

A focus on the isolation of north korea



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North Korea is among the few countries that still hold on to communist ideologies in the 21st century. Political analysts are of the common agreement that the isolation of North Korea was self imposed. It dates back almost five decades during the reign of Kim Il-Sung who was focused on self reliance. Kim refused to open up North Korea to foreign investment when the economy started declining in the 1980's. Additionally, North Korea defaulted on almost all of its outstanding loans. This action did not go well with the international community and led to the imposition of several sanctions. Leadership changes in the country has not affected any changes as the current Kim Jong-Il regime has not showed any regard to the opinions of the international community and instead opting to operate on its own actions (Cornell, 2002). A political writer has described the country as,

“ A nuclear armed state being run by an unstable dictator.” (McCormack, 1993).

The nation has received a lot of criticism from the international community. The country has been accused of selling nuclear weapons and arms to other terrorist countries such as Libya and the recent missile tests have angered the rest of the world with most countries opting to have nothing to do with North Korea (Roudiger, 2006).

The fact that Kim jong-il has also receded into isolation from the international lime light shows that the country is still bent on holding onto the states ideology which a writer has interpreted as,

“ Trusting in its own strengths and independent capacities in economic, military and political affairs.” (McCormack, 1993).

I believe the isolation of North Korea has negatively affected international trade, culture exchange and growth literacy.

Discussion

The isolation of North Korea has negatively affected international trade. The sole reason behind this can be attribute to the states “juche ideology” (self reliance) which means that the state controls international trade and is very reluctant to allow foreigners to invest in the country. North Korea has always relied heavily on its two neighbors’ when it come to trade which are the former Soviet Union and china. These trade relations were affected negatively by the collapse of the Soviet Union and also the fact that china made some new trade policies (Kirk, 2006).

North Korea has not made many friends when it comes to the international trade relations. The fact that they have continuously ignored the requests of other nations and the UN Security Council’s mandate to abandon their nuclear programs has not helped the issue of trade relations. In fact North Korea has earned itself even more sanctions from the time they tested some of their missiles (Kirk, 2006). These sanctions have been imposed as a type of strategy to force North Korea to abandon these programs. Countries like the US and Japan that are one of the world leading trade nations have all imposed sanctions that have reduced the trade between them and North Korea. North Korea has attracted sanctions on financial transactions, commodity transactions, sales of fire arms, bans on travel to the country.

The US has made it clear that it will not condone the practices of the nation and has instituted measures that prevent firms to make any financial

transactions with North Korea. The US treasury has also elucidated support from other nations by alleging that the nation is involved in counterfeiting and laundering money thus tainting its image in the international community. This caused some nations to freeze North Korean bank accounts. North Korea is therefore facing the challenge of managing its financial transactions in a manner that cannot be affected by the international community (Perry, 2006).

All these factors have negatively affected international trade as North Korea has seen a huge decline in the exportation of electrical appliances and textiles. The country imports food, raw materials and technology in large quantities hence it is unable to balance its imports and exports thus requiring the nation to source for other means of foreign exchange like the sale of small arms to terrorist countries. The trade sanctions have also forced North Korea to ship some of its unfinished goods to countries like china for final assembly and inspection before they can be traded thus raising the cost of doing business.

With all these problems no wonder North Korea is having a difficult time in getting trade partners. I believe that the fact that North Korea is isolating itself has forced them to rub shoulders in a negative manner with other nations which are not willing to condone such behaviors. In retaliation they try to crumble the nation into submission by taking measures that will hurt their economy.

The isolation of North Korea has also negatively affected cultural exchange. With such a tainted image it almost impossible to build a good mutual

understanding between North Korea and another nation. Researchers define cultural exchange as,

“ The exchange of students, artists, athletes and other elements between two countries to promote mutual understanding” (Cho, 2005).

Cultural exchanges are used to promote international goodwill and friendship. North Korea has rubbed shoulders in a bad way with most of the countries hence most countries are not willing to engage in any sort of cultural exchange program. No country wants to be associated with a nation that does things the way they want without considering the consequences (Babason, 2009).

North Korea is an industrialized nation hence it depends heavily on technology. Having an exchange program with other industrialized nation will ensure the ease in exchange of new technology. Countries such as Japan, US and china which are industrialized states have all cut down on the exchange of technology to North Korea which has led to the reduced output. The reduction of output has negatively affected the economy of North Korea because the old technology affects the quality of output (Cho, 2005).

Another negative impact on the cultural exchange is the travel bans that have been imposed on North Korea. North Korea is pegged as a descent tourist destination with plenty of attractions that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. With the imposition of the travel ban, this means that North Korea is losing revenue that would have come from the tourists. Also, the tourists would have gotten a chance to embrace the language and culture of North Korea. The benefit of this exchange would have been two fold as also

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North Korea would have had the chance to portray themselves differently in front of the international community (Nanto & Chanlett, 2005).

The cultural ties between the Asian countries of South Korea, China and Japan have also declined because of this isolation of North Korea. The countries have always depended on each other especially in the areas of health and education. The cultural exchange programs would have benefited these sectors very much as the area has some of the world's renowned universities and health. North Korea is thus losing more by playing hardball (Cho, 2005).

The isolation of North Korea has negatively affected growth literacy. The isolation of North Korea has forced a downward trend of growth in literacy. What this means is that when the rates are compared with those of the fellow Asian countries such as South Korea, china and Japan, North Korea seems to be lagging behind. This is attributed to the fact the leadership regime is concentrating so much on instilling the juche ideology that it does not look at what it is doing to all these other sectors. Political analysts have said that North Korea has the capability of being at the same level as other Asian and also some European nations. The cause of this reduced growth literacy has caused numerous problems for the country most of them being purely social and affecting the people of the nation. The sectors affected by this are health, education and the population itself. The fact that North Korea is not in good tidings with other nations means that it is not able to benefit from programs that can assist them in the areas they are lacking. For example, the country is faced with a serious food shortage but because of the position of the state several countries are not willing to use their resources hence the

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nation and the people of North Korea loose more and all this ultimately adds onto the negative impacts affecting the growth literacy (Nanto & Chanlett, 2005).

The effects of growth literacy are felt up to the economy and GDP of the country. Currently, North Korea is facing a serious decline in its economy. Experts have said that without the intervention of the UN council, the country could be headed to a situation similar to that of Cuba (Babson, 2009).

Conclusion

The 21st century has no place for countries that are still holding on to communism. In this modern day, a person cannot survive on his own let alone a country tries to do so by itself. The “juche ideology” being practiced in North Korea is as a result of decades of personality based leaderships. The Kims regimes have been bent on ensuring that the leadership of the country is a family affair with no room for change (McCormack, 1993).

The paper has discussed how the “juche ideology” came into being and how it has negatively affected the nation. The paper has taken three perspectives covering the areas of growth literacy, international trade and cultural exchange. From the discussion it has come out that there is indeed a gap that needs to be filled.

The paper has also shown how the international community treats those nations that do not want to embrace their ideologies. North Korea is lucky to still have some nations that are willing to associate with them despite their continued rebelliousness. This goes to show that the nations in the world are

not willing to just let the relations between them and North Korea to go down the drain completely because they all need each other to survive. The country has a lot to offer and researchers have predicted that it will someday position itself as a giant in the Asian continent. Nevertheless, at the moment the situation in North Korea is wanting and more needs to be done because those that suffer the most are the people.