ROLE OF TOURISM IN UNIFYING THE TWO KOREAS

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Abstract: This paper reviews the origin of the Korea division, the rationale for reunification, and the failure of past political efforts for reunification. Its primary focus is on the relationship between tourism and peace in the context of Korea and the role tourism could play in spearheading a thrust towards reunification. Two tracks in diplomacy are recognized. Track one diplomacy is the official channel of government relations. Track two diplomacy is the unofficial channel of people-to-people relations. In the context of Korea, tourism is perceived as a primary vehicle for facilitating successful track two diplomacy. It offers a nonthreatening apolitical way of tentatively initiating closer relationships and creating an environment which could facilitate more formal political negotiations. Keywords: track two diplomacy, tourism, peace, Korean division.

INTRODUCTION

The modern world cannot be imagined without contacts, both intergovernmental and interpersonal. For it is personal impressions that help people living under different social systems overcome mutual distrust, get to know better their neighbors' way of life and realize that we all live on one planet which must be protected (Pavlov 1986:5).

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This statement made by Pavlov, Chairman of the USSR State Committee for Foreign Tourism, also suggests the contributing role that tourism can play toward the peace and reunification of the two Koreas: Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Republic of Korea. A large number of tourism studies have addressed economic issues, but there has been little investigation of the contribution of tourism to political issues. Richter (1983a:314) has observed, "The role tourism plays in influencing international relations is understudied but scarcely unimportant." The role of tourism in facilitating ethnicity or cultural cohesiveness is one of the potential contributions that tourism can make as an agent of political socialization (Richter 1983a). In this context, there may be no place in the world in which tourism could play a more positive role than Korea.

The Korean peninsula is a politically precarious region (Figure 1) which is widely considered to be one of the most dangerous threats to world peace outside the Middle East. Thus, movement towards reunification of Korea, rather than acceptance of the status quo, would contribute much to the maintenance of global peace. The history of political negotiations seeking the peaceful reunification of the two Koreas has demonstrated that traditional political efforts are unlikely to lead to substantive progress towards reunification.

This paper discusses the contributions of tourism as a supplement or alternative to traditional political mechanisms for facilitating peace and reunification on the Korean Peninsula. First, it briefly reviews the origin of the Korean division. Second, it discusses the rationale for reunification. Third, past political efforts towards reunification are reviewed and reasons for their failure are considered. Fourth, the paper presents a discussion of the relationship between tourism and peace. Finally, an alternative strategy for the peace and reunification of the Korean peninsula is suggested in which the role of tourism in central.

ORIGIN OF THE KOREAN DIVISION

In the waning days of World War II, as the defeat of Japan seemed imminent, the Allied powers faced the question of what to do with Korea, a Japanese colony. The destiny of Korea after its liberation from Japanese imperialism had been deliberated at a series of wartime Allied conferences attended by the President of the United States (Franklin D. Roosevelt, initially, and then Harry Truman), the British Prime Minister (Winston Churchill), a Chinese representative (Chang Kai-Shek), and the Soviet Prime Minister (Joseph Stalin). A conference in Cairo issued a communique on November 20, 1943, which stated that USA, UK, and China, "mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent." This principle of Korean independence was reaffirmed at the Yalta conference of February, 1945 and the Potsdam Declaration of July, 1945.

However, at that time, the United States feared that Soviet troops fighting the Japanese in Manchuria would sweep southward through Korea and install a Communist government. To forestall this, in a meeting on August 10, 1945, State Department planners in Washing-
ton decided to draw a line at the thirty-eighth parallel, with the Soviet Union occupying the North and American troops the South.

The decision to partition Korea, although intended initially as a temporary measure of political and military expediency, became permanent when the Soviets refused to take part in United Nations' sponsored elections in 1948. The cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union in the post-World War II era precluded any chance of Korean unification and inevitably bipolarization of the two Peninsula regimes emerged. Although there were disparities among the Koreans themselves as to what their political destiny should be after liberation (Cumings 1981; Merrill 1989), their views were overwhelmed by the major powers' ideological confrontations.
Rationale for Reunification

For a people with the same language, customs, and culture, co-existing for thirteen centuries within the same political and socioeconomic framework, it was unnatural to be divided and attached to two conflicting world orbits. There was no geographical raison d'être for the thirty-eighth parallel to become the Demilitarized Zone, an impassable barrier. There are four major interrelated forces which provide the pressure for reunification.

