

Make Sports, Not War

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Considering that a nuclear conflict over North Korea appeared imminent in recent weeks, the winter Olympics at Pyeongchang, South Korea, is a most welcome distraction – and might even deter a major war on the peninsula.

The highlight of the games was the arrival of **Kim Yo-jong**, the younger sister of North Korea's ruler, **Kim Jong-un**. This was the first time a member of North Korea's ruling Kim dynasty had come to South Korea. Her handshake with South Korea's president, **Moon Jae-in** was a historic and welcome moment.

So too the planned joint marches by North and South Korean athletes under a new reunification flag. For all Koreans, this was a deeply emotional and inspiring ceremony.

But not for US **Vice President Mike Pence**, who was sent by Trump to give the Olympics the evil eye. He even refused to stand for the joint marchers in a surly act that spoke volumes about his role. Whether he meets President Moon or Kim Yo-jong remains to be seen. Even a cup of tea between Pence and Kim could end all the crazy talk about nuclear war. Does anyone in Washington know that North Korea lies between China and Russia?

All this drama is happening as the Trump White House is advocating giving North Korea a 'bloody nose.' Meaning a massive bombing campaign that could very likely include nuclear weapons. Trump, who received a reported five exemptions from military service because of a little bone spur in his foot, revels in military affairs and thinks a 'bloody nose' will warn Kim Jong-un to be good. Trump is planning a big military parade at which he will take the salute.

This writer went through US Army basic and advanced infantry training with a broken bone in my foot, and has no sympathy with the president's militaristic pretensions.

South Korea's able president Moon is moving heaven and earth to prevent a war in which his nation would be the main victim. Some 2-3 million Korean civilians died in the 1950-53 Korean War. All North Korea and much of South Korea were bombed flat by US air power. Now, as tensions surge, US heavy bombers and nuclear weapons ring North Korea, ready to flatten the north and make the rubble bounce.

North Korea's thousands of heavy guns dug into mountains just north of the DMZ (I've seen them) could flatten all of South Korea's capitol, Seoul, north of the Han River, killing millions, not counting nukes and poison gas. South Korea, the world's eleventh industrial power, would again pay the terrible price for a new war on the peninsula.

One of VP Pence's main missions is to whip up support among rightwing South Koreans who bitterly oppose any peace deal between the two Koreas and support attacking the north. Many on South Korea's hard right are evangelical Christians. It's no coincidence that Mike Pence, an ardent fundamentalist Protestant, was sent to show the flag and rally opposition to any détente with North Korea. Whatever happened to 'turn the other cheek?'

Washington does not want a lessening of tensions between the two Koreas. And much less, talk of potential reunification. If the two Koreas came to peace, what justification would the US have for keeping powerful air, land and naval forces in strategic South Korea, often called 'America's unsinkable aircraft carrier.' Japan is no more favorable to a united Korea.

South Korean President Moon has been calling for a new, positive era in north-south relations. He has been adamant in opposing any chance of war on the peninsula. But Washington has simply ignored Moon or brushed aside his objections to threats of war against North Korea. The North Koreans routinely accused the south of being 'American puppets.' Pyongyang is the only 'legitimate, truly independent Korean government,' charges the north.

Interestingly, in the event of war, South Korea's 655,000-man active armed forces and 4 million-man reserves come under the command of a four-star US general. US nuclear weapons can be moved through South Korean bases. The so-called joint US-South Korea joint command is mere window dressing.

It's hard to say how close the US was to attacking North Korea. Trump certainly backed himself into a corner by all his foolish threats to unleash 'fire and fury' on North Korea. The Olympics delayed the rush to war against North Korea. But once they are over, the war drums will resume beating. President Trump is probably thinking about a dandy parade after a short, devastating attack on North Korea - provided, of course, that the troublesome northerners don't manage to retaliate by landing a few nuclear warheads on Japan and Washington.

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Eric Margolis is the author of [War at the Top of the World](#) and the new book, [American Raj: Liberation or Domination?: Resolving the Conflict Between the West and the Muslim World](#). See [his website](#).

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