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THE UNENDING KOREAN WAR

US Policy And Korea: A Korea Policy Institute Reader

BEYOND NUMBERS: THE BRUTALITY OF THE KOREAN WAR

Ji-Yeon Yuh | September 24, 2015

In collaboration with the Korea Policy Institute, Legacies of the Korean War, an online oral-history project that documents the stories of Korean American survivors of the war and their descendants, is pleased to announce its new website. This article was published as part of special series to launch the Legacies of the Korean War website.

The cost of the Korean War is commonly tallied in numbers: soldiers killed and wounded, civilians killed and wounded, villages destroyed, refugees evacuated, orphans created, families divided, napalm dropped, bombs exploded. Those numbers are worth repeating, for the sheer physical devastation of three years of war on a peninsula about the size of Idaho (roughly 85,000 square miles) is staggering. An estimated 5 million soldiers and civilians were killed during three years of warfare. Of these, just over 1.2 million were soldiers from 19 countries, including about 217,000 from South Korea, 406,000 from North Korea, 600,000 from China, 36,000 from the United States, and about 5,000 from the other UN nations. The remaining more than 3 million deaths were Korean civilians, including those killed in massacres such as the one at No Gun Ri, or executed as political prisoners by either the South or North Korean armies. The capital city of Seoul changed hands four times during the three years of war, with each change accompanied by massive political killings of civilians. In 1950, the population of Korea, north and south, was 30 million. A civilian death toll of 3 million represents 10 percent of the population.[1]

Another estimated 3 million Korean civilians became refugees. An estimated 1 million fled south across the 38th parallel in the months before the war officially began on June 25, 1950.[2] Three months into the war, 57,000 South Koreans were listed as missing and more than 500,000 homes had been destroyed. In 1954, an international child welfare agency estimated that 2 million children under the age of 18 had been displaced by the war. Then there are the separated families. No one knows how many Koreans were separated by the war and national division, although about 130,000 are currently registered as such with South Korea's Ministry of Unification. Virtually every Korean is either part of a separated family or knows someone who is, and most estimates hover around 2 million.[3]

The United States subjected the northern half of Korea to an intense bombing campaign that destroyed virtually every substantial building and left a trail of completely destroyed villages. In just three years, the United States dropped 635,000 tons of bombs, including 32,557 tons of napalm. This tonnage is greater than that which was dropped during the entire Pacific campaign of World War II and more napalm than was used

during the Vietnam War. Both journalists and American POWs reported that virtually the whole of North Korea had been reduced to rubble. In November of 1950, the bombing had decimated housing so severely that the North Korean government advised its citizens to dig into the earth for shelter.[4]

But the true cost of the Korean War cannot be plumbed through numbers alone. It cannot be tidily limited to the peninsula and constrained between the dates June 25, 1950 and July 27, 1953. The suffering, the pain, and the consequences overwhelm those boundaries and spill into the immeasurable. It is the innumerable individual experiences of the Korean people themselves, the massive weight of their stories, that can help us begin to understand the full cost of the still unended Korean War, suspended in a ceasefire and lacking a peace treaty.

Let us start with ordinary soldiers like Mr. Moon.[5] Growing up in a rice-farming family in northern Korea, he volunteered for the Japanese military because he was going to be drafted anyway and doing so would relieve his family of the burden of feeding him and sending him to school. He entered an air force school and became an airplane mechanic. Two months into his first post, the Pacific War ended. Back in his home village, he volunteered for the new North Korean military in order to preempt accusations of collaboration for his Japanese military past. Unable to endure military life, he faked mental illness, deserted, and escaped to the south. But there, he was drafted into the South Korean Army, and served in the Korean War as an ordnance man. He and his family were among the first post-1965 Korean immigrants to the United States. He never spoke to his family about his military experiences, and had reluctantly agreed to narrate his life history when I asked him to participate in my research on the Korean diaspora. As I was putting away the recording equipment after our interview, he thanked me for not pressing for details, saying that what he experienced in the war was too brutal to be remembered.

Reverend Yoo, also part of that early post-1965 immigration, was an adolescent boy in North Korea when the war broke out. In his own words:

Six-twenty-five [6.25, the war][6] erupted and in the middle of October [1950], when the People's Army [the North Korean army] is retreating and the UN and South Korean forces are advancing, and it's right before then, day and night, day and night. Now there's the stealth bomber and the B-52, but then, it was the B-29. Night and day, bombing, innumerable bombs. So at night it's Eunyule, Sariwon, Jinnampo; over there it's bright, dropping bombs constantly. And the flares, because it's dark, they're dropping fire parachutes, flares. I don't know what it is in English. Drop those and it's so bright everywhere, for hundreds of meters around, just like daytime, and then they

follow that with the bombs. And from the Yellow Sea comes military ships, they're firing cannons. They're dropping bombs. They're firing cannons. So day and night, we're hiding in holes in the ground. It's unspeakable, unspeakable. It's really unspeakable. Actually, Americans, the 9-11 incident—that's nothing. I saw with my own eyes people hit by bombs and dropping to the ground. It's unspeakable.

His narrative continued with his recollection of killings. The North Korean army killed many people as they retreated, and the South Korean army did the same as they advanced. Between the two armies, he recalled, they managed to kill off entire families. He dug a hole by the side of an outhouse to hide from both armies, and noted with wry laughter that no one thought to look there. Eventually, he and his family were able to board a U.S. military ship and sail down the western coast of Korea. The ship hits something in the water and is forced to dock at Gunsan. There the family was stuck in a refugee camp and then eventually made their way to Gimpo, a small suburb on the west side of Seoul where many northerners, fleeing the war's violence, settled. He left his family in the refugee camp and disappeared for several months. This was cause for great consternation, according to his sister, as he was the youngest and his family was accustomed to coddling him. In his sister's story, the coddled child was transformed into a man who rescued the family from starvation. He showed up, she recounted, with sackfuls of stuff—cans of meat and other foods, packages of rice and noodles, chocolates, all kinds of edibles he had obtained from the PX. During his disappearance, he had worked for American soldiers in order to bring back to his family these goods. This is a familiar narrative that simultaneously highlights and contrasts American bounty with Korean poverty, but in the sister's retelling, it is also a coming-of-age narrative colored by pride and love.

