The effect of sports diplomacy on inter-Korean relations

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Spring 2018
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to explain how sports events, in which North and South Korea have in some way worked or competed together, have affected the relationship between the two nations. This is carried out through the investigation of specific events; the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics, the competing of the joint table tennis- and football teams in 1991, the cooperation happening during the “sunshine policy”, from 1998 until 2008, as well as the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. The studied material consists mostly of news reports and scientific works.

The result shows that while cooperation in sports is possible between the two Koreas, they have occurred only under favourable political circumstances. It is also concluded that the sports events have in return affected the inter-Korean relationship, and this cooperation has also generated further discussions between the two Koreas, a so called “spillover effect”.

Key words: Inter-Korean relations, 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympic Games, Sports diplomacy, 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, Unified team, sunshine policy.

Resultatet visar att även om samarbete i sport är möjligt mellan de två länderna på den koreanska halvön, har dessa bara inträffat under gynnsamma politiska omständigheter. Det kommer även fram att sportevenemang i sin tur har påverkat den interkoreanska relationen och även genererat fortsatta diskussioner mellan Nord- och Sydkorea, en så kallad ”spredningseffekt”.

**Nyckelord:** Interkoreanska relationer, 2018 Pyeongchang vinter-OS, Sportdiplomatik, 1988 Seoul sommar-OS, Gemensamt lag, Solskenspolitiken.
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List of abbreviations:  
DMZ – Demilitarized Zone  
NGO – Non-Governmental Organizations  
IO – International Organizations  
UN – United Nations  
FIFA – Fédération Internationale de Football Association
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

After a year of constantly making the headlines due to the hard rhetoric performed by himself and President Donald Trump against one another, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un shocked the world by suddenly declaring in his New Year speech on the first day of 2018 that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (hereafter North Korea) was interested in holding talks with the Republic of Korea (hereafter South Korea).

In the beginning of 2017 the political scene was somewhat chaotic in South Korea. President Park Geun-hye had just been removed from office and was up for trial. A presidential election was being held in the spring. Moon Jae-in, a lawyer from the liberal Democratic Party (Tōburōminjudang) who had earlier served for President Roh Moo-hyun, eventually won that election (BBC News 2017a). This brought the hope that maybe the conflict on the Korean peninsula could be eased since Moon Jae-in, unlike his predecessors, was open for discussions with North Korea. However, as the year continued an easement of the conflict seemed to be getting more distant. Throughout the summer of 2017 the conflict escalated greatly and during 2017 a total of 23 missiles were fired (Berlinger 2017). Less than two months before the New Year speech, on the 13th of November, a North Korean soldier just barely managed to defect to South Korea over the de-militarized zone (DMZ) while being shot at multiple times. This made him the third to defect over the border in 2017 and the seventh in five years. Shortly afterwards, on the 28th of November, the conflict between the United States and North Korea reached a climax when North Korea fired yet another missile, despite threats made by President Trump and sanctions made by the UN, and also declared that North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons had reached their peak. This was followed by another defection by a North Korean soldier on the 22nd of December. When American experts in 2017 were asked about the likelihood of war in 2018 between North Korea and the United States their answers ranged between a 25% and a 50% risk (Park H. 2018).

In 2011 the 2018 Winter Olympics was awarded to Pyeongchang, South Korea. Last time South Korea was awarded the Olympics was 30 years earlier when Seoul was awarded the 1988 Summer Olympics. At that time talks were held with North Korea concerning cooperation on hosting the event, but an agreement was never made and North Korea refused to participate in the Olympics that year (Oberdorfer 1997, p. 183). Just two years later talks were held considering a joint Korean team for the 1990 Asian Games and a unification flag was created. The joint team became not just a reality in the 41st World Table Tennis Championship in Japan, but a success when the team managed to win against the eight-time winner China. The unification flag was used again several times in the beginning of the 21st century when President Kim Dae-jung and President Roh Moo-hyun were in office, but has not been used since 2007. Furthermore, except for during the 1991 FIFA World Youth Championship in Portugal, the two Koreas have not competed as one team again since the table tennis success (Jo 2018). In June 2017 President Moon Jae-in proposed the
formation of a joint ice hockey team for the 2018 Winter Olympics as well as a suggestion of co-hosting. North Korea however declined the offer with the argument that there was not enough time to negotiate a deal and that the games should not be used for political purposes (BBC News 2017b). When this statement is considered as well as the state of the political relations between North Korea and the United States in 2017, Kim Jong-un’s sudden proposal of talks with South Korea seems even more surprising. The outcome of the talks in January 2018 was that the annual joint military training between South Korea and the United States would be postponed. It was also declared that North Korea would participate in the games, that the countries would form a unified women’s ice hockey team, that the two countries would walk together under the Unification flag during the opening ceremony and that North Korea would send a cheer-leading squad and a taekwondo demonstration team to perform (Griffiths, McKirdy and Lee 2018; English Yonhap News Agency 2018).

Sport has often been used for political reasons. By boycotting sports events dissatisfaction can be demonstrated by states, as in the boycott of the 1980 Moscow Games after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Through sport the United States could display their disapproval without disturbing their delicate relationship with the Soviet Union. Another example is the boycott and expelling of South Africa in sports events due to apartheid during the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the expelling of Israel. Sports have also been used as a unifying element, both on a national and an international level. In the 1970s the relationship between the United States and the People’s Republic of China experienced a thawing and as a part of that a table tennis team was sent to China followed by a basketball team sent from China to the United States. (Houlihan 2000, pp. 217-218)

On the Korean peninsula the contacts in sport have mostly consisted of one-time events when there has been a thaw in the relationship, and while those events have a great symbolic value since they portray the will and the possibility for cooperation, they cannot compete with contacts happening regularly. Contacts of one-time character are only important for the politics if the contacts can lead to something more, such as ties in other areas as well – a so called “spillover effect”. A “spillover effect” is a term used in the functionalist theory and refers to how stronger ties between two nations in one area, like sport, can lead to stronger ties in several areas and eventually to a more peaceful relationship (Jackson and Sørensen 2003, p. 113).

1.2 Aim of study

The aim of this study is to, through the investigation of specific cases, explain how sports events, in which North and South Korea have in some way worked or competed together, have affected the relationship between the two nations. The study will look at events of one-time character as well as those happening more regularly.

This thesis aims to clarify which effect joined efforts in sports events have had on
the relationship between North and South Korea during the past three decades. To do so, the thesis will try to answer the following questions:

- How have politics affected the possibilities for cooperation in sports events between North and South Korea?
- Has the long-term political relationship between the two Koreas been affected by the cooperation in sports events – if so, in which way?

The thesis will also try to consider what the standpoint of the people of South Korea concerning the cooperation in sports events has been through the years as well as the difference in the approach of North Korea considering the cooperation in the Olympics in 2018 compared to in 1988.

When the most recent developments on the Korean peninsula is considered one can see that this question is relevant as these last months have shown an improvement in the relationship between North and South Korea that was unthinkable only half a year ago. As mentioned above sports events have a great value of demonstration, which cannot be compared to anything else. It is no coincidence that North Korea started to reach out just before a, for South Korea, event of incomparable value. Thus, the connection between the relations on the Korean peninsula and great sports events is very interesting to study since the development of that relationship can have a great effect on peace.

1.3 Method and structure

The approach of this study in order to answer which effect joined efforts in sports events have had on the relationship between North and South Korea during the past three decades has mainly been a qualitative approach. Scientific studies done by scholars on the specific events and of the effect sports events can have on politics have been utilized. The author has also studied reports of the different events in several different newspapers – both Korean and international papers – and has also attended a forum where North Korean scholar Jon Mindok, director of the Institute of Disarmament and Peace in Pyongyang, and South Korean scholar Park Hyeong-jung, from the Korea Institute for National Unification in Seoul, gave lectures about the possible effects of the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang.

Considering the selection of the material the author has tried to combine the information from several reliable sources. The end-date for the events discussed in the thesis has been, in agreement with the supervisor, set as the 31st of March 2018, with some exceptions. Development made considering the subject after the end-date is added in chapter 3.5.3.

