balance of power, and undemocratic regimes. The last reason is important for liberalism. An important contributor to liberalism is the democratic peace theory. The main claim of this theory is that democratic states are highly unlikely to go to war with each other (McGlinchey et al., 2017, p. 23). Liberalism is of course a supporter of liberal values such as individualism, tolerance, human rights, equality and freedom of speech. Well-known liberal thinkers include Jeremy Bentham, Immanuel Kant, John Locke and John Stuart Mill. Like realism, also liberalism has many sub-categories such as *sociological* and *institutional* which will be discussed more later in the text.

 We will also connect our case with sports diplomacy which isn’t actually a theory but rather a tool to describe the connection between sports and diplomacy. Sports diplomacy isn’t the most studied topic in political science or international relations, and therefore, there isn’t that much academic literature about it. However, a known author of this field is Stuart Murray. He defines sports diplomacy as “conscious, strategic and ongoing use of sport, sportspeople and sporting events by state and non-state actors to advance policy, trade, development, education, image, reputation, brand and people-to-people links” (Murray, 2018). What this basically means is that sports, sportspeople and sports events can be used as a tool to achieve different goals related to many different affairs. In his famous speech, Nelson Mandela emphasised the importance of sports to unite people and promote many liberal and fundamental values. He stated: “sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. Sport can awaken hope where there was previously only despair. Sport speaks to people in a language they can understand” (The Global Goals, 2021). We will later show how the 2018 Winter Olympics and the unification of the hockey team influenced the diplomatic relations between the two countries.

# Team Korea

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) – the two countries in conflict – have previously competed under different flags in international competitions. However, there have been events where different countries compete as a unified team or under the same flag. For example East and West Germany competed together from 1952 to 1964. In 1960 and 1964 Summer Olympics Egypt and Syria joined together as the United Arab Republic. Even North and South Korea walked together at the opening ceremony of Sydney 2000, Athens 2004 Summer Olympics and Turin 2006 Winter Olympics, but they had never competed together. Until making history at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in 2018. (Neto, 2021)

One of the highlights from the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics was the unified Korean women’s ice hockey team. Due to the complicated relations between the two Koreas, the integration of women’s hockey players from North and South Korea was received favourably by many people. (Waleik, 2020)

The idea for combining the North and South Korean teams was already discussed as early as 2001, when South Korea lost its bid to host the 2010 Winter Olympics. The idea got more serious at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, when the two Koreas and the IIHF Women’s Committee started discussions. The news of the unification of the two teams came suddenly just three weeks before the start of the Olympic Games. The coach for the Unified team, Sarah Murray, admitted that she didn’t have much faith in the unification of the two teams until the decision. (Aykroyd, 2019)

But the news about North and South Korean women’s unified team didn’t only receive positive reactions, there was a certain amount of controversy involved as well. Newspapers played an important role in how people viewed this situation. Progressive newspapers covered this topic more often during the Olympic Games and on a positive note, while conservative papers did it less and mostly covered it negatively. Also on social media, like Twitter, the reception about the team was initially positive, but negative comments started to increase when controversial statements from politicians came up and the issue of North Korean players replacing some members from the South Korean team arose. (Oh, Kim, Love & Seo, 2021)

A special rule was made for the Korean team and they were allowed to have a 31-player roster, although for other teams it was limited to 23 players. This was due to the fact that 12 North Korean players were added to the South Korean team. Addition to that, the Korean team had to play three North Korean players, who were less skilled than their South Korean teammates and were using different hockey vocabulary. For example, South Koreans used English hockey terms like „pass“, the North Koreans used the same term „contact me“ in Korean. To solve that, a dictionary was created to help with the language barrier. (Waleik 2020)

The unified team also caused some controversy in South Korea. While most younger South Koreans were welcoming towards the idea, the older generation was appalled to learn that their nation was collaborating with North Korea. Most South Korean players now felt they were political pawns and feared that the focus would be on politics instead of hockey. (Waleik, 2020)

On February 10th 2018, the unified Korean team made their olympic debut at the Kwandong Hockey Centre in Gangneung and in the midst of both scepticism and progression, it was something spectacular. More than 3,600 eager spectators, among them 200 perfectly synchronised North Korean cheerleaders attended the game against Switzerland, which is a big number for not such a popular sport in Asia. (Aykroyd, 2019)

The first game ended in an 8-0 Switzerland victory, with Alina Muller tying the Olympic record with four goals and six points. However her achievement was left in the background and the main focus was on the presence of political and sports figures like Kim Yo-jong, the sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un; Moon Jae-in, the president of South Korea; and Thomas Bach, the president of the International Olympic Committee. (Aykroyd, 2019)

Unsurprisingly, the Unified team, lacking stars, finished last in the eight-team Olympic competition. It lost five games and was outscored 28-2. (Aykroyd, 2019) Despite the results and diplomatic fallout, there were some bittersweet feelings about saying goodbye to the teammates. When it was time for the North Korean players to leave, the South Korean team gathered at their bus. Many South Korean players admitted they were surprised how sad it was to say goodbye to their North Korean teammates, the ones they had resented before. (Waleik, 2020)

# Analysis of Team Korea at the Olympics 2018

When analysing the unification of the two Koreans into one women’s ice hockey team in the 2018 Pyeongchang winter Olympics through an IR theory, the theory of liberalism gives us a good understanding of the phenomenon. Liberalism gives an alternative approach to the hard-power focused and perhaps even pessimistic way of perceiving international relations which is typical to the realist school of thought. In this section, we will justify our theory of choice by studying the case from a liberal perspective, and we will also introduce the concept of sports diplomacy and pay more attention to the diplomatic side of the event.