First, Koreans have over 5,000 years of unique national history and common heritage, despite living under different political systems since 1945. The Korean level of ethnic homogeneity is matched by only a few nations elsewhere in the world (Kim 1987). It is estimated that there are 10 million separated families in the Korean Peninsula due to the division. The emotional trauma experienced by these families is substantial. As the separation is prolonged, the level of anxiety and sense of desperateness increase, since the likelihood of contacting relatives in individuals' life times diminishes. These divided families provide continual pressure for reunification.

Second, Koreans clearly foresee the value of political and economic unity. All Korean leaders stress the imperative of unification for the development of a stronger, richer and more productive nation. A united Korea could bring about greater economic benefits to the people on both sides simply by reducing political tension between the two regimes. At present, scarce natural and manpower resources are being wasted by both sides in the quest for defense security through domination over each other. There are over 1.4 million soldiers on active duty. With 843,000 soldiers, North Korea has the world's sixth largest fighting force (Yu 1987). Billions of dollars are being expended by both Koreas for the maintenance of military power. Most of these resources could be diverted to peaceful productive ends if both sides were united into one nation.

Third, Korean leaders make Korean unification a central national goal. North Korean President Kim has stated that reunification is the greatest national priority. Every South Korean president has also stated that reunification is the supreme goal of the Korean people. Indeed, the illogicality and the tragic consequences of the Korean division have been so obvious to everyone that no Korean leader could afford to be reticent about the need for Korean reunification.

Fourth, reunification of the two Koreas has much to contribute to the maintenance of global peace. The observance of the artificial status quo in the Korean Peninsula has led to an arms race between the two Koreas, and the attendant possibility of an armed conflict which would involve other nations.

Past Efforts Towards Reunification

In the early 1950s, North Korea used force in an attempt to gain hegemony over all Korea. However, the Korean War ended in political stalemate (Powe 1986). In the aftermath of the Korean War which lasted three years, mutual hatred and suspicion inevitably emerged.
Both Koreas were devastated by the war and became preoccupied with economic rehabilitation and with consolidating their political structures. Consequently, talk of reunification was temporarily muted. Nevertheless, the two Koreas have never abandoned the idea of national reunification. On two occasions after the Korean War (in 1972–73 and 1984–85), they engaged in a dialogue to ameliorate their hostile relationship.

The beginning of rapprochement between the United States and China in the 1970s had a profound impact on North–South Korean relations. Consistent with the prevailing mood of détente between East and West, the Koreans themselves began to explore the possibility of reunification of their country. The first dialogue took place during 1972–73 when the South and North Korean Red Cross Societies met to discuss the problem of separated families between the two areas. A result of this remarkable development was a joint communique in July, 1972, stating that the two Koreas for the first time had agreed to hold meetings to address problems affecting reunification of the country. Subsequently, the two sides agreed to establish a North–South Coordinating Committee to propagate the principle of national unity, "transcending differences in ideas, ideologies, and systems," and to prevent armed clashes, facilitate exchanges, expedite the Red Cross talks, and settle the reunification problems (Kim 1976). Thus, the Communique of July 4, 1972, raised genuine hope among the Korean people for reunification. However, this hope was stultified when North Korea terminated the talks and announced on August 28, 1973, that in order for them to resume, South Korea must agree to North Korea's previous proposals which included legalizing communist activities, withdrawal of US forces from South Korea and reorganizing the North–South Coordinating Committee.