After a brief introduction this thesis describes the theoretical framework the study has considered. Thereafter follows a review of the sports events in which North and South Korea have in some way worked or competed together. The events are discussed chronologically and are separated into four categories – the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics, the competing of the joint teams in 1991, the
events in which the countries marched together during the early 2000s and, finally, the 2018 Winter Olympics. The whole thesis ends with a conclusion followed by a bibliography and an appendix.

1.4 Notes about transcriptions

In this study, for transcriptions of Korean the McCune-Reischauer system is used, with the exceptions of widely known Korean persons frequently appearing in English-language media and publications, such as politicians. Exceptions are also made for those Koreans who live overseas and use a different transcription when writing their own name. The author will make translations of titles of literature or quotes from Korean, unless a translation is already established.
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Functionalism

Functionalism is an approach based upon liberalism and also partly upon Marxism. The first notions of the idea can be dated back to the late 19th century, but it was Professor David Mitrany (1888-1975) that, after the First World War, conceptualized the approach and has therefore a key role in the approach (Rosamond 2000, pp. 31-32; Jonsson 2006, p. 4).

A key part of functionalism is the functionalist theory of integration, as presented by Mitrany. Robert Jackson and Georg Sørensen describe his approach in their book *Introduction to International Relations – Theories and approaches* (Jackson and Sørensen 2003, pp. 112-113). Mitrany reasons that peace could be achieved through greater interdependence between countries. Through the cooperation between non-governmental organisations (NGO) and international organisations (IO) instead of politicians, solutions considering welfare issues could be solved. When that happens people will turn their loyalty toward the NGOs and IOs instead of the state and so economic interdependence will lead to political integration and peace.

Political scientist Ernst Haas developed neofunctionalism based upon functionalism. While he builds on the thoughts of Mitrany he does not believe that politics can be separated from “technical” matters, as argued by Mitrany. A characteristic of the neofunctionalism is the idea of the “spillover” effect. The “spillover” effect is when increased cooperation in one area leads to general increased cooperation in several other areas (Jackson and Sørensen 2003, p. 113).

2.2 Interdependence liberalism

The functionalism and neofunctionalism theories nevertheless have limitations. Functionalism has been criticized for having a poor record of prediction, for not having a foundational theoretical statement and for being naïve, since it rests upon irrational expectations of the capacity of states and humans to make rational decisions (Jonsson 2006, p. 6).

When the French President Charles de Gaulle during the 1960s started to oppose the limitations set on France due to cooperation, the theories could not explain it. Instead Haas argued that there was need for a more general theory of interdependence instead of the one of regional integration. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye laid down the idea of this new theory, which was based on liberalism and they called it “complex interdependence”.

The argument made by Keohane and Nye in their book *Power and Interdependence* (1977) is that interdependence in its general form has changed in the post-war world. Previously, the leaders of the states mostly conducted
transnational relationships, which is not the case anymore since the relations now are conducted on several ranks and in different divisions of the government. All relationships are more complicated and international relations start to resemble the domestic politics. “Different issues generate different coalitions, both within governments and across them, and involve different degrees of conflict” (Jackson and Sørensen 2003, pp. 113-114).

2.3 In a Korean context

Neofunctionalism served as the basis for President Roh Tae-woo’s “Nordpolitik”, which would develop into the better-known “sunshine policy” initiated by President Kim Dae-jung (Sanford 1993, p. 4; Jonsson 2006, p. 4). It therefore naturally serves as an important part of the theoretical framework for this thesis. Interdependence liberalism is also included as part of the theoretical framework due to the limitations of functionalism and neofunctionalism discussed above. Since the sunshine policy of the Presidents Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun was based upon the neofunctionalist view scholars have proclaimed that the theory cannot explain the way to a Korean unification (Hwang and Kim 2015, p. 41). This thesis will therefore try to look at the cases once again from a neofunctionalist standpoint as well as from the eyes of Interdependence liberalism.
3. SPORTS EVENTS

3.1 Introduction

Sport used in politics or for political reasons is a well-known concept. Scholar Barrie Houlihan explores the concept of politics and sport in the book *The Handbook of Sport Studies*, where he explains how sport can be used both to unify and to separate states.

As an example of a unifying event the Ping-pong politics of China and the United States can be mentioned. In the 1970s the relationship between the two superpowers were strained, but was at the time experiencing a slight thaw. To further expand the contacts the United States sent a table tennis team to China to compete against them in a friendly game. A year after that game a Chinese basketball team was sent to the United States. Table tennis was a sport in which China was world leading, and while the United States ranked low in that sport they, on the other hand, were expected to win the basketball match as basketball is a minor sport in China. By losing the table tennis match the United States would not lose any dignity, and similarly, China would not lose dignity by losing the basketball match. The sports were chosen with great diplomatic care (Houlihan 2000, p. 217) and helped improve the relationship between the two nations.

In several events the effect of sport has been utilised by nations to show their dissatisfaction of something another nation has been doing. During the most of the 1960s and 1970s South Africa and Israel were both unable to compete in several important sports events, such as the Olympic Games, because so many other countries were dissatisfied with apartheid in the case of South Africa, and with the conflict with Palestine in the case of Israel. Moreover, in several cases nations have boycotted great sports events when a rival country has hosted them. In 1980, in the midst of the Cold War, many countries boycotted the Moscow Olympic Games due to the Soviet Union invading Afghanistan. Four years later the Soviet Union boycotted the Los Angeles Olympic Games (Houlihan 2000, p. 218).

South Korean scholar Jung Giwoong further explores the effect of sport when it comes to international politics in his article “Politico-diplomatic Aspects of Pyeongchang Winter Olympic Games – Is Sport Still a Useful Tool?”. He highlights three effects great sports events can have on international relations. Through great sports events, such as the Olympic Games and the Football World Cup, a country can improve their national image, they can improve their relations with other nations and with rival countries and they also have an opportunity to present their political views, which might be in conflict with the views of other states (Jung 2017, p. 180). To host these “mega sports events”, as Jung calls them, proves to be an invaluable opportunity.

South Korea has, as of 2018, been a host to two Olympic Games (1988, 2018), one World Cup (2002) and three Asian Games (1986, 2002, 2014). There have
also been a few events where North and South Korea have managed to come to an agreement and competed together. This chapter will look more deeply at some of these different events and study whether sport has had a unifying or a separating effect on the tense relationship between the two nations on the Korean peninsula.

3.2 The 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics

Up until 1988 dictators and military regimes ruled South Korea. The first president, Syngman Rhee, was chosen as the president through United Nations controlled elections in 1948 (Kim 2007, p. 39). To be able to keep the power Rhee changed the election system through constitutional revisions and managed to rule up until 1960. However, his administration started to lose popularity, and in 1960 he resigned following large-scale demonstrations. In 1961 elections were held. Park Chung-hee eventually took over as president and ruled until his assassination in 1979. Park also took to changing the reform to keep the power and ruled with an iron hand for almost twenty years, but many still remember him as a good ruler since he often gets the credit for the industrialization and great economical expansion experienced by South Korea during the 1960s and 1970s (Kim 2007, pp. 93, 131-132, 145). His assassination led to a military coup, and Chun Doo-hwan became de facto-leader, and eventually also ruled as president, until 1988. Chun’s rule is characterized by the many student demonstrations and strikes. The government brutally suppressed a great demonstration in Gwangju in 1980 and killed more than a hundred people in the process. The event is now often referred to by the names “the Gwangju massacre” or “the Gwangju uprising” (Kim 2007, pp. 162-164). All of this naturally affected the view of South Korea internationally, but while South Korea had grown to become a quite industrialized country with an exponentially growing economy, it was the demonstrations for democracy, the student strikes and the police brutality that got reported the most. South Korea was in great need of improving their national image.

