

Miklós Zrínyi National Defense University

Résumé of *Mózes Csoma*'s PhD dissertation entitled

**THE POLITICAL RELATIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE
KOREAN PENINSULA AND THEIR ASPECTS CONCERNING
SECURITY POLICY**

[A KOREAI FÉLSZIGET POLITIKAI VISZONYAI ÉS AZOK BIZTONSÁGPOLITIKAI ASPEKTUSAI]

with the examiners' reports attached thereunto

Supervised by:

Dr. Péter Láng Ph.D.

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1. Justification of the choice of topic, articulation of the academic issue

The historical background of the “Korean Question”, its evolution into a protracted source of tension and the parallel development of the two countries (or parts of the country) as well as the changes in their situation which have taken place in the past years are scarcely known in Hungary, although the dividedness of the Korean Peninsula is to date one of the most severe, yet unresolved questions of international politics. Notwithstanding the indubitably existing achievements, unification by means of integration (following the German model) still seems unaccomplishable. Furthermore, the possibility of an armed conflict cannot be excluded, either, in the region still charged with tensions.

Throughout the three decades following the period of open aggression (1950-1953), North Korea incessantly sought to reunite the peninsula under its own flag, having recourse to the armed forces (following the example of Vietnam). From 1988 on, owing to the changes of the international balance of power, the North Korean regime renounced the strategy of violent unification, thus from the early 1990’s, a cooperational process of fluctuating intensity has emerged between the two countries, which rendered the security policy of the region more calculable. In February 1998, Kim Dae-jung, the elected President of South Korea, who had always been a supporter of peaceful dialogue in relation to the Northern part of the country, was established in office. In June 2000, a summit of historic significance took place with the participation of North and South Korea, but after the inauguration of US President George W. Bush, tensions heightened afresh on the divided peninsula.

2. Research aims and theses

In the first place, the aim of this research is to present the peculiar process of parallel development observed on the Korean Peninsula: on the one hand, the rapid industrialisation and modernisation of the Southern part of the country, which still earned most of its income from agriculture in the 1960’s, and on the other hand, the emergence of the all-pervading economic and political crisis in the North, despite the far more favourable initial conditions.

Moreover, this research aims at presenting the dividedness of local decision-makers by the analysis of the internal relations and circumstances of the two countries (parts of the country), namely, on the one hand, the fights for supremacy within the Northern regime and the generational discords occurring therein, while on the other hand, the struggles of party politics in the South. For the conservative (dogmatic) and liberal (let us term it realist) tendencies of government, whose current situation has a major impact on the relations and circumstances of the peninsula, are distinguishable in the Northern and Southern parts of the country alike. In the late 1990's the coincidence of the readiness of the left centre Seoul Administration for compromises with the business interests of the Pyongyang regime led to a relaxation of tension hitherto inconceivable. In June 2000, the first summit meeting of the divided peninsula could take place, which is beyond doubt considered an event of historic importance. In 2001, however, with the inauguration of the Bush Administration – and the emergence of the term “The Axis of Evil” – the influence of the conservative (dogmatic) circles within the Pyongyang regime extended. It was indisputably this alteration that resulted in the demonstrative restart of the nuclear reactor in Yongbyon, i.e. the outbreak of the second North Korean nuclear crisis.

Accordingly, the aim of the present research is to explore the evolution of the political relations of the divided peninsula, regarded as the moving forces of the entire conflict, principally from an internal perspective. Furthermore, the former links of the concerned superpowers (China, Japan, Russia and the USA) to the peninsula, as well as the various views relating to the solution of the still sharp conflict, will be subject to detailed presentation. On the basis of all this, I wish to prove the following theses during my research:

a) The peculiar development of the two states of the Korean Peninsula can be traced back to shared roots: the same model and the same objectives may be observed behind the success and the failure.

b) The internal relations and circumstances of the two states of the Korean Peninsula fundamentally determine the process of relaxation between the two countries (parts of the country): a cooperational process of fluctuating intensity has emerged between the two countries, subsequently to open confrontation and recourse to terrorist activity.

This change has its roots in the shared interests of the two countries (parts of the country).

- **The objectives of the North Korean party administration from the second half of the 1990's are: the sustenance and continuous safeguarding of their own power, the provision of minimal supplies for the population struggling with famine, as well as the gradual decrease of international isolation, but also the resistance to the overtly hostile attitude of the Bush Administration.**
- **The objectives of the South Korean political and economic elite from the second half of the 1990's are: maintaining calculable, peaceful relations on the divided peninsula, ensuring the conditions of the "soft landing" (i.e. the smooth transition) in the Northern part of the country, and promoting cooperation in the field of economy, culture, sports etc. in order to facilitate the ensuing integration.**

c) The evolution of the political relations and circumstances of the Korean Peninsula are nowadays far less dependent on the approval or attitude of the superpowers. However, international relations still have a significant impact on the cooperational process of fluctuating intensity.

d) Extremist, hardliner (i.e. military) solutions have no future in the densely populated region; these would only lead to another major national tragedy. The outside world therefore may promote the restoration of the unity of the Korean Peninsula primarily by finding and supporting moderate political forces.

