



**Pázmány Péter Catholic University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Institute of International Studies and
Political Science
Research Group for Modern East Asia
Pázmány East Asia Club, Hungary (PEACH)**

PEACH MŰHELYTANULMÁNYOK 23.

Zsolt Szilágyi

***The Korean Peace Process and Northern Policy of
SouthKorea from the Hungarian point of view***

**Budapest
2020**

ABSTRACT

The Korean Peace Process and Northern Policy of South Korea from the Hungarian point of view

This paper aims to briefly describe the factors that influence the interpretation of the Korean peace process in Hungary. From this point of view, it is the experiences of the 20th century history of Hungary that are decisive, but there is also a diplomatic, economic and cultural relationship between Hungary and the countries of the Korean Peninsula. The paper discusses how major events in the Korean peace process fundamentally influence the Hungarian position on these. At the end of the article, the paper gives a summary of how the Korean Northern Policy and the peace process appears in the online media of Hungary.

ÖSSZEFOGLALÓ

A koreai békefolyamat és Dél-Korea északi politikája magyar nézőpontból

Jelen tanulmány a koreai békefolyamat magyarországi értelmezését befolyásoló tényezők rövid áttekintésére tűzte ki céljául. A kérdés megítélését Magyarország 20. századi történelmének eseményei döntően befolyásolták, de szerepet játszottak ebben a Magyarország és a Koreai félsziget két országa között az elmúlt 70 évben létrejött diplomáciai, gazdasági és kulturális kapcsolatok is, ahogyan a koreai békefolyamat főbb eseményei hogy befolyásolták a magyar álláspontot ezekkel kapcsolatban. A tanulmány végén egy rövid áttekintő összefoglalás mutatja be, hogy a két Korea, a Koreai Köztársaság északi politikája és a két állam közötti békefolyamat hogyan jelenik meg a magyarországi online sajtóban.

ZSOLT SZILÁGYI

THE KOREAN PEACE PROCESS AND NORTHERN POLICY OF SOUTH KOREA FROM THE HUNGARIAN POINT OF VIEW

I. INTRODUCTION

Hungary established official diplomatic relations with the Republic of Korea (ROK) in February 1989, which has determined Hungary's position in relation to the Korean peace process for the past thirty years. Due to globalization and the threat of a nuclear conflict, the amicable settlement of the situation on the Peninsula is globally important and as the conflict is not a regional issue anymore, it is in the interest of Hungary as an independent country and also as a member of the European Union to reach an amicable settlement.

However, due to its experiences in the 20th century, mainly the treaty of Trianon and the partition of its territory, Hungary understands the complexities of the Korean conflict better than several other countries. The treaty that concluded World War I in 1920 severed 72% of the Hungarian territories and 64% of the Hungarian population from the motherland.¹ This partition of territory and population is similar to the consequences of the Korean War. Based on the agreement of outside powers Hungary also had to witness the situation that a significant part of the nation, who were culturally and ethnically related were placed under the control of another state.² The preservation of shared cultural heritage would have been essential in keeping alive the sense of belonging to the same nation on the two sides of the border, however, in the past century it became clear for Hungarians too that it is extremely difficult.

Furthermore, as a one-time socialist country, and now a member of the EU, Hungary has gained experiences that help better understand the situation between the two Koreas. In the various historical periods of the last 75 years Hungary has had

¹ ROMSICS 2001.

² ABLONCZY 2010. The research team at MTA has been operating since 2016 under the leadership of the author. Their English website is available at the link below: <http://http://trianon100.hu/> (accessed 27 July, 2020.)

relations with both states of the Korean Peninsula. Between 1948 and 1950 Hungary, as a member of the Soviet bloc, maintained diplomatic relations with the socialist countries of Asia, such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China and the Mongolian People's Republic. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the democratic transition of 1989, the dynamics of diplomatic relations changed and the Republic of Korea took over as Hungary's most important diplomatic partner on the Korean Peninsula. The two countries have maintained a close relationship, and 2019 marks the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations.

The Korean conflict ceased to be an internal problem at the onset of the conflict as international forces appeared in the early stages of the conflict. When the Soviet Union, China and the UN forces led by the US stepped in the conflict quickly became an international issue. This did not help to solve the conflict, moreover in the last decades we could see several examples when the appeasement process of the Korean states came to a halt because of a third party's statements. In 2002 the unfortunate statement of the previous American president G. W. Bush resulted in a drastic deterioration of the peace process.

II. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF HUNGARIAN-KOREAN RELATIONS AND THE EFFECT OF THE 'NORTHERN POLICY' ON HUNGARIAN-KOREAN RELATIONS

The following section aims to provide a historical overview of the Hungarian-Korean relations. Although it is beyond the scope of the paper to provide an in-depth analysis, the following discussion throws light on the most crucial historical moments and processes that influenced the bilateral relations. Although the beginning of the Hungarian-Korean diplomatic relations dates back to 1892 when the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Kingdom of Great Joseon established diplomatic relations, the focus of the discussion is on the events of the 20th century, as it was in the aftermath of World War II that the relationship between Hungary and the states of the peninsula deepened,

During the Korean War and the period of reconstruction, socialist countries, such as Hungary provided significant support to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The main area of support that Hungary provided was in the field of health care. During the Korean War several Hungarian doctors worked in the country, and Hungary

supported the establishment of hospitals which served as civil hospitals after the war.³ Hungarian professionals, such as Aladár Sövény who served as a diplomat in the DPRK from 1954, also cared for and educated orphaned North Korean children.⁴ Shortly after the birth of the (DPRK) Hungary initiated diplomatic contact with the new state on the 9th of November, 1948, and then extended this relation to ambassadorial level.

The following decades were dominated by the countries' participation in the COMECON, which provided a framework for economic, educational and cultural cooperation. However, the political changes of 1989 not only swept away the alliances between socialist countries but changed the relationship of Hungary with the two countries of the Korean Peninsula. The shift had started earlier, as the topmost leaders of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party had been discussing matters relating to the Republic of Korea (ROK) from the start of the 1980s, which was later also taken up by the Political Committee in June 1983⁵ but the opposition of the North Korean government and the instructions arriving from Moscow thwarted the cooperation of the two countries.

It was the 1988 Summer Olympics that provided an opportunity for the two countries to take the first steps towards establishing relations. On 21 December 1987 the Hungarian Olympic Committee decided to participate in the 1988 Summer Olympics. Hungary was the first to express its interest in the Games amongst the socialist countries, which proved to be a key step in establishing of the relationship.⁶ It gave a boost to the international Olympic movement too, as it opened the doors for all countries in the wake of the previous two boycotted Olympic Games (Moscow 1980, Los Angeles 1984). The Seoul Olympics was a break-out point for the slightly isolated ROK as well, the leadership of which had clearly wished to open towards the countries of the Eastern Bloc, economically and commercially alike. In January 1988, the Far East representative of the Hungarian News Agency provided the information that following the announcement of the Minister of Commerce and Industry, Rha Vung Be, the ROK decided to open towards the Socialist bloc.⁷

In 1988, due to the general thaw within the Socialist block, a change of leadership happened in the state party of Hungary. János Kádár, who had been at the helm of the

³ KOCSIS 2005.

⁴ CSOMA 2015.

⁵ TORZSA 2009: 212-227.

⁶ TORM 1988.

⁷ TORM 1988.

party for over 30 years was replaced by Károly Grósz, who felt that the time had come to open up towards South Korea. His decision coincided with the idea of the Korean government. Not long after his inauguration,⁸ Roh Tae-woo⁹ declared his new 'Northern Policy' He wanted to remedy his relationship with the socialist countries and wished for changes in the dialogue between the two Koreas. His statement was thus a turning point in the process of unification politics; as the ROK now declared that it was ready to continue the dialogue without conditions.

In accordance with the globally impactful changes of 1988 and 1989, the Hungarian-Korean relation were placed on new foundations. The general thaw in the Soviet-Chinese relations provided an excellent environment for the overtures of Hungary and South Korea. The process was greatly aided by the fact that Hungary was the first among the ex-socialist countries that took steps towards opening up. Sándor Demján, the president of the Hungarian Credit Bank travelled to Seoul in the summer of 1988, and in turn, Park Chul Un presidential advisor arrived to Budapest on 5 July to pursue secret negotiations.¹⁰

Although by this point some differences had appeared in the countries' respective standpoints, both parties were committed to strengthening their ties. Ferenc Bartha, the president of the Hungarian National Bank travelled to the Korean capital and the same month Park Chul Un arrived to Budapest for the third round of secret negotiations.¹¹ The Korean representative was accompanied by several ministers, and on 26 August 1988 they signed the declaration in which the parties announced their wish to normalise political relations.¹² The Republic of Korea opened its permanent agency in the Budapest Hilton Hotel on 26 October 1988.

As the People's Republic of Hungary was the first socialist country to establish official, inter-governmental relations with South Korea, this was a historical event and resulted in a strong international response. From the then allies of Hungary, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia tacitly agreed to the treaty, while Romania and the Democratic People's Republic of Germany vehemently rejected it. Unfortunately, the DPRK also supported the latter position. Kin Jong Nam objected in a

⁸ PETERSON 2010: 232-234.