Due to the low national image, the possibility of getting the Summer Olympics of 1988 became very important for South Korea. Already in 1979 President Park Chung-hee approved the idea of applying for the voting of the 1988 Olympics (Pettersson 1989, p. 14). He reasoned that an Olympic game could help the national image as well as generate diplomatic contacts with the rest of the world, for example the communist and the non-aligned countries. The timing was good because the general view was that this Olympics should go to an Asian country. The biggest rival was Japan, but while Japan was a developed country, South Korea was not. South Korea also had a lot of contact in the third world countries, which together could generate the most votes. South Korea also worked hard to promote in order to win the bidding, as the chairman of Hyundai at the time, Chung Ju-yung, spent several million dollars in goodwill by traveling to other countries and by wining and dining with Olympic committee delegates (Oberdorfer 1997, pp. 180-181). Because of this South Korea managed to beat Japan with roughly 60-70% of the votes. However, the 1988 Olympics was not the only event that finally was going to be hosted by South Korea. South Korea
had also managed to get the 1986 Asian Games, and since both the events would be held in Seoul, the Asian Games served as a practice for the Olympics (OCA 2009).

Eventually the games became a success for South Korea. While improving South Korea’s national image by demonstrating their economic growth and development it also put South Korea on the international scene. The Olympics helped South Korea to continue to grow economically, culturally and socially (Oberdorfer 1997, pp. 179-180). The event also proved to be very important for both the national and international politics. The demonstrations for democracy had continued all through the 1980s and in order to calm the atmosphere before the Olympics a declaration was signed in the summer of 1987 that would guarantee democracy in the country (Jonsson 2014, p. 14). By successfully inviting the communist superpowers the Soviet Union and China the event became one of the first steps in the breaking of the wall between the west and the east during the Cold War (Pak, Ok and Pak 2011, p. 56).

3.2.1 Discussions of co-hosting

North Korea was not pleased about South Korea getting the Asian Games and the Olympic Games as it would give their rival international recognition and important contacts. In 1985, however, after the suggestion from Cuba’s leader Fidel Castro, North Korea proposed the game to be shared by Pyongyang and Seoul. If the United States and South Korea did not agree to the proposition, North Korea declared that the communist countries should boycott the games together, as they did during the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games (Oberdorfer 1997, p. 181).

The IOC and South Korea were willing to give a few events to North Korea, but a full co-hosting was declared not possible. IOC-controlled negotiations began between North and South Korea. In July 1987 North Korea came with the unrealistic demand that they should host a third of the events, based on the expected audience. The IOC countered with the suggestion of North Korea hosting the table tennis, archery, football and women’s volleyball as well as the individual cycling for men. In August North Korea demanded that instead of 4 events they should get 5 events, among which tennis, archery and football were included. The IOC eventually rejected the new demand. Even the demand from North Korea that the two Koreas should hold talks on their own, without the IOC, was rejected by South Korea. Eventually North Korea declared, “The issue of co-hosting the Olympics can not be realized while the current South Korean government exists” (Shin 2013, p. 86).

3.2.2 North Korea sabotaging the games

The boycott of the 1988 Seoul Olympics by the communist countries that North Korea had proposed should happen in case the demand of co-hosting would not be accepted, was never actually a realistic demand. The Soviet foreign minister
clarified to North Korea in a state visit in 1986 that their athletes who had not competed in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games would not be going to wait out another Olympic as well. They agreed however to North Korea’s request of waiting until the last minute with declaring that the Soviet Union would participate in the Seoul Olympics (Oberdorfer 1997, p. 182).

A week before the 1986 Asian Games in Seoul a bomb went off on the Kimpo Airport in Seoul. 5 people died and 29 were severely injured (Shin 2013, p. 86). South Korea immediately suspected North Korea of being behind it and while North Korea did not confess to being the culprit behind the bomb the bomb was similar to one in 1983 in Burma that killed 17 South Koreans and was intended for President Chun Doo-hwan who was on an official visit in the country at the time (Haberman 1986).

The bomb on Kimpo Airport was shortly followed by the bombing of the Korean airlines flight KAL 858. All of the 115 passengers aboard died (Shin 2013, p. 87). The bomb was planted aboard by the North Korean spy agent Kim Hyon-hui and her companion and exploded on the 29th of November 1987. This was the first assignment for Kim, who had been picked for spy training while at the University due to her language skills. Kim and her companion boarded the plane in Baghdad, planted the bomb, which was disguised as a radio, and disembarked when the plane stopped in Abu Dhabi. While the plane was on its way to Bangkok before going to Seoul it exploded above the Bengal Gulf. The two spies eventually got caught when about to border a plane to Rome. Both of them bit in to their cyanide pills, but Kim Hyon-hui survived and was transferred to Seoul for questioning. After some days she finally confessed, but was pardoned by President Roh Tae-woo, with the reasoning that she had been as much a victim of the North Korean government (Hancocks and Kwon 2018; Oberdorfer 1997, pp. 183-184). In an interview with CNN Kim describes how she received the assignment in the middle of the night on the order of no other than Kim Jong-il, the oldest son of supreme leader Kim Il-sung, in order to hinder the upcoming 1988 Seoul Olympic Games. She also recounts how she tried not to think about all the lives she was about to take while boarding the plane, and justified it at the time with being for the unification of the country (Hancocks and Kwon 2018).

The goal of the bombing for North Korea was to eventually scare people from going to the games, and while in the case of the bombing of Kimpo Airport it got the consequence that almost half of the expected tourists chose not to go to South Korea and hotels in Seoul lost a lot of money, it did not stop the Asian Games. The bombing of KAL 858 did likewise not stop athletes and states from going to the Olympics and the 1988 Summer Olympic Games became a great success for South Korea (UPI 1986).

3.2.3 Nordpolitik

The newly elected President Roh Tae-woo introduced in 1988 the new “northern politics”, also called “Nordpolitik” after the politics of West Germany with East Germany, which was called “Ostpolitik”. “Nordpolitik” would later grow into the
“sunshine policy” a decade later. “Nordpolitik” has been named as one of the few good things of the Roh Tae-woo government (Sanford 1993, p. 1).

The politics were based upon neo-functionalist ideas of interdependence and the goal was to improve the relationship with North Korea, which perhaps could lead to unification in the future. The first step was to expand the economic relations with countries that generally supported North Korea as well as open a window for trade with North Korea. With time it was supposed to lead to a membership in the United Nations (UN) for both countries and the recognition as two superpowers (Sanford 1993, pp. 2-3).

This new policy generated many new secret talks with North Korea. One goal was to make North Korea open up more to the rest of the world. North Korea, however, did not care for the policy and reportedly said that the policy would lead to a greater separation than unification. That was also what domestic critics were afraid of – a greater separation due to the policy.

The first communist country South Korea managed to build economic ties with was Hungary. Hungary had opened for trade with South Korea already in 1987 and as the new “Nordpolitik” grew stronger so did South Korea’s will to get full diplomatic contacts with Hungary. Hungary had at the same time elected a new, more west-friendly government in May 1988. The two nations began negotiations during the summer of 1988 and in September, four days before the opening of the Seoul Olympic Games, it was declared that the two countries had come to an agreement. The agreement irritated North Korea, who had also tried to negotiate with Hungary around the same time (Oberdorfer 1997, pp. 189-191).

The success with Hungary was an important starting point. After this several other countries followed, and by 1990 diplomatic ties had been created between South Korea and most of the communist countries and allies of North Korea, including the Soviet Union. The timing of the policy had been perfect, as several countries, like the Soviet Union and China, had been promoting similar policies as well with the goal of expanding their international contacts. The only exception was North Korea, who instead became more isolated, which was not what “Nordpolitik” had intended from the start. To compensate for this North Korea tried to expand their ties with China and Japan, but without much success (Sanford 1993, p. 12).