3. Research methodology

The present research is essentially based on the reference works and analyses collected during the author's 2-year-long study-trip in Seoul, supplemented with the related publications of the international specialist literature. As for the related reference works of paramount importance, these are referred to, following the guidelines applied in the EU, by means of paranthesised in-text references (containing the name of their author, the year of

publication and the relevant page number), while references to journal and newspaper articles used as primary sources are relegated to footnotes, with the indication “Source” [Forrás]. Works used as secondary sources, mostly contributing to deeper insights into the topic under discussion by providing additional pieces of background information, are indicated with the label “In greater detail” [Témáról bővebben].

The author has followed the traditional scientific model as a methodological guideline in the acquisition of the data, as well as in the description and the subsequent analyses of the phenomena under scrutiny, and applies all of its three indispensable components: theory, operationalisation and observation.

The transcription of Korean proper names in the text followed the phonetic guidelines of the Hungarian Academy of Science concerning Far-Eastern languages. However, so as to facilitate comparison with the related specialist literature written in English, the relative McCune-Reischauer-transcriptions, recognised throughout the world, also appear in parentheses. As regards Chinese proper names, their transcriptions, immediately followed by the relative Pinyin transcriptions in parentheses, likewise attend to phonetic principles. In the case of Japanese proper names, transcriptions widely used in the Hungarian press are applied, along with the Hepburn-transcriptions in parentheses.

4. Conclusions, findings

a) One of the major conclusions of the present research is the observation of a single, selfsame model and objective behind the peculiar development of both North and South Korea: that of breaking out of the humiliation and backwardness caused by colonial rule, thereby constructing a powerful country in economic and military terms, which is capable of eliminating national dividedness.

This ideal, also feeding on Korean historical traditions, has been realised in different ways in the two parts of the country. In the North, Kim Il-sung spent all the available resources on military and defence industry investments, while he established an extreme personality cult and concentration of power. In the South, in contrast, the President General

Park Chung Hee subordinated even his own power to the success of the export-oriented economic development.

b) It has been concluded that the internal circumstances of the two states of the Korean Peninsula fundamentally determine the security policy of the peninsula and the whole region. The shared interests of North and South Korea in the late 1990's led to a process of relaxation to a hitherto unseen extent, rendering the relations of the region more calculable.

Following the Korean War and the period of terrorist activity, a cooperational process of fluctuating intensity emerged, in which both countries were interested. After the collapse of the USSR and the Eastern-European socialist regimes, the Pyongyang party administration set themselves as a primary aim the avoidance of the downfall of the regime and the evasion of the possibility of being called to account. With regard to the actualities of international politics, this could only be achieved by the improvement of the country's relations to South Korea. This aspiration coincided exactly with the conciliatory North Korea-policy of South Korean President Kim Dae-jung, who entered office in 1998. It is due to this fact that the first summit meeting in the history of the peninsula could take place.

c) It has also been concluded that the evolution of the political relations and circumstances of the Korean Peninsula are nowadays far less dependent on the approval or attitude of the superpowers. Nevertheless, unconsidered or inopportune expressions of opinion and attitudes lacking careful deliberation may cause enormous damage in this political atmosphere charged with tension.

The political relations and circumstances of the Korean Peninsula are fundamentally determined by the vicinity of the neighbouring superpowers, viz. the largest country in the world by land mass in the North, the most populated state in the world in the West, the second largest economy in the world in the East, and last but not least, the presence of the world's greatest military power in the Southern part of the country. The Korean Peninsula has suffered a series of external attacks throughout the past centuries, and the dividedness following World War II was also the result of the decision of the superpowers.

d) It has been concluded that military solutions to the political conflicts may have no justification in the densely populated Far-Eastern region, as these would cause severe damage and another major national tragedy in 21st-century circumstances.

The Pyongyang regime endeavoured to unite the peninsula under the Northern flag by violence even after the period of open aggression (1950-1953). Changes occurring in international politics from 1988 made it impossible for the Pyongyang regime to have recourse to terrorist activity. However, from the late 1980's the North Korean defence industry was capable of the unaided production of launch vehicles that were necessary for the ABC weapons to reach target. At the same time, the renewal of the country's nuclear weapons programme and the vulnerability of South Korean and Japanese metropolises exclude the possibility of a pre-emptive strike. In retaliation for air strikes targeted at military bases, the Pyongyang regime could give an answer which would demand hundreds of thousands of victims. The outside world therefore may promote the restoration of the unity of the Korean Peninsula primarily by finding and supporting moderate political forces.

5. List of publications

IN HUNGARIAN

Csoma, Mózes: *A remetekirályság öröksége – a koreai azonosságtudat belső és külső összetevői.* In: Nemzeti identitás és külpolitika Kelet-Ázsiában. (ed. N. Rózsa, Erzsébet) Teleki László Intézet – Külpolitikai Tanulmányok Központja. Budapest, 2005.

Csoma, Mózes: *Az indokínai országok változásai.* In: A proletárdiktatúrákból a polgári demokráciákba. (ed. Glatz, Ferenc) MTA Társadalomkutató Központ. Budapest, 2005.

