



BEYOND THE ARMISTICE

EFFORTS FOR PEACE ON
THE KOREAN PENINSULA

THE CENTRE FOR PEACE
AND CONFLICT STUDIES

BEYOND THE ARMISTICE

EFFORTS FOR PEACE ON THE
KOREAN PENINSULA

Beyond the Armistice - Efforts for Peace on the Korean Peninsula

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First edition: September 2023

ISBN-13 : 978-99963-856-9-8

Printed in 2023 in Cambodia

Book Coordinator and Editor: Alison Lee

Published by the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies

www.centrepeaceconflictstudies.org

Digital versions of this publication are available on CPCS website

The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies extends its sincere appreciation to Misereor for their support in the creation of this publication. While Misereor provided financial backing for this endeavour, the viewpoints and thoughts articulated are solely those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the position of Misereor.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the people who contributed to the publication of this book. First and foremost, we would like to thank the contributors who generously shared their life stories, experiences, insights, and reflections on their work for peace. Their knowledge and hopes led us through the complexities of decades of tension caused by the unresolved Korean War. We are grateful for their candour, wisdom, and strength, and for trusting us with their voices. We also appreciate their time for interviews, editing, and other contributions.

The contributors and their organisations are our partners working on Korean Peninsula peace. We appreciate their continued dedication to this important cause, and we acknowledge the resilience and strength of generations of peace advocates who work tirelessly to contribute to peace on the Korean Peninsula amidst great difficulties.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to Misereor for their financial support, without which this publication would not have been possible. We are deeply grateful to all those who contributed to this book and hope that it will inspire others to work towards lasting peace in Asia.

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FOREWORD

I am honoured to be asked to provide a foreword for CPCS's «Beyond the Armistice – Efforts for Peace on the Korean Peninsula.» Having participated in CPCS-hosted Track 2 discussions with DPRK officials and others in 2018, I witnessed how tirelessly and creatively CPCS explores all options for promoting peace on the Korean Peninsula. With this volume, CPCS has gathered different perspectives on transcending military approaches and establishing lasting peace.

When I received an invitation to visit the DPRK as the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs in December 2017, tensions between the United States and the DPRK were escalating rapidly. The two countries appeared to be marching irreversibly toward war.

That year, the DPRK had launched ballistic missiles and conducted its sixth nuclear weapons test, all in violation of multiple United Nations Security Council Resolutions adopted unanimously. State media claimed that the DPRK was capable of striking the whole mainland of the United States. In September, U.S. President Trump from the podium of the United Nations – an organisation established to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” – threatened to “totally destroy North Korea.” Channels of communication between Washington and Pyongyang and between North and South Korea were idle, with Pyongyang having suspended even the military hotline across the DMZ.

As a UN official, I travelled to Pyongyang worried that any incident or miscalculation by any of the parties could trigger war. While my meetings including with then-Foreign Affairs Minister Ri Yong Ho and Vice Foreign Affairs Minister Pak Myong Guk were constructive, five days of talks

left me terrified: In a preview of the “triggers” discussed in Glyn Ford’s thoughtful contribution to this book, my hosts explained that, when the DPRK sensed that the United States was about to strike, the DPRK would launch first – meaning that, if the DPRK misread U.S. intentions and attacked the United States, the weapons the North Koreans insisted were to defend them from an eternally hostile United States would invite the very destruction they were designed to deter. Washington’s statements and actions reinforced the paranoia in Pyongyang about American intentions.

For the Americans, Pyongyang’s blatant defiance of the UN Security Council Resolution’s ban on ballistic missile launches and nuclear tests and its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) reinforced voices favouring “maximum pressure.” Washington advocated stronger UN and U.S. sanctions, despite clear evidence that sanctions were not obstructing Pyongyang’s military program.

Each side, in other words, was inadvertently strengthening hardliners on the other, with neither side seeking dialogue and off-ramps from a looming crisis.

My UN colleagues and I shared with our DPRK hosts proposals for de-escalation and re-opening of communication channels. Whether we can take credit or not, what seemed in 2017 to be a march toward war evolved in 2018 to inter-Korean talks and the Singapore summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un. The military hotline was reactivated, reducing the risks for miscalculations. The world exhaled.

Unfortunately, recently the atmosphere has darkened significantly. In 2017, China, Russia, and the United States, along with other Security Council members, could forge a consensus on questions regarding the DPRK’s weapons programs. Today, Russia’s unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and the deteriorating bilateral U.S.-Chinese relationship make a unified approach toward security on the Korean Peninsula unlikely. The DPRK’s “rock star” reception in July 2023 for Russian Defence Minister

Shoigu and the U.S.-Japan-Republic of Korea Camp David summit in August illustrate how badly international unity has shattered.

Domestic developments in Pyongyang, Seoul, and Washington also suggest those favouring dialogue face a rough road ahead. Kim Jong Un appears to have double-downed on his missile, WMD, and nuclear programs, losing interest in seeking a relationship with Washington. A conservative government in Seoul discontinued the outreach to Pyongyang pursued by the previous Moon Jae-in Administration. In Washington, the Biden Administration has not attempted direct diplomacy with Pyongyang, and American election years (2024) are rarely the time for creative U.S. foreign policy initiatives.

And yet surely, we can all still agree that a war on the Korean Peninsula or between the DPRK and the United States would be disastrous. We cannot simply wish away the serious issues that so deeply alarm Washington, Seoul, and Pyongyang. But how can we address them in order to reduce the likelihood of war?

This book offers some ideas. Candidly, when CPCS approached me about this foreword, I hesitated. I do not agree with some of the contributions here seeming to suggest that, if the United States simply and unconditionally withdrew its military forces from the Republic of Korea and lifted all sanctions (many of which are UN, not U.S.), all would be well. Proponents of a new U.S. approach are clearly well-meaning. But they should not, as a couple of authors imply, absolve the DPRK leadership of its responsibility for the current situation. Whatever its policy missteps and missed opportunities, the United States is not the reason why the DPRK is not viewed internationally as a “normal country.” South Koreans heroically and successfully established a democracy with a strong, healthy civil society and a booming economy. One hopes that their northern brethren will one day enjoy the same civil and political rights and the opportunity to subject their leaders to electoral accountability.

But that gets to the heart of the matter. The people suffering the most from the current situation and who are also most at risk in the case of military escalation are the Koreans living north of the 38th parallel. More than 25 million people live in unprecedented isolation and deprivation, inflicted by both Pyongyang's policies and international sanctions. In South Korea, in case of war, 52 million people could find themselves under attack from the north.

The risks to the Korean people explain why, despite my own unease with some of the authors' presumptions, I agreed to provide this foreword (which admittedly strikes a different tone than much of the volume): so far, nothing tried (and in some cases tried repeatedly) has succeeded to establish lasting peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. Thus, let us welcome the ideas and themes in this book, in hopes of provoking innovative approaches to what is both a humanitarian imperative and a peace-and-security dilemma with global implications. Now 70 years after the Korean Armistice Agreement, there is an urgent need to find the off-ramps from nuclear proliferation and war and to build the on-ramps to peace, security, development and civil rights to give the North Koreans the opportunity to live dignified lives.

Jeffrey Feltman

Former Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs of
the United Nations

INTRODUCTION

Together we can build an on-ramp to peace

The book features perspectives of 13 individuals from different countries, sectors, and generations, who are dedicated to peace on the Korean Peninsula. By sharing their peacebuilding journeys or efforts to engage in dialogues, these experiences and insights collectively highlight the complexities of the Korean Peninsula tension and the challenges in addressing these issues over decades.

The Inter-Korean Summits in 2017-2018 and the Hanoi Summit in 2019, which many contributors recalled, marked a time that gave a lot of hope to the Korean nation as well as generations of people working on peace on the Peninsula that, if it was successful, we were a major step toward replacing the Armistice regime and establishing permanent peace for millions of people living on the Korean Peninsula and beyond. However, the summit was unfortunately followed by a prolonged diplomatic deadlock and further escalation of military tensions up till now. We have seen a loss of momentum in resuming dialogue, while countries have been doubling down on the deterrence strategy, to strengthen alliances, expand military budgets, invest in strategic weapons, and so on.

We don't aim to downplay the importance of defence, but as Jeffrey Feltman wrote in the foreword, finding innovative approaches to realise an offramp from war is of utmost importance. We have to face the fact that the current security dilemma on the Korean Peninsula cannot be resolved by military solutions. We need a collaborative approach to shift the path and build new momentum for dialogue and cooperation.

As we began creating this publication, we took a moment to reflect on how CPCS became involved in Korean Peninsula peace. As a Cambodian organisation, our focus had primarily been on peace processes in Southeast Asian regions such as Myanmar and the Philippines. In 2008, when Myanmar was struck by Cyclone Nargis, we witnessed the remarkable efforts of a mobilised and intelligent civil society within the country that organised themselves to provide relief and establish connections with external actors. Despite both a natural disaster and military confrontations, they implemented innovative strategies to integrate peacebuilding into development work.

We were inspired by their actions and published a book to showcase the vast range of possibilities for building peace and creating momentum for political change. This challenged external perceptions of what is possible and what is not. It would have been a grave mistake for external actors and international organisations to give up on them. Voices of Myanmar civil society also made clear to us that isolationist policies including sanctions adopted by the international community towards the Myanmar government were not effective in changing the brutality of the military regime, but rather exacerbated the polarisation and division resulting in the regime becoming more entrenched in their position.¹

We thought that our experiences on Myanmar might be relevant to those working on the Korean Peninsula. To gain a better understanding of the situation, we listened to people such as Yi Kiho, Glyn Ford, and Douglas Hostetter about their experiences engaging with the DPRK. As we became aware of a vast network of people and groups working on peace on the Korean Peninsula, those conversations evolved into a series of meetings in Siem Reap, Cambodia over the course of several years, with the aim of achieving solid and inclusive analysis through ongoing conversations. The outcomes of these discussions were documented and written into two analysis papers, which were published in 2017 and early 2019.^{2 & 3}

The current situation on the Peninsula is entirely different from four to five years ago, with the absence of diplomatic engagement with Pyongyang since Hanoi, an unprecedented amount of weapon tests and military drills, coupled with over three years of DPRK border closures, that make rebuilding trust an extremely difficult task. Hence, this publication aims to contribute to sustaining a constructive dialogue that is much needed for creative, collaborative approaches to address both the military tension and humanitarian situation. The unprecedented danger on the Korean Peninsula presents to us the reality that a strong alignment of our interventions, with clear objectives to reduce tension and hostilities, is urgently needed if we want to reinvigorate momentum for dialogue and diplomacy.

What possibilities do we present here? The constructive dialogue going forward should involve, as Nam Boo Won suggests, comprehensive analysis and a holistic view of the system of division on the Korean Peninsula. As he and Yi Kiho address, the cycles of confrontation and subsequent endless debates surrounding contentious issues such as denuclearisation have not been able to shed light on how the peace process should go forward, but instead sustain the violent status quo on the Peninsula. Hostilities remain and both sides keep spreading demonised images of each other.

We acknowledge accountability as a key to building a just society that honours human dignity, but by engaging in endless blame games and fault-finding without a strong political will to look for a practical strategy to change the status quo, we continue to leave millions of people on the Korean Peninsula in a vulnerable situation. Jargalsaikhan Enkhsaikhan, who has dedicated most of his life to nuclear non-proliferation, highlighted the need to adopt a positive mindset and cooperative approach to generate ideas and energy in search of solutions for all, instead of fixating on the worst-case scenario.

As we see the dangerous trajectory, some may wonder if Pyongyang is willing to talk. Glyn Ford debunks the misconception that Pyongyang

refuses to talk to anybody and pointed out that there is still space for diplomacy. Change is possible which starts from our ability to listen carefully to what Pyongyang speaks.

And when much attention is given to superpower politics, geopolitical tension, or leaders' summits, Hwang Sooyoung, with the civil society movements she has been nurturing, leads us to the fundamental questions of building peace – whose peace is it and how people's voices matter to and essential for change. As we seek to enhance inclusiveness in peace and security issues, how does the will for peace reach people's hearts? In a similar vein, Moon A-Young discusses that the core mission of peace education and civic participation is to empower people to understand they have a choice, they have the power to shape the discourse, and more importantly, they have different options when deciding the direction of peace and security. Deterrence and demonising the other are not the only choices. Our minds can be liberated to imagine wider possibilities for a peaceful future.

Douglas Hostetter shares how, when serving as the director of the Mennonite Central Committee UN Office, he unleashed the possibilities, expanded the space for engagement, and elevated the impact, by going deep into building relationships with his “enemy” and recognising their dignity and shared humanity. The war and ongoing tension broke down human connections and trust. Kim Jeongsoo points out that trauma, the absence of reconciliation, fear of war, and insecurity are the blockages to building sustainable peace. Instead of over-relying on the deterrence strategy to address security issues, alternative platforms such as discussions toward building a Northeast Asia regional women, peace and security (WPS) agenda could be a way to foster regional cooperation on human security and enhance mutual understanding.

Christine Ahn offers sharp remarks on the militarisation of the U.S. foreign policy, one which justifies military expansion in the name of “security”. To challenge the system and the establishment's definition of security, the

women-powered movement that she is leading aims to amplify people's voices for peace, and highlights the power of people's solidarity in realising change.

Kee Park's discussion on the health situation in the DPRK offers significant insights into how human security is at risk as a result of the failure to make peace on the Korean Peninsula. While peace is the prerequisite of health, he suggests that health practitioners and humanitarian workers have an important role to play in not only improving people's health but also as an effective bridge toward peace.

From being a witness to one of the momentous times in South Korean history during the Gwangju Uprising, to working on the other side of the demilitarised zone after serving in several Asian countries, Linda Lewis concluded a number of key lessons she learnt from working closely with local partners, emphasising some important values and principles as we engage DPRK partners while being strategic in the work.

As we may get overwhelmed by the amount of information, the wide breadth of perspectives and the complexities of the political dynamic, O Ryong Il's sharing encourages us not only to look at the past and the present situation but also to look at the future and envision what kind of future we want to create for our children and future generations. As people who build peace, we ground ourselves on solid analysis and by listening widely to different perspectives, and we energise ourselves and each other by envisioning a better future for humanity. We act to build momentum for peace. We don't give up.

The unresolved Korean War and the subsequent violence contribute significantly to the ongoing tensions and hostilities on the Korean Peninsula and beyond. The contributors of this publication urge for an immediate resumption of dialogue to reduce tension and rebuild trust. They call for all parties to cease hostilities, shift away from a militarised security approach, and establish a more robust, inclusive process to facilitate effective collaboration and include the voices of people affected

by the conflict. The current pressure approach on the DPRK, including sanctions policy, needs to be reconsidered. Each contributor has provided unique suggestions and recommendations for the policy community and civil society groups to work together towards achieving these goals.

This publication aims to shed light on the complex challenges that have obstructed peacebuilding efforts on the Korean Peninsula for decades. It also strives to bring a glimmer of hope by showcasing the experiences and insights of individuals from different countries, sectors, and generations who are committed to building peace. It is evident that military solutions cannot resolve the security dilemma on the Peninsula, and a collaborative approach is necessary to steer the course towards dialogue and change. We hope the stories and discussions presented here will inspire meaningful conversations and innovative approaches. By maintaining a constructive dialogue and aligning our interventions with clear objectives, we can rekindle momentum for diplomacy and work towards building a peaceful and just society for all those living on the Korean Peninsula.

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- 1 Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, *Listening to Voices from Inside: Myanmar Civil Society's Response to Cyclone Nargis* (2009). <https://www.centrepeaceconflictstudies.org/books/listening-to-voices-from-inside-myanmar-civil-society-response-to-cyclone-nargis/>
 - 2 Caroline Kearney, *Strengthening Understanding through Dialogue: A Peacebuilding Approach to the Korean Peninsula Conflict* (Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, 2017). <https://www.centrepeaceconflictstudies.org/books/strengthening-understanding-through-dialogue-a-peacebuilding-approach-to-the-korean-peninsula-conflict/>
 - 3 Caroline Kearney, *Seizing a Window of Opportunity for Peace on the Korean Peninsula* (Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, 2019). <https://www.centrepeaceconflictstudies.org/books/seizing-a-window-of-opportunity-for-peace-on-the-korean-peninsula/>

YI KIHO

Reflections on my 30-year peacebuilding journey and hopes for the future

*Executive Director of the Center for Peace and
Public Integrity at Hanshin University*

Looking back on my life, every experience I have had was a precious moment and a significant page in modern Korean history. I would like to review my actions in this context and share my thoughts and ideas for a peaceful future.

Democratisation and the new atmosphere on the Korean Peninsula

The late 1980s was an exciting time. South Korea underwent a massive democratisation movement in 1987 and held the 1988 Seoul Olympics one year later. This created a positive atmosphere and sparked new dreams and hopes for the future of Korean politics. Under this umbrella of democratisation, I was very interested in studying social movements and political change in Korea. Thanks to my advisor, Professor Lee Shin-haeng, I started working at the Korea Christian Academy (KCA) as a staff member and organised dialogue programmes for politicians and leadership programmes for youth.

In 1991, North and South Korea simultaneously joined the United Nations. A few months later, the “Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation between South and North Korea” (also known as the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement) was signed after a series of high-level talks on disarmament. All these developments, including the joint declaration on the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, happened in 1991. These were truly critical transitions between North and South Korea, who regard each other as enemies. However, the impact wasn’t felt as much as expected by the public since the meetings and agreements were all at the highest level and among governments.

Living under a dictatorship for a prolonged period meant we were restricted from travelling abroad freely, leaving us with a narrow domestic perspective. However, the normalisation of relations with China in 1992 significantly impacted us. We could visit China, a communist country, and travel to the Soviet Union, a leading red block in the Cold War system that was believed to have supported the DPRK in starting the Korean War.

KCA’s effort to build a transnational civil society for peace based on new relationships between South Korea and Japan

In 1995, KCA was preparing an international conference with Japanese intellectuals on the 50th anniversary of Korean liberation from Japanese colonisation. That year was also the 50th anniversary of the Japanese defeat in the Second World War. Because of the progress of Korean democratisation and new relationships with neighbouring countries, including North Korea, many intellectuals dreamed of a new era overcoming the Cold War and divisions in this region.

The KCA seniors believed that reflecting on the past 50 years and reconciling with Japan could cultivate peace and cooperation in Northeast Asia. However, the reality was that Korea and Japan needed to work together to achieve this peace process. This was a challenge because the Korean people's collective grievance against Japan had not been resolved due to Japan's lack of genuine apology for colonising and oppressing Koreans. We were working hard to find ways to normalise the Korean-Japanese relationship at the civil society level. In contrast, at the governmental level, Japan and South Korea normalised their relationship in 1965 without an apology, despite opposition from the Korean people.

The international conference in 1995 aimed to transform Northeast Asia into a regional peace community with the joint efforts of Japanese and Korean participants. We wanted to foster a genuine connection on the civilian level between Japan and Korea, dreaming of a transnational civil society for peace. It was my first time working at an international peace conference. After a long preparation, the meetings took place in Seoul in February and Tokyo in April, and we came together again in 1995. I was very lucky to be a part of this work alongside many seniors who designed the event as a new start to history. On the Korean side, we had reputable leaders of KCA like Rev. Kang Won-yong, Chi Myong-kwan and Oh Jae-shik. On the Japanese side, Iwanami Shoten, Publishers was the hosting organisation. There were also Yasue Ryosuke, Oe Kenzaburo, the novelist and Nobel laureate, who passed away in 2023, and Prof. Sakamoto Yoshikazu, who advised me in many ways on peace studies and Asian relationships as a mentor when I later studied at Waseda University in 1999-2002.



A group picture of Yi Kiho (first from the left), Yasue Ryosuke, Oe Kenzaburo, Sakamoto Yoshikazu, Kang Wonyong, and Oh Jaeshik taken at the peace forum “Liberation 50 years, Defeat 50 years” at Chosun Hotel in February 1995. Source: Yi Kiho.

It was a crucial time in history as the political landscape was changing, with Kim Dae-Jung’s meeting with Obuchi in 1998 marking the beginning of a new Japan-ROK partnership. We organised various workshops and conferences in Korea and Japan. We also connected with Chinese partners. Then, ten years later, we started the East Asia Peace Forum, sponsored by the Niwano Peace Foundation, every other year in Tokyo, Shenzhen, and Seoul until 2010. The topic of discussion was centred around creating a regional peace community in Northeast Asia, focusing on both discourse and actions. We would like to call people with a vision and their field for activism “intellectual activists.” We delved into ways to transform or overcome the San Francisco System, a network of political and military

alliances spearheaded by the U.S. in the Asia Pacific region. This system is essentially a continuation of the Cold War era, and we aimed to foster a new vision for the future of Northeast Asia. It was a momentous period for me.

We discussed many significant topics – How do we design a peace structure in Northeast Asia that facilitates a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding? How could we include North Korea and build a new kind of relationship between socialist and capitalist countries? How did we deal with the U.S. hegemony in the region? Is a nuclear-free zone in Northeast Asia possible? Of course, we faced a challenging situation, but the discussions created many new opportunities, trials, and dreams. For me, who had focused mostly on South Korean democratisation at the national level during my PhD study period in the mid-1990s, these discussions and exposures refreshed my thinking about civil society initiatives for peace and fundamental changes at a regional level. I also believe that transnational civil society cooperation could be a powerful driver of peacebuilding in Northeast Asia. It was great to envision those new opportunities at that time!

A severe flood and famine hit North Korea in 1997, and simultaneously, we faced the Asian financial crisis in South Korea. At the time, at KCA, I worked on arranging medical assistance and supplies for the North Koreans while facing economic challenges at home. To achieve this, we conducted a fundraising programme in Los Angeles in 1998, where Korean Americans donated funds, and American civil society groups contributed medicines. We successfully shipped the medicines to North Korea. This event created a powerful momentum for cooperation within and between Korean American society and American peace groups. Many individuals and religious groups were actively involved in responding to North Korea's food crisis. This experience taught me how we could invite U.S. citizens and the Korean diaspora to join the peace process in Northeast Asia.

In 1999, I decided to pursue further study on peace in Japan as a visiting scholar at Waseda University for three years after my PhD at Yonsei University. With the assistance of Sakamoto Yoshikazu and Nishikawa Jun, I travelled extensively to meet with peace scholars and activists in Japan, China, and the U.S. Meanwhile, in 2001, Rev. Kang Won-Yong, KCA's founder, started the Korea Peace Forum (KPF) in his mid-80s. He invited me to serve as the secretary general of the KPF, which I accepted while I was a visiting scholar in Tokyo.

KPF's efforts in facilitating dialogue between North Korea and the U.S.

The Korea Peace Forum (KPF) has three essential principles as follows:

- 1) No war. We have a firm belief that should not occur in any situation.
- 2) Bipartisan cooperation. Despite opposing political views, we aim to make one united voice for peace. As much as possible, we would like to deliver bipartisan voices and actions, so I worked to facilitate collaboration on peace issues between the ruling and opposition parties.
- 3) Northeast Asian cooperation. We were working towards building a peace network in Northeast Asia by connecting peace activists in Japan, China, and the U.S.



A photo taken at the East Asia Peace Forum in Tokyo on 8th – 9th October, 2006 with convenors and key participants including Suh Seung, Wang Ming, Yamaguchi Akio, Sakamoto Yoshikazu, Chi Myoungkwan, Toi Takao, Wada Haruki, Lee Buyoung, Yoon Yeojun, and Okamoto Atsushi. Participants were taken aback by the news of the DPRK's announcement of the first nuclear test on 9th October. Source: Yi Kih0.

Based on these three principles, we sought to build momentum for improving North Korea-U.S. relations. This was a delicate issue, but as a priority mission, we did as much as we could to organise North Korea-U.S. dialogue. It was never easy. To make this happen, I went to meet with North Korean leaders abroad many times. On the other hand, it was also challenging to persuade the U.S. government and Congress representatives why such a dialogue is necessary. Then, I realised “third-party” places are excellent spaces to host meetings between North and South Korea or the U.S., which gave me insights into the importance of peripheral cities for dialogue, as the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) has been doing in Siem Reap.

The process of gathering the North Koreans and Americans for dialogue was very long and took much patience. The Korea Peace Forum sought to organise various kinds of meetings involving North Koreans and Americans around 2004. We organised a bilateral meeting in the U.S., but it had to be cancelled because, at the last minute, the U.S. government denied the North Korean participants entry to the U.S., despite initial permission from the administration. So, our two-year efforts were in vain. KCA had invested significant time and resources in preparing for the meeting, including extensive travel to meet with both parties, but unfortunately, the meeting did not take place.

We did not give up the dialogue process because it was essential to build peace in this region. Organising the dialogue between the North Koreans and Americans was a long and challenging process requiring much patience. Meanwhile, the Korean Americans in D.C. led by Lee Haeng-woo, whom I worked closely with, successfully arranged a meeting between the North Korean Ambassador to the UN and members of Congress, including Joe Biden, in 2004. This event marked the first time the North Korean Ambassador to the UN visited the D.C. and Congress. Despite the challenges, we saw a significant development on the Korean Peninsula because of the fundamental impact it had on the structure of Northeast Asian relationships, ones that have been heavily influenced by the U.S.