3.2.4 Analysis

The 1988 Summer Olympic in Seoul is more of a non-event in the case of this thesis since the two parties failed to negotiate and come to a solution and therefore did not experience any cooperation in 1988. The neofunctionalist theory argues that an increase in the contacts should lead to an improvement of the relationship – due to a “spillover effect”, but because of the failed negotiations this was not realized.
If the Interdependence theory is studied instead one can argue that perhaps the reason for the failed negotiations is that North Korea did not see any need for an improvement in the relationship with South Korea. North Korea did not in any way depend on South Korea, nor needed or wanted to depend on them. Instead they depended on the communist countries, but while they depended on the Soviet Union, it is clear from Soviet’s response to North Korea concerning a boycott of the Seoul Olympics that the Soviet Union did not depend on North Korea. Had there been more interdependence between North Korea and the Soviet Union and other communist countries it is likely that the countries would have felt a greater need to stay with North Korea. Due to it being the end of the Cold War the Soviet Union was also not in the position to avoid events that could lead to greater relationship with other nations. They needed to develop interdependence with other nations to be able to survive, and would therefore lose too much by not being able to showcase themselves from a more positive side, through sport.

In the case of South Korea the functionalist theory can be used again. Due to the will to get to host the Olympics South Korea worked hard to expand their contacts with the rest of the world, and while some of the expansion in contacts was directed by the state, NGOs and IOs were greatly involved. As discussed earlier, this led to South Korea becoming more recognized internationally. These contacts continued, as we can see with the “Nordpolitik”, and while this policy was strictly governmentally led, it started as a way to improve the status of the Olympic Games. Thus we can see that the 1988 Olympic Games had a “spillover effect” on the politics before the games even started, a “spillover effect” that would continue with the progress of “Nordpolitik”. South Korea developed into a country interdependent on other countries and became a country more keen on peace.

As showcased in section 3.1, under the headline Introduction, sport has a great demonstrational value. When sanctions are put on a country by the UN the newspapers write about it and the country in question possibly feels the effect, but among people internationally it is not exceptionally noticed. However, since great sports events like the Olympics or the Football World Cup is of interest to ordinary people worldwide, it is noticed and well discussed when one or more countries boycott the event. Sports events heat up feelings like nothing else, and therefore prove to have remarkably great demonstrational value.

There are several accounts of nations misjudging what the reactions will be abroad or how a situation will develop, with devastating results for themselves. For instance, this has happened when a materially superior nation has failed in wars they were expected to win easily – as in the Vietnam War and the United States war on Afghanistan (Jonsson 2018b, private communication). The bombing on Kimpo airport and of KAL 858 are both examples of North Korea misjudging what the reactions will be abroad or of how the situation would develop. The goal for North Korea was undoubtedly to damage South Korea’s reputation and to scare people from traveling to the Asian Games and the 1988 Summer Olympic Games. They did not want their rival to gain further international recognition, especially if North Korea did not also gain anything
from it. However, the bombing did not stop the Asian Games nor the Olympic Games, and the result was that North Korea got further isolated.

A short summary of the relationship between North and South Korea during this time is failed politics (Jonsson 2018b, private communication, May). North Korea, South Korea and IOC failed to come to an agreement and North Korea both failed to get any part in the Olympics as well as to ruin the Olympics for South Korea. As mentioned, the Olympics turned out to be a great success for South Korea who received greater international recognition, but the event was isolating for North Korea and the relationship became very tense for a couple of years.

3.3 Competing as one

3.3.1 The Unification Flag

The idea of North and South Korea competing together as one team in sports was first discussed in 1957. At the time it did not get further than the discussion board, but the idea was there and discussions concerning making a joint team a reality continued on all through the 1970s and 1980s. The idea, however, consistently failed to see the light and there was no joint Korean team in the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympics or the 1986 Seoul Asian Games. The 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics, as already mentioned, did not help to improve the relations on the Korean peninsula. (Kim 2017)

Nevertheless, the idea of competing as one team remained and the talks did not stop. The next goal was the 1990 Asian Games and for this event the Unification Flag was created. The Unification Flag shows the Korean Peninsula in blue on a white background. The flag was created through extensive talks between North and South Korea. Even though there was no joint team in the 1990 Asian Games, the Unification Flag was used by the first joint cheerleading squad.

The flag has experienced a few changes in the design over the years. The 1990 version of the flag show the Korean peninsula as well as Jeju Island. In 2002 a new version of the flag containing the island Ullųng-do was made and in 2003 a third version of the flag was made, this time also including the controversial Liancourt Rocks (in Korea called Tokto, in Japan called Takeshima) (Jo 2018).

In 1991 the Unification Flag was used for the second time during the 41st World Table Tennis Championship, where the two Koreas for the first time competed as one team. The success of the joint table tennis team led to the formation of a joint football team in the 1991 FIFA World Youth Championship in Portugal, and that team even advanced to quarterfinal.

Due to a worsening in the relationship between North and South Korea because of the conflict concerning North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons, the competing of a joint team was not repeated, and the Unification Flag was not
used for another decade. During the time when Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun were in office, however, the flag got used again, and this time frequently. The flag of the Korean peninsula was used in several sports events during the early 2000s when the two Koreas marched together, as in the Olympics and the Asian Games, but a joint team was not created. Below follows a list of all the sports events in which North and South Korea have marched together during the opening ceremony.

- 2000  Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia
- 2002  Asian Games in Busan, South Korea
- 2003  Summer Universiade in Daegu, South Korea
- 2004  Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece
- 2006  Winter Olympics in Turin, Italy
- 2006  Asian Games in Doha, Qatar
- 2018  Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea

(BBC Korea 2018)

The last time the flag got used in sports events before the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics was in 2006. Nonetheless, the flag had gained foothold and people started to see it as the official flag of the Unified Korea. Recently, people fighting for unification have instead used the flag in a political way. Some examples are when in 2010 a South Korean pastor and in 2012 a South Korean activist traveled to North Korea illegally. At their return to South Korea over the DMZ supporters waved the Unification Flag so as to say that Korea was one country (Jo 2018).

3.3.2 The 41st World Table Tennis Championship

In 1990 three rounds of talks were held between North and South Korea, the first between the prime ministers since the division. These talks did not, however, lead to much as the disagreements were too great (Park and Lee 1992 p. 435). Nevertheless, in February 1991 the two Koreas came to an agreement and at the inter-Korean sports conference the creating of a joint table tennis team for the 41st World Table Tennis Championship as well as a joint football team for the FIFA World Youth Championship in Portugal was declared (Hankook Ilbo 2018).

The 41st World Table Tennis Championship in Chiba, Japan in 1991 proved to be a very memorable event. Before this event China had won the championship eight times in a row and seemed undefeatable. The South Korean table tennis team, with the athlete Hyun Jung-hwa as their ace, had one goal – to beat China and win the championship. However, only a few months before the championship the athletes received the news that they would compete as part of a joint team with North Korea – the first time North and South Koreans would compete together since the Korean War and the first time the Unification Flag would be used officially. Hyun Jung-hwa recollects in an interview with Arirang TV in 2017 that she did not hear the news from the coaches first, but from the evening news.
The competitors from North and South Korea met one month before the championship in Japan to train together, and even though they had met before during other competitions they did not know each other. Hyun Jung-hwa was especially curious about her North Korean counterpart, the ace of the North Korean team and her rival, Ri Pun-hui (also frequently written as Li Bun-hui). The teams stayed together, shared meals, trained and had fun. The two aces Hyun and Ri became quite close friends during the short time, and Hyun reminisces that while the two of them talked about their boyfriends and their income and played together, they also got close “while they were sweating”. She continues to argue that while you are talking to people you can sometimes lie somewhat, but while working out and competing, you are genuine, so you get to truly know each other (Arirang TV 2017).

Both Hyun and Ri were part of the Korean Women’s team during the championship together with South Korean Hong Cha-ok and North Korean Yu Sun-bok. The team had managed to create a very good teamwork in spite of barely practicing together. Together they got all the way to the finals where they were going to meet the great rival China. After a match that lasted more than three and half hours the joint Korea team came out as winners (Yonhap News Agency 2011). After tearfully saying goodbye to each other the two athletes did not meet again, except for during a competition in 1993. Hyun, however, has mentioned that she would love to meet Ri again.