⁹ Former general of republic of Korea Army, and a former president of South Korea from 1988 to 1993.

¹⁰ TORZSA 2009: 213.

¹¹ TORZSA 2009: 218.

¹² From the Hungarian side the declaration signed by Dr. János Görög, and from the Korean side signed by Min Hyung-Ki. The agreement entered into force on 13 September 1988.

record by the Hungarian ambassador of Pyongyang. The Hungarian party responded to this note on 21 October 1988, but the ambassador of the DPRK refused to receive it.¹³ However, the rapprochement of Hungary and the ROK was unstoppable. Gyula Horn, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed the record on the all-around diplomatic relations in Seoul on the 1 February 1989. As the result of this, permanent agencies rose to ambassadorial level. Simultaneously, cultural, commercial and economic agreements were also signed between the two countries.¹⁴

As a response to North Korean reactions around the agreement Hungary clearly expressed that these agreements are not against any third parties. Nevertheless, the North Korean reactions became increasingly adverse. The most extreme form of this was a terrorist attempt against Roh Tae Woo visiting Hungary in 1988, thwarted by the Hungarian counter-terrorism unit.¹⁵ Although following this incident, the hostile outbursts of the DPRK against Hungary remained solely of symbolic nature¹⁶ but they often turned into atrocities like the ones against the Hungarian delegation which participated in the 1989 World Festival of Youth¹⁷ in Pyongyang.¹⁸ It had become clear to all parties that after the 1989 political turn in Hungary, the ROK became the primary partner of the Hungarian diplomacy. In the next three decades, the Hungarian-South Korean relations developed at impressive rates. In spite of the good Hungarian-Korean relations, the Hungarian diplomacy remained committed to the unification of the two countries.

III. THE KOREAN PEACE PROCESS AND THE HUNGARIAN POSITION

The DPRK joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1985;¹⁹ however, it soon became obvious that they will not observe its rules. A long diplomatic negotiation

¹³ TORZSA 2009: 220.

¹⁴ CSOMA 2018: 264

¹⁵ CSOMA 2018: 275.

¹⁶ CSOMA 2014.

¹⁷ At the opening ceremony, the Finnish and Danish delegations wished to protest the events in Tiananmen Square and the violation of human rights, which resulted in severe atrocities. CSOMA 2018:269-271. A Hungarian eyewitness reported similar experiences on his blog.

¹⁸ CSOMA, Mózes: *Korea története*. Antall József Tudásközpont, Budapest 2018. p. 271. [History of Korea]

¹⁹ About the history of USA – North Korea Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy see: <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron> (accessed 27 July, 2020)

started in 1993 to solve the crisis.²⁰ In the softened atmosphere, the death of Kim Il Sung in July 1994 resulted in the suspension of negotiations. A new rapprochement became possible at the end of the decade, generated not only by political events but the worsening economic condition and developing humanitarian crisis of the DPRK.

Kim Dae Jung was elected as the president of the ROK in 1997. In his inaugural speech, the new president proposed to improve the dialogue between the two Koreas. In the spirit of the inter-state agreement concluded in 1991, he recommended to expand the economic relations in a framework usually known as the Sunshine Policy. The high point of rapprochement was the announcement of the face-to-face meeting of the two Koreas in the spring of 2000. Although the South Korean president indicated that he was ready to negotiate in the interest of economic cooperation, family reunions and the reunification of the Korean nation, the US wished to influence the events according to its own interests and aimed to resolve the nuclear conflict as part of the negotiations, which had a negative impact on the actual meeting.

The historical event took place in Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea on the 13th of June 2000.²¹ There seemed to be hope that if the two countries concentrate on national and regional matters, a rapprochement is possible, however the negotiations only fulfilled the hopes partially.²² However, the so-called Sunshine Policy of Kim Dae Jung, collapsed less than two years later as a result of the statements of G.W. Bush. On 22 January 2002 the President of the US criticized North Korea as 'arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens.' Bush characterized North Korea, along with Iraq and Iran as constituting an 'axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world.' The statement instantly soured bilateral relations, proving that in spite of the international significance of the Korean conflict, third country interventions can result in setbacks in the resolution of conflicts.

The past two decades of the negotiations were defined by the North Korean nuclear programme. The nuclear programme launched by the DPRK and its successful intercontinental missile tests provoked international outrage and the international community imposed sanctions on North Korea.²³ After the change of guard in North Korea in 2011 and 2012, many hoped for a thaw in the situation but they were

²⁰ CSOMA 2018: 280.