Peace meeting preparation with the DPRK delegation at Mt. Kumgang in the DPRK. Source: Yi Kih0.



Source: Yi Kih0.

In other words, the issue of the Korean Peninsula cannot be solved without neighbouring countries' commitment, and relationships in this region cannot be transformed without peace in the Korean Peninsula. Therefore, we would like to develop an alternative strategy for peace with the cooperation of people across borders. Additionally, this presents an opportunity to showcase Asian values and create a new and unique world different from the Western perspective. I was eager to work on promoting dialogue and building a peace network to achieve this vision.

The New York Conference on Peace and Cooperation

In 2012, we brought our North Korean counterparts to Washington, D.C. The New York Conference on Peace and Cooperation in Northeast Asia was held in March 2012. As director of the Center for Peace and Public Integrity (CPPI) at Hanshin University, I collaborated closely with the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation, Syracuse University, and the National Association of Korean Americans. Just a few months before that, on 17th December, 2011, Kim Jong Il passed away suddenly, so I thought two years of effort might be in vain again. However, Kim Jong Un showed positive signs of proceeding with the dialogue. Pyongyang sent high-ranking officials to attend the conference from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Ri Yong Ho, who later became the DPRK Minister of Foreign Affairs and attended the Singapore Summit in 2018 and the Hanoi Summit in 2019, and Choe Son Hui, who is now the DPRK Minister of Foreign Affairs.

We aimed to facilitate a multilateral dialogue, so we invited a diverse group of delegates from Germany, the EU, Japan, China, Mongolia, and the UN. This allowed us to incorporate perspectives from different regions in addition to those from the U.S. Among the German delegates was Walter Kolbow, former Vice Minister of Defense and Member of the German Federal Parliament. Peter Simon, also a German, was a delegate from the European Parliament. The U.S. delegation included John Kerry, then Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, James Laney, former Ambassador to South Korea, and Henry Kissinger, former

Secretary of the States. With such high-level attendees, we hoped to build a new relationship between North Korea and the U.S.

Unfortunately, the positive momentum was disrupted when North Korea launched a rocket, claiming it was for a satellite launch. The U.S. accused them of actually launching a missile. In 2013, we tried to hold the conference in Germany again as a follow-up to the New York meeting. However, due to the deteriorating relationship between the U.S. and North Korea, we could not host any delegates from North Korea. Although the 2012 conference did not yield immediate results due to unforeseen circumstances, it laid the groundwork for future developments. During the conference, Ri Yong Ho and Choe Son Hui engaged in discussions with prominent U.S. politicians, including John Kerry, James Laney, and Henry Kissinger, among others. Those interactions might have played a role in facilitating the Kim-Trump Summits in Singapore and Hanoi.

It seemed to me that the U.S. administration was hesitant to engage in dialogue with Kim Jong Un, the new leader of North Korea, back then because they weren't sure if he had enough power in the country to be a suitable partner for dialogue. They seemed to take a "wait and see" approach. But in 2016, when Trump became president, he took a different approach and decided to meet with Kim Jong Un. Other positive events, such as the Pyeongchang Olympics, accompanied this shift in strategy. I witnessed this part of the journey of engaging North Korea from 1995 until then.

Sanctions policy and militarisation increase the likelihood of war. It seems like we're heading towards war faster than expected.



The Korea Peace Forum with international religious leaders including Victor Hsu, Lim Dongwon (Former ROK Minister of Unification), Chon Pal-ahn (Won Buddhism), Kang Wonyong (Korea Peace Forum), and Philip Potter (World Council of Churches). Source: Yi Kiho.



A press conference after the 2012 New York Conference on Peace and Cooperation in Northeast Asia. Source: Yi Kiho.

We are now facing an unprecedented situation due to escalating tensions and militarisation in the name of national security and alliances. This worries me because sanctions policy and militarisation increase the likelihood of war. It seems like we're heading towards war faster than expected. Where can we find hope and opportunities for peace?

Developing cross-border peace city networks with a bottom-up approach

By building transnational ties across cities, we can establish a sense of solidarity between cities across borders, amplify our voices for peace, and create a greater impact. At the national level, cities cannot compete with the national government. However, if we unite cities in a cross-border solidarity network, we can create a stronger voice for peace. Cities prioritise peaceful and happy living and are not interested in militarisation, military industries, or warfare. This sets cities apart from the state, which usually prioritises national security. How can we build these city networks?

Peace initiatives are taking place in various cities, including Siem Reap, Ulaanbaatar, Nagasaki, Bandung, Chiang Mai, and more. We can expand the impact of these initiatives by connecting city networks at the civil society level, involving peace activists and local citizens. Today, my focus is addressing local issues and creating a network at the local level rather than the top level. I believe that fostering collaboration at the local level, starting from the bottom up, can be an effective means of achieving lasting peace. This is where my interests lie.

The 21st century has brought about a new environment, not just in terms of climate change but also the digitalisation progress experienced through generative AI technology. The digitalised society has given rise to a new generation with a different way of thinking. Connecting with this generation and encouraging them to think about peace is critical. Peace education is crucial today, but the challenge lies in making it impactful at the individual, local, national, and global levels. There are various

peace activities, from peace tours and workshops to peace dialogues and meditation. Peace education is not just about imparting knowledge, but also inspiring people to take action for peace.

Intergenerational peace education with alternative strategies and field experiences

While I used to focus on top-level decision-maker dialogues and peace conferences, in the past decade, I have shifted my focus toward peace education and local city networks. Since 2008, I have been working as a professor at Hanshin University, actively involved in peace education through various means. This includes organising peace tours and scenario- and simulation-based workshops and offering peace studies programs. Peace studies involves interdisciplinary research and the creation of many contents and methodologies. Despite the importance of peace studies, the field shrinks significantly when national security issues arise. To revitalise peace studies, we need to focus on building a structured and methodological peace dialogue with the help of many scholars and activists. Also, we must prioritise peace education for future generations and establish solidarity networks between cities to amplify our voices for peace.

University campuses can contribute to the globalisation of peace. We are renovating the dormitory at Hanshin University in Seoul to accommodate international students and foster cultural exchange. This space will also serve as a platform for conducting social experiments to develop innovative peace education methods students can participate in while living together. We aim to see students and teachers collaborate to design and implement effective peace programs, and hopefully, this model can be replicated in other Asian cities.



A campaign organised by the Civil Society Education Network in Asia (CENA), a peace education programme, in Jeju Island in August 2018. Source: Yi Kiho.



The Ulaanbaatar Process meeting, a civil society dialogue co-organised by the Northeast Asia Secretariat of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC Northeast Asia) and Mongolian NGO Blue Banner in Ulaanbaatar in May 2007. Source: Yi Kiho.



*Various peace programmes in daily-life settings including universities and local communities.
Source: Yi Kiho*

I am currently testing peace programs in different settings, including local communities. If these programs prove effective, they could be replicated in other Asian cities with the help of other regional partners. Then we could establish a network of diverse programmes addressing specific local and regional peace issues. The potential for this is very exciting. Around 2008, I started a peace NGO called the Asia Regional Initiative (ARI) with the support of the Nautilus Institute and its director, Peter Hayes. We are working together to incubate and implement our ideas and weave a strong network. Joan Diamond as a mentor has also contributed many creative ideas in developing our peace projects.

Intergenerational peacebuilding is crucial, and we must adopt this approach across various fields, including climate change and other pressing issues. Many challenges we face today require collaboration across generations. We must acknowledge the significance of this now, as it is not only the younger generation that requires education but also older generations who need to learn and be taught. We must avoid a one-sided approach that assumes a particular generation knows best. Instead, we must encourage all generations to learn and work together towards a better future.

My wish is to see the creation of an intergenerational learning space for peace that hosts students from both North and South Korea.

Education needs to play a role in facilitating the way we learn and build trust with others across generations. The intergenerational divide is more than just an age gap; it represents deep divisions and even hostility among generations. This is a crucial social issue in Korea and various parts of the

world, as different generations think and live differently. Furthermore, technological advancements have revolutionised social life, making it necessary for us all to come together to address issues and find solutions.

We must reflect on the purpose of education. Today, universities have lost their authority to direct students and simply function as professional schools for securing jobs rather than providing desired learning. They offer vocational training, not education. This has resulted in the decline of liberal education. Therefore, reviving a true sense of education is essential to promoting intergenerational learning.

My wish is to see the creation of an intergenerational learning space for peace that hosts students from both North and South Korea. This would allow us to learn from each other and promote understanding. Education is a reflective process that encourages us to consider who our friends are and how to turn our enemies into friends. To facilitate this, city-to-city exchanges are essential. Since direct exchanges between North and South Korea are impossible, we could facilitate these exchanges through a city outside the Korean Peninsula. For instance, Siem Reap could serve as a hub for such exchanges. Local-level exchanges would also reduce the likelihood of irreversible mistakes that could occur at the national level, creating a broader space for diverse and nourishing experiments for peacebuilding.



Source: Yi Kih0.

GLYN FORD

**There are no solutions
absent of dialogue. The sooner
the dialogues start, the better**

*Director of Track2Asia, Executive Director of Polint,
and Former Member of the European Parliament*

I am a football fan. In 1966, the World Cup was held in the United Kingdom. I was only 16. North Korea was there for the first time. As underdogs, they did rather well. After a draw with Chile, they lost to Russia, but then they beat Italy, one of Europe's top teams, and went through to the quarterfinals, which was amazing. They gained a lot of fans. They ended up playing Portugal, where they quickly went three nil up. They lost to Eusébio, who scored four goals, with the final score 5-3. They made an enormous impact which put them on my map.

In 1984, I was elected to the European Parliament (EP) and served on the External Economic Relations Committee - which is now the International Trade Committee. On the committee, you could propose own-initiative reports, and I suggested several, one of which was on EU-North Korea Trade. The answer was there wasn't any. It was a total of something like \$27,000 for the previous year. A copy of the report was sent to their Embassy in Paris. (It was an embassy to UNESCO. They never had, and still don't, an embassy to France because of intransigence by the *Quai*

D'Orsay.) The result of this was that I maintained occasional contact over the coming years.

But it wasn't until 1997 that it became more serious. They came to see me saying they were facing a famine triggered by floods and droughts. They wanted to access the beef the EU was destroying after Mad Cow Disease led to us slaughtering hundreds of thousands of cattle. They came to me because there was almost literally no one else to talk to. At the time, European Commission officials were not allowed to speak to North Koreans, and there were no embassies in Pyongyang – save Sweden. So, I said, “Well, you need to show me the situation. If I'm going to start arguing in the Parliament and with the Commission for food aid, I need to see what the situation is on the ground.”

They invited me and two Labour Party colleagues, both Members of the European Parliament, to visit. This was an unofficial delegation. Without any official backing, the three of us went to Pyongyang, Pyongsong and Huichon and visited orphanages, children's centres, food distribution warehouses, hospitals, etc. Even though I had no medical training it was clear they had a major problem. I asked them, “Would they like an official delegation?” And they said, yes, of course. So, on our return, we tabled in the Parliament a rather critical resolution saying there were major problems in North Korea and demanded that the North Korean government allow us to send an official delegation. To everybody's surprise - apart from mine – after this rather aggressive resolution was forwarded to them, Pyongyang's response was, “Yes, send a delegation”.

This was the first official European Parliament delegation. I went with Leo Tindemans, the former Belgian Prime Minister, and Laurens Brinkhorst, who subsequently became the Agricultural Minister in Holland. We came back and officially reported what I had previously seen on our unofficial visit. I am not saying it was because of us. The message about the famine sweeping the country came from multiple sources at the time. But it was around then that humanitarian assistance to North Korea finally started to flow.

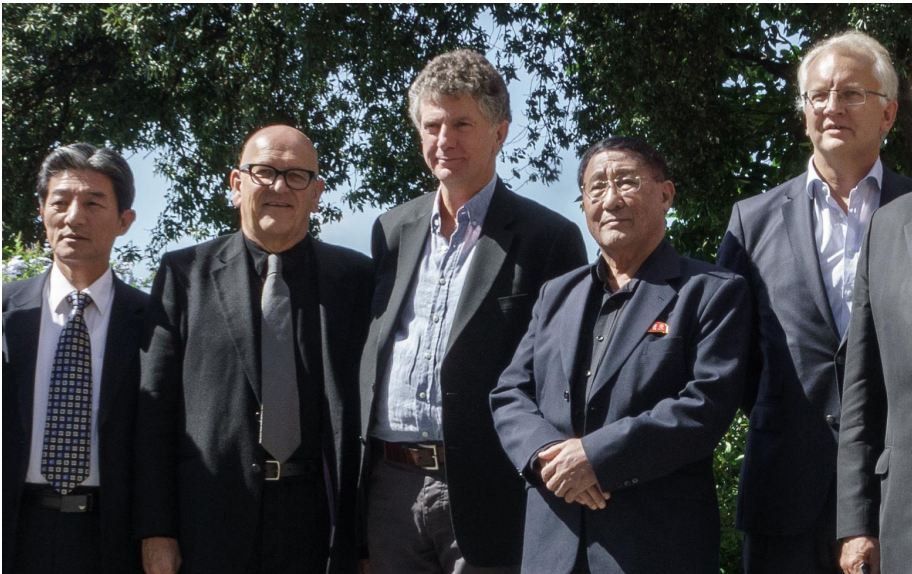


Julian Priestley, the Former Secretary General of the European Parliament, with Choi Sun Hon. Photo © Polint Ltd.

Subsequently, there were two further *ad hoc* delegations to Pyongyang from the European Parliament in 1999 and 2002. I was on both, with Jacques Santer, the former President of the European Commission, and Jas Gawronski, the former press spokesperson for Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi. I suggested in the Parliament that we set up a standing delegation with the Korean Peninsula. That was done in 2004, and it still exists now, although they have not travelled to Pyongyang now for nearly five years confounded by public health and politics. Because of my experience, I was sought out by a series of other groups with ambitions to visit. Twice the Friedrich Naumann Foundation invited me to be part of a delegation to talk about economic modernisation, and I took a delegation from the Socialist Group in the European Parliament on one occasion.

I have now been just short of 50 times to the North. I got invited personally probably every year effectively for a political dialogue. We were lucky - more accident than design. Because I was a serving politician

rather than a diplomat, our interlocutors were principally – although not on every occasion – the International Department of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK). Like in China, Vietnam, and the Soviet Union, the party is more important than the ministries. Almost all people who have dialogues with North Korea are effectively talking with elements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Non-Americans generally deal with the Institute for Disarmament and Peace while for those from the U.S., it’s the Institute for American Studies. We skip straight to the Party. In 2010, the Party approached me, saying they would like to establish a political dialogue with European political parties. The reality was that no European political party - then and certainly not now - whose members wouldn’t fit into a telephone box as one of Europe’s miniature Marxist-Leninist-Maoist parties, would be prepared to engage in that dialogue. Instead, I suggested that I could assemble a small group of former senior political figures; people who had now retired or moved out of frontline politics, but still had influence.



A meeting with the North Korean delegation in Switzerland. From the right: Pär Nuder, former Swedish State Secretary and Chief of Staff to Prime Minister Göran Persson, Kang Suk Ju, Jonathan Powell, and Glyn Ford. Photo © Polint Ltd.

Through Tony Blair, I approached Jonathan Powell, his former Chief of Staff, literally from when he was elected leader of the Labour Party to when he retired as Prime Minister. And unlike many of Blair's employees who went off to work for banks and on boards, Jonathan set up a peacebuilding operation, based on his experience being central to the Irish peace process. His organisation Inter Mediate works in Myanmar, Libya, Syria, Haiti, Kashmir and more. The only area we work together is North Korea. Jonathan and I set up this political dialogue with the Head of the International Department of the WPK. A series of incumbents have come and gone over the last decade, but the dialogue continues. Initially, it was with Kim Yong Il, who apparently was a relative of Kim Jong Un and Kim Jong Il. Then it was Kang Sok Ju, who had been the chief negotiator at the six-party talks. Then when Kang was ill with colon cancer and before he passed away, we worked with Choe Thae Bok, a member of the Politburo and the former Speaker of the Supreme People's Assembly. More recently, our last contact was with Ri Su Yong. He was the Vice Chairman of the Executive of the Politburo, which put him amongst the country's top four decision-makers.

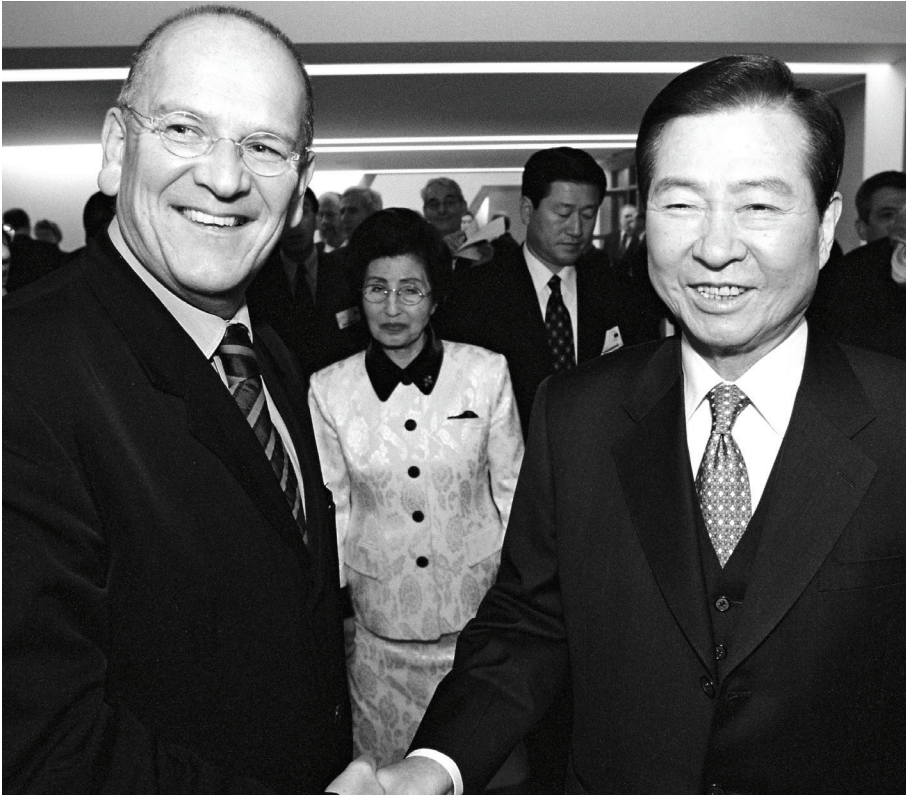
We are not a peace operation. What we do is a political dialogue. Thus, we are in a different relationship with the North Koreans. We are bridge builders, if anything, in two ways. We normally do not pass messages, but after or before our visits, we travel to the usual places, Seoul, Japan, and the United States. We had reasonably good contact with China, but that rather fell apart when somebody moved on. We are happy to talk on these visits about our experiences and what we thought and learned. It can make a difference.

We went about three or four times in the 12 months around the nuclear crisis in 2017 and 2018. We were there actually the week before the ICBM launch and spoke to Ri Su Yong. Ri told us that the Americans were going to be absolutely furious with what they would do next. And, of course, it was the first ICBM launch, followed by the nuclear test, "fire and fury" and all the rest. Tensions were very high. But then, when Kim Jong Un gave

the 2019 New Year's address, the Americans, in my view, weren't properly listening and failed to pick up the messages. We went again in January, and Ri Su Yong said, "We are not going to do what Saddam did in Iraq and wait for the Americans to build up their forces and invade us. At the point at which we think it's impossible to stop, we will take pre-emptive action, for example, a signal of the imminent evacuation of American non-combatants from South Korea." For Pyongyang that would sign of passing a point of no return. My new book, *Riding Two Horses*, has a more detailed description.¹

About a week later, we were in the White House talking to H.R. McMaster, Trump's then National Security Adviser, and I mentioned to him what Ri Su Yong had said. That was it. Subsequently, Bob Woodward reported in his book *Rage* that a visitor in the White House had told McMaster that Ri Su Yong had said the evacuation of non-combatants would be a trigger point for the North Korean pre-empting military action. McMaster had immediately to rush off and stop Trump from tweeting that he was planning to do exactly that. It was serendipity and maybe my accidental good deed. And if so, it was worth it.

There was a hiatus in the dialogue for two reasons. Firstly, there was the need for a massive reassessment of the North's position after the Hanoi Summit. In my view, the 2019 New Year's address indicated that Kim Jong Un was prepared to move towards incremental denuclearisation on the basis of the right deal. He talked, in his address, about arms conversion, that military factories are now producing tractors, that people are going to be able to be decanted out of the military into the civilian economy - a whole series of positive things concealed beneath the rhetoric. There was a real opportunity there that Washington either missed or didn't want. As a result, unfortunately, in Hanoi partly due, in my opinion, to sabotage from John Bolton, Trump walked away from Kim Jong Un's last best chance for denuclearisation of the Peninsula. In the end, it was Trump's responsibility, and the problem was that Trump doesn't really do deferred gratification.



Glyn Ford at a reception that followed the visit of the President of South Korea, Kim Dae-Jung, to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. Photo © Polint Ltd.

Any process that will work is going to take at least a decade. It is going to be step by step. Certainly, after these recent experiences, there is little, if any, trust on either side. It can only be a long-term process because you need time to build trust. The essential problem is that the United States is deeply reluctant to do irreversible, but they expect that of North Korea. There are cheap options for Washington. An end-of-war declaration, which is irreversible, costs little but is very important symbolically. You can't have a peace treaty because there is no way it will ever pass the U.S. Congress. This the North Koreans are very well aware of. So, they are looking at a different gesture. An end-of-war declaration signed by China, the United States, South Korea, and Russia would be a low-cost way of breaking the deadlock.

When people say Pyongyang is refusing to talk to anybody, that is not true.

As I said, we are not there to deliver or pass on messages, but we do sometimes get mail. I remember Kang Sok Ju telling us that their investigation into the Japanese abductee issue was over. And when we took this message to Tokyo, the Cabinet Office and the Vice-Minister of the Secretariat for Headquarters for the Abduction Issue really did not believe it. Unfortunately, it turned out to be all too true. Pyongyang had decided there was nothing else they could do to satisfy Tokyo, and that was it.

When people say Pyongyang is refusing to talk to anybody, that is not true. They are not talking to Americans. They are not talking to South Koreans or the Japanese. But they have been trying to talk to the Europeans. And it has been the EU who have been struck dumb. The reality is rather more balanced with the North Koreans not talking to some people and others refusing to talk to them. Yet there are no solutions absent of dialogue. The sooner those dialogues start, the better.

Secondly, any ultimate solution is international. I am not sure Pyongyang will give up their nuclear weapons quickly or easily but they might freeze production as they offered in Hanoi. They might agree to a fresh moratorium on nuclear and ICBM testing. But to go anywhere beyond that they are looking for security guarantees. They use the examples of Libya, Iraq, and Syria to argue that the problem is not having weapons of mass destruction; It is not having them. Those solid security guarantees are likely to be on the model of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - the Iran Deal - where Tehran's security guarantees came from the United Nations Security Council's Five Permanent Members Plus (UNSC+). Pyongyang's view is that you can't trust the United States because any deal is going to stretch across at least two, if not three, presidencies. What one American

President prepared to sign off on the next may not, as we saw with the Iran deal, which was signed by Obama and torn up by Trump. So, it will need external support to buttress it that stretches beyond Washington. With the JCPOA, it was the UNSC plus Germany and the European Union. With North Korea, it would probably be the UNSC plus South Korea and probably Japan.

Alongside they will seek a Framework Agreement similar to that in 1994, which resulted in the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO). It was the most significant and substantial peace process agreed between the U.S. and North Korea since 1953. With KEDO, North Korea agreed to freeze their nuclear programme in exchange for the Americans organising the construction of two Light Water Reactors (LWR) costing \$4.5 billion, but President Bush walked away in 2002 abandoning the deal over allegations that Pyongyang was cheating on its nuclear programme. This time around, it may not be LWRs, but the package they seek will cost a minimum of \$15 to 20 billion. They will call it reparations, the donors an Industrial Development Fund. It doesn't matter. But this shares the same problem as any Peace Treaty. There is no way that any American President will get that through Congress. So, again it will require an international effort like with KEDO, which was funded by South Korea, Japan, and the EU. The Americans merely chipped in the small change to provide Heavy Fuel Oil. Both Washington and Pyongyang have no alternative but in any deal's culmination to internationalise the process - Washington for money and Pyongyang for security.

Ri Su Yong told us on many occasions that the reality of early unification would only be assimilation. They know their economy is 40 to 50 times smaller than South Korea. They believe that if the Americans get off their backs, they are as hard-working and dedicated as the South Koreans and the other Tiger Economies in East Asia. Then they believe they could grow their economy by 10-15% a year, and in 20-25 years, they would be at least in the same league as Seoul. That's when they can talk unification, but early unification is assimilation by another name. Unification is only

meaningful on the basis of a balanced relationship. It is the end of a process, not the beginning.