The man himself told a different story. In fact, he never told me the story of his food-laden return to his family. Instead, he told me about the time he spent on base. The toadying up to soldiers to get work and the resulting tips. Getting a job on base manning the soldier's lounge. Eating nothing but the sugar that fell off the donuts he sold at the lounge, because the donuts had to be accounted for but the sugar did not. The flicker of shame at the sight of camptown prostitutes. Constant hunger. Sheer amazement at the power and the waste of the Americans. As he recalled, the contrast between well-fed Americans and starving Koreans, between bombed-out Korean villages and bustling U.S. military bases, between American might and Korean weakness, was sharply painful. His entire life, he said, from his ambitions to his outrage, from his accommodation to his resistance, were reactions to that contrast.

Mrs. Ahn was a young wife and mother of two toddler boys when the war broke out. Her husband was among the thousands of young men forcibly taken by the North

Korean army when it entered Seoul. He never came back, and she became a virtual widow, caring for her parents-in-law and raising her two sons. She and her sons became refugees, forced to flee south, and she remembered the hunger, the fatigue, the hordes of desperate people, and most of all the fear. Fear of soldiers because to the civilians all soldiers, regardless of affiliation, were dangerous. Fear of losing her remaining family. Fear of death. Fear of greater hunger. There was so much fear that eventually she felt numb. Without the children to keep her focused, she said, she might very well have given up. She never remarried, and she spoke about the deep loneliness of a lifetime as a widow caring for family members and wondering about her husband. Decades later, a discreet inquiry revealed that her husband was still alive in the north. She shook her head at the recollection. Too late, she said, and too much distance.

Mrs. Lee was the mother of three young children, living in her hometown in the north with her parents, siblings, and husband, when the Korean War broke out. They were already suspect in the eyes of the North Korean government because of their Christianity and comparative wealth. Medium-sized landowners, they lost nearly all their land under land reform. Mrs. Lee was a nurse who spoke both Chinese and English. She landed a job as an interpreter for a U.S. military unit that camped out nearby when the United States was advancing north in late 1950. One day, the commander asked her to go with them back across the 38th parallel. It'll be only a few days trip, he assured her; the border isn't going to close. But the day after they crossed over to the south, heavy fighting ensued, the border closed, and Mrs. Lee was stuck. She has never been back since, and she never again saw her husband, three children, or other members of her family. Over the next two decades, she worked as a nurse in numerous places, including camptowns where she treated the women and witnessed their exploitation, and in orphanages where she cared for abandoned children. Every night, she had the same nightmare. She stands in front of a thick black river. On the other side, stand her three children, crying out for their mother. She cannot go to them; something invisible holds her back as she strains to cross that thick black river. Every night, she woke up drenched in a cold sweat. On days when she had no work, she would go to the port city of Incheon and trail her hand in the waters of the Yellow Sea, thinking to herself, these waters flow to the shores of the north, where my children are. Eventually, she couldn't tolerate the pain any longer, and she used her missionary connections to obtain a job as a nurse in a California hospital. She hoped that physical distance would end the nightmares, but she noted sadly that they followed her across the Pacific. She never dared to contact her children, she said, because she feared they might be punished for having a mother who had worked for the U.S. military.

There are many more stories. There is the wholesale business owner in Philadelphia who as a young boy witnessed the execution of his father by the North Korean military

and became virulently anti-communist. There is the pediatrician in Atlanta who nearly lost her family while fleeing to Busan, survived numerous bombings, and now abhors being alone in a dark house. There is the grandfather in northeastern China whose experience as a draftee in the Japanese military was so terrible that he hid for years to avoid being drafted into the Chinese army for service in the Korean War. There is the housewife in Osaka who starved as a child during the war and now must always have several months' worth of rice in the home. There is the second-generation Korean American college student who declared that North Korea is the enemy of his homeland, only to discover that his grandfather is from the north and yearns for reunification.[7] There are the sons and daughters and grandchildren who do not understand the silences and dark spaces in their families because their elders cannot bring themselves to talk about the war.[8] Each story illustrates what Mrs. Ahn once told me: "The war is not only a national tragedy; it is also [her] personal tragedy."

What these stories tell us is that the cost of the Korean War lies not only in the direct devastation of war, but also in its long-term human consequences: the memories too searing to be remembered, the destruction of families, and the collective trauma of generations.

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[1] Casualty statistics for the Korean War vary among sources depending on how deaths are counted. The most accurate statistics are for U.S. soldier deaths and come from the Department of Defense. The figures used here are from "American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics," a Jan. 2, 2015 report from the Congressional Research Service. Figures for both civilian casualties and soldier deaths for other countries are taken from Bethany Lacina and Nils Petter Gleditsch, "Monitoring Trends in Global Combat: A New Dataset of Battle Deaths," *European Journal of Population* (2005) 21: 145-166; David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter: American and the Korean War* (New York: Hyperion, 2007), p. 4, and Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2011).

[2] Between 1945 and the official start of the war, there was much military fighting along the 38th parallel as both the northern and southern armies crossed over and engaged in battle. Any one of those battles could have been chosen as the official start of the war. It

is worth noting that the Korean War has never been legally recognized as a war. The U.S. Congress defined it as a “police action,” and the UN defined it as a defensive action on behalf of South Korea. For a fuller discussion of how the Korean War is interpreted, remembered, and forgotten, see Cumings, *The Korean War*.

[3] Statistics for refugees, orphans, and divided families vary widely. These figures are taken from Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2011). South Korean newspapers have reported that as many as 10 million Koreans were separated from their families by the end of the war. A recent household census, however, found that about 1.5% of South Koreans (just over 700,000) report that they have direct family members—parents, children, spouses, siblings—in the north. See “2005 South Korean Household Census—First Complete Survey of Separated Families” (2005 hanguk ingu jutaek chongjosa—cheot nambuk isan gajok hyeonhwang jeonsujosa irwojyeo),” accessed July 29, 2015 at <http://www.voakorea.com/content/a-35-2006-06-12-voa16-91232844/1301462.html>.

[4] Charles Armstrong, “The Destruction and Reconstruction of North Korea, 1950-1960.” *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 8 (December 20, 2010), 51; Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2011).

[5] All names are pseudonyms. Oral history interviews were conducted by the author in the United States, China, and Japan between 1999 and 2012 for an ongoing book project on the Korean diaspora.

[6] Most South Koreans call the Korean War “Yook-ee-oh,” for 6/25, the commonly accepted start date for the war. The formal term is “hanguk jun-jaeng,” literally “Korean War,” and is used on the air and in print.