²¹ CSOMA 2018: 285.

²² INA YOON – JH AHN 2015

²³ <https://nkhumanitarian.wordpress.com/1912-2/#2017> (accessed 27 July, 2020)

disappointed. Rather than putting a stop on the nuclear programme, Kim Jong Un sped it up instead. Therefore, in the recent past the international significance of the armament programme of the DPRK has grown along the threat of nuclear strikes becoming more and more real. The DPRK is now considered a *de facto* nuclear power, however, apart from nuclear weapons, it also possesses intercontinental launchers, necessary to ensure the delivery of nuclear devices. Due to their range of 9 000-10 000 km, they can easily reach other continents,²⁴ therefore posing a security threat to Europeans too.

The EU and the ROK celebrated the 55th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations in the spring of 2008.²⁵ This relationship developed into a strategic partnership in 2010, and now the ROK is one of the ten strategic partners of the EU.²⁶ This means that the EU must participate in the normalisation of the relationship between the two Koreas. A dialogue needs to be maintained with the North Korean leadership, and they all have to aspire to continue diplomatic negotiations. The EU and Hungary as its member state must deliver their opinion on this matter and thrive to maintain relations with both parties.

In addition to maintaining the strategical relationship with South Korea, multiple EU member states have established embassies in the DPRK. Hungary has also assigned responsibilities in Pyongyang to its South Korean ambassador, which provides an opportunity to maintain a dialogue. The EU and the DPRK have issued a statement to this effect on their 14th meeting, stating that ‘the political dialogue is an integral part of the EU’s policy of critical engagement towards the DPRK which aims at contributing to achieve peace and stability on the Korean peninsula, upholding the international non-proliferation regime and improving the respect of human rights.’²⁷ The EU has an important role to play in the affairs of the Korean Peninsula. It should continue its diplomatic support for the ROK and multilateral peace efforts, maintain economic engagement with the DPRK and preserve security cooperation with the ROK and other partners. As Dr Pardo writes:

‘The following recommendations would be helpful in this respect: The EU should: 1. Share its experience and that of most EU member states that have normalized diplomatic relations

²⁴ <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/hwasong-14/> (accessed 27 July, 2020)

²⁵ The European Community (EC) and the Republic of Korea established diplomatic relations on July 1963.

²⁶ Pardo – Desmaele – Ernst 2018.

²⁷ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/6336/node/6336_ko (accessed 27 July, 2020)

with the DPRK, both in relation to the normalization process itself and to the diplomatic exchanges concomitant with normalized relations. 2. Use its existing bilateral political dialogue with the DPRK to discuss denuclearization in the context of a wider range of issues. 3. Use its existing bilateral human-rights dialogue with the DPRK to discuss human rights in the context of other issues, including denuclearization and matters of concern to Pyongyang. 4. Expand its assistance to the area of energy, particularly through support for the building of proliferation-resistant light-water reactors. 5. Widen the scope of EU-funded projects to address other areas – especially trade and investment, and energy. 6. Become more deeply involved in DPRK denuclearization activities, including by building on its own experience in the post-Soviet space.²⁸

In terms of the Hungarian-Korean relations the year 2004 can be considered as a turning point when Hungary became a full member of the EU. Since then, Hungary has been following relevant EU policies in its international relations. Similarly, Hungary's standpoint agrees with the European Union's opinion on matters related to the Korean peace process

IV. IS THERE AN EXAMPLE FOR SETTLING THE INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS?

As mentioned in the introduction, Hungary and the EU have gained historical experiences which might serve as examples to resolve the Korean issue. Hungary itself was a member of the socialist bloc until 1989. Eventually, the system was unable to build a sustainable economy and could not provide living standards similar to the more developed regions of the world, and these failures clearly contributed to the fall of the political structure that existed between 1945 and 1989. During the East-West division of Europe, socialist countries were unable to hermetically seal their borders from information coming from the West. The news arriving from the outside world and informing people about the cross-border economic and political situation, played a significant role in the strengthening of internal opposition and the resistance against the system. As a result of the information about Western living standards and political and human rights, dissatisfaction increased in the countries of the Eastern Bloc, such as Hungary. This resulted in the formation of a cultural resistance, which gradually

²⁸ PARDO 2017.

weakened the legitimacy of the regime.²⁹ Hungary also rediscovered its national culture that boosted a sense of unity among Hungarians living on the two sides of the border.