The second period of North–South Korean dialogue was in 1984 and 1985. During that period, North and South Korea discussed four topic areas: economic cooperation, political discussion between parliamentarians, reunion of separated families, and sports. The first significant milestone came in 1984 when North Korea made, and South Korea accepted, an offer to provide relief supplies to aid victims of a flood in South Korea. It was a landmark event in North–South relations which opened the way for talks on the other issues.

On September 18, 1984, high-ranking representatives of both sides met to explore means of achieving economic interaction between the two Koreas. At the meeting, South Korea urged her northern counterpart to agree to bilateral trade proposals including Seoul's desire to purchase 300,000 tons of anthracite coal. South Korea also proposed the establishment of a joint economic cooperation committee and reconnection of the "Kyungui Railroad" (Figure 1), which once ran between Seoul and Sinuiju, the most northwestern city in North Korea. In 1985, new Red Cross discussions culminated in the exchange of hometown visiting groups and art troupes between the two Koreas, which were the first exchange visits between North and South Koreans since the Korean division in 1945. It took 14 years—since the 1971 agreement between the two Koreas to negotiate family reunions—to accomplish this exchange.
These positive developments in 1984 and 1985, however, came to an end in December 1985 as North Korea objected to the forthcoming “Team Spirit” military exercise between the United States and South Korea. Since the exercise had been a regular event, it appeared that North Korea had concluded that the contacts with South Korea no longer served its own interests.

In retrospect, it seems obvious that earlier contacts between the two regimes were only arrangements of political expediency and there was no serious commitment to move towards permanent reconciliation. Given the nature of inter-Korean relations, it is not surprising that the dialogues between the two Koreas have been guided by their political expediency. In the early 1970s, when inter-Korean talks were arranged through secret exchanges by high-ranking leaders, they occurred because President Park of South Korea needed a constitutional revision to allow perpetuation of his power and North Korean President Kim was experiencing serious economic stagnation resulting in mounting foreign debt. During the second rapprochement in 1984–1985, the aforementioned North Korean offer of relief supplies to aid victims of the flood in the South ostensibly indicated a major breakthrough. However, for North Korea the delivery of relief goods were designed to demonstrate to its own people that the socialist North was “superior” to the South.

When North Korea involvement with the destruction of a South Korean airliner on November 29, 1987 was revealed, relations between the two Koreas which had been thawing, hardened once again. The successful staging of the Olympic Games, despite a North Korean boycott, is believed to have encouraged President Roh’s government to seek new initiatives (Los Angeles Times 1988), and talks were resumed after the Games. President Roh announced his willingness to go to Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, in response to a September 8, 1988, proposal by North Korean President Kim, and in fulfillment of his own July 7, 1988, promise to meet his northern counterpart at any time or place to discuss any and all issues.

President Roh has announced he is willing to discuss a “declaration of nonaggression and the unification of Korea” which President Kim had specified as prerequisites for any meeting of the two leaders. Representatives of both Koreas addressed the United Nations General Assembly for the first time on October 18 and 20, 1988, respectively, publicly articulating their conciliatory policies towards each other. If the two leaders meet together in the near future, it could be the start of inter-Korean reconciliation leading to reunification.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOURISM AND PEACE

Davidson and Montville (1981–1982) have proposed that there are two tracks in diplomacy. Track one diplomacy is the official channel of government relations which has characterized the diplomacy efforts of the Koreas to this point. This track requires diplomats to make worst case assumptions about an adversary’s intentions in order to defend their nation’s interests. This inevitably leads to confrontation, mutual
distrust, and antipathy. Frank and Melville, writing on “perception of the enemy,” concluded that:

the mutual image of the enemy is always similar, no matter who the enemies are, and they mirror each other. That is, each side attributes the same virtues to itself and the same vices to the enemy. “We” are trustworthy, peace loving, honorable and humanitarian; “They” are treacherous, war-like and cruel (cited in D’Amore 1988: 153).

This perception is perhaps an inevitable outcome of track one diplomacy.