[7] The individuals mentioned in this paragraph include oral history narrators, family members, colleagues, and students who spoke with the author.

[8] The multimedia exhibit “Still Present Pasts: Korean Americans and the Forgotten War” explored the legacies of the war via oral history, film, visual and performing arts, and history. It is now accessible online at <http://stillpresentpasts.org/>.

KOREAN AMERICANS ARE RECLAIMING THEIR HISTORY THROUGH CULTURE

Ramsay Liem and Christine Hong | October 30, 2015

Co-published with *Foreign Policy in Focus* and *Legacies of the Korean War*.

A few summers ago, Barack Obama addressed a crowd of American veterans and South Korean dignitaries at the U.S. Korean War memorial. Declaring that Korea “was no tie” but “a victory,” Obama referred to the Korean War, among other curious word choices, as a distinctly “American story.” The war may have “finally ended” in July of 1953, but its bright legacy, he asserted, persists into the present.

That might come as news to Koreans, including those living in the United States, still dealing with the war’s fallout.

Most Americans fail to appreciate the outsized role of U.S. policy in the history of Korea — from the initial partitioning of the peninsula at the 38th parallel by U.S. forces after World War II to the outbreak of full-scale war and the failure to follow up a 1953 ceasefire agreement with a proper peace treaty.

Referred to as the “forgotten war,” the Korean War, which was never resolved with a peace treaty, registers murkily in the U.S. historical record. When commemorated at all, the first hot war of the Cold War is typically framed as a sacrificial action on the part of the United States to safeguard South Korean democracy. (Less remarked upon is the fact that Washington actually bequeathed South Koreans a military dictatorship, which democratized decades later not because of U.S. policy but in spite of it.)

In fact, the Korean War was pivotal to the emergence of the United States as a global superpower. It ushered in the national security state, the military industrial complex, the empire of U.S. bases that stretches across the globe, and permanent warfare as defining features of U.S. foreign policy. As historian Bruce Cumings writes, the militarized reality we inhabit today is “a product of Korea whether we know it or not.” (Obama seems to agree. In his speech, he praised the war as evidence of the U.S. commitment to “maintain the strongest military the world has ever known, bar none, always.”)

Without a better-informed public, the Korean War and its geopolitical legacies are destined to endure — a Cold War bequest for generations to come. The war’s invisibility, however, comes with another hidden cost: Even now, 70 years after the division of the peninsula, Koreans themselves have been mostly written out of the U.S. account of the war.

Missing are the sobering perspectives of ordinary Koreans who bore direct witness to the conflict’s extraordinary devastation: the killing of more than 3 million civilians, the

decimation of social and physical infrastructure, and the separation of 10 million people from their families with few prospects for reunion, even many decades later.

A Rising Challenge

An increasingly vocal challenge to this silence is being mounted within the Korean American diaspora — whose very existence is a direct legacy of the war.

At the start of the Cold War, when racist quotas restricted Korean immigration to 100 people per year, the entry of thousands of Korean military brides into the United States laid the foundation for the rapid chain migration that ensued when national quotas were lifted in 1965. Added to this was the pressure on Koreans who migrated southward during the war, for whom Cold War ideological fervor and political repression in South Korea created intolerable economic and political hardships, motivating many to emigrate. The war also spawned a continuous wave of international adoptions to the United States, making South Korea the main source of transnational adoptees until 1991.

More than any other demographic in the United States, Korean Americans understand the human costs of conflict on the Korean peninsula: Even today, over 100,000 of them remain tragically separated from family members in North Korea.

For Korean Americans schooled in the Cold War narrative about the U.S. “liberation” of South Korea from communism, it has long been considered a matter of self-preservation to foreclose any talk that calls into question the U.S. role in the conflict. “In the U.S., we’re still under the influence of ideology,” observed Min Yong Lee, a Korean War survivor, in an interview with psychologist and oral historian Ramsay Liem. “We paint family stories with political issues and then we’re scared, and we hide it all,” Lee stated. There’s “no chance to open ourselves. No personal history after 50 years, no real identity.”

An early crack in this structure of silence emerged during the lead-up to the first summit meeting between the leaders of North and South Korea in June 2000 — more than four decades after the signing of the 1953 Korean War armistice. Prior to this moment, there was virtually no open discussion about the Korean War among Koreans living in the United States, and no published accounts of their war memories.

Yet that historic North-South opening — and the possibility of reconciling across entrenched ideological differences — reverberated throughout the Korean diaspora.

Now, with the thawing of Cold War tensions, Korean Americans have increasingly been willing to speak out about the war.

Critical Remembrance

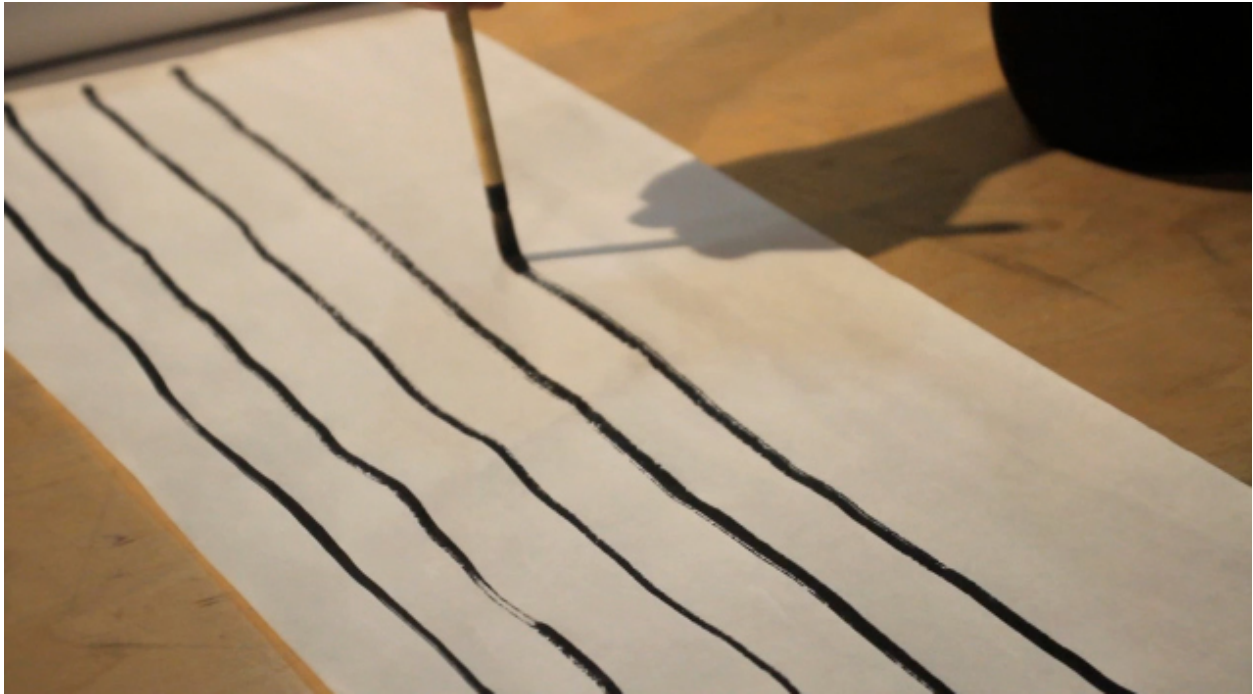
Over the past decade and a half, Korean Americans have turned to the arena of public culture as a space to critically remember and reckon with the human costs of the conflict.