Accordingly, Hungary has relevant experiences of transitioning into a market economy and establishing a new political and economic structure, which experiences might prove helpful in settling the Korean situation too. The EU might serve as an example in connecting differently developed regions. The German reunification should serve as an important example for the reunification of the two Koreas because it produced mixed results in terms of economic, political and cultural consequences as the two countries that were united in the process were of different development levels. Hungary played the role of the catalyst in the reunification process by letting East German refugees escape to the West through the newly opened Hungarian-Austrian border the summer of 1989.³⁰ Finally, the country was reunited in October 1990 and a year later the treaty establishing the European Union was signed.

Several studies have pointed out the similarities between the German and Korean case, and the majority of these studies concluded that the experiences of the German reunification are adaptable to the Korean Peninsula with certain reservations. East and West Germany could be viewed as belonging to the same nation in spite of their different economic development levels. However, the two German countries never fought in a war against each other and their separation was the decision of external political powers. Their division only lasted for 45 years, which is shorter than the period elapsed since the end of the Korean War. The difference between the East and West German economies was significantly less stark than the difference between the economic performance of the DPRK and the ROK. At the time of the reunification, the production plants of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) worked at 70% which would not be true for the DPRK.³¹ Apart from production levels, different economic disparities are also wider between the two Koreas. By 1991 West Germany was two to three times wealthier than its eastern brethren, while South Koreans are estimated to be between 12 and 40 times richer than North Koreans (the North's opacity in statistics explains the wide range in estimates).³² In spite of the smaller differences in economic disparities, the costs of the German reunification were enormous and exceeded preliminary drafts.

²⁹ The international research programme named COURAGE works on this topic. For more information see <http://cultural-opposition.eu/> (accessed 27 July, 2020)

³⁰ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Germany/The-reunification-of-Germany>. (accessed 27 July, 2020)

³¹ CSOMA 2008: 148.

³² <https://geopoliticalfutures.com/korea-cant-replicate-germanys-reunification/> (accessed 27 July, 2020)

This suggests that if a Korean reunification were to take place, the ROK would have to take on a very heavy economic burden.

Another significant difference between the German and Korean examples is the question of international consensus. Whereas the neighbouring states and allies of the German Federal Republic had all accepted the German reunification, there is no such consensus with regards to the Korean Peninsula. The negotiating states have different opinions on how to help the economy of the DPRK to meet the standards of the ROK.³³ Besides this, Kim Jong Un seems to reject the 'Chinese model' and he does not want to follow the example of his main ally.³⁴ He did not follow in his father's footsteps but announced his own programme instead that aimed to develop the army and the economy side by side.³⁵ It is still too early to analyse the long-term consequences of this policy but it is clear that for international actors, such as the EU and Hungary, the most decisive factor of the North Korean nuclear programme.

There is another, regional example that we can look at in terms of economic development. Although the political circumstances are quite different, it is worth mentioning that Mongolia has developed its infrastructure at a convincing speed following a change of regime. The economic realignment, modernisation and the infrastructural development of the country could serve as good examples for North Korea as well. The Mongolian economy had to be rebuilt from its ruins after the collapse of the COMECON and the Soviet withdrawal. At the beginning of the 1990s the Mongolian infrastructure was similarly underdeveloped, therefore the modernisation of the Mongolian industry and economy and the development of the market economy and its integration into the international system³⁶ could be an example for the transformation of the North Korean system. Moreover, Mongolia is committed to the resolution of the Korean crisis and it has expressed its willingness to take on the role of a mediator. The president of Mongolia Ts. Elbegdorj visited the DPRK in 2013, the first foreign statesman to visit Pyongyang since Kim Jong Un had come to power.³⁷ Following this meeting, Mongolia suggested that it could serve as an example for the modernisation of North Korea. In 2014 Mongolia organised the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on North-East Asian Security, where the participating countries (Russia, China, Japan, the

³³ <https://geopoliticalfutures.com/korea-cant-replicate-germanys-reunification/> (accessed 27 July, 2020)

³⁴ MU 2013.

³⁵ CHEONG 2013.

³⁶ SZILÁGYI 2010: 116-141.

³⁷ HALBERTSMA 2014: 32.