North Korea's economic development is crippled by two bottlenecks, where the solution to both is seen as nuclear. One is energy. The only option they see to avoid dependence is civil nuclear power. That's why there was a problem between Trump's Singapore Declaration and the Biden Administration language. American presidents are increasingly in the habit of rejecting everything their predecessors did if they are from a different party. The Singapore Declaration talked about denuclearising the Peninsula, that clearly meant for the North Koreans they could have a civil nuclear programme because the South was never going to give up its nuclear reactors. But by insisting on changing the language, early on in the Administration, to denuclearising North Korea, Pyongyang interpreted that to mean Biden was rowing back on their right to having a civil nuclear programme. I am not sure whether the Americans even understood what they were doing. For them, I suspect, it was just using slightly different words to stand apart from Trump, but those nuances are very important for North Korea.

And we need to be able to scale down the armed forces on both sides. The second shortage in North Korea is literally manpower. And I say that, knowing this is a very gender-sensitive age, because it is men that are in the army. North Korean men have ten years of conscription. And if you could even release a tenth of those, you would have 100,000 new workers. Now those are the people who would drive the economy that they are looking to build. It's not a fashionable model of economic development today. But mass production might just work for the North. After all, they are the world's last pool of cheap skilled labour. They are already working as subcontractors for the Chinese industry. I went up to Rasong on the China-Russia border and watched North Korean workers sew "Made in China" labels into NBA shirts. On a larger scale that could kick-start economic take-off.

*If you don't have dialogue, you can't resolve problems.
You've no choice but to keep going. The Irish peace
process took 30 years. You don't give up. You kept trying.*

To be realistic post-Hanoi, I think you're talking at the beginning of any settlement about arms control rather than disarmament. Rather than denuclearisation, the first step will be a deal with North Korea to stop plutonium production, and to halt the assembly of more nuclear weapons, and to freeze weapons testing. That's the place to start. There is no way, allowing for the experiences they have gone through, that North Korea is going to front-end load the giving up of nuclear weapons. That will be the end, not the beginning. And the trouble with the U.S. is that they are in denial, demanding to stand logic on its head and expecting that to be the beginning rather than the end.

There is talk in South Korea about developing an independent nuclear weapons capacity. This is meant to frighten Pyongyang. Actually, it doesn't - the North Koreans would be in favour, because it would break the iron bond between Washington and Seoul. They see themselves threatened with nuclear weapons now, so does it matter that they are South Korean rather than American? Not really.

I do believe in dialogue. If you don't have dialogue, you can't resolve problems. And if at first you don't succeed, try diplomacy. You've no choice but to keep going. The Irish peace process took 30 years. You don't give up. You keep trying. I had the lessons of the Second Iraq War burnt deep into my conscience. At the time I was the Labour Party spokesman in the European Parliament on Foreign Affairs, When the war started, I resigned. I saw what the consequences were for the people of that poor benighted country. If anything goes wrong on the Peninsula, the people

that are going to suffer are the ordinary North and South Koreans. So, I'm keen to avoid those worse horrors being visited on hundreds of thousands, if not millions in Northeast Asia.

North Korea's leadership does not fit the image painted in the West's media. There are problems of human rights that are undeniable. But their decisions are rational in their own terms. The people of Iraq were brutalised by Saddam Hussein, but that has only got worse in the bloody anarchic aftermath of the war. People in the North are ordinary people, just like us and they need to be protected from those who think they are masters of the world. I'm currently engaged in a project trying to produce a picture book from the 10,000 images I've taken over the last quarter of a century to illustrate exactly that point.

I have lived through the lives of many of my North Korean interlocutors. There are people I know in Pyongyang who were having children when I first engaged. I've followed their schooling and attempts to get into Kim Il Sung University - some successful, some not - and their passage into the Army for the boys and work for the girls. Some time ago when I drove from the United Kingdom to Brussels, I was stopped by the border police in the UK, and they noticed my passport's litter of Chinese and North Korean visas. Someone, I suspect from Special Branch, which is a UK intelligence service, asked whether I'd met the London Ambassador. I said, "Yeah, he's pretty sad." "Why's that?" asked the officer. I told him, "He's a Chelsea fan, and they're doing terrible." And he said, "Yeah, I suppose they're human like us."

1 Glyn Ford, *Riding Two Horses: Labour in Europe* (Spokesman, 2022).



A delegation from the Workers' Party of Korea, including Ri Ung Gil (third from the left on the front row) and Pak Kyong Son (first from the right on the second row), attended the Stoke vs. Manchester City match on 31st January, 2009, alongside Glyn Ford, Keir Dhillon (first from the left on the front row), and Marialaura De Angelis (second from the right on the second row.) Photo © Polint Ltd.

NAM BOO WON

Collaboration is significant in our response to the system of division

*General Secretary of the
Asia Pacific Alliance of YMCAs*

I began to be involved in activism in 1978 when I entered Yonsei University and joined the Student Christian Movement (SCM). It was a turbulent time in South Korea because we were under the military dictatorship. My friends at the Student Christian Association (SCA) and I had frequent discussions on how the Christian faith can contribute to the betterment of Korean people's lives. We studied together and read many books including theology books by German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He was executed not long before the end of the Second World War for his role in the plot to assassinate Hitler. In his *Letters and Papers from Prison*, which was written in a Nazi prison cell, Bonhoeffer explained, "If I sit next to a madman as he drives a bus into a group of innocent bystanders, I can't, as a Christian, simply wait for the catastrophe, then comfort the wounded and bury the dead. I must try to wrestle the steering wheel out of the hands of the driver."

We were all greatly influenced by his writings and began to understand that the core value of Christianity is justice. And it's about radical love for people – near and far. So, we were determined to be part of

the democratic movement to fight the military dictatorship. We need to follow Bonhoeffer's example and the teachings of Jesus. We were so actively involved in the democratic movement that when I joke about my past, this is what I would tell my friends, "You know, when I was a university student, the number of times I took to the street was higher than my class attendance!" During my active involvement in the Student Christian Movement, I was caught and detained two times, once by the police and once by the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA). The detentions were a life-changing experience because I suffered some torture during the interrogation, but that really strengthened my belief as a Christian. I was determined to commit my whole life to democracy, human rights, justice, and peace. So, the SCM experience, the detention, the torture and everything during my university days shaped my entire life afterwards.

After graduation, I joined the YMCA in 1985. I continued to be engaged in civic movements in South Korea, first as the Secretary of the National Council of YMCAs of Korea and later in several leadership positions at other local YMCAs. In modern Korean history, civic movements faced many ups and downs, advancements and turbulence. Throughout time, there has been a constant argument among academia and civil society groups – about the linkage between the democratisation of South Korea and reunification with North Korea; which one should come first? Can we go on with the democratisation process of South Korea with no consideration for reunification?

One group insists that reunification should be our first goal if we want a truly democratic Korea. Without reunification, the division continues to be a structural factor that hinders the country's democratisation process. Another group says, no, reunification is difficult at the moment, so we need to prioritise the democratisation of South Korea. That would lead to an enabling environment for dialogue and discussion and greater progress for reunification with North Korea. The debate went on and on between the two groups over decades. Although none of the groups has

the perfect answer to the dynamic situation that we are facing, through those ongoing discussions, I learnt that our commitment to democracy and human rights actually has a strong connection to the division on the Korean Peninsula. Initially, I did not focus on peacebuilding specifically, but then I understood that the current situation of the Korean Peninsula has been shaped by the historical past, particularly the Cold War era, and so peacebuilding is fundamental to the whole democratisation process of South Korea.

Those experiences from my earlier days significantly shaped my attitudes and values in approaching peacebuilding, democracy and justice movements. Then, my actual involvement in peace work started in 2014 when I received an unexpected invitation. One day, I received an invitation from the Korean Christian Federation (KCF) in North Korea through the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK). Initially, I hesitated because I doubted whether there were any Christians in North Korea. But then I heard that other than myself, ten Christian leaders from YWCA, NCCCK and others also got the invitation from KCF. We were all surprised because during the Lee Myung-Bak Administration, the political dialogue between Seoul and Pyongyang had stopped, and tension was escalating. We decided to go, even though we didn't know the real intention behind the invitation. But before we went, we needed to submit papers to the government, including the trip schedule. And we all needed to sign an agreement with a list of strict rules. We then flew to Pyongyang via China and stayed there for seven days.

We went to many places in Pyongyang and met with KCF. We visited two churches there, one of which is called Bongsoo Church. We worshipped together with the church members. They warmly welcomed us, and we talked a lot and sang hymns together. Our visit schedule was all set before we arrived. They had planned everything, including where we were visiting and whom we would meet. As South Koreans, we were not allowed to talk to ordinary North Koreans on the street. We were led by the guides sent by the state wherever we went. But, an incredible

opportunity came. One day, they told us that we could walk outside the hotel and meet the people on the street, and no guides would be with us. We were all delighted! We could meet the people on the street of Pyongyang!

We went to the Botong River and saw people fishing. Some people were playing football, and some were taking a walk. We were able to talk to them. But that also felt unusual to us because they spoke the same language as ours but sounded differently. They might know that we came from South Korea, but they did not avoid us when we went over to talk to them. We had some normal conversations with them. All 11 of us spread and walked around the city to meet as many people as possible!

The trip was a transformative moment for me. Those seven days changed entirely how I looked at my work and myself, and I knew I needed to reposition my commitment to peacebuilding. I realised I lacked a holistic view of the issues on the Korean Peninsula. My commitment to democracy and human rights in my country was only serving a part of the whole problem as if we look at our issues with only one eye. Now, we need to see with both our eyes open, looking holistically at the whole Korean Peninsula and beyond so that we can have a different vision and dreams about the future. And that means we should rearrange our work priorities – Peacebuilding on the Korean Peninsula is significant and should go with our current work on democratic movement, human rights, and social justice.

The trip gave me a first-hand experience of what the “system of division” really means. I learnt the concept from books and discussions. But it was only when I saw how people live their lives and have a real-life encounter with them that I finally was awakened to the power of the system of division. The division, I must say, is a structural and systemic problem not only between North and South Korea but also at broader levels.

Without a comprehensive analysis and holistic view, our efforts in democracy and human rights movements in Korea will be futile. This is an important work that the global civil society network should do.

This division system has a long historical development and has been shaped by several intertwining factors, including the ideological conflict during the 1940s and 1950s. After the Second World War, the ideological conflict led to the Korean War, which was essentially a proxy war between the bloc led by the U.S. and the Soviet bloc. So, we Koreans fought each other and simultaneously fought as proxies of the two blocs of the Cold War. And we are still in the middle of superpower rivalries regarding military and economic competitions. So, all the geopolitical, military, and economic influences combined to create a solid system of division on the Korean Peninsula. Many people wrote about this concept, but it was until I visited Pyongyang that I really started to look at the situation with both eyes open, and this structure has become real to me.

So, we need a holistic vision and approach to respond to the system of division. The democratic movement would not be complete without a holistic view of the system, not only on the Korean Peninsula but also on a broader geopolitical system. We have to think about – what are the factors driving or hindering the change? Who are the decision-makers? What are the connections between these actors and factors? Without a comprehensive analysis and holistic view, our efforts in democracy and human rights movements in Korea will be futile. This is an important work that the global civil society network should do.

And I believe in the principle of radical collaboration that values generosity, integrity, and long-term commitment in partnership so that we can

overcome our own organisational self-centeredness, and effectively work on shared goals and roadmaps with diverse partners in advancing peace and justice. Radical collaboration supports a process where partners are committed and supportive of each other with a strong sense of shared responsibility, encouraging them to share knowledge, resources, and connections to achieve the shared purpose. I believe this is significant in our response to the system of division.

We have also seen a division among the generations. Because of war memories, the older generation, those in their sixties and older, holds a very antagonistic attitude towards North Korea. This sentiment is being manipulated by the conservative party to gain votes. They accuse the opposition leaders and politicians of sympathising with North Korea, and they have been spreading communist/socialist stigma. Red tagging, name-calling, and finger-pointing still exist in South Korea because of the war, leading to a generational division. The older generation generally holds a conservative and antagonistic attitude towards North Korea and is also very active in all political activities. And the younger generation, who tend to be more liberal-minded, however, does not care much about elections and politics. This is reflected in their low voting rate. And so, demographics plays a critical role in shaping the narrative and people's perspective of North Korea. It may take at least two more decades to see a change at a societal level.

As members of civil society, we need collective reflection to find new possibilities and pathways to engage in this disabling environment. We need creative ways in our response to the challenges. That means we need a lot of self-reflection, deeper study, and exchange of ideas to help break across the stalemate.



A group picture taken during the International Conference in Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the “88 Declaration” organised by the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) on 5th – 7th March, 2018 in Seoul. Nam Boo Won is in the second position from the left. The conference aimed to reflect on the Korean Church’s 30-year effort in the reunification movement, articulate a theological vision for peaceful reunification, and develop action plans for peace and reunification in Korea under the theme “Cultivating Peace, Proclaiming Hope”. Source: Nam Boo Won.

Domestic politics is what leads to an even more divisive environment. Moon Jae-in became the President following the candlelight revolution in 2016-2017. He had made some progress for peace, although not tangible achievements. Still, he maintained an enabling environment so civil society could work together for peace, engage the public with dialogues, and train young leaders. It was not an easy time for peace workers, but at least we felt we were progressing together for peace and democracy. However, near the end of his term, Moon’s government was involved in several serious issues like internal mismanagement, dereliction, and money scandal. All these gave the conservative party a chance to rise and win the election. With Yoon Seok-yeol being the President now, everything that Moon had done and every little step of success were rolled back. Our society has become more divided. And with the superpower rivalry, we have seen more division in global politics. Peace activists and peace workers face such a challenging

environment where the space for dialogue is shrinking, and the belief in peaceful engagement is fading.

As members of civil society, we need collective reflection to find new possibilities and pathways to engage in this disabling environment. We need creative ways in our response to the challenges. That means we need a lot of self-reflection, deeper study, and exchange of ideas to help break across the stalemate. With a more robust network, we can encourage each other, exchange thoughts and ideas, and be energised. All these are critical at the moment. And I'm happy to see the young generation in Korea, within and outside YMCA, commit themselves to democracy and peacebuilding. There are not many of them, but they are very committed. They are following in our footsteps and are eager to learn and grow. As I see their growing commitment to peacebuilding, it really gives me hope! It takes time to see fundamental changes. We have a long way to go, but the young generation will sustain the momentum and build upon the work we have done!



A snapshot of the Cheorwon International Peace Conference held at the Border Peace School (BPS) located in the demilitarised zone (DMZ) on 4th – 5th September, 2015. The conference was co-hosted by the National Council of YMCAs of Korea (NCYK) and BPS. Source: Nam Boo Wŏn.

Big changes are far from sight, but we can start by taking small steps. I hope to see exchanges between North and South Koreans resume. Civilian-level exchanges, like the one done by KCF in Pyongyang, would create many possibilities for further work. Likewise, one day we can invite KCF and other North Korean Christian groups to South Korea. It is hard to realise big changes, but we can work on smaller steps, such as exchanges, dialogues and meetings, to create favourable conditions and circumstances, which would lead to more possibilities for peace engagement in the future.

The military tension is now escalating in a very dangerous way. All the political dialogues have stopped. And with the war in Ukraine going on for over a year, we see many governments increase military budgets and blame each other for causing the conflict and escalating tension in the region. The global situation now is disheartening. That's why I think we need a stronger global civil society coalition. I believe there are several roles that the global civil society coalition can play:

First, we should advocate governments, particularly big powers such as the United States, China, the European Union, and the United Nations. Many people and groups have been doing this. And so I think it's time we evaluate our advocacy work and assess how we can work more effectively together in this hostile environment. Our voice is vital. Second, I hope the global civil society can be a facilitator or bridge that brings together North and South Koreans. When governments fail to have a dialogue with each other while tension escalates, I hope the global civil society can play a proactive role in facilitating and connecting the actors to break the stalemate in peacebuilding, particularly on the Korean Peninsula.

A complete reunification of the Korean Peninsula is really difficult. Still, at least we can try to build an environment for the peaceful coexistence of the two Koreas that will enable ongoing and diverse exchanges, mutual visits, and economic cooperation. I think of many things we can do to maintain peaceful coexistence – agricultural support, mutual cooperation on combating climate change, medical health exchange and so on. And we

in South Korea have a duty to support the humanitarian needs in North Korea.

However, the intervention of the U.S. and other governments has long been the major obstacle to our peaceful coexistence. In the past decades, the endless debate on whether denuclearisation or a peace agreement should go first has really made us skeptical about the real intention of these governments, that they want to keep this system of division for their interests instead of lasting peace for the Korean people. So what can we do to engage with these vested interests that maintain the system of division? I don't have an answer to this, but we all must work together to find possible channels to engage. The obstacles are enormous, with many deep-rooted causes, but I believe radical collaboration is what we need at this moment to find peaceful resolutions.

JARGALSAIKHAN ENKHTSAIKHAN

Make a habit of dialogue to promote regional peace, justice and cooperation

*Chairman of Blue Banner,
and Former Diplomat of Mongolia*

Since childhood, I have known about Korea and their culture. I remember Korean children living in Ulaanbaatar. I still remember learning a Korean song when Korean leader Kim Il-sung was coming to Mongolia, and children were expected to sing one verse of the song. At that time, I did not know that Korea was a divided country. When I developed an interest in other countries, I was given to understand that there were good countries known as socialist, many friendly countries, and then there were also bad capitalist countries. I still remember seeing many political cartoons in Mongolian comical papers showing the evil U.S. warmongers and revanchist Germany trying to start wars.

My father was Mongolia's first Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Hence for two years, I attended United Nations International School, where I learned English and developed an interest in international relations. There I learned about the war on the Korean Peninsula, though I did not know the real story behind the

war or its effects on the Korean people. With my English proficiency and interest in international relations, I was sent to study at Moscow's State Institute for International Relations, where I learned about the Soviet vision or interpretation of international relations, including the war on the Korean Peninsula. As a graduate of the international law faculty, my primary area of interest naturally lies in international law. I was interested in multilateral diplomacy which was important at that time to promote Mongolia and its goals at the United Nations. After graduation, as an international lawyer, I worked at the Foreign Ministry's legal department and was sent to attend the Sixth (legal) committee sessions of the General Assembly.

My first real encounter with the Korean issue

I remember the year 1983 vividly. It was the height of the Cold War, and I was elected Vice-Chairman of the legal committee of the General Assembly that year.

That year the press was full of news and articles about the U.S. SDI initiative, known as Star Wars, the planned deployment of U.S. Pershing II and Soviet SS-20 nuclear weapons in Europe, European protests, and Soviet suspicion of a possible U.S. pre-emptive strike. That year two events caught the media's attention that were expected to be discussed in the legal committee of the General Assembly. First, in September, the Soviet Union downed a Korean Airlines flight 007 when it strayed from its scheduled path and entered Soviet airspace. At that time, a U.S. Air Force plane was on a nearby reconnaissance mission to monitor the Soviet testing of some missiles. The Soviets mistook the Korean Airlines plane for a U.S. spy plane and, after some warnings, shot down the plane, killing all 269 persons on board. Second, in October, an assassination attempt was made against South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan, who was on an official visit to Burma, resulting in many South Koreans being killed or wounded.



Jargalsaikhan Enkhsaikhan (first from the right on the front row) serving as the Vice-Chairman at the Legal Committee of the UN General Assembly. Source: Jargalsaikhan Enkhsaikhan.

Given political will, nothing is impossible

The legal committee does not investigate international terrorism; it considers such issues from a political angle and advises the General Assembly on what may be done. International terrorism has been a controversial issue, with some states seeing some activities as terrorist while others are a form of legitimate national liberation or anti-colonial struggle. That is why, as a compromise, even the agenda item had a long title: “Measures to prevent international terrorism which endangers or takes innocent lives or jeopardises fundamental freedoms and study of the underlying causes of those forms of terrorism and acts of violence which lie in misery, frustration, grievance and despair and which cause some people to sacrifice human lives, including their own, in an attempt to effect radical changes”. When told of the title, I thought it surely could earn a place in the Guinness Book of World Records for its long title.

In 1983 it was expected that the General Assembly would adopt one resolution on the issue of international terrorism. The debate and discussion of the issue in the legal committee showed that there were different and even diametrically opposing views on the above two issues. However, it was logical that the Assembly would not adopt two or three resolutions reflecting the views of certain groups of states. The Chairman (from Tunisia) had asked me the Vice-Chairman, and a representative of the European Economic Community (EEC) and India to work on a consensus resolution on the issue. At that time, it seemed almost a mission impossible. However, working on the issue, I learned that given political will, ways to realise it can be found. Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union, along with their allies, politically supported a consensus approach. They avoided mentioning any specific states or groups in the resolution. This was done to prevent further tension. Also, both sides were not sure how members, especially developing countries, would vote on specific paragraphs of the resolution that mentioned states. Instead, the focus was on reaffirming the unity of member states on the matter.

After several informal discussions, negotiations, and two meeting suspensions, we reached a consensus that was ultimately adopted as General Assembly Resolution 38/130 without the need for a vote. As a compromise, the resolution did not satisfy any group of states. However, it reaffirmed the General Assembly's willingness to strengthen anti-terrorist measures. The resolution deeply deplored the loss of innocent human lives, urged states to work to eliminate the causes of terrorism, and called on states to prosecute or extradite the perpetrators and to implement the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on International Terrorism adopted a few years earlier. Those involved in drafting the resolution or closely following terrorism-related issues knew well which paragraphs or sentences referred to which cases. That was the first time that I learned of the sensitivities and complexities of inter-state relations, including the relations between the two superpowers as well as the two Koreas. As the observer states, the two Koreas closely followed every step of the consideration of the issue, each approaching with their questions, comments and observations. Since our

task was not to take any side, we were able to find an interim solution to the issue at hand. Later, there were a number of attempts to define international terrorism, but due to different and even opposing views, they failed.

Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free policy is an example thereof and encourages Mongolians to be more proactive in promoting peace and security.

At that time, I also learned that besides being a lawyer, one also needs, when circumstances require, to become a pragmatic diplomat and prioritise broader common interests and goals over narrow interests. I always keep this in mind. Later, when representing Mongolia at the United Nations I had several confidential meetings with then Secretary-General Kofi Annan and discussed the role of small states at the United Nations. He believed that the contributions of small states to international cooperation were “crucially important” in all areas, including disarmament, human development, and environmental protection. He thus was aware of and welcomed Mongolia’s efforts to make our world a safer place. His thoughts reinforced my thoughts and belief. Mongolia’s nuclear-weapon-free policy is an example thereof and encourages Mongolians to be more proactive in promoting peace and security.

Current challenges of the Korean issue

Since the 1990s, I have been working on promoting confidence-building in Northeast Asia. It is a challenging region since there are three de jure nuclear weapons states (Russia, China, and the U.S.), one de facto nuclear-weapon state (North Korea), two nuclear-capable states (South Korea and

Japan), and one state with internationally recognised nuclear-weapon-free status (Mongolia). Unfortunately, the region lacks an inclusive regional security mechanism after the paralysis of the Six-Party Talks more than a decade ago. There is still suspicion and a lack of confidence. International practice and our instinct tell us that establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone is needed like in other regions. Any loss of time might lead to an irreparable nuclear domino effect. Unfortunately, this issue is not officially on the region's political agenda though unofficially there is plenty of discussion in regional think tanks and civil society organisations. I believe that initial political steps need to be made by the U.S. and North Korea.

My view of the situation

What really needs to be done at present is promoting confidence-building and trust among the states of the region, starting with the normalisation of U.S.-North Korean relations, as both sides had agreed at the highest level in 2018 in Singapore.



Jargalsaikhan Enkhsaikhan meeting with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Source: Jargalsaikhan Enkhsaikhan.

Such political will needs to come first and foremost from these two main players. Other states and allies, national and regional NGOs need to support the normalisation of their relations and increase political pressure on them to live up to that vital commitment. Due to the long history of negative propaganda about each other, it will be challenging for both sides to work towards that goal. However, that is exactly what needs to be done, and that will open the way to implementing other agreements that have been made.

Rather than threatening with the worst-case scenario, adopting an optimistic mindset, positive thinking, and cooperative approach would generate ideas and energy in search of positive solutions for all.

Mongolia is striving to contribute to a peaceful political atmosphere in the region by taking on a bridge-building role. They are doing this by encouraging a track-1.5 *inclusive* regional political process, called the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue, which involves the participation of representatives from both Koreas. Unlike the Six-Party Talks, this dialogue focuses on soft security issues like infrastructure development, economic cooperation, and environmental collaboration. There is a higher likelihood of making initial progress, building confidence, and fostering mutual interest through this approach.¹



Participants in the Ulaanbaatar Process (UBP) meeting gathered for a picture during the meeting in Terelj, Mongolia in September 2022. The UBP is a civil society forum for peace and security in Northeast Asia, organised by Blue Banner and GPPAC Northeast Asia. Source: Jargalsaikhan Enkhsaikhan.