Ramsay Liem's oral-history project, *Korean Americans Remember the Korean War*, paved the way for the 2005 exhibit, *Still Present Pasts: Korean Americans and the "Forgotten War,"* which paired installation, performance, and interactive art with documentary film and archival materials. On tour nationally and in South Korea for nearly eight years, this exhibit created a rare space of collective memory about the war, evoking individual, family, and community reflections — and simultaneously grappling with the war's erasure from the U.S. national narrative. Highlighting Korean American survivor perspectives on the unresolved Korean War, *Memory of Forgotten War*, a 2013 documentary produced and directed by Liem and Deann Borshay Liem, also emerged from these projects.



"Bridge of Return" by Yul-san Liem and exhibit participants, *Still Present Pasts* (Photo: Tim Lindgren)

Numerous other initiatives also followed. The New York-based organization, Nodutdol for Korean Community Development, for example, has a new community-based project called *Intergenerational Stories to Break the Silence: A Korean-American Oral History Project*. Initiated by second-generation Korean Americans, it aims to address gaps in personal, family, and community histories, to bridge community divides, and disrupt prevailing narratives about the war and immigration. What stands out about this work is its egalitarian process. Interviewers and interviewees — and at times audiences — all participate in the narrative process, motivated by the goal of pursuing justice for war survivors.



Bridging Across Generations with Oral History: A Collaborative Theatre Project (Photo: Danny Kim)

In Los Angeles, the intergenerational *Missing Pieces Project* presented the visions of second- and third-generation Korean American high school students for peace in Korea. Moved by what they called “the heartbreaking stories of division and loss that we heard from the forgotten elders of our community,” they interviewed their own relatives and elderly community members whose hometowns are in North Korea. The Missing Pieces Project partnered with the National Coalition for the Divided Families in a U.S. congressional hearing, testifying to the urgent need for a pathway to family reunions for elderly Korean Americans separated from relatives in North Korea.



Members of the Missing Pieces Project (photo by K.W. Lee Center for Leadership)

Most recently, a new project was launched this October at a standing room-only event at UC Berkeley in front of a multiethnic and multigenerational audience of nearly 200 people. Dubbed *Legacies of the Korean War: Korean Americans Remember the "Forgotten War"*, this online multimedia archive joins these other projects in its goal of foregrounding ordinary Korean American perspectives as essential to U.S. discourse on the conflict. The Legacies project brings together community activists, scholars of critical Korean studies and Asian American studies, and award-winning documentary filmmakers in a far-reaching collaboration that includes participants in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and Seoul.



Ramsay Liem speaking at “Legacies of the Korean War” event at UC Berkeley, October 17, 2015 (photo: Peter Schroepfer)

Underscoring the lived experiences of Korean American survivors of the Korean War and other members of the war-formed Korean American diaspora, the nuanced stories gathered in the Legacies archive span the political spectrum and bridge generations but dovetail in a shared call for peace and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula. For Korean Americans who bore witness to the Korean War’s “violent, unnecessary deaths,” stated Suntae Chun, an immigrant from a divided family, the obligation is to “work hard to make a world without war, between nations, people, and religions.” Yet pointing out that “technically, the war’s not over, 1.5-generation Korean American Eun-Joung Lee states that “there’s definitely a place for second-generation people in terms of facing what the impact of the war has been about.”

The goal, In-Sook Lee, a survivor of the war, states, is “peaceful reunification.”

Silent no more, the voices that are surfacing in these Korean American oral history projects offer prospects for breaking years of Cold War silence, raising awareness of the continuing human costs of the un-ended Korean War, and rethinking U.S. policy regarding the Korean peninsula.

**For a fuller exploration of the politics of silence around the Korean War in the Korean American community, please see Ramsay Liem's essay, "Silenced No More: Korean Americans Remember the 'Forgotten War.'"

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A MURDEROUS HISTORY OF KOREA

Bruce Cumings | May 12, 2017

Originally published in the *London Review of Books*

More than four decades ago I went to lunch with a diplomatic historian who, like me, was going through Korea-related documents at the National Archives in Washington. He happened to remark that he sometimes wondered whether the Korean Demilitarised Zone might be ground zero for the end of the world. This April, Kim In-ryong, a North Korean diplomat at the UN, warned of ‘a dangerous situation in which a thermonuclear war may break out at any moment’. A few days later, President Trump told Reuters that ‘we could end up having a major, major conflict with North Korea.’ American atmospheric scientists have shown that even a relatively contained nuclear war would throw up enough soot and debris to threaten the global population: ‘A regional war between India and Pakistan, for instance, has the potential to dramatically damage Europe, the US and other regions through global ozone loss and climate change.’ How is it possible that we have come to this? How does a puffed-up, vainglorious narcissist, whose every other word may well be a lie (that applies to both of them, Trump and Kim Jong-un), come not only to hold the peace of the world in his hands but perhaps the future of the planet? We have arrived at this point because of an inveterate unwillingness on the part of Americans to look history in the face and a laser-like focus on that same history by the leaders of North Korea.