US, North and South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and Mongolia) discussed questions related to North Korean economy, security policy and cooperation. Thanks to this and the following high-level meeting in 2015 the Mongolian government played a major role in the resolution of the East Asian security policy issues.³⁸

V. THE KOREAN “NORTH POLICY” AND THE PEACE PROCESS IN THE HUNGARIAN ONLINE MEDIA

The online issue of the Korea Herald, published an interview with Mózes Csoma Ambassador of Hungary to the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea on 31 December 2018, we can read an interview with Mózes Csoma where he reminisced: ‘When I first came to Korea in 2000 most people here didn’t know about Hungary. Only those in their 40s and above knew a little, largely through the famous poem by Kim Chun Su, ‘The Death of a Girl from Budapest’ which eulogises the 1956 Hungarian Revolution against the Soviet rule.’³⁹

In spite of the distance, the Hungarian public received more news about the Korean peninsula than Koreans about Hungary. During my research, I focused on the biggest Hungarian online news portals – *index.hu* and *origo.hu* – as well as on the reportage of the Hungarian News Agency (MTI, Magyar Távirati Iroda) in the past twenty years. As we have seen it before, events in South Korea were of particular interest to the reporters of the Hungarian News Agency in 1988 and 1989. This attention was not only generated by the 1988 Summer Olympics but also by the political messages. Several news articles reported about Roh Tae Woo’s ‘Northern Policy’ announced in 1988, as well as about South Korea’s opening up to former socialist countries and primarily to Hungary. In the autumn of 2018 András Torm published 28 MTI (Hungarian News Agency) news for information purposes.⁴⁰ These were born in a period when Hungary and the Republic of Korea were taking secret, exploratory steps towards each other but they did not have official diplomatic relations.

Ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations the number of news items have significantly increased. The majority of articles have reported about politics, economic and cultural relations and sports. The two online media outlets and the Hungarian News Agency produce contents with different purposes: whereas the online

³⁸ BOLOR 2016.

³⁹ LEE 2018.

⁴⁰ TORM 1988.

media provides more 'colourful' and 'sensational' news but it reports less on diplomatic relations. Between 1 January 1999 and 23 June 2019, the search engine of *index.hu* produced 16 532 hits for the following keywords: Korea, South Korea, North Korea, Korean Peace Process, and Korean Culture.⁴¹ *Ok.hu*, the search engine of *origo.hu* gave 8 831 hits between 28 November 1998 and 23 June 2019.⁴² According to the information provided by the Hungarian News Agency articles published between 1 January 1999 and 23 June 2019 contained the word 'Korea' 11 728 times.⁴³ If we search for South Korea and North Korea separately we receive 6294 and 7012 hits, however it is impossible to filter those hits that are contained in both results.

After a quantitative analysis of the articles, we can conclude that it is the significant political events that generate big case numbers. In the last decade, the term 'Korea' often appears next to the following keywords: 'US', 'China', 'Japan', and 'nuclear'. This clearly indicates that the security threat posed by the DPRK received remarkable attention from Hungarian media agencies. The international interactions of the DPRK, such as Kim Jong Un and Donald Trump's meeting on 12 June 2018 also generated attention. It is clearly visible from the reportage that the relationship between the two countries of the Korean Peninsula is far from being merely a regional matter, as China and the United States also regularly appear in the news when the Korean issue is under discussion. Their role is fundamentally decisive; often they appear more times in this context than when the reports are about the events between the two Koreas.

The quantitative analysis of data provides interesting results in terms of how many times the European Union comes up in news related to the two Koreas. It can be stated that this number is surprisingly low as the researched database indicates less than a thousand hits from above-mentioned 11 000 records between 1991 and 2019. This reinforces what we have noted: although Hungary and other EU member states have strong economic and commercial ties with the Republic of Korea, the EU as an institution has no measurable influence on the Korean peace process and the associated security challenges. Of course, this does not mean that the EU is not interested in settling the conflict but its capacity to promote its own interests is much smaller than what its economic power and population would justify.

⁴¹ <https://index.hu/24ora/?word=1&pepe=1&tol=1999-01-01&ig=2019-06-22&s=korea&tarskiadvanyokbanis=1> (accessed 28 July, 2020)

⁴² <https://www.ok.hu/katalogus?q=korea&mode=5&hol=1&slider=0> (accessed 28 July, 2020)

⁴³ <https://www.ok.hu/katalogus?q=korea&mode=5&hol=1&slider=0> (accessed 28 July, 2020)

It is easily discernible that events categorised as security challenges prompted peak levels of reportage. In addition to the missile tests, the historical meeting between Kim Jong Un and Donald Trump in the summer of 2018 also resulted in a similar increase in the number of reports. It can be observed that political and security events normally generate more reports than economy, culture or sport related issues or events. An exception of this was the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang.

It can be discerned that it is most likely that the average Hungarian reader understands that the Korean Peninsula is shared by two countries. However, it is also clear the majority of news is about the Republic of Korea, especially in terms of economy and culture related news. The DPRK receives a rather negative image, it is presented in the news as a state that poses a serious security risk.