There is also a track-2 inclusive civil society forum known as the Ulaanbaatar Process that provides political space and a venue for regional civil society cooperation to address issues of common concern or interest. Blue Banner, of which I am a member, is part of this process. Despite many challenges, this process can play a positive role in exchanging not only truthful information but also developing ideas and viable proposals based on such exchanges however small they are.²

I am an optimist and believe that, rather than threatening with the worst-case scenario, adopting an optimistic mindset, positive thinking, and cooperative approach would generate ideas and energy in search of positive solutions for all. The Ulaanbaatar Process is working to make a habit of dialogue and promote regional peace, justice and cooperation, and provide ideas and suggestions for our respective governments and peoples. Establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone would surely strengthen peace and security in the region. This fresh dynamic could foster a positive

political environment that could, if the two Koreas agree, allow Koreans to work together with the Korean community overseas and explore ways of reuniting the Korean nation. Such a development has the potential to make a constructive contribution to the region and beyond.

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- 1 To learn more about the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue, visit <https://mfa.gov.mn/en/documentation/61403/>.
 - 2 The Ulaanbaatar Process is a civil society dialogue for peace and stability in Northeast Asia, coordinated by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) Global Secretariat, GPPAC Northeast Asia Regional Secretariat Peace Boat, and the Mongolian NGO Blue Banner. To learn more, please visit <https://gppacnea.org/ulaanbaatar-process/>.



The Ulaanbaatar Process members visiting the United Nations headquarters in December 2022. Source: Jargalsaikhan Enkhsaikhan.

HWANG SOOYOUNG

**Let's come together as a united voice that
70 years of war is more than enough!**

*Manager of the Centers for Peace and
Disarmament and International Solidarity at
People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD),
and General Secretary of the Korea Peace Appeal*

I've been working at the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD) in the Centers for Peace and Disarmament and International Solidarity since 2014. I also serve as the General Secretary of the Korea Peace Appeal, an international peace campaign advocating for an end to the Korean War and a transition from armistice to peace on the Korean Peninsula.

My involvement in peace advocacy began more than ten years ago. After graduation, I worked for a peace organisation reporting the tenth anniversary of the Iraq War. My reports focused on South Korea's overseas armed forces deployments, particularly in the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Next, I joined the "No Jeju Naval Base Movement" in Gangjeong Village on Jeju Island. The government wanted to build a naval base on Jeju Island, the southernmost island of Korea. We called on the government to stop the construction for several reasons. First, it is a UNESCO site. Second, the U.S. military can use the naval base for a U.S. agenda and in ways that don't help maintain peace in Northeast

Asia. Also, the villagers were never consulted about having a naval base in their neighbourhood. The many controversies resulted in a gigantic peace movement, essentially an anti-naval base movement, in South Korea. It was a huge national issue.

In 2011, I moved to Gangjeong Village and came back and forth while living there for some time. Initially, I just wanted to be there and see how things developed. Then, as I learned more about the peace movement there, I started getting involved. I was at the protest site every day. I organised peace actions with the people in front of the naval base gate to protest the construction. My learning and involvement in the No Jeju Naval Base Movement in Gangjeong Village were life-changing, and I started committing myself to peace activism. The experience greatly impacted me and shaped how I view peace issues and my subsequent involvement in peace movements.

I also participated in the campaign against the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defence) missile system deployment in Seongju in 2017. Seongju is a town in a mountainous area in central South Korea. I went to the village, lived with the villagers again, and supported them in their struggle against the Seongju military base. This experience taught me how unrealistic it is to believe that militarisation, weapons, and military bases can help us become a safer country. I thought a lot about national security. Every time the government says something is for our security, I don't see how more weapons and military bases make us safe. To me, it is a huge lie. The military is not the answer. Peace through strength is not possible. Through those campaigning experiences, I was convinced that we can only achieve peace by peaceful means.



A group of participants, including Sooyoung at the front, took part in the Grand March for Gangjeong Peace in 2012. The march was part of a nationwide effort to garner support for the No Jeju Naval Base Movement. Source: Hwang Sooyoung.



Campaign against U.S. Forces Korea (USFK)'s THAAD deployment in 2017. Source: Hwang Sooyoung.

The Inter-Korean Summits and U.S.-DPRK Summit in 2018 once promised big hopes for peace. However, we were very disappointed with what happened after the summits. So, we peace activists discussed the movement and activism we had organised and the problems facing us. And we realised that even though summits are important, they are not the only way to achieve peace. We can achieve peace when the people, the Korean people, want peace. The Korean War has been unresolved for over 70 years. 70 is not just a number but is a long time, so at least two generations have passed since the beginning of the war. However, most of the population has no first-hand experience of the military combats that happened 70 years ago. People have become accustomed to living under a ceasefire rather than a state of true peace. Generational perspectives towards North Korea vary significantly.

After the Inter-Korean summits, we felt we are running out of time, and we must do something about it. So, we had this idea to make one simple and united voice to call for an end to the Korean War, and that became the Korea Peace Appeal Campaign. Many people worldwide know Korea because of K-pop or K-drama, thanks to BTS and other globally famous Korean pop icons. But when it comes to the Korean War, many people have no idea about it. And it is a “forgotten war” among the people in the U.S., even though their country plays a big part in it. So, we must tell people about the Korean War and the Korean peace issue. As South Korean civil society groups, we make one big, united voice that 70 years is enough!

The Korea Peace Appeal is an international campaign that seeks to amplify voices worldwide, calling for an end to the Korean War and a transition from armistice to peace. We have been collecting signatures for the Korea Peace Appeal since 2020, the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War, up until 2023, the 70th anniversary of the armistice agreement.¹



In December 2014, PSPD submitted a written petition to the National Assembly in opposition to the “Participation Act for Dispatch of Korean Army to Overseas.” Source: Hwang Sooyoung.

Our four demands at the Korea Peace Appeal are as follows:

- end the Korean War and establish a peace agreement
- create a Korean Peninsula and a world free from nuclear weapons and nuclear threat
- resolve the conflict with dialogue and cooperation instead of sanctions and pressure
- break the vicious cycle of the arms race and invest in human security and environmental sustainability

This is one of the largest networks for peace on the Korean Peninsula, with more than 750 South Korean civil society organisations, two major labour unions, seven major religious orders in South Korea, and more than 70 international partner organisations participating in the mobilisation.

What really matters is that people truly desire peace and are willing to work towards it in peaceful ways. Our goal is to change people's hearts and minds so that they see the value in pursuing peace.

The militarised situation in South Korea is a result of many years of division. We have a massive army, and every young man is required to do 18 months of military service. In such a social environment, it is not easy to have people supporting the notion that we can make peace by peaceful means and let's end the Korean War. So, whenever I see how our campaigns and mobilisation efforts move people's hearts, I feel very encouraged. At the Korea Peace Appeal signature movement, we received signatures and letters of support not just from Korea but also from Canada, Japan, the United States, Germany, the UK, the Philippines, Palestine, and more. This is meaningful because I believe social movements are about winning people's hearts. It's encouraging to see that our work and our messages for peace have reached people's hearts, no matter how difficult the situation may be.

In order to achieve peace, it's important to have policies, summits, and conferences that can help us get there. But at the end of the day, what really matters is that people truly desire peace and are willing to work towards it in peaceful ways. Our goal is to change people's hearts and minds so that they see the value in pursuing peace. Many ordinary citizens are not familiar with peace issues because they find it difficult to make sense of issues related to security, diplomacy, and the military. Sometimes people feel disconnected because they don't think peace issues impact them personally like what minimum wage, housing, or education do. People

don't feel peace is their own issue, something they need to care for, and they can change. We reach out to people with an important message that peace on the Korean Peninsula is not about anyone in particular; it's about everyone living on the peninsula. Our mission is to make our people aware that this is our own issue, we have a say in this, and we can make changes together.

During the “No THAAD Deployment” campaign, I created online materials to explain the problem of the U.S. military deployments in South Korea. A student living in Seongju, a village where the U.S. planned to set up a military base for installing THAAD batteries, sent us a letter explaining how the online content helped the villagers a lot in processing the military issue behind the THAAD deployment because they initially found it difficult to understand the problem. People are not interested in learning about complex military and security issues. So, our campaign and the materials we created made it more accessible for ordinary people to understand peace and security issues around them and how they can be involved in peace campaigns.

Since the diplomatic deadlock that followed the Inter-Korean summits in 2018, a major challenge in mobilising for peace arose: people's cynicism. The summits brought us high hopes in the beginning and then deep disappointments. Since then, people have started believing peace is no longer possible and that if we have failed to solve this in 70 years, we are no longer able to solve it. And then, when the Russia-Ukraine war broke out, it destroyed people's last hope for a peaceful resolution, not only on the Korean Peninsula but also worldwide. Many people in South Korea believe they need a more powerful military, alliance, and weapons to safeguard national security based on the Russian invasion of Ukraine. There's an interaction between people's responses and government actions, and we have seen many governments expand their military budgets and import more weapons since the Russia-Ukraine war began.

Today, the government and president are pursuing a “peace through strength” approach in South Korea. The president is pushing to advance the U.S.-ROK alliance and the U.S.-ROK-Japan military cooperation, under which many joint military exercises have been conducted. The president has no will for dialogue with North Korea and no vision for peace. I think people’s cynicism and the president’s lack of vision for peace are the biggest obstacles in mobilising for peace today.

The Korean Peninsula is facing a serious situation. Many military exercises took place on both sides, and the tension has escalated so greatly that there is little momentum for dialogue. It seems that we can’t see an offramp from this dangerous situation. However, I want to see a change, and we need to work for this change to occur. I want to see the resumption of Inter-Korean summits and civil exchanges. To make this happen, the U.S. and South Korean governments need to stop their military exercises. Every party, the U.S., South Korea, North Korea, etc., must stop their military activities. Military activities are incompatible with dialogues. We are in a very risky situation with no effective communication channels between North and South Korea. If all governments halt their military activities, we can start creating opportunities and conditions for dialogue. Thus, we are urging our government every day to cease.



A campaign on the Global Day of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS) in 2021. Source: Hwang Sooyoung.



Sooyoung spoke as a civil society representative during the 2019 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Source: Hwang Sooyoung.

The current government doesn't have a vision for peace. Our mobilisation is to show the government how unrealistic it is to try to maintain peace through military activities, alliances, and military exercises. We cannot change North Korea through military threats. The policy to make North Korea give up its nuclear weapons through sanctions and military pressure has failed for the past two decades. Conversely, we have witnessed North Korea's nuclear capability growing over time. We should all remember that North Korea's nuclear and ICBM tests were once suspended during talks and negotiations. The international community cannot solve problems simply by demonising North Korea and imposing sanctions and pressure.

Shifting the momentum towards peace is a straightforward process. As more people embrace peaceful solutions, the momentum will shift. However, it is not an easy task, and there is still a long way to go. Given the current dangerous situation, we keep making efforts to organise and mobilise people to have a louder and more influential voice for peace. This work is fundamental if we hope to effect real change, even though it may not be easy.

Military tension affects every person. In South Korea, every young man is required to do an 18-month military service. Currently, there are approximately 300,000 young men serving in the military under conscription, and the total number of personnel in the standing armed force is roughly 500,000. This not only impacts the young men themselves but also their families. I recall the Yeonpyeong battle, twenty years ago, where a military confrontation arose over a disputed maritime boundary in the West Sea, and my cousin was serving in the navy at that location. Every family member was worried about him day and night. These types of clashes and battles near the border can result in the loss of lives and create a genuine concern for every ordinary citizen due to increased militarisation.



Sooyoung with the GPPAC Northeast Asia advocacy delegation to The Hague in 2022. Source: GPPAC.

And yet, since some members of BTS, a K-pop boy band, were enlisted in the army, many people, especially their fans, became worried about the tension because someone they cared for was now serving in the army. However, in general, many South Korean people are not sensitive to the risks of military confrontations, so we work on warning about the severity of the situation. We discovered that the war on apathy is actually more emergent than any other threat. Today, people show little concern for war and conflict because we have been in this cycle of confrontations for so long, and I think this apathy is even more dangerous than North Korean nuclear weapons. Thus, we have been warning about the military crisis to battle for people's attention and concern. We show people that we are all facing a genuine crisis.

People know that military power is not, ultimately, the solution, and they understand that a peaceful resolution is the only realistic way forward.

An opinion poll result was published in October 2022 when the military tension was escalating. When asked what was important in resolving the current crisis, almost 70% of respondents said a peaceful resolution was needed. People know that military power is not, ultimately, the solution, and they understand that a peaceful resolution is the only realistic way forward. So, we organise the people, amplify their voices, and make others aware of the risks of war. It's hard to say where the opportunities are because we are facing a difficult and unpredictable situation. The government acts wildly, but we need to keep going. We need to do anything we can to organise the people!

The war has been unresolved for more than 70 years, and I don't think the issue is going to go away any time soon. I often tell myself that this is a long process, and we may not accomplish anything quickly. Consequently, I'm in a cycle of hope and disappointment, so I tell myself not to be discouraged easily and stay in for the long game. Even if I can't achieve anything substantial in the coming years, I will still do my best to contribute to this movement. The older generation came before me, and someone will continue this struggle after me. We have seen how people from the older generation sacrificed themselves. Because of their endeavour and dedication to the peace movement, we have been able to maintain a relatively stable armistice regime instead of falling back into war.

No matter how long the process takes, whether seven or 700 years, and how unpredictable the situation is, I will keep going, keep organising, and keep meeting the people. The change will come, and we are the ones driving

the momentum for change. Sometimes, when we can't predict anything, we just keep going and avoid feeling disappointed. After ten years, we will look back and see how things have changed.

Reflecting on the events of 2017 and early 2018, no one believed that the Inter-Korean summits would happen. So, I wish the current government success in building peace with North Korea. It is my hope that Yoon becomes the first conservative president to meet with the North Korean leader. During my discussions with government officials, I urged them to do their best for peace. Peace is a universal issue that transcends political parties and political affiliation. We must mobilize our people and encourage the government to take action towards peace, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges.

1 To learn more about the Korea Peace Appeal campaign, please visit <https://en.endthekoreanwar.net/>.



On 22nd July 2023, a sea of people gathered in Seoul to rally for peace ahead of the 70th anniversary of the Korean Armistice Agreement with a call to “Overcome the Threat of War, Stop Hostility. Peace Now!” Source: Korea Peace Appeal Campaign.



Source: Korea Peace Appeal Campaign.

MOON A-YOUNG

Move beyond the “us and them” mentality - Create a discourse for peace through mutual learning

Representative and Peace Education Facilitator at PEACEMOMO

As a student, globalisation was a major focus of Korean education policies. I remember how our schools and teachers encouraged us to develop a global mindset. As young students, we had rather rigid visions about our potential paths because of career stereotyping. So, since high school, like many other young people interested in international politics and diplomacy, I considered pursuing a career in global affairs or working with international agencies like the United Nations. I wanted to focus on international affairs rather than just Korean issues.

Then, a significant incident changed my thinking about what I wanted for my future. In 2009, the Seoul Metropolitan Government wanted to implement a controversial urban redevelopment plan in Yongsan district. As they tried to push the project through, they met strong opposition from the residents. One day, there was a violent clash between the riot police and locals. During the clash, a fire broke out overnight, killing five activists and one police officer. I lived in the Yongsan district, close to where the clash happened. I went there when the sun came up on that cold January morning. I remember seeing a dark pool of firefighting

water in the remains of the fire. As I stood surrounded by destruction, I thought, “*Which is more important? Citizens’ lives or economic gains?*” My question and the devastating scene in front of me affected me deeply. Of course, human lives are more valuable than money! It was an awakening experience, and from that moment, I wanted to do something with my life that contributed to improving human lives and dignity.

So, I started to study inequalities and structural violence in Korean society. Before this, I thought I knew what poverty was. I learned about poverty in Africa and similar issues, but soon realised I had adopted a colonised view of understanding these situations. This urged me to look more deeply into a myriad of topics, including human rights, economic inequality, political inequality, refugees, etc., and how they interact. When I studied structural violence in South Korea, I focused on education. I recalled how we were taught to hate North Korea in elementary school. In Korean public education at that time, demonising North Korea was a typical default narrative when describing our relationship with them. This had bred anxiety about North Koreans in me, even though I had never met any. Thus, a violent narrative was built into our structure and education design. And so, I began to question myself, the things I believed and had been taught; were they correct? Maybe I needed to rewrite my narrative.

My profession is education and pedagogy. As I prepared to work for peace as an educator, I first needed to unlearn what I had been taught about national security. The government teaches us that national security through military strength is the only truth about peace and security. But, in fact, the world can also be viewed through other lenses. Thus, I began my work on peace education in Korea. And by basing my peacebuilding work in Korea, I am also working on global peace because all peace issues are connected, and I am focusing on this part of the whole violent global system. I work locally and simultaneously have a global impact. We call it “glocal peace”. This is the kind of work that I want to do.

I founded PEACEMOMO in 2012 with my colleagues Francis Lee and Seahyun Jun. MOMO is a short form of “모두가 모두로부터 배운다” in Korean, meaning everyone learns from everyone else. I believe mutual learning, the ability to learn from everyone else, is critical for shaping an alternative solution for peace and security. If we believe there is something in everyone we can learn from, we do not need to see each other as enemies. We can respect diversity, acknowledge our differences, and change how we see and treat each other. And this way, we can create a new kind of relationship. We live in a world system that maintains an order of supremacy, where some people are superior and suppress others in power and authority. Mutual learning cannot happen in such a system. So, PEACEMOMO aims to create a new kind of relationship and innovative social dynamics so everyone is empowered to learn from each other.

Our approach is influenced by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. In his book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he criticised the one-way relationship between teachers and students. He aimed to reshape education as a process of mutual learning and dialogue. I reflected on my journey as a student under the oppressive Korean education system when I read his writing. Students were expected to accept, write, and memorise everything taught by the teachers. We were locked in an education curriculum and a rigid classroom setting. Paulo Freire said that kind of education is the language of the oppressor that implements oppression in the form of the school system. This is different from what education is meant to be. Education can be a process of liberation, and we can liberate each other. His vision and philosophy about education are the vital foundations of our work.

As educators, we need to maintain an equal relationship between the “teacher” and “students” by facilitating mutual learning. I believe this approach is required when discussing the security agenda. Most conflicts and crises, from the Yongsan incident to the war in Ukraine to the climate crisis, result from a supremacy-focused world order because we have failed to listen to and learn from each other at many levels. We often want to be the teachers and show others our way.



A-Young as a facilitator at a peace education workshop. Source: Moon A-Young.



An interactive workshop organised by PEACEMOMO. Source: Moon A-Young.

Like many countries, South Korea went through democratisation in the last century. Many people sacrificed their lives to bring true democracy to our society. Using democracy, we aim to dismantle oppression and invite all in society to be decision-makers, with power shared by each person. However, although we have some choices and elections, many people are isolated or excluded from the essential decision-making process. Oppression and control hide behind the democratic infrastructure that has effectively limited our options and perspectives. We exercise citizens' rights by voting, but we may not be aware of the soft power of oppression rooted in the structure and culture. And so, we all become passive actors in this democratic show.

Even in democracies, oppression can occur when citizens are excluded from decision-making processes regarding peace and security issues.

One expression of the soft power of oppression is education. Peace and security issues are not always about direct violence. As an educator, I deal with the oppressive culture rooted in society through public education. We look at the formal education curriculum and every component of the process, including classroom settings, teachers, students, teaching materials, lesson designs, and more. Every experience, inside and outside the classroom, is a form of curriculum for us. Everything around us is part of education, so all government policies and how they influence a person's life are too. This is how oppression subtly and smoothly permeates into our daily lives. If we are not aware of this, we would accept the oppressive narrative as the only truth and absorb all messages from the government through this subtle system of oppression.



PEACEMOMO and other civil society groups held a press conference urging the government to prioritise responding to crises that affect citizens' lives over military actions and promote peace through peaceful means, on the Global Day of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS) in front of the Yongsan Presidential Office on 24th April, 2023. Source: Moon A-Young.

Even in democracies, oppression can occur when citizens are excluded from decision-making processes regarding peace and security issues. This is because people have given over the right to decide to the government, which then proceeds to operate based on its own political agenda and interests by implementing a national security policy. Unfortunately, in South Korea, this policy, along with the national education curriculum, creates an oppressive structure that portrays North Korea and its people as demons. This structure effectively removes our citizens' ability to think critically and decide what they want for peace. Instead, they are boxed into the government's narrative, which is expressed through its policies, information, and curriculum. Thinking outside of this box is challenging and those who attempt to act on a different security narrative risk being red-tagged by the government and others in society. Unfortunately, red-tagging is still happening in South Korea under the National Security Act and has even accelerated under the Yoon Administration. It seems that Yoon Seok-yeol is continuing the approaches of Park Geun-hye and Lee Myung-bak when it comes to implementing this law.

Considering the connections between education, oppression, peace, and security, PEACEMOMO designs and facilitates peace education programs that connect peace to learning and daily life. Many people in Korea feel remote from peace and security issues, so they rarely talk about them in everyday life contexts, for example, in the classroom. Peace issues are everywhere every day, but we seldom discuss them. We must exercise our rights to define what peace means to us and what we need to do to build peace. We reach about 12,000 people every year, and in the past ten years, we have reached nearly 110,000 people. I really enjoy having genuine dialogues with people at workshops where I feel a heart-to-heart connection with them. After long conversations, I have seen how groups of 20-30 participants begin to understand each other more deeply and realise they all play a significant role in making a difference. "It's really up to us to decide what to do to build peace!"

Mutual learning is significant in reshaping peace and the world order, and our role as a facilitator is like a mirror placed in front of people. We support and empower each other to learn in conversations, and then learning flows throughout the workshop. It's really exciting. We are thrilled to have received letters or messages from participants who wrote about what they experienced in our program and how that impacted their lives and changed their perspectives. We know we are changing the narrative!

Meanwhile, during the Park Geun-hye administration, the Korean government reached 600,000 people annually with its patriotic education program. Their participant size was 50 times larger than ours every year. Partly because of that, Korean people grew up believing that national security is of utmost importance in our society. This belief is built on the demonised image of North Korea and the North Korean people, widely accepted in our political culture. People agree that peace is important, but when the conversation turns to national security, they think safeguarding national security is way more important than making peace with others. Society's belief and culture are huge blocks facing our work. It is not easy to continue reaching out to the people with an alternative narrative.

*When people perceive an enemy,
they want to focus their resources and attention
on protecting "us" rather than the "enemy".
So, we need to change the "us and them" discourse
and begin by learning from each other.*

As a peace educator, I have noticed that many social resources and support mechanisms are directed towards patriotic programmes. However, this poses a great challenge for peace education organisations like us and the peace activism sector as a whole, especially with the changing political climate and party competition. For instance, if the head of the regional education office is from the democratic party, there may be more resources and opportunities for democracy and peace education. Conversely, if the head is from the conservative party, more resources would be allocated to national security or patriotic programmes.

Nevertheless, the underlying issue goes beyond government resource allocation. Society's belief system creates a dichotomy between "us" and the "enemy". When people perceive an enemy, they want to focus their resources and attention on protecting "us" rather than the "enemy". So, we need to change the "us and them" discourse and begin by learning from each other. It is essential to understand that the concept of an "enemy" is not helpful, and we do not need it. This is my belief as a peace educator.

We are advocating an alternative idea or position unattractive to the Korean public. After the war, the country was divided into two, and we have been living in hatred for over 70 years. We have a horrendous history of Korean people killing each other, red-tagging, and calling each other traitors or North Korean followers. These experiences and memories cause us deep anxiety, even now. If someone says North Koreans are our friends, not our enemies, they would be accused of being a traitor and harming national security. We face these fundamental challenges from culture and structure and sometimes feel defeated. Change is difficult. The security discourse is linked to the political system, culture, people's beliefs, and more. But we do our best to change some people, and the chain effect will come.



Source: Moon A-young.

PEACEMOMO promotes the idea of *Peace as Commons*. We have been raising the state's knowledge enclosure issue through the concept "education without teaching". *Peace as Commons* points out that the state's monopolisation of security is inevitably linked to its monopolisation of knowledge about security. The way in which the "national curriculum" reinforces and amplifies the "security discourse" works not only in formal but also in informal education, and every message sent by the state is a "hidden curriculum" that works as a foundation to support the state's security monopoly.

PEACEMOMO sees learning as a peer-produced process, with the "aha" moments created by participants when learning from each other and the irreversible self-transformation experiences. From this perspective, we call these learning moments that we practice together "commons" and the learning process "commoning". At the 2020 General Assembly, PEACEMOMO's members called for peace as commons. Our work in creating and promoting the concept of the peace commons is a steady stream of work that gradually shifts the narratives of peace and security.