North Korea celebrated the 85th anniversary of the foundation of the Korean People’s Army on 25 April, amid round-the-clock television coverage of parades in Pyongyang and enormous global tension. No journalist seemed interested in asking why it was the 85th anniversary when the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea was only founded in 1948. What was really being celebrated was the beginning of the Korean guerrilla struggle against the Japanese in north-east China, officially dated to 25 April 1932. After Japan annexed Korea in 1910, many Koreans fled across the border, among them the parents of Kim Il-sung, but it wasn’t until Japan established its puppet state of Manchukuo in March 1932 that the independence movement turned to armed resistance. Kim and his comrades launched a campaign that lasted 13 difficult years, until Japan finally relinquished control of Korea as part of the 1945 terms of surrender. This is the source of the North Korean leadership’s legitimacy in the eyes of its people: they are revolutionary nationalists who resisted their country’s coloniser; they resisted again when a massive onslaught by the US air force during the Korean War razed all their cities, driving the population to live, work and study in subterranean shelters; they have continued to resist the US ever since; and they even resisted the collapse of Western communism – as of this September, the DPRK will have been in existence for as long as the Soviet Union. But it is less a communist country than a garrison state, unlike any the world has seen. Drawn from a population of just 25 million, the North Korean army is the fourth largest in the world, with 1.3 million soldiers – just behind the third largest army, with 1.4 million soldiers, which happens to be the American one. Most of the adult Korean population, men and women, have spent many years in this army: its reserves are limited only by the size of the population.

The story of Kim Il-sung's resistance against the Japanese is surrounded by legend and exaggeration in the North, and general denial in the South. But he was recognisably a hero: he fought for a decade in the harshest winter environment imaginable, with temperatures sometimes falling to 50° below zero. Recent scholarship has shown that Koreans made up the vast majority of guerrillas in Manchukuo, even though many of them were commanded by Chinese officers (Kim was a member of the Chinese Communist Party). Other Korean guerrillas led detachments too – among them Choe Yong-gon, Kim Chaek and Choe Hyon – and when they returned to Pyongyang in 1945 they formed the core of the new regime. Their offspring now constitute a multitudinous elite – the number two man in the government today, Choe Ryong-hae, is Choe Hyon's son.

Kim's reputation was inadvertently enhanced by the Japanese, whose newspapers made a splash of the battle between him and the Korean quislings whom the Japanese employed to track down and kill him, all operating under the command of General Nozoe Shotoku, who ran the Imperial Army's 'Special Kim Division'. In April 1940 Nozoe's forces captured Kim Hye-sun, thought to be Kim's first wife; the Japanese tried in vain to use her to lure Kim out of hiding, and then murdered her. Maeda Takashi headed another Japanese Special Police unit, with many Koreans in it; in March 1940 his forces came under attack from Kim's guerrillas, with both sides suffering heavy casualties. Maeda pursued Kim for nearly two weeks, before stumbling into a trap. Kim threw 250 guerrillas at 150 soldiers in Maeda's unit, killing Maeda, 58 Japanese, 17 others attached to the force, and taking 13 prisoners and large quantities of weapons and ammunition.

In September 1939, when Hitler was invading Poland, the Japanese mobilised what the scholar Dae-Sook Suh has described as a 'massive punitive expedition' consisting of six battalions of the Japanese Kwantung Army and twenty thousand men of the Manchurian Army and police force in a six-month suppression campaign against the guerrillas led by Kim and Ch'oe Hyon. In September 1940 an even larger force embarked on a counterinsurgency campaign against Chinese and Korean guerrillas: 'The punitive operation was conducted for one year and eight months until the end of March 1941,' Suh writes, 'and the bandits, excluding those led by Kim Il-sung, were completely annihilated. The bandit leaders were shot to death or forced to submit.' A vital figure in the long Japanese counterinsurgency effort was Kishi Nobusuke, who made a name for himself running munitions factories. Labelled a Class A war criminal during the US occupation, Kishi avoided incarceration and became one of the founding fathers of postwar Japan and its longtime ruling organ, the Liberal Democratic Party; he was prime minister twice between 1957 and 1960. The current Japanese prime minister, Abe Shinzo, is Kishi's grandson and reveres him above all other Japanese leaders. Trump was having dinner at Mar-a-Lago with Abe on 11 February when a pointed message arrived mid-meal, courtesy of Pyongyang: it had just successfully tested a new, solid-fuel missile, fired from a mobile launcher. Kim Il-sung and Kishi are meeting again through their grandsons. Eight decades have passed, and the baleful, irreconcilable hostility between North Korea and Japan still hangs in the air.

In the West, treatment of North Korea is one-sided and ahistorical. No one even gets the names straight. During Abe's Florida visit, Trump referred to him as 'Prime Minister Shinzo'. On 29 April, Ana Navarro, a prominent commentator on CNN, said: 'Little boy Un

is a maniac.’ The demonisation of North Korea transcends party lines, drawing on a host of subliminal racist and Orientalist imagery; no one is willing to accept that North Koreans may have valid reasons for not accepting the American definition of reality. Their rejection of the American worldview – generally perceived as indifference, even insolence in the face of overwhelming US power – makes North Korea appear irrational, impossible to control, and therefore fundamentally dangerous.

But if American commentators and politicians are ignorant of Korea’s history, they ought at least to be aware of their own. US involvement in Korea began towards the end of the Second World War, when State Department planners feared that Soviet soldiers, who were entering the northern part of the peninsula, would bring with them as many as thirty thousand Korean guerrillas who had been fighting the Japanese in north-east China. They began to consider a full military occupation that would assure America had the strongest voice in postwar Korean affairs. It might be a short occupation or, as a briefing paper put it, it might be one of ‘considerable duration’; the main point was that no other power should have a role in Korea such that ‘the proportionate strength of the US’ would be reduced to ‘a point where its effectiveness would be weakened’. Congress and the American people knew nothing about this. Several of the planners were Japanophiles who had never challenged Japan’s colonial claims in Korea and now hoped to reconstruct a peaceable and amenable postwar Japan. They worried that a Soviet occupation of Korea would thwart that goal and harm the postwar security of the Pacific. Following this logic, on the day after Nagasaki was obliterated, John J. McCloy of the War Department asked Dean Rusk and a colleague to go into a spare office and think about how to divide Korea. They chose the 38th parallel, and three weeks later 25,000 American combat troops entered southern Korea to establish a military government.