Consensus building through official negotiations is inherently difficult because “statesmen cannot compromise when compromise destroys what is perceived to be a national interest” (Burton 1984a:157). Government leaders cannot risk the chance that adversaries will misperceive reasonableness as a sign of weakness and thus be tempted to be even more aggressive. A political solution is unlikely when the national interests of interacting states are defined in mutually exclusive terms. That is, when one nation’s gain is likely to cause another nation’s loss. This is the premise that has solidified the Korean impasse (Park 1986: 434).

In situations such as the North–South Korean conflict, it is difficult for either side to take an initiative to approach the other, except perhaps to offer some proposal that is clearly unacceptable and made only for political purposes. This is largely because the relationships are adversarial (Burton 1984b). For reunification of Korea to occur, both sides need to confront at the official level their mutual fears and jointly look for ways of redefining areas of conflict so that they become amenable to solution. To this point, this has not occurred. Davidson and Montville suggest that it will not, unless preparatory discussions can occur in a more unofficial environment with minimal risk. Creation of this environment is the essence of track two diplomacy. In contrast to the formality of track one, track two diplomacy is the unofficial channel of people-to-people relations. The underlying assumption of track two diplomacy in creating an alternative set of relationships is that conflict can be resolved or eased by “appealing to common human capabilities to respond to goodwill and reasonableness” (Davidson and Montville 1981–1982:155).

Past political efforts to negotiate reunification have been limited to track one diplomacy and have failed. The central thesis of this paper is that tourism is an excellent vehicle for implementing track two diplomacy, and that this approach is likely to have a higher probability of success. It appears to have potential for achieving a more positive definition of peace than does the track one approach. If the track one approach is pursued, it seems more likely that peace will be defined in the Korean Peninsula as the absence of war. This negative definition conceptualizes peace only in narrow terms of something that is not happening, namely war, and does not further the cause of reunification. A more positive definition of peace incorporates the evolution of a series of ordered relationships between North and South Korea. Such a peace would be manifested by friendliness, harmony, and active coop-
eration among people, and these seem more likely to emerge from a track two approach.

Tourism connotes people who are visiting a particular place for sightseeing, visiting friends and relatives, taking a vacation, and having a good time (McIntosh and Goeldner 1988). It is dependent upon a positive definition of peace which removes logistical barriers to travel and psychological notions associated with fear for personal safety and antipathy from prospective hosts.

Although there is a lack of research indicating the circumstances under which tourism can promote reconciliation among nations, there is a widespread belief that it does contribute to this end. Richter has suggested that governments use tourism as a diplomatic barometer of their closeness and affinity to each other. She cites Stock as observing, "The flow of tourism between two nations can be used as a sign of the level of salience between the two nations and their people" (Richter 1983a:324). It is argued that increased personal interaction may break down barriers, reduce suspicions, and facilitate mutual appreciation, respect, and friendship. This belief was evident, for example, when USSR General Secretary Gorbachev and US President Reagan signed a Cultural Agreement on "contacts and exchanges" at the Geneva Summit in November 1986. Article XIV of this agreement committed both sides to promote tourism as a vehicle for broadening familiarization of each other's peoples, life, work, and culture (Edgell 1987).

The psychological wounds associated with the division of Korea are deep. Although they lived in close proximity, in some cases sharing the same city, before they were arbitrarily divided into two hostile political systems, the political barriers have effectively alienated relatives and neighbors. Their level of isolation is acute. Unlike, for example, the two Germanys, the two Koreas have had almost no contact with each other since their war ended in 1953: no mail service, no telephone lines, no travel back and forth, not even southern radio or television broadcasts that can be received on sets used in the North (Newsweek 1988).

The less people interact, the less they are able to develop or maintain a common identity (Weede 1987). It is when people perceive themselves to be different from others that fertile conditions for discord emerge. Erecting barriers around countries makes people both inside and outside unsure of what is occurring elsewhere and creates a situation of general tension and insecurity. A relaxation of travel barriers could enhance mutual understanding and friendship.