Whether in the office, in conversations with members and elementary, middle, and high school classrooms, in workshops with local civil society activists, in press conferences, direct action, teacher training, parent meetings, or collaboration with national organisations and local governments, PEACEMOMO's work has been transformative, and we are committed to putting the brakes on the hidden curriculum enclosure of the state.

Rather than only focusing on local issues, it is crucial to go beyond that limited status quo and connect with broader global issues. Going beyond the Korean peace-focused agenda helps us create a different momentum for building peace in Korea. So, we need to find ways to expand our knowledge and connect a global perspective with our local challenges to create new momentum. To make this happen, we must strengthen our collaboration with diverse actors to increase civil society's vitality. I believe this is how we can make a real and lasting change. And so, in the long run,

I want to facilitate collaboration among many different actors, not only from the peacebuilding field but also from the business sector and more.

I want to see people realise they have the power to decide what peace and security mean to them.

We need freedom of movement to overcome our deep anxiety about the “enemy” in North Korea. This is our right. If we could travel freely to the other side of the Korean Peninsula and meet the people there, we would overcome our anxiety and rise above the demonised image of North Koreans. Then, we would soon realise that we have the power to change the status quo. We can have a different future. I feel very sad for the separated families caused by the division; more and more old people from these families pass away each year. We don’t need the division, and we don’t need an enemy.

I want to see people realise they have the power to decide what peace and security mean to them. In the past 70 years, people on the Korean Peninsula have seen superpower competitions affecting how we see our power. People have limited imagination about the kind of changes we can make together. We have lost the ability to imagine an alternative future and have allowed politicians to manipulate what we think. Many people on the ground have become spectators rather than agents of change for a long time. I believe we can have honest discussions about what security should look like and what it really means to us. We can create another discourse instead of just accepting what the politicians and military officials say. Together, we can find a new definition of the peace we want. I want to see a new discourse for peace in an environment where people share ideas, accept different perspectives, and respect diversity.



A launch event was held by PEACEMOMO to introduce the Korean translation of a yearbook summary from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). The event brought together key civil society leaders, peace activists, academics, and diplomats to discuss the implementation of peace education across various sectors of society. Source: Moon A-young.

DOUGLAS HOSTETTER

Human relationships are the foundation of peacebuilding

*Member of Pax Christi International UN Advocacy Team,
former Director of the Mennonite Central
Committee United Nations Office*

I was the Director of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), United Nations Office from 2006 to 2018. MCC was one of the few non-government organisations doing humanitarian work at that time in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, sometimes referred to as North Korea). During most of that period, MCC was working primarily on nutrition and self-sufficiency issues in 13 different orphanages in the DPRK. As the director of the UN Office, it was important for me to get first-hand exposure to our program work in the DPRK. Before the trip I had contacted several DPRK scholars in New York, who all assured me that if we were even allowed into the country, we would not be allowed out of Pyongyang, and if we were, we would be allowed to travel only a short distance from the capital. It was a pleasant surprise to learn that we would travel to the north, south, east and west as MCC was supporting orphanages across the country, in Nampo, Pyongsong, Sariwon, and Wonsan, where we were supporting child nutrition and building greenhouses for the orphanages. We also visited the MCC soymilk plant where soybeans were processed into soymilk to be delivered to the orphanages that MCC supported.



Douglas at the Pyongyang International Airport. Source: Douglas Hostetter.



MCC DPRK Representative, Kathi Suderman, visited the Nampo Baby Home in Nampo, DPRK, where she spent time with Director Mrs. Kong Kum Ok, staff, and children. Source: Douglas Hostetter.

I understood how important this work was because 40 years earlier I had been a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War. I had chosen to do my alternative service with MCC in Vietnam at the height of the war in the middle of the war zone. From 1966 to 1969 I lived and worked in Tam Ky, Quang Nam, a small town in one area that was most heavily fought over in that war. My primary work had been a literacy project, helping Vietnamese children, whose schools had been destroyed by the American Air Force, learn to read and write their own language. As an American, I wasn't in a position to be teaching Vietnamese children how to read and write Vietnamese, so I taught English in the local high schools, and organised high school students to be my volunteer teachers for the refugee children who had neither teachers nor schools. We were careful to keep our schools politically neutral, selecting school materials that could not be used as propaganda for either side of the war.

The literacy program enabled me to build close relationships with students and their parents. My teammate and I lived in a small cottage in the middle of Tam Ky, across the street from one of the high schools where we taught English. We were the only Americans living on the streets of Tam Ky. The other Americans - CIA agents, USAID officials and military advisors (MACV), all lived in heavily guarded compounds at the edge of town. During the three years that I lived in Tam Ky, the town was taken over about a dozen times by the National Liberation Front (NLF, often called VC or Vietnamese Communist) and once by North Vietnamese soldiers. Each time the guerillas took over Tam Ky, they attacked the CIA, USAID and the MACV compounds, all of which were surrounded by high walls, barbed wire, landmines and machine gun posts, while our little cottage, which had no weapons and no defence, was never attacked.

I learned that relationships can be built, even with the people who are supposed to be your bitter enemies.

I returned to Vietnam 40 years after the war to meet some of the people I had known and worked with earlier. Upon returning I was astounded to discover that one of my best friends was also an intelligence agent of the National Liberation Front. I discovered that he had four brothers that he had never mentioned; all four were on the other side. One of his brothers had travelled to the North after the French defeat and held a government post in the North, while the other three brothers were with the NLF, living just a few kilometres from Tam Ky. I had always known that God had protected me when the NLF took over Tam Ky. Forty years later, I learned that God had some help from a close Vietnamese friend who had three brothers in the NLF just outside of Tam Ky. My friend had protected me because of the relationship we had built, and because he believed the work that MCC was doing, educating the refugee children, was helping Vietnam.

I learned that relationships can be built, even with the people who are supposed to be your bitter enemies. If the programs that you do enhance the dignity and humanity of the people you are working with, and empower them to live better lives, you will discover that your friendship will be reciprocated.

DPRK diplomats who represent the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the United Nations live in New York with their families while they are serving at the UN. As the director of the MCC United Nations Office, I needed to work with DPRK diplomats to facilitate shipment of humanitarian aid and facilitate MCC staff travel to the DPRK. Diplomats who work at the UN and are from countries that do not have diplomatic relations with the United States are prohibited from travelling beyond 25 miles from Columbus Circle in Manhattan without official permission from the U.S. State Department. It took MCC more than a year to get the State Department to grant permission for three DPRK diplomats in New York City to visit the MCC headquarters in Akron, Pennsylvania. When the State Department approved the travel, they requested that we fly them to Pennsylvania. As the trip was less than 200 miles, I asked permission to

drive the diplomats in my car. The State Department agreed but required that I send them the make, model and license plate of my car, and the exact route that I would travel to Akron, so that they could make sure the diplomats didn't go off our path between New York and Akron!

When you travel with someone in a car for four or five hours you really get to know each other. You share about each other's homes, families and personal information that wouldn't come up in a more formal meeting with an ambassador discussing nutritional aid to orphanages or staff travel to North Korea. Upon reflection, it was the informal, personal interactions, with North Korean diplomats that turned out to be perhaps the most critical work that I did as Director of the MCC UN Office.

From conversation during the car ride to Akron, the ambassador learned that each spring hundreds of shad fish from the Atlantic Oceans swim up the Hackensack River to lay their eggs in a small stream about 100 yards from my house. When he heard this, he insisted, "You have to invite me to your house when the shads are spawning in your stream." I measured carefully on a map and realised that my house was located just within the 25-mile limit that North Korean diplomats are allowed to travel without State Department permission.

In the spring when the shad returned, I called the Ambassador to let him know the shad had arrived and would be spawning in the stream for a few weeks. I suggested that he let me know when a good time would be for him, his wife and a few friends from the Mission to come up for a picnic. When my wife asked how many people would likely come, I suggested perhaps four or five people. The ambassador called a week later to say that they would come up on Saturday, arriving at 11:00 AM. I asked how many people would likely be coming. The Ambassador responded, 22! Everybody from the ambassadors to the drivers, with their children and grandchildren, all came up for the picnic. I also invited my South Korean Mennonite intern and a few Korean American friends who were active in the peace movement.



A Mennonite farmer sharing his experience in sustainable farming practices with a DPRK diplomat during a visit to the MCC headquarters in Akron, Pennsylvania in September 2011. Source: Douglas Hostetter.



Diplomats from the DPRK UN Mission visiting the Quilt Room at the MCC Material Aid Center in Ephrata, Pennsylvania. Source: Douglas Hostetter.



A DPRK UN diplomat visiting the Clothing Repair Room in the MCC Material Aid Center. Source: Douglas Hostetter.



DPRK diplomats sharing a meal with MCC staff at the home of the MCC Director, Arli Klassen. Source: Douglas Hostetter.

*Despite the differences in culture,
religion or political systems, we are
still much more alike than we are different.
We want the same things for our spouses
and our children. We care about shelter,
education, health care, and employment.
We are part of a common humanity.*

My home is in a wooded area with a stream and no close neighbours, so it is very private and everyone relaxed. We ate, drank, fished and enjoyed each other's company. We did not discuss politics. The parents with children were especially ecstatic. Several of the parents mentioned, "We always worry about our children. We could never just let them run and play in New York, but here they can be free to race, climb in the tree house or play in the stream." That picnic totally changed my relationship with the DPRK diplomats and their families.

When building bridges with a people designated as our enemy, it is essential to recognise their dignity and affirm our shared humanity. Despite the differences in culture, religion or political systems, we are still much more alike than we are different. We want the same things for our spouses and our children. We care about shelter, education, health care, and employment. We are part of a common humanity. Nations, religions and ideologies often demonise those who are different from us. The "other" is described as evil and feared as dangerous. Many American friends can't believe that I have North Koreans visiting my home, coming for picnics. Most New Yorkers can't believe that DPRK diplomats live normal lives in New York City where their children attend public schools.



DPRK diplomats and Korean American friends gathered together at a sunny picnic hosted by Douglas at his home in June 2014. Source: Douglas Hostetter.



Women and children of the DPRK Mission enjoying a picnic lunch on the deck. Source: Douglas Hostetter.



Shad fishing in the stream behind Douglas' home. Source: Douglas Hostetter.

An ambassador who had visited my home completed his assignment in New York at the UN and returned with his family to the DPRK. Several years later I received a call on my phone in the office, “Hi, this is your friend, the ambassador who was here in New York earlier. I just returned on a short assignment for the opening of the UN General Assembly. My wife has sent some gifts, would you please come meet me at the UN?” I quickly gathered a few gifts of my own and ran over and met him. As we were catching up and exchanging gifts, he asked, “Do you remember that picture of you and your wife, and me and my wife in front of your home at that first picnic?” “Yes,” I responded, “I remember it well.” “I took that photograph home and it’s on the wall of my living room,” he replied. “None of my friends, not even my children, can believe that I have an American friend. ‘Yes,’ I tell them, ‘I have a very good friend in New York City.’”

Out of those kinds of relationships, I was able to help facilitate the reestablishment of high-level relations between UN officials and North Korean diplomats.

The friendship between that diplomat and me will always be there. We have learned to know and trust each other. That could only happen because we spent time together as human beings, not me as the American Director of the MCC UN Office, and he as a diplomat in the DPRK Mission to the UN, but he and I as friends. That humanitarian work is important, but perhaps its highest value is that it can enable individuals from enemy nations to become friends, which may actually have the most lasting consequences.

Out of those kinds of relationships, I was able to help facilitate the re-establishment of high-level relations between UN officials and North Korean diplomats at a time when the UN and North Korea had no formal channel of communication.

When President Donald Trump addressed the United Nations during the opening of the General Assembly in September 2017, he declared, “The United States has great strength and patience, but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea.”¹

Not long after President Trump’s address, a friend of mine from the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA, which was later renamed as the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, DPPA) came to an exhibition of DPRK paintings that MCC had helped to organise at an art gallery in New York. My UN friend explained that he had come to the exhibit because the Secretary-General was concerned that war could break out on the Korean Peninsula and the UN had no way to

communicate with the DPRK since they had broken off communications after the UN increased sanctions against the DPRK six years earlier. The Secretary-General had mandated my DPA friend to learn all he could about the DPRK, so he had come to our exhibit to learn about North Korean art.

A few days later when I mentioned that conversation to my friend from the DPRK Mission, he asked, “Do you think your friend from the DPA would want to meet with me?” I promised to check and got back to him the following day to let him know that my friend from the DPA was very interested. We arranged for a meeting for the three of us a few days later at a lounge in the UN. That meeting was possible only because of the trust which had been built between friends.



In October 2017, an exhibition titled “Community and Ideology” was held by the Korea Art Forum. Heng-Gil Han, the Director of the Korean Art Forum, can be seen in this photograph explaining the photographs taken by DPRK artists in China to DPRK diplomats and guests at an exhibit in the Tillman Chapel of the Church Center for the UN. Source: Douglas Hostetter.

My UN friend and my friend from the DPRK Mission met for the first time in 2016. Out of that and subsequent meetings, a year later, Jeffrey Feltman, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, visited North Korea shortly before the South Korean Winter Olympics – the first high-level UN visit to DPRK in over six years. Soon after Under-Secretary-General Feltman left the DPRK, Kim Jong Un congratulated South Korea on their Olympics, and the South Koreans reciprocated by inviting the DPRK to participate in the Winter Olympics.

I have been privileged to be one of the staff organisers for two Global Peace Forums on Korea (GPFK) held at Columbia University in New York in September 2018 and September 2019. The forums were “designed to provide a panoramic overview and discussion of the key issues in the ongoing U.S.-Korea peace process. Comprised of leading scholars, civil society and faith-based peace organisers from the primary stakeholders in the peace process including the U.S., Korea, China, Japan, and Russia-the conference program speaks to a broad audience of policymakers, academics, experts, journalists, and members of the business community.”

The themes of the two forums were: 2018, “Peace and Prosperity for Korea and the World” and 2019, “Making Connections: Global Challenges, Korea, and Peace Coexistence.” The organising committee came primarily from UN-related staff of the United Methodist Church, Mennonite Central Committee, Pax Christi International as well as the National Council of Churches in the U.S., International Peace Bureau and the Institute for 21st Century International Relations, and also included strong support with speakers from the World Council of Churches, the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Carter Center with a message from former President Carter for both Forums.



Participants engaged in a lively discussion during the first Global Peace Forum on Korea at the Italian Theater, Columbia University, in September 2018. Source: Douglas Hostetter.



During the Forum in 2018, when New York musicians struck up the cords of the song, “I am forever your son” from a DPRK movie, one of the DPRK diplomats spontaneously strode to the microphone to sing the words, and was quickly joined by a Korean American conference participant. Source: Douglas Hostetter.

But the real draw of the forums was the knowledge, passed informally to the 120 invited participants, that diplomats from the DPRK UN Mission in New York would be participating in the Forums. Although not listed on the formal program invitees were informed that DPRK UN diplomats would be giving presentations, participating in informal discussions and sharing meals with other participants. There were participants from 15 countries although most of the international guests were from South Korea. There were excellent papers presented by internationally known scholars and religious leaders, and good consensus statements at the end of both forums. Still, most participants who travelled from South Korea or other countries came primarily for a chance to sit down, talk and build a relationship with someone from the DPRK, something that was often prohibited in their own country.

Those kinds of exchange programs are valuable not only for the knowledge that is shared but also for the relationships that are formed between the participants on both sides.

Humanitarian work with the DPRK has become much more difficult after the failure of the Trump - Kim Jong Un Hanoi Summit. Since then, MCC had to abandon its direct humanitarian aid projects in North Korea, because the U.S. government requires that NGOs working in the DPRK confirm that all supplies that were licensed for nutritional, educational or health, are actually being used as indicated on the license application. And once Trump prohibited Americans from travelling to the DPRK (a policy continued by the Biden administration), MCC could no longer assure the Treasury Department that, we have visited the institutions where our aid was sent.



Participants sharing a conversation with a DPRK diplomat at the banquet at the end of the Forum. Source: Douglas Hostetter.



Douglas Hostetter with Sonja Bachmann from the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UN DPPA) and a DPRK diplomat at the Global Peace Forum on Korea in 2019. Source: Douglas Hostetter.

We can no longer confirm the weight increase of the children or document improvement in the children's health because of the soy milk, the little gardens and the greenhouses we provided. For the last four or five years, the NGOs who have worked in the DPRK have not been able to continue their previous humanitarian work. Those kinds of humanitarian projects are important, not only for the health and welfare of the recipients in the DPRK, but for the relationships that are built between the American staff and the staff of the institutions which receive support.

I videotaped a dance by a group of five- or six-year-old orphans who performed for us at one of the orphanages we visited in North Korea. When I returned home, I showed the video to neighbours, an internationally known dance couple who have performed around the world. They were amazed, "We have danced around the globe and have watched dance performances all over the world, but we have never seen children of that age perform at that level!" This kind of cultural exchange helps to humanise the people on both sides. Human relationships are the foundation of peacebuilding, whether with an orphan, a farmer or an ambassador. Trust is developed through friendship built upon shared dignity and mutual respect.

The Mennonite Central Committee is a binational organisation with branches in both Canada and the U.S. At a time when the U.S. government would not issue visas to citizens of the DPRK, Canada would. MCC was able to arrange a short-term agricultural course for North Korean agriculturalists, taught by a Mennonite professor at the University of Manitoba. This project enabled DPRK farmers to meet with Canadian farmers, visit their farms, go into their fields, ride on their tractors and eat meals in their homes. Canadian and DPRK farmers are both struggling to find a way to farm sustainably. We can all learn from each other and work together to build a better world. Those kinds of exchange programs are valuable not only for the knowledge that is shared but also for the relationships that are formed between the participants on both sides.



Professor Martin Entz of the University of Manitoba shares his expertise on managing pig manure nutrients to benefit agriculture and preserve water quality during a DPRK visit to Winnipeg Canada in May 2017. Source: Douglas Hostetter.

In recent years, unfortunately, exchange programs, even in Canada, have become impossible. The COVID restrictions in North Korea and travel restrictions in the West have made it impossible for MCC to continue exchange programs as well as humanitarian aid. Flights in and out of the DPRK have been halted in recent years. Even the World Food Program (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO) and all other UN agencies have had to withdraw their staff during the COVID crisis. As the threat of COVID subsides, hopefully things will change. North Korean friends have reported that shipments can now be sent by train from China. However, because the U.S. government requires that all NGOs that are working in the DPRK confirm how their supplies are being used, U.S. NGOs will not be able to send humanitarian to the DPRK as long as staff travel is impossible.

I am working with a group in the U.S., largely Korean Americans, that has been trying to advocate lifting the travel ban on Americans travelling

to the DPRK. The travel ban has disrupted Korean family reunion meetings. Korean Americans used to be able to travel to the DPRK to meet with relatives. That whole generation of families separated by the Korean War, is rapidly being lost. Every year, we're losing more and more Korean Americans and South Koreans who have longed to be reunited with separated family members in the DPRK. Lifting the travel ban and COVID-19 travel restrictions is critical both for family reunification and for the resumption of humanitarian aid.

We have been working with several congressional representatives here in the United States to put pressure on the Biden administration to lift that Trump-era travel ban. Unfortunately, there are forces in the U.S. that want to continue the hostility with the DPRK. We need to start where people are and build understanding and trust between our peoples and our governments. Lifting the travel ban is one step in that direction. I would like to see travel for many Americans: Korean Americans whose families were separated by the war, scholars, athletes, musicians, artists, and humanitarian workers. COVID has been the block in the DPRK, and the Department of State and Treasury Department have been the block here in the United States.

There also needs to be similar kinds of opening of relationships between South Korea and the DPRK so that South Koreans can again visit the DPRK and citizens in the North can visit the South. It is through human interactions, that one can understand that we really have much more in common with each other than we have differences, and many of the differences turn out to be complimentary. The DPRK has a young labour force and abundant mineral resources but lacks industry and good agricultural land while South Korea has a strong industrial base and excellent agricultural land but needs mineral resources and workers. In many ways, the two Koreas need and complement each other. If they would stop fearing and threatening each other, they could recognise what each has to offer and unite to become a powerful nation.

The Koreans were one people for thousands of years but have now been separated for 70 years. They have been driven apart by the struggle among great powers. We need to find ways for Koreans to transcend those barriers that have separated them and affirm their common heritage and humanity. Human relationships have the power to break those barriers and transform enemies into friends.

1 David Nakamura and Anne Gearan, "In U.N. speech, Trump threatens to 'totally destroy North Korea' and calls Kim Jong Un 'Rocket Man'" 19 September, 2017, The Washington Post, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2017/09/19/in-u-n-speech-trump-warns-that-the-world-faces-great-peril-from-rogue-regimes-in-north-korea-iran/>.

KIM JEONGSOO

We need to build a process of dialogue to overcome our fear of war and avoid dependence on the so-called deterrence strategy

Representative of Women Making Peace

In 1989, I graduated from the seminary in Korea with an M.Div degree. Then I started working at the Christian Women's Institute for Peace Studies (later known as Korea Women's Peace Institute under the umbrella of Women Making Peace). Back then, we did not have peace studies, peace education, and peace movement. What we had was student movements for unification. So my teachers, who had experienced the peace movement in Germany, introduced peace movement and peace studies to Korea. That's how I began to learn about peace studies because we never had that in our school curriculum. At the same time, with my colleagues in the institute, I started studying Korean history regarding militarism, patriarchy, and violence under the division. We studied feminist theories and feminist peace analysis. All those areas were new to us.

At the time, there was a reputable professor at Ewha Women's University, Professor Lee Hyo-Jae (1924-2020). She was a sociologist who focused on Korean society analysis, particularly women's situation under military dictatorship and division. Because of her active involvement in the

democratic movement in the 1980s, the government dismissed her from her professorship. She was also an advocate of the women's peace and unification movement. She was one of the South Korean leaders at the "Seminar on Peace in Asia and the Role of Women", the first inter-Korean women's dialogue. Because of her, we were able to understand our situation and the violence against women under the division, militarism, and patriarchy.

And so, the feminist peace discourse began to shape the anti-war movements in the early 1990s. There was a movement against the first Iraq War. Then, we organised a disarmament campaign against the vast military budget of Korea. We highlighted the impact of militarisation on women by presenting the enormous difference between the defence budget (30% of the total budget) and the women's welfare budget (0.31%). That was how we advocated disarmament at the time.

In 1991, we had the first South and North Korean women's dialogue at the "Seminar on Peace in Asia and the Role of Women". The seminar, joined by women from South Korea, North Korea, and Japan, was the first legal civilian-level exchange after the division. What's less known to the public is that it marked the first time South and North Korean women walked across Panmunjom together. The first seminar was held in Tokyo in May 1991. In November, North Korean women visited South Korea for three days at the second seminar.

My institute was one of the five organisations working on the seminars, so I was a staff member for the second and third seminars, which allowed me to meet North Koreans for the first time in my life. Because of the Cold War, it was very difficult to learn about and understand North Korea properly since the armistice agreement was signed in 1953. Meeting with North Koreans at the second seminar greatly impacted me and my work on Korea peace. We spoke the same language and shared a similar culture, but our political ideologies are different. We did not know their stories and how they lived their lives. Our ways of looking at history and

understanding the Korean War also differ. At the time, we needed to learn to live with our differences and put aside our fear of war, even when our countries were still in hostile relations.

Our people and our stories need healing.

*Without healing and reconciliation, we cannot
relinquish our hostile attitudes towards each other.*

Around that time, I discovered the traumatic experiences of my family during the Korean War, particularly my mother's family. My mother's older brother was a socialist and went to North Korea during the war. It was very dangerous, even after the war, to disclose that we had a family member who was a North Korean collaborator during the war. If it were disclosed, other family members would be accused of being involved in the crime. So, it remained a family secret. No one was allowed to talk about what happened to the family during the war. It was forbidden and unspoken. But it was a traumatic experience for them because they had to live through hardship during the war in South Korea without the family's eldest son. I did not know this until in my thirties. The time when I learned about my family's experience in the war was exactly when I started to study Korean history from the women's perspective. It was a coincidence. And that made me realise that the tragedy my family went through was not just a family experience – it represents a collective trauma of our society. Our people and our stories need healing. Without healing and reconciliation, we cannot relinquish our hostile attitudes towards each other.

Later, together with around 20 Korean activists, I joined the Conflict Resolution Training Program designed by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in 2000-2002. That made us the first activists in Korea

to have conflict resolution training. Women Making Peace was one of the three organisations co-hosting the program. Since then, I have focused on developing a discourse on peaceful unification education by merging peace education and unification education. We conducted research to analyse peace education programmes from various countries and studied conflict cases such as Northern Ireland, South Africa, Germany, Israelis and Arabs, etc.

That was a special experience because we had no such kind of peace education programme in South Korea. At that time, we had no choice but to learn about North Korea through the unification education curriculum the government gave. But it provided very limited knowledge about North Korea under the restrictions of the National Security Law. A major part of unification education was North Korean history, their political and economic situations, how they built their nuclear programme, etc. It was heavy and difficult to understand. And essentially, because we can't go to North Korea and meet the people, understanding North Korea becomes like blind people trying to make sense of an elephant – everyone has a very limited understanding of what it really is. And even now, I still find it challenging to understand North Korea.