It lasted three years. To shore up their occupation, the Americans employed every last hireling of the Japanese they could find, including former officers in the Japanese military like Park Chung Hee and Kim Chae-gyu, both of whom graduated from the American military academy in Seoul in 1946. (After a military takeover in 1961 Park became president of South Korea, lasting a decade and a half until his ex-classmate Kim, by then head of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, shot him dead over dinner one night.) After the Americans left in 1948 the border area around the 38th parallel was under the command of Kim Sok-won, another ex-officer of the Imperial Army, and it was no surprise that after a series of South Korean incursions into the North, full-scale civil war broke out on 25 June 1950. Inside the South itself – whose leaders felt insecure and conscious of the threat from what they called ‘the north wind’ – there was an orgy of state violence against anyone who might somehow be associated with the left or with communism. The historian Hun Joon Kim found that at least 300,000 people were detained and executed or simply disappeared by the South Korean government in the first few months after conventional war began. My own work and that of John Merrill indicates that somewhere between 100,000 and 200,000 people died as a result of political violence *before* June 1950, at the hands either of the South Korean government or the US occupation forces. In her recent book *Korea’s Grievous War*, which combines archival research, records of mass graves and interviews with relatives of the dead and escapees who fled to Osaka, Su-kyoung Hwang documents the mass killings in villages around the southern coast.[*] In short, the Republic of Korea was

one of the bloodiest dictatorships of the early Cold War period; many of the perpetrators of the massacres had served the Japanese in their dirty work – and were then put back into power by the Americans.

Americans like to see themselves as mere bystanders in postwar Korean history. It's always described in the passive voice: 'Korea was divided in 1945,' with no mention of the fact that McCloy and Rusk, two of the most influential men in postwar foreign policy, drew their line without consulting anyone. There were two military coups in the South while the US had operational control of the Korean army, in 1961 and 1980; the Americans stood idly by lest they be accused of interfering in Korean politics. South Korea's stable democracy and vibrant economy from 1988 onwards seem to have overridden any need to acknowledge the previous forty years of history, during which the North could reasonably claim that its own autocracy was necessary to counter military rule in Seoul. It's only in the present context that the North looks at best like a walking anachronism, at worst like a vicious tyranny. For 25 years now the world has been treated to scaremongering about North Korean nuclear weapons, but hardly anyone points out that it was the US that introduced nuclear weapons into the Korean peninsula, in 1958; hundreds were kept there until a worldwide pullback of tactical nukes occurred under George H.W. Bush. But every US administration since 1991 has challenged North Korea with frequent flights of nuclear-capable bombers in South Korean airspace, and any day of the week an Ohio-class submarine could demolish the North in a few hours. Today there are 28,000 US troops stationed in Korea, perpetuating an unwinnable stand-off with the nuclear-capable North. The occupation did indeed turn out to be one of 'considerable duration', but it's also the result of a colossal strategic failure, now entering its eighth decade. It's common for pundits to say that Washington just can't take North Korea seriously, but North Korea has taken its measure more than once. And it doesn't know how to respond.

To hear Trump and his national security team tell it, the current crisis has come about because North Korea is on the verge of developing an ICBM that can hit the American heartland. Most experts think that it will take four or five years to become operational – but really, what difference does it make? North Korea tested its first long-range rocket in 1998, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the DPRK's founding. The first medium-range missile was tested in 1992: it flew several hundred miles down range and banged the target right on the nose. North Korea now has more sophisticated mobile medium-range missiles that use solid fuel, making them hard to locate and easy to fire. Some two hundred million people in Korea and Japan are within range of these missiles, not to mention hundreds of millions of Chinese, not to mention the only US Marine division permanently stationed abroad, in Okinawa. It isn't clear that North Korea can actually fit a nuclear warhead to any of its missiles – but if it happened, and if it was fired in anger, the country would immediately be turned into what Colin Powell memorably called 'a charcoal briquette'.

But then, as General Powell well knew, we had already turned North Korea into a charcoal briquette. The filmmaker Chris Marker visited the country in 1957, four years after US carpet-bombing ended, and wrote: *'Extermination passed over this land. Who could count what burned with the houses? ... When a country is split in two by an artificial border and irreconcilable propaganda is exercised on each side, it's naive to ask where the war comes*

from: the border is the war.’ Having recognised the primary truth of that war, one still alien to the American telling of it (even though Americans drew the border), he remarked: ‘The idea that North Koreans generally have of Americans may be strange, but I must say, having lived in the USA around the end of the Korean War, that nothing can equal the stupidity and sadism of the combat imagery that went into circulation at the time. “*The Reds burn, roast and toast.*”’

Since the very beginning, American policy has cycled through a menu of options to try and control the DPRK: sanctions, in place since 1950, with no evidence of positive results; non-recognition, in place since 1948, again with no positive results; regime change, attempted late in 1950 when US forces invaded the North, only to end up in a war with China; and direct talks, the only method that has ever worked, which produced an eight-year freeze – between 1994 and 2002 – on all the North’s plutonium facilities, and nearly succeeded in retiring their missiles. On 1 May, Donald Trump told Bloomberg News: ‘If it would be appropriate for me to meet with [Kim Jong-un], I would absolutely; I would be honoured to do it.’ There’s no telling whether this was serious, or just another Trump attempt to grab headlines. But whatever else he might be, he is unquestionably a maverick, the first president since 1945 not beholden to the Beltway. Maybe he can sit down with Mr Kim and save the planet.

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THE WAR AMERICA FORGOT

Charles Hanley | February 23, 2018

Charles Hanley delivered this talk as part of a roundtable, “The Korean War Today,” with Kim Dong-choon, Christine Hong, and Monica Kim (moderator) at NYU’s D’Agostino Hall on February 23, 2018. This was the inaugural event of NYU’s Marilyn B. Young Memorial Lecture program.

I was approaching my third birthday in Brooklyn, New York, that Sunday long ago when those seven North Korean divisions struck south across the 38th parallel. Now here we are, a lifetime later, in a new century, and it seems as if all the last century’s turmoil and wars – both hot wars and cold wars – have been distilled into one explosive corner of the world map, one narrow peninsula that history won’t let live in peace. Or that somebody won’t let live in peace – choose your own villains.

And yet, all these decades later, the Korean War, the root of all of this, remains an unknown war in so many ways, particularly to Americans.

And the question will arise: Can the warring parties agree to a peace when they cannot agree on the war, on what happened, when they don’t understand what about that war motivates the other side, when they don’t acknowledge responsibility and regret?