In 2012 the film “As One”, or K’oria (transl. Korea) was released and depicts the story of the event from Hyun Jung-hwa’s point of view, with actor Ha Ji-won portraying Hyun. Hyun was very active in the making of the movie, coaching all the actors herself to make it look more realistic when they played table tennis, and all the actors portraying the North Korean athletes had to learn to speak with North Korean accents (Cho 2012).

Later in 1991 the experiment of a unified team was tested again in the FIFA World Youth Championship in Portugal. Once again North and South Korea competed as Korea with the Unification flag, but the results are credited to South Korea by FIFA. The team of 18 members (9 North Korean and 9 South Korean) was put together after players from both North and South Korea met and competed in Pyongyang. Since there was not much difference between the North Korean and the South Korean football teams, players could come to agreements and work together (Hankook Ilbo 2018). Before the games people in South Korea were negative to the unified team. The South Korean newspaper Hankook Ilbo described how teamwork is even more important in football than in table tennis, but that the team only had one month of training together and that people criticized the whole team. However, the team shocked the world when they managed to beat Argentina, one of the greatest football-nations in South America, and managed to advance to the quarterfinals. After that success some frustration was still felt, people wishing the team had been able to practice together for a longer time (Pak 2018).

As mentioned earlier, the contacts ebbed out during 1992 due to the conflict concerning North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons, and in 1993 Kim
Young-sam, who had a more conservative way of handling the northern policy, became president over South Korea. In 1994 North Korean leader Kim Il-sung died and the ties between the two Koreas became strained once again when South Korea failed to convey condolences (Jonsson 2006, p. 58), making cooperation in sports impossible.

3.3.3 Analysis

It is quite safe to say that the progress made in politics and sport and the success of the unified teams were short-lived and since it was only a two-time event it did not contribute more than being of symbolic value – the two Koreas showed the world that they could cooperate under the right circumstances. The author has not found any sources discussing whether Roh Tae-woo and Kim Il-sung intended for the unified teams to have a greater effect than that of symbolic value as well as of a qualitative value or whether they intended for this to be a recurring happening. The reason for choosing table tennis as a sport in which to cooperate was most likely because both North and South Korea were excellent in the sport, and there was a hope that together they would be able to beat China. The reason for choosing football was probably because the two Koreas were on a similar level in the sport, and once again because there were hopes for succeeding better together. Football is also more known than table tennis so the joint football team could have a greater impact worldwide. What can be said is that the creation of the Unification flag happened during a time of thaw in the relations and that it can indicate a will and hope for the cooperation to be something more recurring. It is also worth mentioning that a few years later, during the sunshine policy, there were repeated talks about creating a unified team once again. There is a possibility that had it not been for external circumstances coming in the way and making the contacts recede the unified team might have become a frequent occurrence.

When looked upon from a functionalist point of view, it can be reasoned that the formation of a joint table tennis team and the joint football team happened due to a “spillover effect” from politics, as there was a thaw in the relationship at the moment. Whether the joint teams were supposed to generate more “spillover effect” and increase the contacts is not known. It did not happen, however, due to the relationship becoming strained shortly after – something that almost can be seen as a negative “spillover effect” as the politics once again affected the sports contacts, but for the worse.

When this event is analysed in terms of the Interdependence liberalism theory instead, one could argue that the thaw in the relationship and the formation of the joint teams came from a greater need for interdependence as South Korea had after the 1988 Summer Olympics expanded their contacts internationally, but North Korea had gotten more isolated. The east block was also on the verge of collapsing so North Korea needed to show goodwill to expand their relations as well to be able to survive. In the case of South Korea they were at the moment conducting their “Nordpolitik” and encouraged all contacts with North Korea as
well as other communist countries. North Korea opening for contacts would be exactly what they wanted, since that would mean success for “Nordpolitik”.

The formation of the joint teams was conclusively a success as well as the “Nordpolitik”. Once again we do not know what it could have led to had contacts not become strained again, but it is possible that due to the successful turn of events in 1991 the world could have gotten to see more North and South Korean joint teams in the years after, becoming something recurring.

### 3.4 The time of the sunshine policy – 1998-2008

#### 3.4.1 The sunshine policy

In 1998 Kim Dae-jung of the Democratic Party was elected president in South Korea and proclaimed from the beginning of his term that he would work on strengthening the relationship between North and South Korea through something he called engagement, or sunshine, policy (Jonsson 2017, p. 104).

As mentioned earlier, the functionalist approach was the base for the sunshine policy as it was for the precursor of the sunshine policy, “Nordpolitik”. Kim Dae-jung believed that through cooperation it could be possible for the two Koreas to peacefully exist and work together. All mention of unification was ordered to be removed, to be replaced by “constructive engagement policy” so that North Korea would not have to be afraid of being absorbed by South Korea (Levin and Han 2002, p. 23).

In 2000, 50 years after the start of the Korean War, Kim’s government managed to arrange a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-il – the first inter-Korean summit. The same year the two Koreas also chose to stand behind a UN resolution urging peace on the peninsula (Jonsson 2017, p. 105). The sunshine policy was continued by Kim’s successor, President Roh Moo-hyun. The second inter-Korean summit happened in 2007 and President Roh became the first president on the Korean peninsula to walk across the DMZ. North and South Korea then signed an eight-point peace agreement and Roh later expressed his expectations for what this agreement would lead to (Sohn 2007).

However, a study conducted by scholar Insoo Kim titled “Why no spillover effect between the two Koreas?” examines the North Korean underlying reasons behind when they choose to engage in contact and not. The study comes to the conclusion that the contacts are not due to a spillover effect, as the proponents of the sunshine policy wanted to believe. Instead it is shown that the dialogues between North and South Korea have brought an increase in the inter-Korean aid, and that the time of the dialogues can also be connected to times when North Korea has increased their military spending (Kim 2014, pp. 49-50). The sunshine policy has also generated general criticism from the conservatives in South Korea since the increased aid was revealed. People criticized President Kim and Roh for helping North Korea with the development of nuclear weapons.
The importance of the agreements and the sunshine policy should nevertheless not be underestimated. The sunshine policy had a great value of demonstration since it portrayed a common will to work together and that it was possible for the nations to come to agreements. On a more practical note it also led to the countries keeping contact continuously for almost a decade, even when incidents happened, as when bloody naval clashes happened in 1999 and 2002 – events that would earlier have resulted in a break of contacts (Sohn 2007). The exchanges between the two nations were no longer one-time occasions, but had become regular, which is represented by the two Koreas marching together under the Unification flag in several sports events in the early 2000’s.

3.4.2 Marching together

Shortly after the successful summit between the two Koreas in 2000 it was decided that the nations would walk together as one during the opening ceremony of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, while they would not repeat the experiment of competing together this time. As mentioned above in part 3.3.1 the Sydney Olympics proved to be the first out of several events in which the countries would march together.

A notable fact is that all of the events in which they marched together, with the exception of the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, happened while South Korea still promoted the sunshine policy. In 2008 the nations held talks about walking together at the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, but North Korea ultimately halted the negotiations and the two Koreas walked in as two countries (Bridges 2008). 2008 was also the year that the conservative individual candidate Lee Myung-bak was installed president of South Korea. President Lee favoured a more hard-line strategy for dealing with the North compared to the sunshine policy. The strategy of the Lee government meant a requirement for a solution of the issue with nuclear weapons before any contacts could take place, and therefore, the relationship between the two Koreas became strained once again (Park 2008, pp. 42-44).