Many people in Korea are preoccupied with the dream of reunification. However, there appears to be some ambivalence in distinguishing between what they desire and what they can do. Richter (1983a) has pointed out that tourism is a "chosen" policy. Unlike many other policy decisions, it is not foisted upon governments by the necessity to react to a specific crisis. In its initial stages, tourism is an activity where there appears to be substantial rewards and few interests to placate or offend so very little controversy surrounds it. In the context of the Koreas, this makes it an excellent vehicle for track two diplomacy. It does not threaten either side's security or political stability, but it could create momentum towards reunification.
Governments elsewhere have recognized the potential of tourism as a means of building political bridges among nations (Richter 1983a). The People’s Republic of China is perhaps the most dramatic example in recent years. It was widely regarded in the US as a threat in the 1960s but, until the events in Tiananmen Square in June 1989, China had in more recent years succeeded in repositioning itself as a friend (D’Amore 1988). A key to the changed political relationship between China and the United States was the opening of the former to tourists in 1978 and the encouragement of cultural and scientific exchange groups, conferences, and sport groups. While it may be overly-optimistic to expect that the World Tourism Organization’s motto, “Tourism: Passport to Peace,” will be shared by everyone in the two Koreas, it would be a step in the right direction.

Past Tourism Initiatives

In recent years both Koreas have proposed a variety of tangible actions which would contribute to reunification.

1. A comprehensive set of proposals were made by South Korea in February 1982 in the form of 20 joint “pilot projects” (Korea Herald 1982). These included such tourism-oriented projects as opening of the Seoul-Pyongyang Highway; postal exchanges and reunion of separated families; joint management of homeland visits by overseas Koreans permitting them free travel between the two sides via Panmunjom; exchanges of goodwill visits by those with similar interests; exchanges of goodwill competitions in various fields of sports and participation in international games with a single, unified delegation; and creation of sports facilities inside the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) for goodwill matches. With this set of proposals, South Korea seemed to show a willingness to come to some sort of accommodation with the North. However, like numerous reunification formulae proposed by both sides since the day of division, these proposals did not bring reunification of Korea any nearer because North Korea flatly rejected them.

2. North Korea in March 1984, proposed the formulation of a single Korean team for the Los Angeles Olympic Games. Talks began on April 9, but were terminated after three meetings primarily because the South believed North Korea was using the talks for political purposes.

3. Hopes of North–South reconciliation arose when a selected number of people were permitted to travel to the other side in September 1985. For the first time in the four decades of Korean division, ordinary citizens and artists, though very limited in number, visited the other side of the border. Each delegation consisted of 50 hometown visitors and 50 performing artists, together with newsmen and support personnel. In South Korea, people watched their television sets with unprecedented interest for several days observing the emotional meetings between relatives. The Washington Post (1985) reported that while the reunions were the most tangible result of the reconciliation slowly developing in the Peninsula since 1984, the reunited family members were not assured of meeting or hearing from each other again.

4. Many in South Korea believed that the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games added impetus towards reconciliation and cooperation which
transcended ideologies and political systems. For example, the Games served as a catalyst for South Korea to expedite more positive relations with such Communist countries as Hungary, China, and USSR. According to a recent poll in South Korea, 65% of 1,300 Korean and 50% of 2,900 respondents from USA, USSR, China, and Japan indicated that the Seoul Olympic Games would positively contribute to the Korean reunification process and the improvement of peace in North East Asia (Dong-Ah Daily 1988).

Despite these positive perceptions, the Seoul Olympic Games may be regarded as a lost opportunity. If South Korea had been prepared to sacrifice hosting the Games exclusively, then it could have used this as leverage with North Korea in the political bargaining process. It perhaps could have provided the impetus to launch a series of track two type initiatives and create momentum towards reunification.

5. In response to the North Korean rejection of the Seoul Olympic Games, South Korea refused to participate in the Pyongyang World Festival of Youth and Students in July 1989. South Korea also believed that the event was tainted by political ideologies, because it was a leftist youth conference. This could have been another opportunity for the Koreas to pursue a track two tourism approach to upgrading their relationship.