From the case studies, we learnt that peace education and conflict resolution in those areas are about changing attitudes towards the so-called enemy people and how we see the conflict. Those peace education programs also focused on conflict analysis, nonviolent communication, and peaceful ways to resolve conflicts without relying on violence. These are entirely different from what we had been taught. Since then, I have been involved in developing peace education discourses and manuals.

In 2007, I had a chance to work for Cheong Wa Dae (also known as the Blue House or the presidential office) for about seven months as the Chief of Staff for First Lady Kwon Yang-sook. When the Inter-Korean Summit was held in Pyongyang in October 2007, I was part of the delegation to Pyongyang and met with North Korean women leaders from the political, economic, and cultural sectors.



South Korean delegation, led by First Lady Kwon Yang-sook (fourth from the left in the front row), met with the North Korean women's delegation at the Baekhwawon Guest House in Pyongyang during the Second Inter-Korean Summit on October 2nd, 2007. In the front row, from left: co-chairman Jeong Hyun-baek, Jang Geum-sook, manager of Moranbong factory, Ryu Mi-yong, chairwoman of Central Committee of the Chondoist Chongu Party, Kwon Yang-sook, Park Soon-hee, chairman of the Korean Democratic Women's Alliance, and Kim Hwa-joong, president of the Korean National Council of Women (KNCW). Kim Jeongsoo, then chief secretary of Kwon Yang-sook, is on the first from the left of the back row. Source: The Women's News (<http://www.womennews.co.kr>)

It was a coincidence that I became the First Lady's Chief of Staff at Cheong Wa Dae. Ahead of the Summit in 2007, I contributed to the newspaper Hankyoreh, arguing that women should also be able to attend the summit. Kwon Yang-sook read my writing, and she was preparing for the summit. She had little experience in North Korea, so she hired me to support her with my experiences in inter-Korean women's exchange.

My decision was a great shock to Women Making Peace and other peace movement organisations. Many people criticised me for my decision to join the Blue House. However, I chose to work at the Blue House because I believed attending the Inter-Korean Summit and helping the First Lady also contributed to inter-Korean reconciliation.

At the Summit, the First Lady invited the North Korean women leaders to a meeting to share with us the women's work and activities in North Korea. The meeting was a significant part of the trip for the First Lady. Thanks to the trip and the meeting, I had a unique experience observing the North Korean women leaders' attitudes and words towards the South Korean First Lady.

After finishing my work at the Blue House in early 2008, I stopped involvement with Women Making Peace for many years. Around 2013 I started resuming my work. And as Women Making Peace faced multiple difficulties in finance and staff resources, I took up the position of the representative again in 2019 to take responsibility for my choices in the past.

To create a peaceful future, it is necessary to invest time and effort to understand each other.

I have met North Koreans 20-30 times and have been to North Korea more than ten times, from the first meeting with North Korean women 30 years ago to 2019. I was there when Kim Jong-un signed the Joint Declaration of the Second Inter-Korean Summit with South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun. I remember the atmosphere was very good at that time. And I also met with several other North Korean colleagues at official sessions and informal meetings. The experiences left me with a complicated impression of North Korea. It is going to take a long time to understand them. This is inevitable. But to create a peaceful future, it is necessary to invest time and effort to understand each other.

I last met North Korean women at an inter-Korean joint event, a New Year's meeting at Geumgangsan Mountain in North Korea in February 2019. That was before the collapse of the DPRK-U.S. Summit in Hanoi

at the end of February. So, people at the event all casted optimistic hopes for the future of the Korean Peninsula. Women from the two Koreas also shared high expectations for future exchanges and cooperation. Unfortunately, we have not been able to meet each other since then.

Those encounters left me with a deeper desire to learn what the North Koreans really want for their lives, for their society, and for peace. What is their wish? What are their desires? What are their needs as a country? Reflecting on those experiences, I learned that regime security or security assurance is the most important for them. That is what they need. We have not paid serious attention to their desire and urgent need for a security guarantee from the United States and other countries. And at the same time, South Koreans need security assurance, too. Look at how much our government spent on the military in the past 70 years. Last year, we saw many missile tests by North Korea and military exercises in the air, in the sea, and on land by South Korea, the United States, and Japan. 2023 may be the most dangerous year since the signing of the armistice in 1953. Sustainable peace is what we both need to ensure we are free from the fear of war. I am saying this from the bottom of my heart.

I became committed to Women, Peace and Security (WPS) advocacy in 2018, while Women Making Peace has been working on the WPS agenda for nearly 15 years. Our members played a significant role in establishing the National Action Plan for the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace and Security. We advocate greater participation of women in the peace process on the Korean Peninsula because this is consistent with the pillar of “participation” in UNSCR 1325.¹

At first, our members promoted the UNSC’s adoption of the UNSCR 1325 and the trend of countries building their own National Action Plans (NAP) to the women civil society groups. Next, they lobbied the lawmakers to contribute to establishing a NAP in South Korea. Women Making Peace formed a “1325 Network”, joined by 45 women’s organisations, that demanded the government set up a UNSCR 1325 NAP. As a result, The first NAP was established in 2014, making South Korea the third country

in Asia to adopt the UNSCR 1325 NAP after the Philippines and Nepal. Since then, Women Making Peace has participated in the “1325 NGO Advisory Group” chaired by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the NAP.

Establishing a regional WPS agenda in Northeast Asia would be a significant step towards proposing the idea of developing a WPS National Action Plan to North Korea.

In the past five years, as a representative of Women Making Peace, I developed manuals about the WPS agenda and assessed the achievements and limitations of the implementation. We produced educational YouTube videos to popularise the WPS agenda and developed and carried out educational programs.

On the 20th anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in 2020, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family hosted the International Women’s Forum. I presented the achievements and limitations of implementing the WPS National Action Plan in Korea. At the DMZ Forum organised by Korea Peace Now in Gyeonggi Province, I presented the accomplishments of the Korean women’s peace movement over the past 30 years in terms of “meaningful participation,” one of the WPS pillars. Through our studies, we are making the case that localising the WPS agenda is critical in ensuring women’s human security. Also, establishing a regional WPS agenda in Northeast Asia would be a significant step towards proposing the idea of developing a WPS National Action Plan to North Korea.

Simply having a National Action Plan is not enough. South Korea adopted the first NAP in 2014, and now we are at the third NAP, adopted in 2021

for the period of 2021-2023. However, implementing the WPS agenda still needs to be improved regarding local ownership. It involves more than ten government ministries and institutions but has yet to give local women enough opportunities to participate. We are working on promoting the WPS agenda in South Korea at the local level to realise genuine security for all Korean women.

Over the past years, I have supported the women activist groups in Gyeonggi-do in localising the WPS agenda at the provincial level. The historic Women Cross DMZ event took place at Panmunjom, in the northern part of Gyeonggi Province, on 24th May, 2015. Women's organisations and their local members in Gyeonggi Province played a significant role in the event. Since then, the Women Peace Walk continued until 2018. As they began to reflect on their program's purpose and meaning critically, they conducted research with the Gyeonggi Women and Family Foundation to evaluate the peace projects and programs across Gyeonggi Province from a gender perspective.



A candlelight vigil held on 14th December 2019 as a peaceful protest against the United States forced defence contributions. Source: PSPD.

In 2019, the research findings were presented at a seminar. After hearing the findings, I suggested that the women activists in Gyeonggi Province consider working on a local action plan for the WPS agenda. Through continuous discussions, the local women leaders were able to merge several proposals with their aspirations for the province. In 2021, Gyeonggi women activists gathered to explore possible UNSCR 1325 actions and tasks to be done in the province.

Located at the border between the two Koreas, where many U.S. military bases are stationed, Gyeonggi province is home to many women living in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) area. And the “comfort women” during the war still live in the villages near the U.S. military base. Gyeonggi also has the most number of North Korean women defectors in the country. So, the province is in a critical position geographically to reveal how the violence of the division continues to inflict harm on women’s lives. This is a necessary component of Gyeonggi’s local action plan. They will organise the Gyeonggi Women’s International Peace Forum in 2023 to build local capacity for peacebuilding.

This WPS agenda localisation process is very meaningful to me as both a supporter and an advisor of them. As we see how the plan progresses because of our collective efforts, it confirms our belief that women’s human security can be realised in powerful and tangible ways. I am also working on connecting the Gyeonggi women activists to the Gangjeong women activists on Jeju Island. The Gangjeong village is where the South Korean naval base is located. Gangjeong women peace activists had been protesting against the construction of the naval base. It was part of the broader peace movement in Jeju starting around 2011 that halted the naval base construction. And after the construction was completed, they switched to advocating peace and anti-militarism by making the case that the Gangjeong naval base and port are assets serving the U.S. military to contain China.

Having already campaigned for over a decade, the Gangjeong women activists want to get out of isolation and connect with other women peace activists outside Jeju Island. So this year, we will bring together the Gyeonggi and Gangjeong women to discuss developing a WPS local action plan on Jeju Island. The meetings will facilitate learning, experience exchange, and stronger connection among women peace activists across provinces. The Gangjeong women will learn from Gyeonggi's process of building a WPS local action plan, and we all can learn the history and development of the Jeju Island struggle for peace.

The WPS agenda provides a platform for women activists to connect and work together at the local and regional levels. I am a strong advocate for the WPS Northeast Asia Regional Action Plan. When I was on a trip to the United States with other Northeast Asian members of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) in December 2022, I attended a meeting hosted by the Mongolian Permanent Mission to the United Nations and met with the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UN DPPA). I urged the Mongolian Government to develop a WPS National Action Plan. If Mongolia does it, we will be one step closer to formulating a Northeast Asia Regional Action Plan because currently China and Mongolia do not have a NAP. In fact, the WPS agenda provides a safe platform for women peacebuilders across Northeast Asian countries to discuss peace issues together while getting around various political sensitivities. This is what we need to focus on in the near future.

Our movement in South Korea faces enormous challenges because of the current President's antagonistic attitude towards gender equality, peace movement, North Korea, and even civil society. We have seen how he divides civil society and marginalises NGOs in many different ways. In such a hostile situation, sustaining the women's peace movement is challenging. We are indeed in a difficult situation.



A photo captured at a joint campaign by Women Making Peace and the Korea Peace Appeal on 10th June, 2023. The campaign aimed to raise awareness and encourage people to sign the peace appeal, urging for a formal end to the Korean War. Source: Kim Jeongsoo.

Another challenge is with the South Korean National Security Law. Under the National Security Law, North Korea is an illegal group. The law, which aims to punish behaviours and speeches in favour of North Korea, in fact, violates our citizens' rights by prohibiting visits

to North Korea and restricting our rights to express opinions about them. However, our Constitution states that the Korean people have the right to pursue unification by peaceful means. The First Article of the Constitution says that the whole peninsula is the territory of the Republic of Korea. So, the National Security Act is restricting our rights to bring peace.

Now we see the military tension in Northeast Asia running high. Japan seeks to acquire national identity as a country with the so-called right to war. However, the Japanese government has yet to take responsibility for the wrongs of its colonial past, and the victims still demand a just solution. With historical issues unresolved, the Korean, Japanese, and U.S. governments are increasing military cooperation and joint military exercises. Meanwhile, North Korea is still isolated from the world due to pandemic-related border closures and international sanctions. During the trip to the U.S. with GPPAC members in December 2022, I realised that people in Washington, despite the regional tensions, feel very tired of the Korean agenda and all related problems. Their attitude showed us how the Korean War was forgotten in Washington.

We live with these daily challenges and frustration, but to build a peaceful future for the next generation in North and South Korea, we need to continue our work for peace. This year Women Making Peace mobilises women's groups to support the Korea Peace Appeal campaign in preventing military conflict on the Korean Peninsula, especially in the DMZ area. We also work with international groups such as the Korea Peace Now! campaign to raise awareness globally.



Jeongsoo and members of Women Making Peace participated in the Korea Peace Rally on 22nd July 2023 ahead of the 70th anniversary of the Korean Armistice Agreement, advocating for a formal end to the Korean War. Source: Korea Peace Appeal Campaign.

*We still have a great fear of war,
and so we rely on our military strengths and
military expenditures to secure peace. We need
to build a process of dialogue so we can avoid
dependence on military force, the ROK-U.S.
alliance, and the so-called deterrence strategy.*

I wish to see South Korean young people visit North Korea again. Around ten years ago, when travelling to North Korea was much easier, groups of high school students took trips to Mount Kumgang in North Korea every year. This kind of trip can change young people's attitude towards North Korea. Nowadays, the younger generation pays little attention to North Korea, and they don't want to learn about it or think about unification and any dialogue with North Koreans. I hope North and South Korean young people can meet. I hope they can visit any places on the peninsula, from Mount Kumgang in the north to Hallasan on Jeju Island, without any restrictions. They should have freedom of movement and expression.

The freedom to travel to North Korea without government restrictions would enable us to have dialogue and a process towards reconciliation. Without a step-by-step process, we cannot overcome our fear of war. We still have a great fear of war, and so we rely on our military strengths and military expenditures to secure peace. We need to build a process of dialogue so we can avoid dependence on military force, the ROK-U.S. alliance, and the so-called deterrence strategy. Freedom of movement, dialogue, and exchange are what we need to stop the vicious circle of militarism. This is the most significant change I hope to see in our society.

To make this happen, we have two most important tasks. Firstly, peace education needs to be carried out more extensively in communities and schools. Secondly, we need to end the Korean War at both local and international levels. Our local activists are working hard to advocate the end of the war. Global action and solidarity are critical in amplifying our voices. To resume dialogue with North Korea, we need first to build trust from our side. North Korea wants to be recognised as a normal country. So, peace movement groups, members of international society and South Korean people need to voice out for North Korean people's right to survival. Then we find ways to bring together different parties to talk

to each other. The GPPAC Ulaanbaatar Process is an example to show that peaceful dialogue is possible. There are always challenges, but we can continue to play an active role in building trust and maintaining a safe space for dialogue.

1 To learn more about the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, please visit <https://dppa.un.org/en/women-peace-and-security>.

CHRISTINE AHN

Mobilise a women-powered movement to shift the militarisation of U.S. foreign policy

Executive Director of Women Cross DMZ

During my time as a graduate student at Georgetown University, Bob Gallucci, who had worked in the Clinton Administration, came to guest lecture about the time when President Clinton considered a preemptive strike on the North Korean nuclear facility Yongbyon in 1994. To prevent this, former President Jimmy Carter flew to Pyongyang with a CNN camera crew and called to inform President Clinton. President Carter met Kim Il Sung, and together, they negotiated the parameters of the Agreed Framework, which resulted in the freezing of North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Learning about this event sparked my interest in the other half of my motherland, which I knew little about, much less about the Korean War. That semester, I wrote a paper on the role of non-governmental organisations and civil society in gaining access to North Korea and how they helped during the 1990s famine. This experience led me to work on Korea peace.

After graduate school, I received a fellowship from the Ford Foundation to work at the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development, a think tank in Berkeley, California that was headed by Peter Hayes, an

Australian who travelled to North Korea multiple times to help them with their energy crisis. He helped install windmills in North Korea as an alternative energy source, as he believed that the famine in North Korea was caused by the energy crisis. North Korea is mostly mountainous, and Hayes believed they could harness the power of wind to provide much-needed electricity. While living in the Bay Area, I met several Korean Americans that were long involved in supporting peace, reunification and democratisation movements on the Korean Peninsula. Some had even travelled to North Korea in search of their families.

My first trip to North Korea was in 2004. At that time, the George W. Bush administration had just launched its “War on Terror” and had included North Korea as part of the “axis of evil,” along with Iraq and Iran. Many Korean Americans were truly concerned that North Korea would be the next country to be invaded after Iraq, and so I decided it was important to travel to North Korea to meet the people and understand from their perspective how their lives were shaped and impacted by the unresolved Korean War. Two years later, I travelled to South Korea to join rice farmers from the villages of Daechuri and Doduri who were protesting the expansion of the U.S.’ largest military base in the world at Camp Humphreys base in Pyeongtaek, which is approximately 50 miles south of Seoul.

We arrived late at night and had to pass through two military checkpoints to get gain access to the villages. When we finally arrived, we were led into a dimly lit barn where approximately 50 villagers were waiting to greet us. Every night, for over 1000 nights, they gathered in that barn to hold a candlelight vigil, reminding one another why they were fighting for their land, their ancestors, and their way of life. Witnessing this deeply touched me, and I stood up to introduce myself in my elementary Korean, apologising for the role that my adopted country, the U.S., had played in the continuing war and militarisation of Korea.

Realising the impact of militarisation and the unresolved war on people's lives, particularly on those who grow our food that gives us nourishment and sustenance, was a defining moment for me. The United States was justifying the expansion of the world's largest military base in the name of "security", yet they were destroying fertile rice farms that these farmers had cultivated for generations, growing food for their families and country. During the negotiations for land acquisition by the Ministry of Defense, the South Korean Defense Ministry asked the Pyongtaek village leader Kim Ji Tae the price for his land, to which he replied, "The price will be unimaginably high. The price must include every grain of rice grown and harvested here. It must include all of our efforts to grow them, as well as our whole life here, including our sighs, tears, and laughter. The price must include the stars, which have witnessed our grief and joy, and the wind, which has dried our tears. If all of these could be added, I would tell you the price."

Whenever we hear about the Korean conflict in the media, it's always about nuclear weapons, missile tests or North Korea's military parades. The whole foreign policy field is driven and shaped by men, largely white men who view the Korean Peninsula as a geostrategic chess board. They have little concern for the human costs and devastating ecological consequences of maintaining this forever war. They use antiseptic language of deterrence as a solution. We've had enough of the establishment's definition of security. Their approach has not worked. The threat of nuclear war, the division of millions, humanitarian crises — this is not deterrence, this is violence. The U.S. has a moral responsibility to finally end the war. We need to give power and voice to the powerless and the voiceless, such as families still separated by this conflict or the impact on the North Korean people suffering from being the most sanctioned country in the world. That's why the work of Women Cross DMZ is so crucial; We help educate and inform people about the ordinary Korean people impacted day to day by this conflict.



30 women peacemakers from around the world crossed the Korean Demilitarized Zone in 2015, the 70th anniversary of Korea's division. Source: Women Cross DMZ.

The Women Cross DMZ project was a confluence of two of my life commitments: advocating for gender equality and women's rights, and promoting peace on the Korean Peninsula. Growing up as the youngest of ten siblings – nine girls and one boy – I witnessed firsthand how women must be strong and resilient, especially in Asian cultures due to strong patriarchal norms. Women are taught to balance multiple responsibilities, such as raising children, working jobs outside the home, and caring for husbands, parents, and in-laws. During the day, I worked for women's organisations, and by moonlight, I worked as a Korea peace activist. Naturally, these two commitments – to women's rights and peace in Korea – paved the way for my work to build Women Cross DMZ and a women-led movement to finally end the Korean War. As a Korean American, I have come to believe that the United States is the biggest obstacle to peace, and that as a U.S. citizen, it was my responsibility to pressure my government to do the right thing.

In 2015, on the 70th anniversary of Korea's tragic division by the United States and former Soviet Union, Women Cross DMZ led 30 women peacemakers including Gloria Steinem and Nobel Peace laureates Mairead Maguire and Leymah Gbowee across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) from North Korea to South Korea to call for an end to the Korean War with a peace agreement, the reunion of long-separated families and women's leadership at all levels of the peacebuilding process. We marched with 10,000 Korean women on both sides of the DMZ and held women's peace symposia in both Pyongyang and Seoul. As Gloria Steinem explained, "The point is that engagement and talk are more likely to achieve the kinds of goals we want than isolation. We feel that it's important to try reaching out, doing with our physical selves what we hope can be done politically." We believe that ending the Korean War is vital to 80 million Koreans on the Peninsula and essential to building a just and humane society at home.

Since that historic DMZ crossing, we have continued to mobilise people across borders to press for peace, diplomacy, and women's inclusion in peacebuilding. In 2019, to strengthen our work for peace in Korea, Women Cross DMZ launched the Korea Peace Now! campaign with three feminist peace organisations — the Nobel Women's Initiative, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the Korean Women's Movement for Peace.¹ We have brought women together from across Northeast Asia, including North and South Korea, including the first-ever meeting of women from North and South Korea, China, Japan, Russia, the U.S. and Canada in Beijing in 2018. Recognising the key role that the United States must play to formally end the Korean War, we built the Korea Peace Now! Grassroots Network across 12 regional chapters with more than 300 members. We are a multigenerational, multiracial, people-powered movement that includes peace activists, veterans, students, homemakers, small business owners, academics, and others who collectively press for an end to the Korean War. We collect signatures on postcards, organise house meetings, call and meet with their representatives, show up at town hall meetings, write letters to the editors,

and tell their personal stories to press their representatives. This is truly a people-powered movement led by women.

While there is much progress to be made, there is a growing bipartisan consensus for peace. A poll conducted by Data for Progress and YouGov in 2020 found that 67% of U.S. voters support negotiating a peace agreement with North Korea. Among Republicans, this support is even higher at 76%. Additionally, there is an increasing trend of support for decreasing the military budget, and a majority of Americans believe that negotiating with adversaries is crucial in preventing war. There is a growing trend of younger and more diverse voices calling for a shift in U.S. foreign policy to move away from endless wars.



Korea Peace Now! campaign leaders met with Sen. Bernie Sanders. Source: Christine Ahn.

On the 70th anniversary of the Armistice, hundreds of people — including Korean Americans from divided families, Gen M/Z activists, humanitarian aid workers, experts, scholars, and peace-loving people — travelled from across the country to join our Korea Peace Action: National

Mobilization to End the Korean War. Held over three, scorching-hot days in Washington, DC, Korea Peace Action fortified the Korea peace movement by fostering connection and collaboration between organisations, groups, and individuals — a diverse ecosystem of changemakers who share the vision of peace on the Korean Peninsula in our lifetime. Several veterans of the movement told us this historic convening made them feel hopeful about the possibility of achieving peace in our lifetime, for the first time in decades.

It's been amazing to see the power of ordinary people organising. We are starting to see a narrative shift about the need for a new approach because the last 30 years of U.S. policy have totally failed. This is the result of a dedicated core group of people across sectors and disciplines coming together to collectively say, it's time for a peace-first approach to resolving the more than 70-year Korean conflict. 70th anniversary of the signing of the Korean armistice.

70 years of war is a long time, so ending it won't happen overnight. We have to celebrate the victories, such as the introduction of the first-ever congressional bill calling for a peace agreement and more thought leaders calling for replacing the armistice with a peace agreement.² Despite the challenges we have faced in trying to end America's oldest war, it is encouraging to see the narrative beginning to shift. Among those calling for replacing the ceasefire with a peace agreement is a retired Air Force Lt. General Dan Leaf, the former Acting Commander of the Pacific Command, and Siegfried Hecker, the former Director of Los Alamos National Laboratory, who has had the greatest access to North Korea's nuclear sites. This is progress.

Changing the narrative is a difficult task, akin to a David and Goliath struggle. Thanks to the masterful storytelling by Emmy Award-winning director Deann Borshay Liem, our work and movement are captured in the new documentary film "Crossings", which follows our historic journey across the DMZ in 2015 and afterwards.³ At a screening of the

film in Seattle, my niece's husband was in tears as the lights came on. He remarked that he felt deceived by his government for lying to him about the war, and that this war has allegedly ended when it hasn't. We're up against a narrative that has enabled this war to go on for so long, but we find strength in our community and know that we are making cracks in the official narrative.

We really need to have serious negotiations that we must let go of our mindset that we are going to wait for peace until North Korea denuclearises. That has been an absolute failure of the whole policy community.

In the short term, we need to call for de-escalation. We need to call for halting the military exercises that are underway right now in exchange for North Korea halting their missile tests. We saw it happen in 2018 while the Singapore declaration was signed. In fact, North Korea didn't test any long-range missiles for many years after that, so we need to take note. We need to get both sides to stop provocations and agree to meet.



The Korea Peace Action: National Mobilization to End the Korean War was organised on 27th – 28th July, 2023 in Washington, DC to call on President Biden and Congress to officially end the Korean War and replace the armistice with a peace agreement. Source: Christine Ahn.

And then, for the long term, obviously, we need to negotiate and replace the ceasefire with a permanent peace settlement. We should establish normalised relations. We really need to have serious negotiations that we must let go of our mindset that we are going to wait for peace until North Korea denuclearises. That has been an absolute failure of the whole policy community. There are so many people that are part of the military-industrial complex, who personally benefit from this ongoing war, so we have to figure out ways to have our voices heard louder than theirs.

