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North Korea vs United States of America Relations

Michael Pltts
mchlpitts@yahoo.com

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Michael Pitts

Humboldt State University

2020

Communication Department

North Korea vs United States of America Relations

“We seldom realize, for example that our most private thoughts and emotions are not actually our own. For we think in terms of languages and images which we did not invent, but which were given to us by our society.” - Alan Watts

We are the most advanced civilization that has yet to roam this earth. We have evolved into a species that is capable of obtaining an endless amount of unique qualities, yet we are all still considered to be human. However, we find that those differences can clash with one another. In some cases, out there, civilians are capable of coping and adjusting to each other domestically. Areas such as Chad or the Cameroon are well known nations within Africa for their diversity, yet, they don't find themselves in too much cultural tension for the most part. However, that tends to change once you start to move past state boundaries. Unfortunately, such a clash could turn into unwanted hostility if there is a lack of a empathy. Although this was quite prominent in the early stages of civilization, we see this everywhere today between different nations of the world. Today we are currently faced with a dilemma between both the United States, and North Korea. It has slowly become increasingly difficult to fix due to many underlining issues such as politics, propaganda, and stereotypes. As we now approach a new decade, however, one may ask if it were possible at all for the two respected countries to actually have a conversation between both their leaders, and their citizens also. I believe if such were a possibility, it would be the start of acquiring solutions that may be needed for all nations all across the globe.

Each and every culture respectfully, must be embraced due to its uniqueness from other cultures. Though each culture may have its own walk of life, sometimes we find that certain customs don't quite align with others. To be put in to simple terms, an American may view eating spiders as creepy. However, in some locations such as Cambodia eating spiders is just a simple delightful snack. Unfortunately, those differences can and in fatal consequences in some cases. Consequences such as apartheid, or even genocide have resulted in places such as the Sudan and Germany. Although these results are deemed to hinder one's ability to heighten their quality of life, some nations still struggle to live in harmony with one another. For instance, The United States and North Korea do indeed clash amongst each other on many different levels that exist within the leadership and its civilians. We see this most blatantly when speaking on topics such as politics, however, they also clash in many aspects of cultural values. For example, both cultures differ vastly when regarding topics such as cultural variability, while both are faced with a different set of stereotypes. Ironically, both sets of stereotypes are mostly used against each other when speaking of the two countries due to the ongoing friction happening today. To also get an all-around grasp of both the United States and North Korea issues: one must observe each country through the Culture Context, and Perceptual Context. Once these differences are distinguished and identified, maybe we will start to garner some positive reactions with the realization that their differences are what make them beautiful in their own regard. Hopefully, the end result will include existing amongst each other peacefully someday. Kim Jon Un of North Korea says, "There can be neither today without yesterday nor tomorrow without today." I believe this an elegant way to say that it is better to get things working, sooner than later.

President Bill Clinton once said, "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty." This quote perfectly describes the United States of America, in quite an accurate way. As an American, you are told from a young age that you reside in the most powerful country in the world. However, with great power comes great responsibility. In other words, as Americans we are responsible in maintaining a good reputation of our nation in the eyes

of people who aren't from the United States. Most, if not all people would consider the United States to be an individualistic society. That being due to certain laws in place such as freedom of speech, right to bear arms, etc. Which leads one towards more of self-preserved attitude, aside from community-based thinking. This is also practiced in most American homes as each person has their own individual goals, and seek personal achievement. Or instance, in today's American household its quite common for both the male, and the female owner to have prospering careers. While in other nations, its still common for the male to be the "breadwinner" while the female of the household is a stay at home mother. One would also acknowledge the United States as a society that practices vertical individualism. Although one has the ability to roam independently, people aren't necessarily equal in all aspects of living. We see this occurring today towards the African American community, and there is still a struggle in helping change that in regards such as systematic racism. Barack Obama once stated during his presidency, "I do have confidence that we're going to be able to get it right. But it's not going to be overnight." Sadly, the United States still struggles to obtain equality amongst each citizen according to race, and there has yet to be any sign of changing such. There are nations however, that don't necessarily struggle with race at all. In fact, North Korean Culture differs in these aspects respectfully. The current leader of the nation Kim Jon Un under the Korean Workers Party, comes from a family lineage of leadership of the country starting with the founder. As a citizen of North Korea, you are extremely likely to not be capable of roaming independently. Although you aren't going to necessarily be detained from roaming freely, almost every inch of the country is monitored. That is expressed in multiple avenues such as entertainment, speech, and exposure to other cultures. That being said, if we apply the cultural context to North Korea, one would describe the culture to be more so of collectivistic society due to the entire country being reigned by a dictatorship. Due to these conditions, North Korea indeed practices vertical collectivism due to people being faced with unequal treatment if one were to break their laws. David Clementi of BBC wrote, "All TVs and radios are tuned to state channels and people caught listening to foreign broadcasts face harsh punishments." As mentioned, all citizens of the country are faced with extreme censorship, and are faced with serious consequences that may affect one's entire family

lineage if resisted. Although this may be true, ironically, most tourists of the country would describe the people of North Korea to be living happily. Harrison Jacobs who visits the country frequently writes, "I take those pictures (citizens) because there is a real part of the people that are happy and I want to document that ... North Koreans are brainwashed, but they live like everybody in the world." With that said, if one were to adjust to the culture shock North Korea has to offer, it may lead to them positive insight. However, in this instance, the country tends to view exotic countries as outsiders and harmful beings. North Korea has been notorious of doing such towards the United States.