Development of a New Strategy

Given past failures, a new strategy is proposed. One possible way to break the impasse is for South Korea to propose a set of bold and imaginative measures intended to induce change in North Korea's attitudes towards peace and reunification talks. Instead of rejecting North Korea as an international outlaw, South Korea and its allies should consider making economic opportunities (including tourism) available to North Korea that are designed to create momentum for peace and reunification. Olsen (1984:153) observed, “by opening North Korean minds and appetites to the outside world, the United States, South Korea, and any other participant will be loosing a genie that neither Kim Il-Sung nor his fellows will be able to put back in the bottle.” Indications that such economic overtones may be made, emerged on October 7, 1988, when South Korea unilaterally announced that it would permit the trade of merchandise with North Korea, with the exception of military supplies. South Korean businessmen were officially permitted to visit North Korea. North Korea responded in December 1988 by inviting South Korean businessmen to Pyongyang. These actions resulted in actual visits by South Korean businessmen and trade between the two Koreas at the private business level in early 1989.

The multiple issues and conflicts confronting North and South Korea should not be regarded as independent of one another. It may be effective to switch issues when responding to a given stimulus or challenge from the other side. In other words, disagreements may be modified unilaterally by recourse to challenges along different dimensions of the conflict (Back 1984). In this context, tourism initially may serve as a dimension of the conflict which can be used to reduce the level of
tension, gradually replacing it with mutual understanding and trust. Accordingly, it is argued that the major divisive politically-oriented issues associated with track one diplomacy should be reconceptualized and viewed in the different context of track two diplomacy as nonpolitical tourism-oriented issues. Some examples of tourism projects that could contribute to this end include visits across the DMZ by sports teams, organized tours, and separated families; youth exchanges including student pilgrimages from one end of the Peninsula to the other; sports exchanges including the staging of all-Korean athletic meets; the formation of joint tourism development projects; and establishment of unification parks and other recreational facilities within the DMZ for the creation of peace.

The exchange of visits by various groups would be a step towards restoring mutual trust and a feeling of national homogeneity. According to figures compiled by the Office of Five Northern Provinces in Seoul, there are a total of 5,144,000 displaced persons from North Korea now living in South Korea. All Koreans, particularly the estimated 10 million family members who have been separated since the Korean division, hope for an expansion of the human exchange program (Korea Herald 1982). Government-sponsored travel for students has been used by other countries such as Sweden, USSR, and Cuba to promote national pride and unity (Richter 1983a), and it is possible it may contribute to this end in Korea. However, if any attempt is made to use these track two tourism approaches for political gain, it would sow the seeds of new enmity instead of facilitating reconciliation.

Among the tourism-related suggestions, sport exchanges and cooperative efforts are perceived as being the easiest to expedite because of their procedural simplicity. On December 21, 1988, North Korea proposed that a single Korean Sports Team should be selected for the September 1990 Peking Asian Games. Although this is not the first time a single national sports team has been proposed, it is perceived to be realistic because of the warming of relations and because the North proposed it one year and nine months in advance of the Peking Asian Games.

According to the Ministry of Transportation, South Korea earned over 3.3 billion dollars from 2.3 million foreign tourists in 1988, which ranked South Korea tenth in the world in terms of tourist receipts. Recognizing the potential of tourism as a contributor to its national balance of payments, North Korea hopes to attract foreign tourists. The People's Daily stated tourism "not only promotes mutual understanding and friendship, but accumulates funds for the splendid plan of our Four Modernizations" (Richter 1983b:398). It is possible that the economic benefits emerging from successful tourist ventures may induce desire for further cooperation.