All of the events in which the two Koreas marched together portray the regular contacts between North and South Korea during the time of the sunshine policy. Other forms of regular contact at this time are football matches in which the two Koreas have met each other, sometimes due to an agreement to play against each other and sometimes because of drawing by FIFA. These matches are also a form of regular contact and they have happened even when the relations between the two nations have been tense. By playing the matches anyway the countries have demonstrated that they are prepared to put politics aside for sport. In football the South Korean men have performed better than their northern counterparts, but while the South Korean women has the international rank of 16 the North Korean women are ranked 10th, listed on FIFA’s website as of April 30 2018. Up until the 1990s the teams met occasionally, and after meeting regularly between 1990 and 1993 the contacts stopped due to the death of Kim Il-sung and the extreme famine that struck North Korea. Since 2002, however, the women have met in football matches almost every year, even when relations were tense. The
men have also met in matches in 2005, 2008, 2009 and 2015 (FIFA 2018a; FIFA 2018b). Usually the North Korean and the South Korean people root for each other in sports when they don't meet each other. The Guardian reported in 2009, right before the nations were going to play in the World Cup qualification against each other, that the people of South Korea were very excited about the upcoming match (Duerden 2009).

3.4.3 Analysis

The time of the sunshine policy when North and South Korea marched together and met in friendly football matches is very important when looking at the relations between North and South Korea since it shows a time when cooperation in sports between the two Koreas was recurring instead of one-time events. It was a period when the nations kept talking to each other and kept on working together even when incidents happened. They did not compete together, but they still kept contact and marched together. The good relationship was not solely shown through sports cooperation, but also in several other areas, such as politics, family reunions and tourist trips to North Korea (Karasin 2017).

From a functionalist perspective it could be argued that there was a general “spillover effect” – the good relations in the different areas, both in NGOs and governmental organizations, spilled over on each other and they formed a stronger bond that smaller incidents could not break. When the cooperation is made recurring it also becomes a habit, which makes it easier for contacts to continue to develop.

This could be analysed more deeply from an Interdependence liberalism perspective. The good contacts in sport that were affected by the politics and in their turn affected later politics, contributed to promoting peace on the Korean peninsula for a decade, as earlier mentioned. Better contacts led to thaw in relations, which then led to the formation of cooperation between the two states. To continue keeping the peace became important for both nations as they now cooperated in several areas. For North Korea a break in the relations could result in economical consequences, as some of the areas in which the two Koreas cooperated were business and factories as well as the tourist trips, all situated in North Korea, but mostly financed by South Korea (BBC 2016; Karasin 2017). For South Korea, however, a break in contacts could both mean that they would lose some international recognition and that the “sunshine policy” had been a failure.

It is difficult to know if the North Korean motive was to create a more peaceful environment on the peninsula or if they mostly cooperated in order to receive more money from South Korea. The sunshine policy and the Presidents behind it, Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun, were heavily criticized after it was revealed that large sums of money had been paid to North Korea as aid, while they failed to stop North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons as well as North Korea’s human rights abuses (Choe 2008). Nevertheless, the sunshine policy did succeed with what other policies earlier had failed to do – to create a more peaceful
atmosphere on the Korean peninsula and to keep contacts from breaking every so often, but stay recurring for a full decade.

3.5 The 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics

3.5.1 The preparatory discussions

As mentioned in the introduction, the year before the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics had been turbulent with the impeachment of South Korean President Park Geun-hye, the election of President Moon Jae-in and the increased tension of the relationship between North Korea and the United States, due to North’s missile tests and the sanctions made by the UN (and urged by the United States). The United States President Donald Trump threatened North Korea with “fire and fury” if they would continue to threaten the United States (Svenska Dagbladet 2017).

In June 2017 the Moon Jae-in administration suggested a co-hosting of the 2018 Olympics as well as the forming of a unified team. This suggestion was, however, declined by the North Korean International Olympic Committee who responded that there was no time to arrange something like that, and that when the joint table tennis team was formed it took 5 months and 22 rounds of talks (BBC News 2017b).

2018 started, however, with the surprise declaration of North Korea leader Kim Jong-un in his New Year’s speech that he would be open to speak with the South concerning North’s participation in the upcoming Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang. CNN reported on the 9th of January that talks between a North and a South delegate were being held that day at the DMZ. Before this talk the hotline between North and South Korea had been reopened, after North Korea chose to close it in 2016.

The talk on the 9th was followed by a few more talks concerning a North Korean participation in the Pyeongchang Olympics. After South Korea had promised that the annual joint military practice between South Korea and the United States, which had often angered North Korea, would not take place during the Olympics the nations came to an agreement (Griffiths, McKirdy and Lee 2018). It was decided that North Korea would send competitors to the games as well as a cheerleading team and a taekwondo demonstrational team. It was further reported that North and South Korea were going to enter the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics together as one country, under one flag, for the first time since the Asian Games in Qatar, 2006. They would also have a joint women’s ice hockey team, the first joint team between the nations in 27 years (English Yonhap News Agency 2018).

The news of North Korea being invited to the games was not something everyone appreciated. The Liberal Party allegedly criticized Moon and his administration for allowing North Korea to become such a big part of the Olympics and to use the game for the purpose of spreading their propaganda (Jonsson 2018a).
Scholar Gabriel Jonsson writes in an article published on Beyond the Horizon, “There were no indications that inter-Korean contacts would have been initiated this year if South Korea had not been host to the Winter Olympics.” (Jonsson 2018a)

3.5.2 Joint ice hockey team

After the announcement that it was determined that a unified women's ice hockey team would be formed there were mixed reactions from the public. While the international community consisting of other governments and the IOC were optimistic and happy for the agreement, a lot of criticism of the plan came from local rival parties in South Korea and from the inhabitants of South Korea. The fact that the IOC had treated North Korea and South Korea in a different way than other countries (Jonsson 2018a) – by letting North Korea join the Olympics very late and allowing the joint ice hockey team to be formed, even though North Korea had not qualified for the Olympics in that sport – was also criticized (Park B. 2018).

Korean newspaper The Hankyoreh 21 described in an article the difficulties the women who are a part of the South Korean women's ice hockey team go through to get to where they are. In South Korea there are several ice hockey teams for men at the university level, but none for women. All they have is the national team and if they do not manage to claim a spot in the team they have no other possibility for training and playing matches professionally. If they manage to get on the team they are required to practice every evening until late, and they also have to go abroad for three months every year, which is difficult to combine with a part-time job in South Korea. There is also the fact that the South Korean team was ranked 22nd while the North Korean team ranked 25th in the world (Kim J. 2018). As of the 30th of April 2018 in the ranking by the International Ice Hockey Federation the South Korean Women's team rank had changed to 16 and North Korea received the rank 28, out of 38 Women's teams in the world (International Ice Hockey Federation 2018).

In 2014 the team got a new coach, Sarah Murray from Canada. Together they worked to reach their dream in the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics. Sarah Murray told the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) about the team's and her own somewhat disappointed feelings after the announcement. After working together for so long, Murray expressed that she wished this could have been decided three or four years ago in order for the team to prepare properly (McKenna 2018).

The Hankyoreh 21 article continued with recounting the issues in communication that the unified team experienced. Even if the countries share a language, the 70 year long separation has made it hard for them to understand each other. When it comes to ice hockey terms the South Korean team mostly uses English loanwords, such as puck, skate and pass. In North Korea, however, Korean words have been made for the terms instead. The unified team therefore had to have a dictionary with the terms translated into English, South Korean and North Korean (Kim J. 2018).
Out of the 23 South Korean athletes and 12 North Korean athletes that met in Pyeongchang and that were part of the joint entry, only 22 were allowed to be in the roster team. Since at least three had to be of North Korean decent this also sparked complaints, as not all the South Korean athletes would be able to compete. The team was eventually, after a few joint training sessions, chosen by the coaches and all athletes started to train together (Yoo 2018). The North and South Korean ice hockey athletes lived and trained together at a secret joint camp, before being transferred to the Olympic village. While many assumed that there could possibly be a clash between the two coaches and issues concerning who would be in charge, South Korean coach Sarah Murray as well as South Korean newspapers reported that the coaches worked very well together and that the team worked very hard and became very friendly together. In an article by NPR Sarah Murray is quoted saying that the North Korean coach is very open to suggestions and said, “Our players are together. In the locker room, they mix and talk. This is our family and this is great” (Chappell 2018).

