Egalitarian Symbiosis Model, Intergroup Contact, FIFA's Decision: Initial shock to both nations

The executive committee of FIFA was held to decide the site of the 2002 FIFA World Cup in Zurich, Switzerland, on May 31, 1996. Unexpectedly but rather fortunately, FIFA made its decision that the 2002 FIFA World Cup was to be jointly held by Japan and the Republic of Korea. This was the first occasion of two countries to host the World Cup Soccer tournament in its history. As soon as FIFA made this unusual decision, both Koreans and Japanese seemed to be extremely disappointed in the decision and were uncertain to whether the two nations would ever be able to work with each other to accomplish the same object. There have been series of international conflicts and accusations in almost every department between the two nations for the last fifty years.

Colonization and Egalitarian Symbiosis

The origin of race and ethnic relations lies in intergroup contact. There are several patterns of intergroup adaptation such as exclusion, isolation, accommodation, and adaptation. Egalitarian symbiosis refers to two groups coming into contact, with the results being rough economic and political equality for the two groups (Feagin, 1978). This model is normally used to analyze a migrating group and the outcome of the contact generated by the migration in a given society. The author attempts to analyze the relationships between Japan and Korea by this model.

There have been strong animosities over many occasions between two neighboring nations, particularly from the Korean side, since Japan's colonization of the Korean Peninsula in 1910. After WW II, although the two countries normalized their diplomatic ties in 1965, there have been strong anti-Japanese sentiments in the Republic of Korea. Imports of cultural products from Japan such as movies, videotapes, compact discs and television broadcasts, have been banned since the WW II because of lingering resentment from the colonial period.

France World Cup and Joint Supporter Team: Byproducts

Both Korea and Japan made the FRANCE 98 but failed to advance to the round sixteen in France. However, byproducts of co-hosting 2002 World Cup gradually appeared at the grass root level during the qualifying round in 1997 when Japan met her counterparts in Seoul for the preliminary round match. At that time, Korea Japan - Korea Relation, FIFA World Cup already secured its qualification to the final in France while Japan was struggling for the play-off. Sixty thousand partisan crowds unusually welcomed the Japanese team and even cheered up with little resentment to their hated neighbor when Japan beat the home team. It never happened like this before. Up until then, Korean attitudes toward Japanese were "Beat the hell out of Japanese," "Win at any cost, enemy!" and "Can lose anyone but Japanese." There were even banners of "Co-hosting 2002 World Cup" and "Let's go to France together" waved in the stadium. It appeared to be rather odd when significant number of spectators started chanting "Let's go to France together" at the end of that game.

The Korean Sport Organization in Japan proposed to organize a collaborated supporter's group, so-called Korea-Japan soccer fans, to support both national teams in France. A total of 129 younger generations, 72 Japanese and 57 Koreans, participated in the 5-day tour to France. They stayed together, moved around together, and supported two national teams together despite the language barrier. Both occasions, Koreans made the approach first at grass root level. Koreans' attitudes towards Japanese might have changed slightly to a positive direction. It is very difficult to change the Koreans' attitudes toward Japanese in overnight, and Japanese vice verse. No single institution has ever become a significant vehicle to improve international relations between the two counties since 1945.

Future direction - concluding remarks

The two countries have hardly every done any joint project together whether it was sport or other social domains. There is enough evidence to show that sporting events within and between different nations can trigger conflict as much as bind them together (Tomlinson, 1984; Kuper, 1994, Sugden & Bairner, 1993). Undoubtedly many of the practical details of a co-hosting arrangement still need to be developed. The 2002 World Cup event as a diplomatic tool within a globalising world may serve the purpose of bringing different nations and associations together or the other way around. As a result, it appears to support Houliham's assumption (1994) that globalization, as related to sport, is most evident and significant in providing governments with a further medium through which to conduct international politics. This event has begun to be political and will continue to be political.