VI. CONCLUSION

Examining the peace process between the two Koreas from a Central European perspective, we can conclude that the Korean example is unique in several respects. Two countries share the same cultural roots and both consider themselves the sole legitimate successors of Korean culture. Such a deep conflict would be difficult to solve based on European experiences, especially that the past 70 years spent apart generated fundamental differences in this matter too.⁴⁴ The manner of separation also complicates the matter: the two Koreas broke away from each other due to an armed conflict and the resulting difficulties still persist. Especially, that the conflict has turned into an international war at a very early stage of the Korean war. Even the cease-fire agreement was countersigned by a third country and so the legal conditions of the final settling are also questionable. It has been clear ever since that external mediators do not necessarily help the peace process but rather preserve the current situation instead of resolving it. Apart from its political limitation, regarding the settlement of the Korean peace process it is extremely hard to provide anything but vague estimates about the economic conditions of the reconciliation of the two Koreas. As we have seen from the German reunification, it is very likely that the available estimates are understated.

⁴⁴ As we can see from the Korean example, even a common language can undergo significant changes and hinder the communication of those living on two sides of the border.

From a Hungarian point of view, it seems that the success of the peace process could be primarily promoted by a wide-reaching cultural agenda based on the shared national heritage. In spite of the economic disparities, this can still be considered a common feature between the two countries that could help bridge the differences. If cultural relations and national unity could be strengthened, that would provide a serious opportunity to settle economic and political conflicts alike.

Budapest, April 2020

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ABLONCZY, BALÁZS. 2010. *Trianon legendák*. [Trianon Legends] Jaffa kiadó, Budapest. ISBN: 978-963-997-1288.
- BOLOR, LKHAJAV. 2016. Mongolia's Small Country Diplomacy and North Korea. *The Diplomat*. (19 September, 2016) <https://thediplomat.com/2016/09/mongolias-small-country-diplomacy-and-north-korea/> (accessed 28 July, 2020)
- CHEONG, SEONG WHUN. 2013. The Kim Jong-un's Regime 'Byungjin' (Pararell Development) Policy of Economic and Nuclear Weapons and the 'April 1st Nuclearization Law'. *The Diplomat*. (21 December, 2013) <https://thediplomat.com/2013/12/chinas-official-response-to-jang-song-thaeks-execution-an-analysis/> (accessed 27 July, 2020)
- CSOMA, MÓZES: 1989 – *Diszkózene a Kwangbok sugárúton Észak-Korea a rendszerváltások évében*. [1989 – Disco Music on Kwangbok Avenue. North Korea in the year of Political Transitions] L'Harmattan Kiadó, Budapest 2014. ISBN: 978-963-236-8962
- CSOMA, MÓZES. 2015. *Sövény Aladár, a hazai koreanisztika úttörője*. [Aladár Sövény, the Pioneer of the Korean Studies in Hungary] Eötvös Kiadó, Budapest. ISBN 978-963-312-2273
- CSOMA, MÓZES. 2008. *Korea. Egy nemzet, két ország*. [Korea. One Nation, Two Countries] Napvilág kiadó, Budapest. ISBN: 978-963-969-7201
- CSOMA, MÓZES. 2018. *Korea története*. [History of Korea] Antall József Tudásközpont, Budapest. ISBN: 978-615-555-9396
- HALBERTSMA, TJALLING. H.F. 2014. Mongolia and the DPRK at Sixty-Five: Ulaanbaatar's Changing Relations with Pyongyang. *North Korean Review*. Vol. 10. No. 2. 23-38. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43908939?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents (accessed 28 July, 2020)
- INA YOON – JH AHN. 2015. Was the 2000 Inter Korean summit worth it? *nk.news.org* (16 June, 2015) <https://www.nknews.org/2015/06/interview-was-the-2000-inter-korean-summit-worth-it/> (accessed 27 July, 2020)