The ongoing rivalry between the U.S. and China is making it challenging to make progress on the Korean Peninsula, but on the other hand, peace on the Korean Peninsula could be a significant game changer that can alter the course of relations in the region. It's vital to note that peace doesn't happen overnight. Peace with North Korea does not mean handing them a concession; peace is hard work. More people, including the nuclear disarmament community, Korean Americans, and others, believe that the current version of strategic patience has failed. It's time to wake up and acknowledge the dangerous situation we're in and take a more proactive stance. Achieving peace on the Korean Peninsula is a long game that requires persistence and dedication.

My hope is that people recognise the costs of war. In Korea, people often talk about the costs of reunification. And I don't think that they think about the cost of war, and the cost of war on their lives, emotionally and psychologically, such as the generational trauma resulting from this war. It's my wish that the Korean people recognise the significant impact this war has had on their lives, including the suffering and hardships endured by families, and the significant resources devoted towards demonising the other and in preparation for war. The division of our homeland has far-reaching consequences that we may not fully comprehend. So, it's crucial for the Korean people to recognise the costs of this ongoing war and division. Let us imagine a DMZ no more.

Across Asia, there are significant unsettled grievances for the violence committed in the last century, from colonial occupations to wars. There is an urgent need to have honest conversations about the past to go forward. Unfortunately, the Yoon administration is caving in to U.S. demands to erase the historic wrongs committed by Japan to advance a new trilateral military alliance in a new Cold War against China, Russia and North Korea. Sadly, in the quest to advance more militarisation and preparation for war, those victims of injustice, whether it's the forced labourers or the comfort women, are being swept aside. South Koreans are renowned for their rising up against gross injustice, such as during the last conservative administration of Park Geun-hye where millions took to the streets in peaceful protest during the candlelight revolution.

*Given the urgency of climate change
and the devastation it is wreaking across the world,
we have to challenge our U.S. foreign policy that is
perpetually oriented towards war and more militarism.*

In the United States, as we near spending \$1 trillion on defence, there is an urgent need to democratise the process of shaping U.S. foreign policy and how it impacts our families, especially those who are part of the diaspora. Although not a national conversation, given the urgency of climate change and the devastation it is wreaking across the world, we have to challenge our U.S. foreign policy that is perpetually oriented towards war and more militarism. It is urgent that Americans realise the costs of U.S. militarism not just around the world but also on us at home. It's worth noting that the U.S. has been at war for over 200 years, with only 11 years of peace. We have to see that our militarised orientation around the world also

reflects on the violence we see at home, from mass shootings to high levels of gender-based and racialised violence in this country.

As Martin Luther King, Jr. famously reminded us, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” Change takes a long time, but it does happen. The more peace-loving people can work together to recognise the collective threats we are facing and how much it is tied to this narrative about perpetual war and demonising others, we can imagine a different future where we can peacefully coexist and live with greater security for humans and our planet.

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- 1 Korea Peace Now! is a global coalition of women’s peace organisations calling on the United States, North Korea, South Korea, and China to end the Korean War, sign a peace agreement, and include women in the peace processes. Visit <https://koreapeacenow.org/> to learn more.
 - 2 On 1st March, 2023, Congressman Brad Sherman and other members of Congress reintroduced the Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act. This act emphasises the importance of urgent diplomatic engagement to achieve a formal end to the Korean War. For more information on H.R.3446 - Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act, please visit <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3446>.
 - 3 “Crossings” is a documentary film directed by Emmy-winning filmmaker Deann Borshay Liem. It follows the journey of women leaders, including Women Cross DMZ co-founders Christine Ahn and Gloria Steinem and Nobel Peace Laureates Leymah Gbowee and Mairead Maguire, as they make a historic crossing of the DMZ. The film delves into the lasting impacts of war and the important role that women play in resolving conflicts. For more information, please visit <https://www.womencrossdmz.org/crossings/>.



The Joint Security Area of the DMZ. Source: Women Cross DMZ.

KEE PARK

**Peace is the prerequisite for health,
and health can also be a
bridge towards peace**

*Director of Policy and Advocacy of the Program in Global
Surgery and Social Change at Harvard Medical School*

I'm a neurosurgeon. I was in private practice in neurosurgery in the U.S. for several years. Around 2005 or 2006, there was a fundamental shift in the way I saw myself. I saw myself as someone who has been really lucky, with an education in the U.S., with a profession that can provide me with everything I consider necessary for happiness. It's a very posh lifestyle here in the U.S. to be in private practice, and neurosurgeons do quite well. But I could tell that something was missing on the inside. At some point, I reckoned that was not the path I wanted to take for the rest of my life, so there was a shift from the kind of person who was trying to get wealth and prestige. That led me on a journey to see what would be fulfilling personally and, in many ways, spiritually. It was a spiritual question and a spiritual journey which led me to explore what it means to serve others.

So I started looking at opportunities to serve and exploring where the needs were. I reached out to other countries and places where neurosurgical care may be lacking. And so I looked at a number of countries, Ethiopia, Nepal, and Cambodia. And North Korea was also on the radar because

I had heard that things were tough for North Korean people, and the doctors were working in a very difficult, low-resource setting. So I was thinking about how I can make a difference in that. Can I be of service to North Korean neurosurgeons? That led me to some meetings with North Korean diplomats at the UN. My Korean American neurosurgeon colleagues and I expressed an interest and desire to work alongside North Korean neurosurgeons and to support them. It was well received.

We were invited to North Korea to visit Pyongyang Medical College and attend a medical conference in September 2007. Then, in April 2008, we successfully invited a three-person delegation of neurosurgeons from North Korea to the U.S. for a two-week trip. We hosted them, and that cemented a relationship with the North Koreans.

We've been going back to North Korea twice every year since then, working mainly at the Pyongyang Medical College, which is their primary teaching hospital. And we've now expanded to the Red Cross Hospital, Kim Man-yu Hospital and the Okryu Children's Hospital. Wherever they want us to go, we would go. We wanted to bring the North Koreans again to the U.S. for an exchange programme, but we haven't been successful since the last time because of political issues.

I was thinking about what I can offer to the people of North Korea regarding surgical care, as we see neurosurgical care has undergone a process of evolution. I'm trained as a neurosurgeon, which is a clinician. I treat conditions and diseases that require my skills. And I naively believed that training additional neurosurgeons or helping them acquire new surgical skills would solve the issue of access to safe and affordable neurosurgical care. Soon I realised that is not enough. The question of access, especially to those who need it, wherever they may be, is not a surgical skills problem. It's really a health service delivery problem. It's a health systems problem. It requires an investment by governments to build hospitals, train not only neurosurgeons but also anesthesiologists, nurses and other doctors, and be committed to caring for and providing these services to the population.



Source: Kee Park.

So it's a public health problem that I was trying to solve using clinical methods. I was also working in Ethiopia, Nepal, and Cambodia. That realisation occurred around 2015 when I was in Cambodia. Some research came out of the Harvard Program in Global Surgery and the Lancet Commission on Global Surgery, looking at the lack of surgical care, especially in the developing world, and the scope and breadth of the problem. When I read that research, I realised the problem was beyond surgical skills; it was really financing of surgical systems, training, and service delivery governance. So, in my 50s, I decided to come back to the U.S. and went back to school to get a Master of Public Health. And then I did a fellowship in Global Surgery.

In North Korea, similarly, I went over there with the belief that if I work alongside North Korean neurosurgeons, I can teach them a technique or two that will improve their ability to care for their patients. Yes, we can. We still do that, and our team still go there. And at times, we could send

medical equipment and instruments; we would take them with us or send a container about ten years ago. We went to the hospitals with ventilators and extra machines, etc. We felt good about being able to support the medical needs.

But after a few years, we started noticing something. I've been to North Korea now over 20 times. North Korea has a universal health care system. They provide free medical care for their entire population, but they have no resources or very few resources to care for them. Expensive things like chemotherapy or even certain drugs just aren't available, and this is not unique to North Korea. I worked in Nepal, and when a person needed an operation, the operation was \$50, but the materials that they needed for the operation, like IV tubing, medications, and certain types of supplies would cost \$1,000. They would literally have to go across the street to the pharmacy and have a list of things to buy. And until they had all that materials, they couldn't get the surgery scheduled. So the expense of the operation supplies was borne by the patient and their family.

It's somewhat similar in North Korea, but they were trying their best to help their patients, but they didn't have the resources. So I was looking at where North Korea spend their money. How much are they spending on healthcare? It was actually a respectable amount, about 6-7% of their estimated GDP, which is more than India or some other countries. It was not like they weren't spending any money. They were providing medical education to train nurses; these are all free of charge. Education is free. And they have a large number of what I consider a health workforce that they don't lack people working in the healthcare sector. So they're investing money.¹ But they are also spending a quarter or a third of their budget on defence, that's a huge drain on their budget.

So the question is, what if North Korea spend more money on social programmes like health if they don't have to spend so much money on defending themselves? And the answer, I think there's an expectation within North Korean themselves that they have to sacrifice so that they can

defend themselves. But if they're able not to have to spend so much money, that money will go to improving food conditions, health conditions, and all kinds of other things.

Then I asked myself, what's the reason for not being able to achieve peace on the Korean peninsula? I started looking into this idea of peace and conflict and health. And there's this beautiful quote that is said all the time, though I can't remember who said it – "Peace is a prerequisite for health."

There's nothing like a lack of peace or conflict that takes away the health of the population. Look what's happening in Ukraine and other parts of the world where there's conflict. People's healthcare goes out the window. Vaccinations for children, in refugee camps, how do you manage that? How do you take care of chronic illnesses in people who are displaced? And not to mention injuries, right? People get actually hurt as collaterals in battle. Then a perfect example in North Korea is when you are spending a third of your budget on defending yourself, that is a direct drain on other budget items such as social programmes.

The root cause of the limitations and challenges to healthcare and health is the failure to achieve peace in the Korean Peninsula. That's why I have become a peace advocate and am vocal about it.

The other thing is the increasing international pressure, isolation and sanctions on North Korea as a result of their nuclear weapons development and missile programme, which created all kinds of problems. It created all sorts of regulatory barriers where now we don't even try to send

anything because we're afraid we're going to be in violation of these U.S. Treasury regulations, and UN Security Council's and U.S. sanctions. We no longer know if we're okay to talk to North Koreans unless we have permission. So, that constricted our ability to work with North Korean doctors - we're not trying to do anything beyond healthcare, right? But, that was impacted by international pressure against North Korea, which, once again, resulted from the failure to achieve peace. These measures are all added because of the ongoing conflict and increasing tensions on the peninsula.

So that's when I shifted. As a physician, I want to improve the health of the people of North Korea. But first and foremost, the root cause of the limitations and challenges to healthcare and health is the failure to achieve peace in the Korean Peninsula. That's why I've become a peace advocate and am vocal about it. Whatever I can do to help in the peace process is really going to help the health of the people of North Korea, and they're to me intricately tied in.

Health is dependent on complex geopolitical factors in North Korea. Somehow, governments and policymakers have decided that it's okay if our policies hurt a certain number of people because national security, international stability and security outweigh some collateral damage that comes to children, babies and women. To me, that's completely backwards. We should never accept that. How do we, as human beings, accept that we apply these measures, knowing that sanctions will kill people? They do! And then the senders of these international sanctions say these are not intended to harm the ordinary people and won't hinder the delivery of humanitarian assistance. But it's so clear that it does, and they even acknowledge it. But they don't do anything about it.

We should never have to ask permission to provide health and humanitarian assistance.

Research is one of our main instruments. One of the first things that I did when I started working on the public health of North Korea was that we conducted research on how many people these international sanctions on North Korea killed. We were not able to go out and collect data, but we did our best estimate to look at what happened in 2018 when the sanctions got ramped up. Humanitarian aid programmes intended to be delivered in 2018 got delayed or curtailed because of sanctions. Dual-use things like metal were banned due to sanctions. So there were all kinds of issues with the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and that resulted in a delay and reduction of programming by UN agencies. As a result of the curtailment of the planned programmes, we estimated that almost 4,000 North Koreans may have died in 2018 alone, and most of them were children.²

We should not accept innocent lives being placed at risk in the name of international security. We published our findings, and that created some uproar. But the response by the authorities was, okay, we will streamline the exemptions process, which to me is not enough. I think all humanitarian activities should be given absolute priority for access and fully funded because lives are at stake, and these are innocent lives, not military combatants. We should never have to ask permission to provide health and humanitarian assistance. We don't do that when someone is bleeding to death on the street. We don't stop and say, "Oh, wait a minute, can we take care of this person?" Should we ask somebody for permission? That's the situation that we're in right now.

We know people in North Korea are dying of a lack of medical care. UN agencies and professional humanitarian organisations have already assessed

a need in North Korea, and we should be delivering that. This is what human beings do. This is a moral obligation to help one another. I don't care if they're an enemy. When two countries are in a war, we still have to take care of the civilians in each country.

Then, the pandemic came in 2020. These sanctions were never intended to be in an international setting of a global public health emergency like the pandemic. So I wrote a piece with my friend Nagi Shafik, who worked at the UN agencies inside Pyongyang for years. We recommend a general waiver to allow all humanitarian organisations to send health and medical supplies because we're talking about a global pandemic right now.³ And even then, they still refused to remove the exemptions process. And so, I think the biggest barrier is the degradation of what we believe to be the sanctity of life. We allow ourselves to continue these pressure policies, which are intended to sort of curtail North Korea's weapons programme at the expense of innocent lives. I think that's wrong.



Source: Kee Park.

Imagine if you're a North Korean entity or hospital. You need to replace a part in a medical machine like an X-ray machine. There is no mechanism right now for a North Korean hospital to purchase a part from the international market. So, even if they wanted to buy it from a vendor, let's say in China, legally, the vendor will not sell it because they're afraid that they might be in violation of sanctions. They could be investigated if they are found doing transactions with any North Korean entity, and the whole company could be shut down. So there's a risk for the vendor.

Even if the vendor can send it, no banking channel allows North Koreans to send and receive money. UN agencies and NGOs, before the pandemic, were hand-carrying cash into North Korea to pay for the salaries of their national staff. Even so, the bank in Delhi refused to give cash to the WHO workers saying that if the money is going to North Korea, the bank can't give them cash even from their bank accounts. So there are all kinds of issues that prevent legitimate humanitarian work and health care delivery, both by people providing assistance to North Korea and also by North Korea themselves. Then what did the North Koreans resort to? Smuggling. They have to do it through illegal means, which increases the transactional costs and makes it much harder for them to take care of their own people. That's an example of how healthcare is impacted in North Korea due to current isolation and pressure.

The best way to me is, instead of trying to take away their capabilities through pressure and coercion, it is essential to change their intentions by showing that we have no hostile intentions for them – not just by words, but also followed by actions.

Anyone interested in North Korea and improving the lives of North Korean people should be advocating for peace. We should all be on the same page with that. It's strange when I hear people calling for more isolation and more pressure on North Korea. Their assumption is that they'll somehow capitulate and give up. I don't see that happening. It has failed to prevent, obviously, the nuclear weapons programme, and it is ongoing. So can we find an off-ramp? The best way to me is, instead of trying to take away their capabilities through pressure and coercion, it is essential to change their intentions by showing that we have no hostile intentions for them – not just by words, but also followed by actions. So, ending the war through a declaration followed by a process of peace treaty would send a different message.

However, this is a complex issue. There are many forces in the U.S. You have several congressmen who actually like the idea of the End of War Declaration, like Andy Kim, Brad Sherman, and Ro Khanna. They're there and say, let's end the war and establish a Liaison Office. And you've also got within the same Congress very hawkish Republicans, typically Republicans who said no, that's a concession, and we need more pressure and sanctions on North Korea. So it's political and highly polarised in terms of what the right step is from a U.S. policy standpoint.

Let's start finding the areas that North Korea's interested in doing, that the U.S. and South Korea can also support. So, health can be a bridge to peace. Peace is the prerequisite for health, and health can also be a bridge towards peace.



Source: Kee Park.

As a public health practitioner and someone who understands North Korea's health system, I think what happened with the pandemic requires the entire globe to cooperate. There's a saying that within a pandemic, we're only as strong as our weakest link. No one is safe until everyone is safe. We're all in it together. We can't have any holes in the pandemic. If one country doesn't help with the detection, reporting and all that work, the whole system falls apart, so cooperation is the key. North Korea is very interested in cooperating in the health sector. They're a member of the World Health Organisation (WHO). They were on the executive board in the past and were very active. They attended the annual World Health Assembly. Because of the pandemic, it hasn't happened. But the idea is that healthcare is a high priority for North Korea.

And so, how do we align the world's interests with North Korea's interests and find areas of shared interests to cooperate in? We need to find this because there's a massive trust gap. There's a lack of trust among the key stakeholders between the U.S., Japan, South Korea, North Korea, and

even China with U.S.-China issues. But can we at least start building some trust through some kind of cooperation? We should start with health. It's the least contentious space. As a public health practitioner, I say let's start finding the areas that North Korea's interested in doing, that we think the U.S. and South Korea can also support. So, health can be a bridge to peace. Peace is the prerequisite for health, and health can also be a bridge towards peace. This is something that public health practitioners can really get behind.

We published a paper on North Korea's vaccination capabilities. And we show that they can actually deploy the mRNA vaccines. Before that, most people said they can't do that because of the cold chain requirements and others, but we show that it's possible.⁴ Based on that research, A country has looked into providing vaccines to North Korea, including mRNA vaccines. The research gave them additional options that they hadn't thought about. But, in that situation, it was North Korea that decided they don't want any when they were offered a large quantity of mRNA vaccines. We're not really sure why they refused it, and it may be because of trust issues.

I think we can still find a way to cooperate. The U.S., one of the largest global health donors, can play a role, and North Korea can also play a role in allowing these partnerships. They need to be more willing to accept. There are certain things that they want to get, but they want to get it on their terms, and only their terms. On North Korea's side, they need to show some flexibility; they're too resistant to offers of assistance and are too suspicious. But they have their reasons because there have been examples when humanitarian organisations were weaponised as a whip against North Korea, like shutting off American assistance as a way to apply pressure. So there need to be steps to start rebuilding trust.

Health and humanitarian aid workers are compliance-conscious. They see the rules, and then they figure out how they would navigate. But I think we also need to step back and say, wait a minute, these rules are unacceptable

because they are inhumane. They don't take into consideration the impact of the harm that goes to innocent lives in North Korea. So how do we change these rules? I think that's where we need to go at this point.

I would like to see a separate humanitarian and health cooperation channel, that is separate from all the international pressure and human rights dialogue. What we need to do as public health practitioners and even people who are involved in conflict resolution dialogue is helping to set up an agreed framework, a framework for cooperation that addresses each side's concerns. The idea is that it will look something like a 3-5 year agreed framework on health cooperation, and each side follows certain guidelines in the framework. There are some guardrails on both sides that the project continues no matter what happens because it's designed to help the people of North Korea.

So, even if North Korea does the seventh nuclear weapon test, and then the U.S. and other governments apply more pressure, they are not going to shut down these projects that are proposed for the next few years under the agreed framework because it is put into place to allow both sides to de-link health cooperation from security issues. That's what the public health people can foster because unless we get this kind of agreed framework in place, any cooperation is going to fail because right now, both sides have linked their security issue concerns with anything that's cooperative, including health. Such de-linking is essential in fostering health cooperation that is going to improve millions of lives in North Korea.

Although I usually avoid getting involved in discussions like these, I can no longer remain on the sidelines. Initially, helping those in need was my main motivation as it made me feel useful and alive. However, over the years, I have come to realise the impact of my actions on a larger scale, leading me to think about the bigger picture. The older I get, the clearer the picture is, and the more I realise silence is no longer an option. As so, I speak up as much as I can about the current international sanctions,

pressure, and policies, which I believe are deadly. I also advocate for a better approach to solving these issues, and I believe health cooperation is a positive step towards that goal.



Source: Kee Park.

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LINDA LEWIS

Untried alternatives to building trust and fostering peace with the DPRK

*Former DPRK Program Director of the
American Friends Service Committee*

In 2021, I retired after ten years as director of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) program in North Korea, but my own journey as an activist and peace advocate on the Korean peninsula stretches back much further, to 1970. That year, I graduated from college, joined the U.S. Peace Corps, and was sent to South Korea.

The late 1960s and early 1970s was quite a momentous time in the U.S.; there was the assassination of Martin Luther King and the Vietnam War, civil rights and cultural issues. So, as a young adult, I joined the Peace Corps with some experience in political protesting, particularly against the Vietnam War. The Peace Corps at that time was a very new programme. It was started in 1961 by President John Kennedy, and I was particularly focused on going into the Peace Corps, because in 1964 when I was in high school, my father received a Fulbright teaching grant, and our family went to live in India for a year. The Fulbright Program (founded by the U.S. Congress in 1946) was also fairly new, and when I met new Peace Corps Volunteers working in India, I thought “Wow, this is what I really want to do after college!”

I was in the Peace Corps for over 3 years, and Korea was a very different kind of place at that time. My first job was an agriculture and community development project working with farmers. I lived with a Korean farm family in North Jeolla province in the southwestern part of the country, and my small village was very close to the Kunsan Air Base. I believe there were more than 50,000 U.S. soldiers in South Korea in the early 1970s. And, since the country is roughly the size of the state of Indiana, the soldiers were a ubiquitous presence. It was also a tumultuous time in South Korean politics under the military dictatorship of Park Chung-Hee; there were lots of student and worker protests, and universities were closed for part of the time I was there. The farmers I worked with were very supportive of opposition leader Kim Dae-Jung, and my own views reflected those of the Koreans I knew. I spent a year working in agriculture, and then I moved to Suwon for two years, working at the National Office of Rural Development teaching English to Korean scientists who went overseas to other places to learn about miracle rice and new agricultural techniques.

After I finished my Peace Corps service, I entered a PhD programme in Cultural Anthropology at Columbia University, with a focus on Korea in the context of Northeast Asia. When, in 1979, I went back to do my thesis research in South Korea on a Fulbright grant, I returned to the southwestern part of the country, because I felt most comfortable there. My dissertation was on Korean law and the ROK courts, and as it happened, I chose as my research site the district courthouse in Gwangju. I lived in Gwangju from November 1979 until October 1980, and so I am one of only a few foreign observers of the May 1980 Gwangju Uprising.

To those unfamiliar with Korean history, the Gwangju Uprising – “Korea’s Tiananmen” – is one of the most important political events in late twentieth-century Korea. What began in Gwangju in May 1980 as a peaceful demonstration against the imposition of military rule turned into a bloody people’s revolt. In the decades afterwards, memories of the Gwangju Uprising lived on, assuming symbolic importance in the Korean

democracy movement, underlying a rise in anti-American sentiment, and shaping the nation's transition to a civil society.

The Gwangju Uprising was a singularly important event in my life, an experience that largely determined the direction of the next two decades of my academic career and turned me into a politically engaged scholar. I could never pretend, as a Koreanist, that I was not an eyewitness to the Gwangju Uprising, nor could I ignore my responsibility to bear witness to that momentous event. Afterwards, I was a college professor for almost 20 years, first at Amherst College, and then at Wittenberg University in Ohio, where I was a Professor of Anthropology and Director of the East Asian Studies programme. My academic research during that period focused primarily on civil society in South Korea; I also was active in work supporting political change in South Korea.

It was only with the realisation of democracy in South Korea, which I personally mark from when Kim Dae-Jung was elected President in 1998, that I felt I could turn my attention elsewhere. The special role I had found for myself - as an American willing to listen to Koreans, walk with them and be of service as an activist supporting their work in a particular time and place - was done. In my own view, there has now been a long, resilient peace movement in South Korea, and many remarkable things have been accomplished. An important lesson I learned from my years of witnessing Gwangju was how to respect and support partners' goals, and also when it's appropriate to stop. I published a book in 2002 about the Gwangju Uprising and was able to move on to other things.

After my academic career, I worked in international education, primarily for the School for International Training (SIT) in Brattleboro, Vermont, which runs study abroad programmes around the world in less traditional places. I believe it is important for American students to go and learn about other places, live with local families and learn to speak the language. After all, "people to people" programmes, sports contests, academic exchanges, and study abroad opportunities are all familiar –

and effective – methods of “soft power” diplomacy that governments (including the U.S. government) have long used to build relationships with their “enemies”.

As the Director for Asian and Pacific Studies at SIT, I managed fifteen programmes in ten countries. I went to Vietnam many times and particularly remember developing a programme for American students to study cultural ecology at a university in the Mekong Delta. The Vietnamese university administrator I worked with had spent his college years on the Ho Chi Minh Trail fighting American soldiers. After the war was over, he got a graduate degree in fishery management at a U.S. university and ended up in the Mekong Delta. It was tremendously exciting for me to work closely with him to develop an exchange programme for American students. In 2003, SIT had one of the few programmes in Vietnam; it was early for Vietnam to be opening, so it was hard for us to arrange homestays and other things we wanted to set up. At the time, I remember going on a tour of the Presidential Palace in Ho Chi Minh City that I had seen on TV during the Vietnam War, and looking out and thinking, “How long is it going to be until my son can go to Tehran and be able to have this kind of experience, too?”