Eventually the games arrived, and while the expectations were low, especially after the team had played a practice game against Sweden on the 4th of February and lost 0-8, the spirit was high. In an interview with the Hankyoreh 21 a visitor of the opening ceremony declared, “by uniting peace and harmony in the forming of a unified team we have already won the Olympics” (Chǒng 2018).

Throughout the games the spirit was kept high thanks to the cheerleading squad and the spectators shouting, “we are one”. The team managed to score a goal against Japan, but eventually lost that game 4 to 1. In the end the team failed to move on from the group games after losing all of their games (Ch’oe 2018). Even if this was unfortunate it might not have been very surprising since the other teams in the group were Switzerland, Sweden and Japan, countries that by 2018 ranks 5th, 6th and 7th in the world respectively (International Ice Hockey Federation 2018). When North and South Korea competed together in 1991 in table tennis and football it was not only for the symbolic value, but also because there were hopes for a qualitative improvement. However, with the joint ice hockey team there could not have been many hopes for anything but it being of symbolic value, as the two Koreas both had quite low rankings and competed against high-ranking nations.

On the 26th of February the team who had been training together for a month ended the unified team-project somewhat in a bittersweet manner. The Hankyoreh reported of the athletes crying and hugging each other as well as the North Korean athletes saying “let’s meet in Pyongyang next time” (Kim C. 2018). A report by Hankook Ilbo from the 20th of February stated however that the president of the International Ice Hockey Federation René Fasel had hopes of reuniting the team in the 2022 Beijing Olympic Games (Kim Ü. 2018).
3.5.3 Aftermath

The Pyeongchang Olympic Games ended successfully, and while North and South Korea decided to walk in separately during the opening ceremony for the Paralympics since they could not reach an agreement concerning the Unification flag (BBC News 2018a), the two Koreas seemed set on continuing the improvement of their relationship.

On the 6th of March North and South Korea managed to reach a 6-point agreement, which was discussed between Kim Jong-un and special envoys sent from South Korea to Pyongyang. The 6-point agreement included these points:

1. A third summit between North and South Korea would be held.
2. A hotline between the Heads of state would be established.
3. The Korean peninsula would be denuclearized.
4. North Korea would open for discussions about denuclearization and to normalize the relation with the United States.
5. North Korea would not resume nuclear or ballistic missile tests while the dialogue is held.
6. North Korea invited a taekwondo demonstration team and an art troupe from South to Pyongyang to maintain collaboration and understanding after the Olympics. (Jonsson 2018a)

On the 27th of March a forum was held at the Institute for Security and Development Policy in Stockholm, Sweden, titled “Inter-Korean Relations After the Pyeongchang Olympics”. At the forum there were two talks, one by North Korean Jon Min-dok, Director of the institute for disarmament and peace, and South Korean Park Hyeong-jung, Senior Research Fellow at the Korea Institute for National Unification. They provided two different views of the development on the Korean Peninsula as well as what the improvement in relations could lead to.

Jon Min-dok started his presentation by explaining why North Korea suddenly has changed their actions towards the world. The reasons brought up were the economic sanctions that have hit North Korea heavily as well as a proactive initiative from North Korea and North Korea’s sincere efforts to improve the relations with South Korea. He noted, however, that there were challenges consisting of outside interference, from for instance China, Russia and the Unites States, and also the economic sanctions and the inconsistent policy due to the changes of the South Korean regime. His suggestions were that “North and South Korea should establish a climate favourable for national reconciliation and reunification” and that the international community should encourage this, and only support things that can lead to the co-existence of the two countries (Jon 2018).

Park Hyeong-jung followed with a presentation called “Inter-Korean thaw with the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics – A turning point for a peace?”. Park began to describe the main drivers for the three involved countries concerning the sudden
thaw. South Korea was governed by a strongly optimistic Moon government, which had a strong belief in the need to develop the inter-Korean relations. The United States supported their ally with caution and North Korea had changed their politics from confrontation to examination of the opponents. A change for North Korea had also been the completion of their nuclear development, which had thereby legitimized Kim Jong-un as leader as well as gained confidence.

Park’s presentation continued with explaining what the policy options had been for North Korea at the end of 2017 – either they would continue with the outright confrontation, with the risk of actually provoking war in 2018, or they would de-escalate the conflict through pretended concessions. For South Korea the goal was to persuade North Korea to denuclearize and to open up for discussions with the United States. The United States on the other hand is more sceptical about the sincerity of North Korea and is going to continue with the maximum pressure policy they have led so far. As Park said “North Korea have to be strategic because if they lose once they lose everything. The United States can lose 10 times and still stay strong.” He ended the presentation by declaring that due to the hard line policy in both North Korea and the United States, the most likely outcome out of the summits would probably be a de-freezing of the relations, unless one or both parties change to a more open and trusting policy (Park H. 2018).

At the end of March 2018 speculation started that Kim Jong-un had travelled to China to meet with China's leader Xi Jinping, after the special train of the Kim family had been spotted in Beijing. The speculations were eventually confirmed when China gave a statement concerning the meeting. The meeting had been kept secret from the outside world until the state visit was finished and Kim Jong-un was on his way back to North Korea. Kim Jong-un travelled to the Chinese capital together with his wife and this was the first time the North Korean leader had left the country since he came into power in 2011 (Jiang and Berlinger 2018).

The sending of a South Korean delegation followed shortly after the meeting in China. The delegation consisted of a taekwondo demonstration team, K-pop group Red Velvet and a few singers, among which Cho Yong-pil and Lee Sun-hee were a part. The artists held concerts in Pyongyang for the supreme leader and the 2300 North Koreans who came to watch (The Guardian 2018).

The third ever Inter-Korean Summit took place on the 27th of April 2018, while the meeting between the United States and North Korea is planned to happen on the 12th of June 2018 in Singapore (Mindock and Sampathkumar 2018). After the inter-Korean summit President Moon and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un announced that they had agreed to remove all nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula as well as to sign an official peace treaty before the end of 2018, which would ultimately end the Korean War (Berlinger, Thompson and McKirdy 2018). North Korea also decided to change the time zone in the country to the same as South Korea, after moving it half an hour in 2015. The changing of the time reportedly happened on the 4th of May 2018 (NRK 2018).
In preparation for the meeting between North and South Korea there have been several secret meetings. In the case of the meeting between North Korea and the United States these meetings have at first reportedly happened in a third country, but later also in North Korea when secretary of state Michael Pompeo went to Pyongyang. During the second visit Michael Pompeo was also given the three Americans imprisoned in North Korea, whose release the United States had demanded for a long time (Baker, Hirschfeld Davis and Choe 2018). President Donald Trump allegedly accepted the invitation for the meeting between leader Kim Jong-un and himself barely 40 minutes after he received it, without discussing it with anyone first. After the meeting of Xi and Kim in Beijing President Trump tweeted that while Kim looked forward to meeting Trump, the sanctions on North Korea could not yet be lowered (Jiang and Berlinger 2018). Kim Jong-un also started to prepare for the meeting by announcing the demolition of a nuclear weapons testing area (Svensson 2018). However, Kim Jong-un cancelled a second planned meeting between North and South Korea in the last minute on the 15th of May 2018 as well as threatened to cancel the meeting when the annual joint military practice between South Korean and the United States took place (Darab 2018). Eventually on the 24th of May, after the word exchange between North Korea and the United States had become tenser, the White House declared the meeting cancelled. North Korea, however, continued to urge that the meeting should happen and negotiations started again between the two nations, with the same meeting date in mind (Labott, Liptak and Tatum 2018). At the time of the writing the meeting appears to be on again, although with one week to go anything may yet happen.

During the World Team Table Tennis Championship, which was held from the 29th of April to the 6th of May 2018 in Halmstad, Sweden, North and South Korea were supposed to meet in the quarterfinal. They, however, proposed to make a joint Korean team for the semi-final instead of competing against each other. After all competing teams had been asked and the International Table Tennis Federation had looked at the proposition it was decided that the two Koreas would be allowed to form a joint team (Johansson 2018).

