Effectiveness of Communication as A Tool for Improving the Relationship Between North Korea And South Korea

Samuel Onuh, (PhD)

Department of Political Science and Diplomacy,Veritas University, Abuja Nigeria.

Abstract:

The Korean war has lasted more than 70 years, and it is one of the longest conflicts in human history. One of the implications of the war has been that no line of communication existed between the North and the South despite the heightened tension. The data for this study were collected from secondary sources such as textbooks, Journal articles and internet sources while content analysis was used to analyse the data collected. This study revealed that after the former Soviet army cut off the phone connection between Seoul and Haeju shortly after liberation on August 26, 1945, the first hotline between the two Koreas was not set up at Panmunjom until September 22, 1971. There have been 50 active lines since 1971, including a hotline for leaders of the two Koreas as well as channels for military and intelligence cooperation. But all communication between the North Korean military and the United Nations Command (UNC) was kept going until North Korea abruptly shut off all contact with the South. Lastly, this study recommends among other things that increase inter-Korean contact, will enable exchanges and collaboration, including inter-Korean official discussions, and support the development of humanitarian aid.

Key words: Korean, War, Communication, Peace, Conflict

Introduction

The Soviet Union's involvement in the peninsula's northern region following World War II marked the beginning of the Korean Peninsula problem. The takeover by the Soviet Union was viewed as a Communist propagandist effort by the United States. In order to stop this spread of Communism, the United States therefore took control of the southern portion of the peninsula. The United States and the Soviet Union only occupied the peninsula for three years before leaving in 1948. Even though they departed the peninsula, it had already been split into two sections, not just geographically but also philosophically, putting the two Koreas in constant war.

The Korean War, which began in June 1950 and has claimed millions of lives over the course of three years, is still going strong and shows no signs of ending soon. The two Koreas have avoided escalating into a significant military escalation due to a tenuous power balance and the institutional support of an armistice regime. Due to a lack of steps to foster mutual confidence, the lines separating peace and collaboration have become increasingly hazy, frequently developing into open disputes (Chung-in, et al 2021). Besides, Seoul's offer of reciprocal notice and inspection of military training and exercises has been continuously rebuffed by Pyongyang. More importantly, there were no means of communication. The likelihood of unintentional collisions between the two in the 1950s and 1960s was increased by their utter lack of communication. After the former Soviet army cut off the phone line between Seoul and Haeju shortly after liberation on August 26, 1945, the first hotline between the two Koreas was created at Panmunjom on September 22, 1971, 26 years later.

In Panmunjom, two telephone lines had been set up by the two Koreas at the time, connecting the "Freedom House" of the South and the "Panmungak" of the North. At the first inter-Korean Red Cross preliminary discussions, which were conducted on September 20 of the same year and organised to prepare for the inter-Korean Red Cross talks requested by the then South Korean Red Cross President, Choi Doo Sun, they concurred on the necessity of communication channels. Since that time, the channel has been essential as a regular method of liaison for the two Koreas' governments, in accordance with Article 7 of the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement on Non-aggression, Reconciliation, and Exchange and Cooperation, which came into force in February 1992 (Chung-in, et al 2021). Russia proposed the proposal of having the six-party summit on March 24, 1994. According to reports, two organisations and six states participated at the summit. The nations include the two Koreas, Japan, Russia, China, and the United States. The meeting also called for the participation of the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). However, the Russian proposal included a number of points, including a ban on nuclear proliferation on the Korean peninsula, assurances that the two Koreas won't meddle in one another's internal affairs, promotion of both Koreas' military industries, replacement of the 1951 armistice with a new, more effective agreement, and, finally, strengthening of certain conference participants' strategic ties (the United States relations with DPRK and DPRK relations with Japan) (Toloraya, 2008).

Inter-Korean relations have substantially changed from hostility and conflict to reconciliation and collaboration since the first Korean summit on June 15, 2000. Later, other inter-Korean hotlines were set up. After the 2000 Korean summit, a direct telephone line was established between the aviation control centres at Incheon International Airport and Sunan Pyongyang International Airport appreciations in part to the 1997 inter-Korean and International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) agreements, which were signed but never put into effect (Park, 2016).

The Department of United Front of the Korea Workers' Party in the North and the South's National Intelligence Service (NIS), which worked together to prepare for the 2000 Pyongyang summit, established a direct channel of contact to monitor the execution of the summit's June 15 statement. Additional direct communication lines were later installed, including military ones in the years 2002 to 2003, maritime ones between maritime authorities in 2005, ones for the inter-Korean joint committee of the Kaesong Industrial Complex in 2013 and ones for the inter-Korean Joint Liaison Office.