To foster these economic benefits, a special joint tourism district could be established by the two Koreas and developed to induce international tourist dollars. The opening of the DMZ, Mt. Kumkang, and Mt. Sorak would appear to be logical choices for initial joint tourism districts. Establishment of a "city of peace" and a "unification park" in the DMZ which have been proposed by President Roh would appear to be viable joint projects. The inclusion of facilities such as national
cultural museums, a center for scholarly exchanges, and a trade center could aid in reestablishing cultural cohesiveness and welding national identity. Such joint tourism development projects would serve as powerful psychological symbols of movement towards reconciliation. Their tangible existence may provide the necessary momentum to expedite a host of exchange programs.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Tourism, as a medium for pursuing track two diplomacy, cannot be an absolute alternative to traditional track one diplomacy. However, its psychological contribution in fostering a positive climate in which successful track one diplomacy can take place, is potentially substantial. Despite the antipathy aroused by the relatively recent Korean Airline incident, the possibility of applying to the Peninsula the track two approach to diplomacy through tourism advocated in this paper appears realistic. There is growing evidence that the present period is the early stage of transition to a new era. Indeed, President Roh has stated, "I think we can see national unification in Korea before the end of this century" (Newsweek 1988:43). The two Koreas now appear to be amenable to initiating an issue-by-issue approach to reunification, which would include tourism initiatives, recognizing that it is more likely to lead to success than the more formal track one approaches.

Indications of the coming of a new era include the recent democratic elections in the South which led to the emergence of new leadership under President Roh, and the gradual but steady replacement of leaders in North Korea of the Kim Il-Sung generation. Current indicators suggest that the new leaders will follow different policies in both internal and external affairs (Yu 1987). For example, on September 9, 1988, North Korean President Kim, in a speech commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the North Korean government, made a plea for trade and contacts with the Capitalist world.

North Korea appears to have an economic motivation for opening the various channels of dialogue with South Korea. Recognizing that it was economically lagging behind South Korea, Pyongyang has started to pursue two closely-related priorities: A reduction of military spending through an accommodation with Seoul and Washington, and a rapid influx of advanced industrial technology and foreign investment, facilitated by a gradual China-style economic opening to the West. In recent years, North Korea has emphasized the need to increase its manufacture of light industrial products to raise the living standards of its people. More surprisingly, it has also developed several sightseeing destinations and constructed several hotels including a 105-story hotel in Pyongyang, which stand as symbols of the future potential for developing its tourist trade. To this end, a few fact-finding missions from the West recently have been permitted to visit North Korea to explore its tourism potential. "Now, after decades of self-imposed isolation, North Korea has begun to open up to the outside world" (Newsweek 1989:38). In early July 1989, about 15,000 foreign guests attended the World Festival of Youth and Students in Pyongyang, which reinforced the North Koreans' awareness of the economic impacts of tourism.
If the respective governments do not have sufficient credibility and trust with each other to bring this track two tourism approach to fruition, then it may be possible to facilitate it through the efforts of external neutral governments or international organizations trusted by both sides. For instance, in the case of reunion of separated families, it may be that an organization such as the United Nations or the International Red Cross, could exercise a leadership role. By using tourism as a track two approach to diplomacy, the two Koreas could set a precedent that may be followed by other dissenting nations and regions.

However, as was also observed by Chow (1988) in the context of China, reconciliation through the track two tourism approach may be thwarted. The inhibiting constraint may be North Korea’s commitment to its political ideology, which may lead to a reluctance to develop and to facilitate contacts with the outside world. South Korea has also showed its tentativeness to embracing a track two approach to reconciling South-North relations. Although the South Korean government authorizes businessmen to cross to the North, they are selective, and this authorization does not extend to others. When others have tried to broaden these limitations, they have been rebuffed. Thus, in a well-published incident in August 1989, a radical student and a Catholic priest were arrested when they returned through the Demilitarized Zone after crossing into North Korea. Although they were arrested, the fact that two individuals were able to visit North Korea without permission from the South Korean government was a powerful symbol of the desire for reunification. There are on-going protests against the limitations on travel to the North as a substantial segment of the population want track two diplomacy opportunities to be broadened.

Progress towards peace through tourism is not an isolated process. It is part of a larger social change that begins with a recognition that the fundamental social and political order is changing. This change in the external environment appears to offer an opportunity for tourism to be a vehicle for furthering the momentum towards reunification. Tourism appears to be a viable way of opening a path to peace by eroding the seemingly invincible wall that has divided Korea.

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