3.5.4 Analysis

Since the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics of 2018 finished only a few months ago it is still difficult to say what the sudden contacts can evolve into, so it is best to keep from speculating. On the other hand it can be discussed what caused this unexpected development in the inter-Korean relations. Due to this it will be problematic to use the functionalist theory, so the Interdependence liberalism theory will be in focus for this analysis.

North Korea declared in late 2017 that they have finished their development of nuclear weapons. They would now work on improving their economy. Even if there also is a growing middle class in North Korea and new leisure areas are built in Pyongyang (BBC News 2018b), the North Korean economy is in an awful state with 40% of the population being undernourished, according to a UN report released 2017 (BBC 2017c; Tronarp 2018), a level registered as “serious”
by the Global Hunger Index (GHI 2017). To improve their economy they would have to reach out and work on their relationship with the rest of the world. By this it can be discussed that North Korea is more than before in need of developing interdependence with other countries. The change of the government in South Korea to one more willing to cooperate with North Korea could also be a significant factor for North Korea’s sudden reach out. One more factor is that South Korea would be hosting the Winter Olympics, an event that has incomparable demonstrational value. The importance of this cannot be undervalued as North Korea most likely would not have reached out now had the Olympics not been hosted by South Korea (Jonsson 2018a).

As mentioned earlier, there have been negative reactions by some people in South Korea concerning the North Korean contacts, but many have also been positive, shouting, “we are one” during the Olympics and commenting on the joint ice hockey team that North and South Koreans are one people. In contrast to during the “sunshine policy” South Korea has not given North Korea any money for cooperating this time, something that has generated a more positive atmosphere among the inhabitants in South Korea. The inter-Korean summit was decided through discussion between the two nations and the meeting between North Korea and the United States was, as mentioned, suggested by North Korea. The secret meeting in Beijing by Kim Jong-un, who has not been outside North Korea since he became leader, also points to North Korea opening up and that they are working on expanding their contacts. North Korea even continued to work for the meeting happening, even after it was cancelled by the United States. Whatever their motive may be these contacts can lead to more interdependence on the Korean peninsula and between North Korea and the rest of the world. This, of course, depends on whether the two countries stick the decisions made on the inter-Korean summit and how the meeting with the United States turns out if it happens. No matter how the relations develop from here the last months have undoubtedly portrayed that change is possible and that the sudden developments would not have happened now had not South Korea been hosting the Olympics this year (Jonsson 2018a).
4. CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis has been to answer the following two questions: how politics have affected the possibilities for cooperation in sports events between North and South Korea and if the political relationship between the two Koreas has been affected by the cooperation in sports events. In order to do so two more aspects in the text will be summarised; the difference in the approach of North Korea considering the cooperation in the Olympics in 2018 compared to in 1988 and what the standpoint of the people of South Korea concerning the cooperation in sports events have been through the years.

The difference in the approach of North Korea considering the cooperation in the Olympics in 2018 compared to in 1988 is easily seen in the already mentioned material. As discussed earlier North Korea wanted to be a part of the Olympics both times due to the huge “demonstrational value” of great sports events, and would most likely not have approached South Korea either time had South Korea not been hosting the Olympics. However, the politics failed in 1988, but succeeded in 2018. As mentioned, North Korea did not need to be a part of the Olympics in 1988. Their motive was mostly to not let South Korea get all the glory while they themselves got none, but it was not necessary to be a part of the game for their survival. In 2018, however, North Korea is experiencing an economic crisis as well as a hunger crisis. They have a greater need for interdependence, aid and peace than in 1988. North Korea has also finished their developments of nuclear weapons so they are now in a position where they can reach out internationally without being perceived as weak or as a nation to exploit. There is also the factor that before 1988 cooperation in sports had not happened, while in 2018 it was known to have been done several times before. In 2018 both North and South Korea knew that it could be done and how to go through with it.

Over the years the people in South Korea have generally expressed both positive and negative attitudes concerning the cooperation between the two Koreas in sports events. In 1991 people had, as discussed earlier, mixed feelings to the joint table tennis- and football teams before they competed. This was due to the fact that not all South Korean players would be able to participate, and in the case of football because the team had very little time to practice together and to create great teamwork. However, when the joint teams succeeded much better than expected views changed to the more positive. Especially the gold won by the joint table tennis team is still highly regarded. During the “sunshine policy” views were both positive and negative. People were generally positive to the exchanges in sport, while the negative views concerned the way the policy was conducted. In 2018, as earlier mentioned, some conservatives criticized the development of the Olympics cooperation due to President Moon allowing North Korea to be such a big part of it, removing the focus from South Korea. The formation of the joint ice hockey team was also criticized, but eventually, as we could see, the general atmosphere became more positive, which affected the formation of the joint table tennis team in the World Table Tennis Championship in Sweden.
The first question that this thesis aimed to answer is in which way politics have affected the possibilities for cooperation in sports events between North and South Korea. In summary it is clear from the discussed material that politics have greatly affected the possibilities for cooperation in sports events between the two Koreas. In 1988 the contrasting views of the two governments made cooperation impossible. In 1991, as discussed, cooperation was possible due to a thaw in the relationship and the South Korean policy “Nordpolitik”. From 1998 to 2008 when the "sunshine policy" was carried through, cooperation could happen frequently due to the decade-long thaw, but this ended as soon as the South Korean government changed their policy. In 2018 the once again changed politics of the South Korean government as well as the change to more openness of the North Korean politics concerning the rest of the world made cooperation possible.

The next question is whether effects on the political relationship between the two Koreas have been seen as a result of cooperating in sports events. After the success of the joint teams in 1991 the relationship experienced a thaw for a few years, but except for a few political talks between the nations in 1992, the relationship eventually got tenser. Still, as seen in 2017 when President Moon suggested the creation of a joint ice hockey team, the events in 1991 affected people to believe that competing together could be possible again. The same can be said about the time of the “sunshine policy” when contacts were recurring. The contacts became a habit, and even if the contacts in sports ended in 2008, the events where North and South Korea marched together showcased that getting along and cooperating was possible, under the right circumstances. The good relationship in sports contributed to a continued “spillover effect” with family reunions and tourist trips becoming more frequent. All of these events also affected the outcome in 2018. People knew that the two Koreas marching in together and playing in a joint team was possible and the governments knew more about how to arrange it. In 2018 it is, as discussed earlier, clear that the political thaw can be directly credited to the successful Olympic Games and that the meetings planned would have been impossible just half a year ago.

Altogether, the joint efforts in sports events have shown both the people on the Korean peninsula and in the rest of the world that cooperation between North and South Korea is possible, and the sports events have also created opportunities for further discussions between the two nations. How the 2018 Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang will continue to affect the inter-Korean relationship still remains to be seen. It is no doubt that it has already affected politics in creating a thaw that has led to historical meetings, but in which way the 2018 Olympics will affect the long-term politics depends on how the decisions in the inter-Korean meeting are followed through from here as well as what the fate of the United States – North Korean meeting will be.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>The dividing of Korea.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>The establishment of the Republic of Korea (ROK; South Korea) and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK; North Korea).</td>
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<td>1950-1953</td>
<td>The Korean War</td>
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<td>1960</td>
<td>Syngman Rhee’s resignation as president of South Korea</td>
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<td>1963</td>
<td>The installation of Park Chung-hee as president of South Korea</td>
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<td>1979</td>
<td>Park Chung-hee’s declaration that South Korea can host the Olympics 1988</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>The Gwangju uprising</td>
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<td>1986</td>
<td>The installation of Chun Doo-hwan as president of South Korea</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>Kimpo Airport bombing</td>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>Seoul Asian Games</td>
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<td>1990</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>The creation of the unification flag</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>The 41st World Table Tennis Championship</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>The FIFA World Youth Championship in Portugal</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>The installation of Kim Young-sam as president of South Korea</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>The death of Kim Il-sung and the assuming of post by Kim Jong-il, as leader of North Korea.</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>The installation of Kim Dae-jung as president of South Korea</td>
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<td>First inter-Korean summit</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia</td>
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<td>2003</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>The installation of Roh Moo-hyun as president of South Korea</td>
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