Most significant was the launch of a hotline between the two Koreas' leaders in 2018. On March 4–5, 2018, two South Korean special envoys, Dr. Suh Hoon, then-Director of NIS, and Ambassador Chung Eui-yong, then-National Security Advisor, visited Pyongyang to review the general state of inter-Korean ties. They informed Chairman Kim Jong-un about President Moon's willingness to set up a direct hotline, and he approved the suggestion right away. On April 27, 2018, the first historic summit took place, and a summit hotline was established. It was successfully used to the planning of an unofficial summit discussion on May 26, 2018. Additionally, at certain intervals, the two Koreas checked the communication channels on a regular basis (Kim, 2020).

One of the importance of communication between the North and South Korea is that it reduces the tendencies of the hostility escalating into full war. For instance, Six South Korean sailors were killed and 19 were injured when a North Korean patrol boat unexpectedly assaulted a high-speed boat of the South Korean Navy on June 29, 2002. With 13 fatalities and 25 injuries, North Korea also incurred significant casualties. It was clear that North Korea was acting aggressively. But the conflict did not intensify. According to, Lim Dong-won, he stated that the North immediately informed the South by hotline that the event was not purposefully planned or intended. The North Korea affirm that the only individuals accountable for this unintentional conflict were those of lower ranks. The North Korea apologized and call for collaboration to prevent future occurrence. According to the statement, the event was localized and was not involving senior North leaders. Although they had apologized, the North side did not want the incident to go worse (Lim, 2012).

Again, communication is also key in improving inter-Korean relations. For instance, inter-Korean ties after the first Korean summit in June 2000. The deployment of President Moon's two special envoys to Pyongyang and the visit to Seoul of Kim Jong-un's special envoy Kim Yong-chol in February 2018 were both coordinated via the NIS-United Front Department hotline. The official phone line between the Ministry of Unification and the North also acted as a regular route of communication with the North Korea for exchanging messages, setting up official and unofficial trips, and airing complaints over interactions and collaboration among the two Koreas (Kim, 2018). It is against this background this study seeks to examine the effectiveness of communication as a tool of improving the relationship between North and South Korea in contemporary times.

Conceptual Review

Communication

The definition of communication has been attempted by several scholars in the literature. The Association of Perioperative Practise argues that word communication is derived from the Latin word "communis" which means "communication" first appeared. Hence, the Latin word communis serves as the origin of communication (Lunenberg, 2010). Lunenberg (2010) asserts that one of the key words in communication is the word "common," which implies that the source and the recipient must share a common understanding of the message in order for it to be understood.

The typical understanding of communication is that it involves social contact. There is often a sender (source) and a receiver in communication. It entails the exchange of signals between the participants. These cues might be gesture or visual (photographic), verbal or graphic. Essentially, communicating includes deciphering codes that are performed with the eyes, body, or voice. There is always a process involved, regardless of how it is carried out, in which a meaning intent is initiated and sent to the interlocutor (receiver). According to Daniel (2013), the communication process is fully complete when feedback (the act of the receiver reacting to the signal by starting a new round of meaning exchange) has been transmitted to the sender (source).

Communication, according to Giffin et al (1976), is the process of both ascribing and producing meaning. It is the interaction and sharing of ideas among group members. Communication is defined as "the activity or process of expressing ideas and feelings or of imparting information to people" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 2004). It is acceptable to assume that communication is the act of transmitting data and messages from one location to another and between individuals.

Communication, according to the Online Business Dictionary, is a two-way process. Participants must develop a shared understanding that goes beyond just absorbing and decoding information, news, ideas, and emotions. They must also develop and communicate the communications' underlying meaning (Daniel 2013). Additionally, it is believed that communication may link individuals or locations. Because an organisation cannot run without communication across levels, departments, and workers, it is also recognised as a crucial management function (Online Business Dictionary, 2010).

Literature Review

There is limited study on the communication between North Korea and South Korea in recent literature in International Relations. Kim et al.'s (2007) research sheds light on the growing hostility that South Koreans feel towards North Koreans who reside there. South Koreans showed less compatriotism and hostility towards North Korean refugees in 2005, according to the findings of the nationwide survey conducted by the Korean Institute for nationwide Unification. The majority of them stated that they had "no particular emotion" for one another. North Koreans residing in South Korean society, on the other hand, claimed to feel "emotionally distant" from their South Korean neighbours. According to the writers, such disregard for one another might frequently lead to mistrust, and instances of South Koreans defrauding North Koreans have only served to confirm that view. However, there is a gap in the literature on the effectiveness of communication as a tool of improving the relationship between North and South Korea in contemporary times.