Liberalism is perhaps the best challenger to the realist school of thought and its anarchic way of perceiving world politics. Although the relationship between North Korea and South Korea has been tense for decades, the 2018 winter Olympics showed that this isn’t inevitable – there’s always an opportunity for progress, peace, for more cooperative relations. All these elements are typical for liberalism (Baylis et al., 2014). The athletes from both countries marching together in the opening ceremony under a unified Korean flag and holding each other's hands, and later competing as one team in women’s ice hockey was proof that through sports, steps towards less tense relations can be achieved. Sociological liberalism argues that we shouldn’t only focus on the state actors but pay also attention to different groups and individuals because they can strengthen the cooperation between the states (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). In our case, the group is of course the women’s ice hockey team that consists of individuals from both Korea. The athletes were “normal” citizens and not for example diplomats or heads of states. Thus the focus of analysis is on the individual level. Another subcategory of liberalism, institutional liberalism, focuses on organisations and institutions and sees them as a forum for cooperation and trust-building (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). Of course, in our case, we can't really talk about an organisation such as the United Nations or EU, but we can still perhaps see the Olympics as a certain kind of forum where states can come to promote peace and strengthen relations. Olympics have the ability to bring even distant states or nations together.

A concept specifically made for the purpose to describe how sports are connected to relations between states is sports diplomacy. There isn’t too much academic work discussing sports diplomacy but perhaps the best-known author on this topic is Stuart Murray. He defines sports diplomacy as “conscious, strategic and ongoing use of sport, sportspeople and sporting events by state and non-state actors to advance policy, trade, development, education, image, reputation, brand and people-to-people links” and “the use of sport to realise goals, minimise friction and – generally – bring strangers closer together” (Murray, 2018, p. 3). Therefore, the term doesn’t only limit to relations between states but also takes into account non-state actors which Murray mentions Beyond Sport and Right to Play as examples (Murray, 2018). Sports is thus a tool to promote cooperation and progress between different actors but it’s also a tool for the states to modify their public image. It is also a tool to achieve certain goals. As our case shows, sports have the ability to get even distant states closer together, and through sports diplomacy, the two Koreas could, at least for a moment, have more peaceful and cooperative relations again. Before this, as our text has brought out, there was tension between the two states and we really couldn’t talk about a “friendship” between the two Koreas. As sports diplomacy and institutional liberalism shows, in this case the Winter Olympics 2018 was kind of a forum to unite two nations again. This particular sports event brought both the athletes and also officials on the state level together. As shown earlier sports have played a particularly important role specifically in North-South Korean relations and it’s been through sports that these two countries have had the opportunity to have at least some kind of relations. Unfortunately, although some progress happened during the 2018 winter Olympics, the cooperation didn’t last that long but at least some progress was made.

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# Aftermath of the Olympics and the future of Team Korea

The progress made at the Olympics is only the beginning of improving inter-Korean relations, but the thaw is still too nascent and not deep enough to over- come what remains not only deep-rooted distrust, but also starkly different conceptions of what “denuclearisation” entails between South Korea/U.S., on the one hand, and North Korea on the other. In the end, it is progress on the issue of denuclearisation, based on international agreement and compromise, and a parallel improvement of relations between the U.S. and North Korea, which holds the key to a sustainable thaw in inter-Korean relations (Focus Asia, 2018). Although, the relations did get better after the Olympics in 2018, but since 2019, after the negotiations with USA soured because North Korea didn’t agree with the denuclearisation programm, the inter-Korean relationship took a backstep too.

In 2020, North Korea said to cut off all communication lines with South Korea and it was all due to South Korea’s demand to denuclearise first too (Choe, 2020). Also North Korea has not participated in the Tokyo Summer Olympics 2020 and also the Beijing Winter Olympics 2022, the reason being Covid-19. But there were talks about sending jont Olympics teams to the Tokyo Summer Olympics, but since North Korea pulled out there has been no more talks about it. A resolution has also been submitted toSouth Korean National Assembly to seek support for staging the Gangwon 2024 Winter Youth Olympic Games jointly with North Korea. It promotes the possibility of the South Korean Government jointly hosting the Winter Youth Olympics with North Korea (Burke, 2021). However, hopes of co-hosting the Youth Olympics Games have been dealt a blow by the suspension of the Olympic Committee of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (PRK NOC) by the International Olympic Committee. In 2021 North and South Korea have also submitted a joint bid to host the 2032 Summer Olympics, but there are some challenges to overcome. Firstly, the uncertainty if the IOC will even consider the joint bid. Secondly, inter-Korean relations have not markedly progressed since 2018 and would need to improve significantly before 2025, when the IOC would probably make its decision (Rich jt, 2021). Thirdly, even if inter-Korean relations improve, South Korea would likely have to pay some of the costs for Olympic facilities in Pyongyang (Rich jt, 2021). Also, South Korea should remain aware that if a joint bid is accepted, concerns dealing with human rights issues in North Korea will probably surge and could potentially depress participation (Rich jt, 2021).

In conclusion, there was some progress right after the Olympics in 2018, but since then there has been no progress at all and maybe even some regress.

# Conclusion

In this paper the authors gave a brief overview of the history of the two Koreas followed by the general description of the international relation theory of liberalism and the overview of Team Korea. The event was then analysed through the international theory of liberalism and finally the authors gave an overview of the results of the event.

The authors can conclude that liberalistic efforts to have closer and peaceful relations between North and South Korea have been made ever since the two Koreas were divided. The chosen event of unified women’s hockey team at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics of 2018 has been one of the most marginal of those efforts as it showed that on an individual level the people of Korea want to have closer relations and cooperation and even though the relations have regressed since 2018 there is still the will to change the politics between the two countries through sports.

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