Csoma, Mózes: *Történelemhamisítás Kelet-Ázsiában.* In: Eszmélet. 52. [2001.]

Csoma, Mózes: *A Korea-közi enyhülés belső tényezői.* In: Külügyi Szemle. 2002/2.

Csoma, Mózes: Dél-Korea: a pártpolitikai konfliktusok és a félsziget megosztottsága. In: Külügyi Szemle. 2006/1-2.

Csoma, Mózes: *Vietnam – a nagyok árnyékában.* In: História. 2002/4.

Csoma, Mózes: *Észak-Korea – tényleges fenyegetés vagy politikai erőfitogtatás?* In: Új Honvédségi Szemle. 2005/4.

Csoma, Mózes: *Kim Ir Szen.* In: A 20. század politikusai. ELTE BTK Politikaelméleti Tanszék. Budapest, 1998.

Csoma, Mózes: *Kim De Dzsung*. In: A 20. század politikusai. ELTE BTK Politikaelméleti Tanszék. Budapest, 1999.

Csoma, Mózes: *Dél-Korea: a sajtóviszonyok szerepe a belpolitikai konfliktusokban*. In: Aspects of Korean Civilization 2. ELTE BTK Belső Ázsiai Tanszék. Budapest, 2004.

Csoma, Mózes: *Siker és bukás a koreai félszigeten*. In: Államok és államkudarok a globalizálódó világban. (szerk.: Marton Péter) Teleki László Intézet. 2006. pp. 362-366.
http://www.telekiintezet.hu/kulpol/kutatas/bukott/TLI_KTK_ÁllamokÉsÁllamkudarok.pdf

IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE(S)

Csoma, Mózes: *Hongari chwe'choro kipi ittke hanguk'ul yonguhan hakcha'wa yoksa'ui soyong'doli sokeso sara'chyo kanun ku'ui choso*. (About a forgotten episode of the Korea-Hungary relations – in korean) In: Korean Studies in the Era of Reconciliation and Cooperation. 2nd World Congress of Korean Studies. Published by The Academy of Korean Studies and The Peking University. China, 2005.

Csoma, Mózes: *Khoria, choyong'han achim'ui nara*. (Korea, land of the morning silence – in korean) Jipmoon Dang. Seoul, 2005.

Csoma, Mózes: *Hungarian Travellers about the Korean Independence Movement in the 1920s and 1930s*. In: Hungary, Central & Eastern Europe and Korea. The Sixth International Conference of Korean Association of Central & Eastern European and Balkan Studies. Seoul, 2006.

Csoma, Mózes: *Manchukuk'esoui hangukin'dului muchang hangil tucheng*. (About the Anti-Japanese armed struggle in Manchukuo – in korean) In: Cultural Interaction with Korea - From Silk Road to Korean Wave. 3rd World Congress of Korean Studies. Published by The Academy of Korean Studies. (publishing date: 2006. 10. Seoul, South-Korea)

Csoma, Mózes: *Hangukin'kwa kukche kyolhon*. (Koreans and international marriage – in korean) In: Korea Foundation Newsletter. Nov. 2004.

Csoma, Mózes: *Korean Management and Its Adaptability to Hungary*. In: Past, Present and Future Prospects of Korea-Hungary Relations. International Conference jointly Organized by the Embassy of the Republic of Korea, and the Institute for World Economics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Budapest, 2001.

6. Curriculum Vitae

Csoma, Mózes

born: 1978. máj. 11.

mother's name: Dr. Székács, Anna

education:

1996 –2002: ELTE University, student of historical and political studies

1997 – 2000: Student of korean at the College for Foreign Trade, Institute of Oriental Communication and Further Training

2002-2005: Ph.D. student at the Miklós Zrínyi National Defense University

study in abroad:

march – sept 2000: korean language training with the fellowship of the Korea Foundation in Seoul

jun – aug 2001: individual research in the War Memorial museum in Seoul

march 2004 – april 2005: research in Seoul with the fellowship of the Korea Foundation

congresses, lectures:

april 2001: 25th Congress of the hungarian university students (XXV. OTDK)
make presentation about the Korean detente

march 2003: presentation on the congress organised by the Teleki László Intézet – Külpolitikai Tanulmányok Központja about East Asian national identities

nov 2003: make presentation about the South Korean press affairs on the Eötvös Lóránd University

febr 2005: make presentation on the „2nd World Congress of Korean Studies” in Beijing, China

dec 2005: presentation on the „Failed States” congress organised by the Teleki László Intézet Külpolitikai Tanulmányok Központja about North Korea

febr 2006: make lectures on the Budapest Corvinus University about korean political affairs

Other activities:

from june 2000: publishin about 50 analysis for the hungarian daily Népszabadság about the South- North Korean affairs
www.nol.hu

dec 2001: helping to the Korean Embassy during the official visit of president Kim Dae-jung

febr-apr 2002: koreai interpreter in the Samsung SDI

from aug 2003: koreai interpreter during the business talks of the Commercial Section of the Korean Embassy