Cho (2011) examines South Korea in three different ways from the viewpoint of North Korea. First, North Korea is considered as an integral part of South Korea's "imagined self". "We, the same Korean" sums up the North Koreans' perspective, which emphasises the same ancestral history with the South Koreans. The second representation of South Korea is the "tainted but strong self," which portrays South Korea as a society in need of rescuing from American imperialism. South Korea is frequently referred to the North Korean propaganda as a colony of the West. However, there is a gap in the literature on the effectiveness of communication as a tool of improving the relationship between North and South Korea in contemporary times.

Manojlovic (2020) examined the key micro-level elements that support the resistance to war of South and North Korean communities residing in the Seoul metropolitan region. At the micro-level, the idea of resilience is characterized as having three components: acknowledgment of interpersonal and societal interdependence, interactional quality, and attitudes that foster cooperation and trust. Manojlovic (2020) observed on problem-solving, members of the North Korean diaspora and their South Korean counterparts provided a chance to gauge the resilience of the community to conflict. The results demonstrate that education that fosters understanding, tolerance, and respect as well as meaningful community contact can increase resilience. However, this study identified gap in the literature on the effectiveness of communication as a tool of improving the relationship between North and South Korea in contemporary times. It is against this background this study seeks to make contributions to this research endeavour.

Effectiveness of Communication Between North Korea and South Korea

Since opening of communication channel between the North and South Korea in 1971, the communication channels between the two Koreas have alternated between being suspended and being restored, depending on shifts in inter-Korean relations as well as broader external environments, particularly in the DPRK-US relations. As a result, they have not been stable. The hotlines worked well while inter-Korean ties were excellent, but they were shut down when things got bad. To increase inter-Korean contact, enable exchanges and collaboration, including inter-Korean official discussions, and support the development of humanitarian aid, they nonetheless proved to be effective methods for establishing confidence. More significantly, they have worked well as a system for prompt information exchange that prevents unintentional military conflicts (Chung-in, et al 2021).

However, poor or lack of communication between the North and South Korea can escalate tension and hostility between Koreans. For instance, the incident in which a South Korean official was shot and killed by the North Korean navy on September 22, 2020, demonstrates how strained inter-Korean ties might become in the absence of effective avenues of communication. A member of the South Korean government vanished early on September 21 from a maritime guide ship that belonged to the ROK Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fishery. Also, important drawback is North Korea's relatively undeveloped telecommunications infrastructure, which makes efficient communication challenging. The majority of the inter-Korean hotlines used copper wires, which made for sporadic and poor-quality transmission. It was nearly difficult to conduct video conferences. Optic fibre lines, however, have been put in place since 2007 to facilitate the Kaesong Industrial Complex's video reunion of split-up families and businesses.

On the whole, depending on the state of ties between the two Koreas as well as those between North Korea and the United States, inter-Korean hotlines have seen ups and downs. Only two communication channels are now in use, one for air traffic control and the other connecting the UNC to the North Korean military at Panmunjom. This indicates that since June 9th, 2020, there has been no connection between the South and the North. Seoul is keen to open communication channels again, but Pyongyang is silent. After the two presidents exchanged private letters in September 2020, there were some encouraging indications from the North, but nothing more has happened since.

Conclusion

One of the most crucial elements of methods to increase confidence is communication. Not only has it been crucial in minimising unintentional conflict escalation and inadvertent military conflicts, but it has also made communication and collaboration between the two Koreas easier. Although North Korea has overpoliticized the inter-Korean hotline, which has caused it to cycle between being suspended and being resumed. Such communication breakdowns might exacerbate the precariousness and uncertainty of the Korean Peninsula's overall security. Restoring mutual confidence and reopening hotlines between Seoul and Pyongyang will not be

simple given the present nuclear standoff. The old communication infrastructure's technological limitations provide additional difficulty. It is against this background this study makes the recommendations as measures to improve the communication between North Korea and South Korea.

Recommendations

First, there is the need for the United Nations to engage the leadership of both the North Korea and South Korea on the need to open communication among them. This will among other things reduce the tendency of the current tension escalating into full blown war. Second, there is the need for constant communication North Korea and South Korea especially when each country intended to undertake a military drill. Third, the United Nations through the Security Council should open up a renegotiation platform with North Korea in a bid the discourage further nuclear threat from North Korea which has pose enormous threat to neighbouring countries like South Korea and Japan.

The United Nations should engage in high-level negotiations with both Korean governments to open the borders to regular citizens and let them to visit both countries' territories. This would help to resolve a portion of the conflict and would prevent the two countries from officially declaring one other enemies.

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