For too long the real war – what really happened – lived only in the suppressed memories of ordinary Koreans, in whispered conversations in the villages, in the pages of telltale documents growing yellow with age in classified archives.

When Choe Sang-hun, Martha Mendoza, and I published the journalism confirming the U.S. massacre of civilians at No Gun Ri, on front pages across the United States, it was a shock to Americans. This didn’t fit the script of history as Americans knew it. As Marilyn Young, a historian best known for her research on the Vietnam War, noted, it seemed a story “misplaced in the wrong war.” Korea wasn’t like this.

But when it comes to the Korean War, that script of history sometimes is as much fiction as reality.

A few examples:

The official U.S. Army history of the war tells the reader that U.S. troops recapturing the city of Taejon in September 1950 found that the North Korean occupiers had slaughtered 5,000 to 7,000 South Korean civilians before retreating. But the reality – confirmed only since the turn of this century – is that the South Korean authorities carried out most of these executions the preceding July, as part of a monstrous bloodbath in which tens of thousands of supposed leftist sympathizers across the south were summarily executed. From the very first days, North Korean executions of southerners were publicized worldwide, including

this false story about Taejon. But these much more extensive killings by the southerners were hidden from history.

That same July, *Life* magazine entertained Americans with a cover story about the heroics of U.S. Air Force jet pilots over South Korea, defending hard-pressed American troops on the ground. But it wasn't until a half-century later that declassified archives showed that these same fighter-bomber squadrons were being ordered to attack refugee columns on the roads – or, in one case, to attack any group of eight or more Koreans ... in South Korea! All because of the potential for North Korean infiltrators among them.

Some months later, in January 1951, the Associated Press, my organization, transmitted a news photo showing a scene south of Seoul where 200 civilians – men, women and children – lay dead and strung out along a roadside. The caption said these refugees had frozen to death. The reality was that they had been killed by strafing U.S. planes. Some censorious hand had cut out the truth. This was now the script: frozen to death, all at once, on a main road between two towns.

We'll never know the full extent, but clearly many, many hundreds, probably thousands, of innocent Koreans were killed in this way.

In August 1950, news stories on the AP wire and in the *New York Times* reported that U.S. Army engineers had successfully blown up a bridge over South Korea's Naktong River, denying it to the advancing North Koreans, who wouldn't appear in the area for another five days. What wasn't reported – but was known to the journalists – was that hundreds of South Korean refugees, terrified families seeking safety across the river, were blown up with the bridge. The reporters censored themselves on that fact, helping write the acceptable script of history.

And as late as 1999, the U.S. Army denied – to the U.S. National Council of Churches, of all people – that any evidence existed to support a claim by Korean survivors that the U.S. military massacred hundreds of people at No Gun Ri in 1950 when the truth was that the archives reviewed by the Army held many of those telltale documents. Ground troops were ordered to fire indiscriminately on approaching refugee groups. But the Army of 1999 wasn't about to rewrite the script of history. Six months later, Choe Sang-hun, Martha Mendoza, and I blew their cover on No Gun Ri. And yet the Pentagon investigative report that followed is so full of deceptions and cover-ups that yet another Korean War fiction is kept alive.

That's South Korea. The black hole of history was – and remains – even blacker when it comes to North Korea and what happened there during the war.

Most famously, the North Koreans claim the U.S. military massacred some 35,000 civilians in Hwanghae province, south of Pyongyang, in the fall of 1950. Recent scholars, including Kim Dong-choon, have concluded the slaughter was carried out by Korean right-wing paramilitaries. The question of any American connection remains unanswered.

But we know anecdotally, from my own and others' reporting, that terrible things were done by American troops when they entered the north. One 7th Cavalry Regiment veteran told me, "I personally killed anything in front of me when we moved up. ... You've heard of the Rape of Nanking in China?" he asked me. "Similar to that."

That's on the ground. From the air, of course, the devastation and death dealt to the north by the U.S. Air Force was unimaginable. Dean Acheson, secretary of state, proclaimed publicly that U.S. bombing in North Korea was "directed solely at military targets." But General MacArthur's classified directive ordered his air forces to destroy "every means of communication and every installation, factory, city and village." Even earlier, the Pentagon told MacArthur's command to stop issuing press communiques referring to bombed villages, but to call them "military targets" instead.

There are a few honorable exceptions – Kim Dong-choon's book, "The Unending Korean War," is one of them, along with books by Su-kyoung Hwang, Sahr Conway-Lanz and, of course, Bruce Cumings. But the script of history that comes down to us Americans largely tends to overlook the wholesale flattening of North Korean cities, ignores the indiscriminate mowing down of South Korean refugees, takes little notice of the mass executions – of 100, 200, possibly 300,000 people – by the Syngman Rhee regime in 1950.

The most recent best-selling American history of the war, David Halberstam's *The Coldest Winter*, has an entire six-page chapter devoted to Douglas MacArthur's mother, but literally not a single word – not a word – on any of the above carnage, on all the other mothers and grandmothers and countless others who died unjust deaths in Korea. David Halberstam wrote that book as though the war was fought on a peninsula devoid of civilians. With this kind of blindness and ignorance, how can today's Americans understand the depth of inherited hatred and fear that animates North Koreans? Or understand the mixed feelings of South Koreans toward an America that, on one hand, helped them and suffered more than 100,000 dead and wounded of its own in doing so, and on the other hand helped bring about and perpetuate the unending Korean War, and destroyed much of the land and people in the process.

Edward R. Murrow understood this. Two months into the war, that noted American radio correspondent sent a report from Korea back to CBS in New York in which he said the Americans were creating "dead valleys" across South Korea, and wondered whether the South Korean people could "ever forgive us." The CBS brass killed that Murrow report. It didn't fit the script of history.

One final point: There seems to be a lack of appreciation, of knowledge, here in this country about the historic relationship between China and North Korea, that Korea is the only place where American and Chinese armies have fought each other to the death, that China saved North Korea from oblivion, that it sacrificed hundreds of thousands of young Chinese in the process, that one of them was Mao Zedong's own son, who was buried in a military cemetery in Pyongyang. The Chinese pride in that war, their "War to Resist United States Aggression and Aid Korea," is great and officially nurtured, despite recent frictions over the north's nuclear program.