When speaking about the North Korean governments use of excessive censorship, most North Korean entertainment contains excessive propaganda. As a matter of fact, North Korea's use of propaganda has been known to exist as far back as the nineteen forties', and it specifically is used to paint a positive picture of their very own government. Such propaganda is also used against other nations such as South Korea or even Japan. However, the majority of their propaganda use is reserved for United States also. Additionally, within these messages you will find certain nods that depict Americans in a negative light. A lot of these messages are found in the artwork produced in the country, and has shaped the attitudes and emotions of North Korean citizens towards Americans for quite some time. Furthermore, on June 25th the country celebrates a holiday called "Hate America Month". The citizens gather to engage in massive rallies to observe the holiday, and as an attendee, you will find all kinds of negative American paraphernalia on t-shirts and posters. When applying the perceptual context theory, we must remember that culture affects how the brain processes information. Therefore, for one to be constantly surrounded around such harsh imagery can cause quite an impact overtime. It can be as simple as learning how to ride a bike for instance. If you choose to keep trying to learn how to use your legs to pedal, eventually it will come naturally. Also, we must remember that North Korea almost never has any kind of exposure to other cultures outside of their very own. Unfortunately, as a North Korean citizen it is prohibited to travel around the country or even abroad. According to the perceptual context theory, this by itself creates uncertainty which then leads towards hostility toward others. Therefore, this doesn't necessarily aid in North

Koreans wanting to face uncertainty. The “mighty” United States can’t quite claim innocence in this regard however, especially when conversing on its feeling towards the latter. For instance, as Americans have very little access to North Korea as we do with other countries who currently aren’t engaged in good foreign relations with our government. When applying the context, again, we see this distance creates uncertainty for most civilians in the United States. Even though the president claims to have good relations with the North Korean government as of today, there have been a string of events over time that have risen tensions between the two countries. Events such as nuclear warfare, reinforce us to believe that they are an enemy of the state. According to a recent study, today seventy percent of Americans view North Korea as a serious threat to the country. Therefore, this also blatantly displays how high amounts of uncertainty have resulted in hostility among American citizens also. The hostility between the two nations also became apparent within the American entertainment industry also. For instance, North Korea deemed the release of the movie *The Interview* as an act of war in 2014. With threats such as hacking Sony, the film was eventually pulled from a major theatrical release. Though this seemed to be a threat to innocent people, situations as such also did not aid in the apparent tension between the two nations over the next few years. As mentioned, however, the Trump administration seems to have been making attempts in bridging this gap. Joel Mathis of *The Week* writes, “Because not going to war with North Korea is better than going to war with North Korea. And Trump's strategy with regards to Kim, whatever its faults, makes war with that country less likely.”

Although it’s quite clear that there have been steps made to bridge the gap between the two countries, it doesn’t quite guarantee that the citizens of each country are automatically going align with their leadership. Most, if not all Americans are quite aware of how our current administration has actually divided the United States apart. As a matter of fact, quite a few Americans aren’t quite confident in their leadership, especially during this current pandemic that has been continuing to grow worse while other countries are improving. Therefore, as a citizen of the United States, one must attempt to look past the multiple ethnocentric ideals instilled through our government, and also attempt to obtain a stronger grasped of what North Korean culture is like

without any pre exposed bias. We have to treat North Korea as such of other countries we deem to be interesting also, which may be difficult to grasp at first sight. For instance; Although its strongest ideals are blatantly “Anti-American”, I find that their immense support of their own country is similar to how Americans feel about theirs. Once that common ground is acknowledged, it may be the start of a new chapter in making amends which helps ridding of any kind of uncertainty. As for North Korea, its very own government that needs to reshape its definition of what it means for a human to be free. In such a way where the quality of life isn't stagnant from expanding. As an American citizen, it is one's birthright to have freedom of speech, and freedom to do as they please without breaking the law. This is much different than a government that attempts to monitor is every citizen. Therefore, I believe if North Korea were to allow its own citizens those same exact privileges, at some point someone will be exposed to what true American culture is like. Not only will this diminish the uncertainty that has risen over the years, but the enormous hostility that the country has against Americans will disappear also.

There's no telling when both countries citizens will be capable of visiting each other. As a matter of a fact, it seems unlikely to happen within the next five years or so due to the twenty seventeen travel ban for American tourists. It is believed that this ban was a direct result of American tourist who tried to steal a propaganda poster. Elaine Glusac of the New York Times writes, " The ban followed the death in June of Otto F. Warmbier, an American student who was jailed in North Korea for trying to steal a political propaganda poster from his hotel in Pyongyang." Stealing regardless, is wrong under every context, however, if this person was aware of such consequences the situation wouldn't have occurred. Although this is a one example of Americans practicing their privilege, however, it's quite apparent that we must break down specific barriers between the two in order for the ban to be lifted someday. Starting with the differences of people being acknowledged, this could be done by viewing both cultures through the cultural context theory. Americans practice individualism, and North Koreans practice collectivism. Although both practices are quite different from one another, just being aware of such differences is the first step in the right direction. Additionally, I would find it beneficial for each country to apply the perceptual context

theory towards one another also. Through that, we start to learn about where our own bias and prejudices originate from. As for most of the stereotypes that we see being instilled into the people from both countries, it's safe to say that both the Korean Workers Party and the American government are to be held responsible for shaping each citizen's thought process regarding each other. This absolutely leads one down a path of uncertainty and hostility, and being aware of when propaganda is occurring may help rid of these negative traits. To conclude this relationship, I leave with a quote made by Kim Jong Un towards President Trump. "I am always ready to sit down again with the US president at any time and will make efforts to produce an outcome that the international community would welcome," While each respected country spread hate towards each other, their leaders are actively attempting to amend relations for a better future.

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