- KOCSIS, PIROSKA. 2015. Magyar orvosok Koreában (1950-1957). [Hungarian Doctors in Korea (1950-1957)] *Archívnet. XX. századi történeti források.* 5. évf. No. 6. http://www.archivnet.hu/politika/magyar_orvosok_koreaban_19501957.html?oldal=1 (accessed 28 July, 2020)
- KWONG, MATT. 2018. A North Korean's unexpected challenges in the South: Learning the language, ditching the accent. *CBC Korea.* (02 May, 2018) <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/north-korean-language-accent-1.4554545> (accessed 28 July, 2020.)
- LEE, JOEL. 2018. Hungary can help inter-Korean ties, innovation with Central Europe. *The Korean Herald.* (31 December, 2018) <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20181231000476> (accessed 28 July, 2020)
- MU, CHUNSAN. 2013. China's Official Response to Jang Song Thaek's Execution: An Analysis. *The Diplomat.* (21 December, 2013) <https://thediplomat.com/2013/12/chinas-official-response-to-jang-song-thaeks-execution-an-analysis/> (accessed 27 July, 2020)
- PARDO, RAMON PACHECO. 2017. *The EU and the Korean Peninsula: Diplomatic Support, Economic Aid and Security Cooperation.* IAI Working Papers 17. (02 January, 2017) https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09707?seq=5#metadata_info_tab_contents (accessed 27 July, 2020)
- PARDO, RAMON PACHECO – DESMAELE, LINDE – ERNST, MAXIMILIAN 2018. EU-ROK Relation. Putting the Strategic Partnership to Work. KF-VUB Korea Chair, Institute for European Studies, Brussel. https://www.ies.be/files/EU-ROK_RELATIONS.pdf (accessed 27 July, 2020)
- PETERSON, MARK. 2010. *A Brief History of Korea.* Infobase Publishing, New York. ISBN: 978-081-605-0857
- ROMSICS, IGNÁC. 2001. *A trianoni békeszerződés.* [Treaty of Trianon] Osiris Kiadó, Budapest. ISBN: 963-379-891-4
- SZILÁGYI, ZSOLT. 2010. Is the Post-Communist Transition Over? Economic and Social Factors Influencing the Mongolian Democratisation Process. In: Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics – Miklós Mitrovits – Csaba Zahorán (eds.): *After Twenty Years. Reasons and Consequences of the Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe.* Osteuropa-Zentrum Berlin – Terra Cognita Foundation, Berlin. 116-141.
- TORM, ANDRÁS. 1988. *Az újságíró archívumából: 1988. Dél-Korea nagy nyitási éve.* [From a Journalist Archive: 1988. The Great Opening Year of South Korea] <http://ww2.infovilag.hu/2018/09/15/az-ujsgiro-archivumabol-1988-del-korea-nagy-nyitasi-eve> (accessed 27. July 2020)
- TORZSA, ISTVÁN. 2009. A magyar-dél-koreai diplomáciai kapcsolatok normalizálása, az elmúlt 20 év eredményei. [The Normalization of Hungarian – South Korean Diplomatic relations. The Results of the Last 20 Years] *Külügyi Szemle.* No. 1. 212-227.
- YEON, JAEHOON. 2000. How different is Pyongyang speech from Seoul speech? *BAKS* 7. 241-252. <https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/10277/1/11Chapter.pdf> (accessed 28 July, 2020)

Online references:

- <https://geopoliticalfutures.com/korea-cant-replicate-germanys-reunification/> (accessed 28 July, 2020)
- https://ifjusagpolitika.blog.hu/2013/09/02/ad_1989_vit_89_avagy_utazasunk_az_ejszaka_melyere (accessed 28 July, 2020)

<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron> (accessed 28, July 2020)

<https://nkhumanitarian.wordpress.com/1912-2/#2017> (accessed 28 July, 2020)

<https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/hwasong-14/> (accessed 27 July, 2020)

<http://cultural-opposition.eu/> (accessed 27 July, 2020)

<http://trianon100.hu/> (accessed 28 July, 2020)

<https://index.hu/24ora/?word=1&pepe=1&tol=1999-01-01&ig=2019-06->

[22&s=korea&tarskiadvanyokbanis=1](https://index.hu/24ora/?word=1&pepe=1&tol=1999-01-01&ig=2019-06-22&s=korea&tarskiadvanyokbanis=1) (accessed 28 July, 2020)

<https://www.ok.hu/katalogus?q=korea&mode=5&hol=1&slider=0> (accessed 28 July, 2020)

Published by:

Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Institute of International Studies and Political Science

Research Group for Modern East Asia

Hungary, 1088 Budapest, Mikszáth Kálmán tér 1.

E-mail: salat.gergely@btk.ppke.hu

Tel.: +36-1-327-5919

Website: <https://btk.ppke.hu/en/information-on-studies/departments/institute-of-international-studies-and-political-science/modern-east-asia-research-group>

Editor: Dr. Gergely Salát, Director of the Research Group

All rights reserved!

The views and conclusions expressed in this PEACH Műhelytanulmányok working paper are that of the author, and do not always reflect the positions of the Research Group for Modern East Asia or any other departments of Pázmány Péter Catholic University.