The academic director for the SIT program in Mongolia told me stories of going to university in Russia; the woman who ran the program in China was in the first group of students to go to university after the Cultural Revolution and talked about family members being sent down to the countryside. These experiences were not only personally rewarding and meaningful to me, but also reinforced my belief in the worth of such intercultural encounters and their role and value in any successful work for peace with “enemies”. I believe that the need to build trust, and the ability and skill to work with others to create something together, is essential to the peace process.

In 2010, I was offered the chance to be the American Friends Service Committee DPRK Country Representative. The position, based at the

AFSC office in Dalian, China, involved, with the help of three Chinese staff members, managing AFSC's long-standing agriculture program in North Korea. I was thrilled by the opportunity to work with Koreans on the other side of the DMZ. My husband and I sold our house and car, put our belongings in storage, and moved to China for what we assumed would be a three-year stint. It turned out to be much longer - I only recently retired from the position after ten years.

When we work in the DPRK, we find what we can share. We didn't talk about what the differences were and debate how to get over them. Instead, we started out by finding things that we could work on together, and then we built out from there.

AFSC is a Quaker organisation, and AFSC's approach to peacebuilding is infused with Quaker values. I am not a Quaker, but I am very comfortable with those values and have seen how useful they can be in working for peace, particularly on the Korean Peninsula. One important AFSC Quaker belief is that there is something of God in everyone, which means that it is possible to work with anyone, and it is important that you find things to share with enemies. That's what Nelson Mandela said: If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy, and then he becomes your partner.

Most people who work on North Korea think about and talk about the differences between the DPRK and other nations and struggle with how these differences can be resolved. But that is not AFSC's approach. When

we work in the DPRK, we find what we can share. We didn't talk about what the differences were and debate how to get over them. Instead, we started out by finding things that we could work on together, and then we built out from there. As I used to say, find what you can agree on, even if it is only where to go to lunch.

This perspective is important, because treating partners with respect means we don't tell them what they should do, what they should think or what is bad about their approach. Those are things that North Koreans are capable of doing for themselves. We did not push them outside of their comfort zone. On the contrary, if partners don't feel comfortable, then it is not the right thing for them to do. As an American organisation, AFSC staff could speak to the U.S. government about the things that we thought it should do. But with our DPRK partners, we could help them with the kinds of things that they wanted to do. In terms of agriculture, AFSC works with several farms and provides them with supplies on a regular basis. And AFSC also took a lot of groups to places, mostly in China, for training. We asked our DPRK partners: what kind of training do you want? What would be helpful to you? That's the way we worked.

Peace, like war, takes a lot of effort.

Peace doesn't just break out.

It takes preparation and investment.

It takes ongoing practice.

It certainly takes strategy.

AFSC started to work in North Korea in 1980 and was the first U.S. public affairs organisation to send peace delegations to the DPRK. When there

was the famine in the mid-1990s, AFSC was among the first international organisations to call for humanitarian aid and offer relief. After that, AFSC had the chance to work directly with cooperative farms. AFSC is one of a handful of U.S. groups (mostly faith-based NGOs) that have built long-term relationships of trust with North Koreans by supporting them. To give one example, in 2011, AFSC was able to help take three soil scientists for two weeks of training at the University of Missouri. This rare opportunity was successful in part because I flew with the Koreans from China to the U.S. At the last minute, one of the visas didn't come through in Beijing, and the Koreans thought they would need to cancel the trip. However, I was able to go to the airport and change our tickets, and we left on a later flight. To me, that kind of helping – of accompaniment – is very useful now in working with North Koreans.

AFSC understands that peace, like war, takes a lot of effort. Peace doesn't just break out. It takes preparation and investment. It takes ongoing practice. It certainly takes strategy, particularly if you are a small organisation. Sometimes you have to change the way you work and your approach, because of the changing situation. And if you are working for peace on the Korean peninsula, you must be in it for the long haul.

Working for an organisation like AFSC, for which “peaceful ends by peaceful means” is an important saying, I came to understand the difficulty of it. Someone said building peace is like splitting a big boulder. You just chip away at it. People have been chipping away before, and people are going to chip away afterwards. And it's not the first strike or the last strike that breaks the boulder, but it's all of them together.

I have found colleagues to be a big source of support. We can rant together about things that went wrong or talk about things that we accomplished and are happy about. Then we walk out the door and close it behind us and leave those words behind. Some things can't even be talked about, and you just have to keep them in your heart. Other times, it is the interaction with North Korean partners that is a place of finding strength in a situation

that often seems hopeless. AFSC took North Korean farm managers on a study tour to China every summer for 1-2 weeks, then we would debrief about the trip and what to do next. After a few years, I began to notice that some of the farm managers had gotten really good at making me change my mind. It made me realise that we were learning together about each other. They were learning about me and how to frame arguments in ways that I would agree to, just as I learned how to make a case that I knew they could accept, too.

Sometimes it helps me to step back and see the larger picture. My own life experience working for peace in Korea now seems amazingly long. I was there in Suwon in 1972, when it was the first time Red Cross delegations from the North and the South talked in Seoul. It seemed like the Korean War was forever behind us - South Koreans stayed out all night celebrating, saying "Peace is going to happen! It's going to happen!" Later I was in Seoul in 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell. My Korean friends were crying, "Oh, we're next, we're next!" Then there was that wonderful moment, during the Sunshine Policy, when Kim Dae-Jung was going to North Korea, and everyone was thinking, "Oh, this time, a miracle will happen." Most recently with Donald Trump at the Hanoi Summit, too, there was hope that finally there would be an end to the Korean War. But, it has not happened yet. How can we get to peace now on the Korean Peninsula?

One thing that AFSC tried to do was not have conversations about North Korea without a North Korean voice present. Actually, it is my observation that a lot of academics and policymakers in the United States, China, South Korea, and other countries have in fact never met a real North Korean. These people are professionals who have meetings and talk at length about the DPRK, but without actually including any North Koreans in the conversation. An important part of getting to peace with North Koreans is: they can speak for themselves, just bring them to the meeting.

If you want to see a policy that has failed, U.S. sanctions on the DPRK would be it. And yet, we keep trying to double down, hoping that North Korea will just relinquish its growing nuclear arsenal. It is important now that the U.S. try a more realistic approach.

I believe the U.S. must change its hostile policy toward North Korea. Government officials tend to say the U.S. doesn't have a hostile policy toward the DPRK, but of course we do. And there is not going to be any movement until the United States moves away from the carrot-and-stick approach of sanctions as its way of dealing with so-called political provocations of North Korea, to a policy that starts with a recognition that North Korea does have nuclear weapons. The rest of the world is just going to have to deal with that fact. I used to ask North Koreans, "What would it be like if you didn't have sanctions?" And they inevitably would answer, "We don't know, because we've never lived without sanctions." And it's true. The U.S. has had sanctions on North Korea since the Korean War. If you want to see a policy that has failed, U.S. sanctions on the DPRK would be it. And yet, we keep trying to double down, hoping that North Korea will just relinquish its growing nuclear arsenal. It is important now that the U.S. try a more realistic approach.

It is alarming to see today the extent to which the risks of peace apparently are greater than the risks of war on the Korean Peninsula. At different levels, there is a heavy investment in the status quo by stakeholders in South Korea, in the DPRK and in the United States. I remember when in the mid-1970s President Jimmy Carter announced that he was going to withdraw American soldiers from South Korea. He said there really needed to be a good reason to keep troops permanently stationed abroad, and he

hadn't seen a good reason to keep them in the ROK "in perpetuity". But here we are, with 28,000 soldiers still there. We just keep maintaining a Cold War mentality that is now going in the wrong direction.

Unfortunately, events of the last few years have made maintaining these relationships of trust much more difficult. Not just pandemic border closures, but also U.S. government policies like the travel ban to the DPRK, banking restrictions, licensing requirements, and sanctions have made it harder to sustain these relationships. The U.S. government should facilitate, rather than hinder, closer relations.

One thing I know from my own experiences is the value and importance of the trust and personal ties that groups like AFSC and other NGOs have built through long-standing humanitarian work in partnership with North Koreans. The expertise gained on both sides about how to work together is an essential first step towards peace. Unfortunately, events of the last few years have made maintaining these relationships of trust much more difficult. Not just pandemic border closures, but also U.S. government policies like the travel ban to the DPRK, banking restrictions, licensing requirements, and sanctions have made it harder to sustain these relationships. The U.S. government should facilitate, rather than hinder, closer relations.

Another thing I also know from my own experience is that the U.S. has plenty of government mechanisms and institutions, avenues of so-called

“soft diplomacy,” from ping-pong matches to people-to-people exchanges, that it has long used to help foster peace with our “enemies.” Two of the biggest ones are the Fulbright programme - the largest educational exchange system in the world - and the U.S. Peace Corps. We have had (and continue to have) Peace Corps volunteers in a lot of places where the U.S. doesn’t have good relationships at the government level. And the same is true for Fulbright. Both programmes have been very successful in building relationships with countries where people are our “enemies.”

I started with Fulbright and Peace Corps back when they were relatively new organisations. Why haven’t there been Peace Corps Volunteers in the DPRK? This is not something that is popular to say, but it’s a serious question: why wouldn’t we do that? Why not? There are some major government programmes we haven’t tried with the DPRK. And of course, to be able to implement these programmes, we might have to have a liaison office in Pyongyang, officially end the war, and stop U.S. travel bans to the DPRK. And then maybe we might have to stop treating North Korea as our “enemy”. Too simplistic? Perhaps, but I think about these untried alternatives to building trust and fostering peace because that’s where I started, first with South Korea, and now from the other side of the DMZ.

O RYONG IL

An interview from 2019 in Pyongyang

Presidium Member of the Korean National Peace Committee

I would like my child, and not only my child, but also my future generations to live in a peaceful environment, similar to what many other people enjoy around the world.

My name is O Ryong Il. I was born in Pyongyang, the capital city of the DPRK.

When I was a child, I didn't know anything about the war. But what I remember in my family was that my aunt had no legs. She could not walk at all. At that time I didn't have any idea what happened to her. Later when I grew up, I asked my grandma and she told me that it was because of the Korean War in 1950. What happened was that U.S. bomber aircrafts were trying to attack our city, and so they were running away from the bombings. She was holding two young children, one in her arms, and another one on the back.

When she was about to run, suddenly a bombing occurred near them. One of her children was killed. And the other one, my aunt, was hit on the side and legs, and unfortunately couldn't save the legs. My grandma was also injured and that's why she couldn't use her arm anymore.

Three generations have passed, and the country is still facing the danger of war, and nuclear war threat. Keeping peace and security and preventing war on the Korean Peninsula is very important, and this should be one of our main responsibilities as the Korean nation. That is why I started getting involved in peace activities.

The Korean National Peace Committee (KNPC) was founded in 1949, with main principles of achieving reunification and lasting peace on the Korean peninsula and building a new world, independent, peaceful, and free from war, in accordance with the idea of independence, friendship, and peace.

When Korea was divided into two, the North and the South, by the big powers, the Soviet Union and the United States, the Korean War was used as another battlefield by the big powers. Therefore, KNPC was established to call on all Koreans to resolve the military tension by ourselves without foreign force interference. Our main focus is to gather people at one table for the reunification of Korea in peaceful ways.

When we Koreans think of the war on the Korean Peninsula, we believe it can be a total disaster. This would be a total destruction of the whole nation. That is why we have to prevent any kinds of war and conflicts on the Korean Peninsula. Otherwise, this would be the greatest disaster not only to the Korean Peninsula but also to the whole world.

Since our liberation in 1948, we have been constantly living under the oppression of the big powers and enduring sanctions. I think 70 years is enough. We have to stop. We have to provide a peaceful country for our children, and let them live in a peaceful environment. We have to do our best to hand over a new society and a developed country to our new generation. This is my dream for my child as well as the future generations.

The views were shared by O Ryong Il during an interview conducted in Pyongyang in 2019.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Jeffrey Feltman

Jeffrey Feltman is a senior fellow at the United Nations Foundation, focusing on issues related to the United Nations' peace and security work and participates in discussions and analysis on the future of multilateralism. He is also a John C. Whitehead Visiting Fellow in International Diplomacy at the Brookings Institution's Foreign Policy Program.

Before joining the UN Foundation, Jeff served as the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs for six years under Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. In this role, he briefed the UN Security Council on peace and security issues and provided guidance to the UN's special envoys and special representatives leading special political missions. Jeff was the focal point for UN electoral assistance and oversaw the UN's political mediation and prevention work. He also served as the Executive Director of the UN's Counter-Terrorism Center and headed the UN's internal counter-terrorism coordination, until 2017 when member states endorsed the establishment of a separate Office of Counter-Terrorism – a reform Jeff had proposed to Secretary-General Guterres.

Jeff was U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon from 2004 to 2008 and Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs from 2009 to 2012. He also had postings in Irbil, Baghdad, Jerusalem, Tunisia, Tel Aviv, Budapest, and Port-au-Prince and served as the first U.S. Envoy to the Horn of Africa.

He is the recipient of two Presidential Service awards and several State Department Superior Honor awards.

Yi Kiho

Yi Kiho is a professor at Hanshin University's Graduate School of Social Innovation Business and also serves as the executive director of the Center for Peace and Public Integrity. In the past, he worked as the secretary general of the Korea Peace Forum, where he focused on promoting peaceful cooperation between North and South Korea as part of Northeast Asian cooperation. During the Roh Moo-hyun administration, Kiho was an advisory member of the Presidential Committee of the Northeast Asia Initiative. He was a visiting scholar at Japan's Waseda University from 1999 to 2002, where he concentrated on local and transnational civil movements and their connections to peace in East Asia. Currently, Kiho leads the Asia Peace program at the Center for Peace and Public Integrity. Through this program, he trains young generations in Asia and Peace studies while also coordinating research and educational programs with various institutes and universities across borders.

Glyn Ford

In over 25 years in the European Parliament, Glyn Ford developed an unrivalled expertise on East Asia as a Member of the Foreign Affairs and International Trade Committees. This interest started even before his election to the European Parliament (EP), when he was a visiting professor in 'Science and Technology Policy' at Tokyo University. Immediately after his Japanese experience, he was elected to the EP and became a member of the Delegation for Relations with Japan. His interest expanded over the years to South Korea (he was the Rapporteur on EU-Korea Science and Technology Agreement), China, and the rest of East Asia (he was a rapporteur on the EU-ASEAN FTA). He was appointed by the Council of Ministers as the EU's Chief Election Observer in Indonesia (2004) and

Aceh (2006/7). When he left the European Parliament in 2009, Glyn founded the consulting company Polint. In parallel, he continued his political and academic engagement with the DPRK and the East Asian region on a 'non-profit' basis in the framework of Track2Asia. Glyn is now considered one of the most pre-eminent European experts on the Korean peninsula and East Asia. A sample of this expertise can be seen in his books "North Korea on the Brink" (Pluto Press, 2008 and later translated into Japanese and Korean) and "Talking to North Korea" (Pluto Press, 2018). Glyn is also a Board Member of the North East Asia Economic Forum (NEAEF) and the Pacific Century Institute (PCI).

Nam Boo Won

Nam Boo Won is the General Secretary of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs (APAY) and has been devoted to the YMCA for over thirty years. He began as the Secretary of the National Council of YMCAs of Korea in 1985 and in 1988 joined Seoul YMCA as the Program Secretary. Throughout his career, Nam has held several vital leadership positions in Korea YMCA and APAY, including Executive Secretary for Programs of APAY, Senior Executive Secretary of the National Council of YMCAs, General Secretary of Gwangju YMCA, and National General Secretary of the National Council of YMCAs Korea. He received his Master's degree in Global Ethics from the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom. Nam is married and has two daughters.

Jargalsaikhan Enkhsaikhan

Enkhsaikhan Jargalsaikhan is an international lawyer and diplomat who has served at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, representing his country in Austria and at the United Nations. He also served as the foreign policy and legal advisor to President P. Ochirbat, the first democratically elected President of Mongolia and the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council of Mongolia when the State Great Hural (parliament)

considered and adopted the country's first concepts of national security and foreign policy in 1994. As the country's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, he served as the focal point in promoting Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status. Enkhsaikhan has also written extensively on international relations, non-proliferation, and regional security, and organised/participated in many regional meetings aimed at promoting peace, stability, international cooperation, environmental protection, and governance. Enkhsaikhan is currently the Chairman of Blue Banner, a Mongolian NGO that works towards promoting the goals of nuclear non-proliferation and Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status. He was born in Mongolia in 1950 and holds the title of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Mongolia.

Hwang Sooyoung

Hwang Sooyoung is the Manager of the Centers for Peace and Disarmament and International Solidarity at People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD). She also serves as the Secretary General of the Korea Peace Appeal Campaign. Her work since 2012 has focused on peace, disarmament, international conflict, and Asian human rights issues. Sooyoung joined PSPD in 2014, a watchdog NGO. Her responsibilities involve monitoring government policies on national defence and diplomacy, advocating for peace, disarmament, and a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. Sooyoung actively participates in various peace campaigns, such as the Campaign against the Construction of Jeju Naval Base, the Global Campaign on Military Spending, the Campaign against USFK's THAAD Deployment, the Campaign against the Arms Trade, and People's Committee for the Sewol Ferry Tragedy, among others. She is currently leading the Korea Peace Appeal: A Peace Campaign to End the Korean War.

Moon A-Young

A-Young is a peace education facilitator and the founder of PEACEMOMO, a non-profit education organisation based in Korea that specialises in peace education. Their focus is on creating mutual and non-teaching relationships in learning environments to promote peace education. To expand their approach to other learning settings, PEACEMOMO offers regular training programs to develop transformative peace educators. A-Young is a training specialist who conducts training programmes for provincial education offices, creates training manuals, and participates in regional and local forums for peace activism and education. Before founding PEACEMOMO, A-Young worked as an elementary school teacher and was a programme specialist at UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding. She has also served as an advisor to various educational institutions, including the National Education Conference, the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education, and the Seoul Education Training Institute. A-Young holds a Master's Degree in Peace Education from the University for Peace in Costa Rica and is currently pursuing her PhD in Peace Education at the same university.

Douglas Hostetter

Douglas Hostetter has been a peace activist since the 1960s and now serves as a member on the United Nations Advocacy Team of Pax Christi International. He was a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War and performed alternative service for the Mennonite Central Committee in rural Vietnam. Following his work in Vietnam, Douglas worked for the United Methodist Church at the United Nations on international affairs. From the mid-1980s through the end of the decade, he served as the executive secretary of the American Friends Service Committee in their New England regional office. He served as the Executive Secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation from 1987-1993. During the 1990s he was the international / interfaith secretary of the FOR and directed the Bosnian Student Project for the organisation. In 2003 he was ordained

as Peace Pastor at the Evanston, Illinois Mennonite Church. Since 2006 Douglas had been the director of the Mennonite Central Committee at the United Nations. Throughout his life, Hostetter has been heavily involved in reconciliation, citizen diplomacy, and people-to-people exchanges with citizens of the former USSR, Cuba, Nicaragua, Bosnia, and Israel/Palestine.

Kim Jeongsoo

Kim Jeongsoo is a dedicated advocate for women's peace movements in Korea. As the Executive Representative of Women Making Peace, she has worked to build the peace capacity of female peace activists and women's organisations. Her efforts also include advocating for peace education on the Korean Peninsula. With over three decades of experience in inter-Korean women's exchanges since 1991, Jeongsoo's commitment to advocating peace and empowering women is inspiring. In addition to her work with Women Making Peace, she serves on several advisory councils, including the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 National Action Plan under the ROK Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, Advisory Council for Women with Peace Initiative together with women in the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Advisory Council for Gyeonggi Province Peace Policy.

Christine Ahn

Christine Ahn is the Founder and Executive Director of Women Cross DMZ, a global movement of women mobilising to end the Korean War and ensure women's leadership in peacebuilding. In 2015, she led 30 international women peacemakers across the De-Militarized Zone (DMZ) from North Korea to South Korea. She is the International Coordinator of the Korea Peace Now! campaign, which Women Cross DMZ launched in 2019 with three feminist peace organisations: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Nobel Women's Initiative, and Korean Women's Movement for Peace. Christine also co-founded the Feminist

Peace Initiative, which Women Cross DMZ launched with MADRE and Grassroots Global Justice Alliance in 2020. She has addressed the UN, U.S. Congress, Canadian Parliament, and ROK National Human Rights Commission. Her op-eds have appeared in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, and she is a regular contributor on MSNBC, *Democracy Now!*, and CNN. She is the recipient of multiple awards, including the 2023 Certificate of Recognition from the Honolulu City and County Council for her life devotion to peace, the 2022 Social Activist Award from the Nobel Peace Laureates, the 2020 Rotary International Peace Award, and the 2020 U.S. Peace Prize from the U.S. Peace Memorial Foundation. Christine has a master's degree in International Policy from Georgetown University and a certificate in ecological horticulture from the University of California, Santa Cruz. She serves on the board of Hawai'i Peace and Justice.

Kee Park

After completing his medical school and neurosurgical residency in the U.S., Kee spent 10 years teaching neurosurgery in Nepal, Ethiopia, North Korea, and Cambodia. In 2016, Kee joined the Program in Global Surgery and Social Change at Harvard Medical School and now serves as the Director of Policy and Advocacy, the Lead for the Global Neurosurgery Team, and the Co-Director of the WHO Collaborating Center for Surgical System Strengthening. Having visited North Korea over 20 times, Kee started the Korea Health Policy Project at Harvard Medical School. His team studies the complex geopolitical factors influencing health in North Korea and the relationships between international security, health, human rights, and health diplomacy. His recent publications include "The Human Cost of UN Sanctions and Funding Shortfalls for Humanitarian Aid in North Korea," "North Korea's Vaccination Capabilities" and "Why North Korea's Covid-19 Outbreak Could Shock the World." He is a member of the National Committee on North Korea. He has appeared on BBC, Al Jazeera, PBS, CBC, and his writings have been published by New York

Times, US Today, The Hill, and CNN. He received his MD from Rutgers Medical School, MPH from Harvard Chan School of Public Health, and neurosurgical training at Temple University Hospital.

Linda Lewis

Linda Lewis recently retired after working for ten years for the American Friends Service Committee as the Country Representative for the DPRK and China. Based in China, she was responsible for AFSC's programme in the DPRK, including its long-standing agricultural development project. She is a regular visitor to the DPRK and has organised numerous study tours and exchanges for DPRK partners. As a cultural anthropologist and Korea specialist, Linda has spent much of her career living and working on or near the Korean peninsula, including as a Peace Corps Volunteer, Fulbright research fellow, and international program director. Before joining AFSC in 2010, she was Vice President for Academic Affairs at the Institute for Study Abroad – Butler University (Indiana), and Director of Asian and Pacific Studies at the School for International Training-Study Abroad (Vermont). Linda received her PhD from Columbia and taught at Wittenberg University (Ohio), where she was Professor of Anthropology and Director of the East Asian Studies Program. She has also held visiting appointments at Amherst, Dartmouth, and the University of Washington. Her most scholarly publications have focused on the 1980 Kwangju Uprising.

O Ryong Il

O Ryong Il has been the Presidium Member of the Korean National Peace Committee (KNPC) Presidium since June 2016. Since its establishment in Pyongyang in 1949, KNPC has been dedicated to achieving reunification and lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula, as well as building a new world that is free from war, independent, and peaceful. For over fifty years, KNPC has worked towards reducing tension and military confrontation on the

Korean Peninsula, including objectives such as eliminating all weapons of mass destruction and reducing conventional weapons to achieve general and complete disarmament; dissolving all military blocs and withdrawing foreign troops and military bases from other countries; peacefully resolving disputes related to race, nationality, religion, and other issues; protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development; and promoting cooperation and solidarity with other national peace organisations, international and regional organisations, anti-nuclear and environmental organisations, and individuals who pursue similar objectives. Mr. O previously served as the Secretary General of the organisation from 2011 to mid-2016, and from 2004 to 2010, he was the Secretary for the Korean Committee for Solidarity with the World People.

TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFSC	American Friends Service Committee
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPCS	Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
DMZ	Demilitarised Zone
DPA	Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations (now known as the UN DPPA)
DPPA	Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs of the United Nations
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (also referred to as North Korea)
EEC	European Economic Community
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
GPFK	Global Peace Forums on Korea
GPPAC	Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict
ICBM	Intercontinental ballistic missile
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
KCA	Korean Christian Academy
KCF	Korean Christian Federation
KCIA	Korean Central Intelligence Agency
KEDO	Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation

KNPC	Korean National Peace Committee
KPF	Korea Peace Forum
LWR	Light water reactor
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
mRNA	Messenger ribonucleic acid
NCCK	National Council of Churches in Korea
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NLF	National Liberation Front; often called VC or Vietnamese Communist
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
PSPD	People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy
ROK	Republic of Korea (also referred to as South Korea)
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SIT	School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont
SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative (often referred to as Star Wars)
THAAD	Terminal High Altitude Area Defence
UBP	Ulaanbaatar Process
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325
U.S.	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organisation
WMD	Weapons of mass destruction
WPK	Workers' Party of Korea
WPS	Women, Peace and Security



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