I have a Chinese soldier's 862-day diary from the Korean War. In late July 1953, when he hears at the war front about the armistice, this teen-aged soldier Chen Xingjiu realizes he can now go home a hero, one who helped humiliate the mighty United States. "The entire Chinese people are proud," he writes in his diary. "How can we not be, being victorious in this war? Rejoice! We are proud because we are Chinese."

When we speak of ignorance about the Korean War and that Chinese connection, one need go no farther than this current White House. Some of you may recall that in the first presidential debate in the 2016 campaign, candidate Trump suggested that China invade North Korea to resolve the nuclear issue.

"China should solve the problem for us," he said. "China should go into North Korea."

I think my young Chinese soldier of 1953 would be a little befuddled by this American president.

The historian Marilyn Young once wrote that the horrible conflict that broke out in Korea 67 and a half years ago was a war that "the American public both rejected and refused to think about." Sadly, in too many places, that thinking has yet to begin.

Charles J. Hanley is a retired Associated Press correspondent who was a member of the Pulitzer Prize-winning AP reporting team that confirmed the No Gun Ri Massacre in 1999. He is co-author of The Bridge at No Gun Ri (Henry Holt and Company, 2001).



US FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS NORTH KOREA

US Policy And Korea: A Korea Policy Institute Reader

THE NEED FOR A NEW US FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS NORTH KOREA

By Martin Hart-Landsberg | June 4, 2017

Originally published in *Reports from the Economic Front*

US-North Korean relations remain very tense, although the threat of a new Korean War has thankfully receded. Still the US government remains determined to tighten economic sanctions on North Korea and continues to plan for a military strike aimed at destroying the country's nuclear infrastructure. And the North for its part has made it clear that it would respond to any attack with its own strikes against US bases in the region and even the US itself.

This is not good, but it is important to realize that what is happening is not new. The US began conducting war games with South Korean forces in 1976 and it was not long before those included simulated nuclear attacks against the North, and that was before North Korea had nuclear weapons. In 1994, President Bill Clinton was close to launching a military attack on North Korea with the aim of destroying its nuclear facilities. In 2002, President Bush talked about seizing North Korean ships as part of a blockade of the country, which is an act of war. In 2013, the US conducted war games which involved planning for preemptive attacks on North Korean military targets and "decapitation" of the North Korean leadership and even a first strike nuclear attack.

I don't think we are on the verge of a new Korean war, but the cycle of belligerency and threat making on both sides is intensifying. And it is always possible that a miscalculation could in fact trigger a new war, with devastating consequences. The threat of war, perhaps a nuclear war, is nothing to play around with. But – and this is important — even if a new war is averted, the ongoing embargo against North Korea and continual threats of war are themselves costly: they promote/legitimize greater military spending and militarization more generally, at the expense of needed social programs, in Japan, China, the US, and the two Koreas. They also create a situation that compromises democratic possibilities in both South and North Korea and worsen already difficult economic conditions in North Korea.

There is a choice for peace

We doesn't have to go down this road—we have another option—but it is one that the US government is unwilling to consider, much less discuss. That option is for the US to

accept North Korean offers of direct negotiations between the two countries, with all issues on the table.

The US government and media dismiss this option as out of hand—we are told that (1) the North is a hermit kingdom and seeks only isolation, (2) the country is ruled by crazy people hell bent on war, and (3) the North Korean leadership cannot be trusted to follow through on its promises. But none of this is true.

First: if being a hermit kingdom means never wanting to negotiate, then North Korea is not a hermit kingdom. North Korea has been asking for direct talks with the United States since the early 1990s. The reason is simple: this is when the USSR ended and Russia and the former Soviet bloc countries in central Europe moved to adopt capitalism. The North was dependent on trade with these countries and their reorientation left the North Korean economy isolated and in crisis.

The North Korean leadership decided that they had to break out of this isolation and connect the North Korean economy to the global economy, and this required normalization of relations with the United States. Since then, they have repeatedly asked for unconditional direct talks with the US in hopes of securing an end to the Korean War and a peace treaty as a first step towards their desired normalization of relations, but have been repeatedly rebuffed. The US has always put preconditions on those talks, preconditions that always change whenever the North has taken steps to meet them.

The North has also tried to join the IMF and WB, but the US and Japan have blocked their membership.

The North has also tried to set up free trade zones to attract foreign investment, but the US and Japan have worked to block that investment.

So, it is not the North that is refusing to talk or broaden its engagement with the global economy; it is the US that seeks to keep North Korea isolated.

Second: the media portray North Korea as pursuing an out of control militarism that is the main cause of the current dangerous situation. But it is important to recognize that South Korea has outspent North Korea on military spending every year since 1976. International agencies currently estimate that North Korean annual military spending is \$4 billion while South Korean annual military spending is \$40 billion. And then we have to add the US military build-up.

North Korea does spend a high percentage of its budget on the military, but that is because it has no reliable military ally and a weak economy. However, it has largely responded to South Korean and US militarism and threats, not driven them. As for the development of a nuclear weapons program: it was the US that brought nuclear weapons to the Korean peninsula. It did so in 1958 in violation of the Korean War armistice and threatened North Korea with nuclear attack years before the North even sought to develop nuclear weapons.

Third: North Korea has been a more reliable negotiating partner than the US. Here we have to take up the nuclear issue more directly. The North has tested a nuclear weapon 5 times: 2006, 2009, 2013, and twice in 2016.

Critically, North Korean tests have largely been conducted in an effort to pull the US into negotiations or fulfill past promises. And the country has made numerous offers to halt its testing and even freeze its nuclear weapons program if only the US would agree to talks.

North Korea was first accused of developing nuclear weapons in early 1990s. Its leadership refused to confirm or deny that the country had succeeded in manufacturing nuclear weapons but said that it would open up its facilities for inspection if the US would enter talks to normalize relations. As noted above, the North was desperate, in the wake of the collapse of the USSR, to draw the US into negotiations. In other words, it was ready to end the hostilities between the two countries.

The US government refused talks and began to mobilize for a strike on North Korean nuclear facilities. A war was averted only because Jimmy Carter, against the wishes of the Clinton administration, went to the North, met Kim Il Sung, and negotiated an agreement that froze the North Korean nuclear program.

The North Korean government agreed to end their country's nuclear weapons program in exchange for aid and normalization. And from 1994 to 2002 the North froze its plutonium program and had all nuclear fuel observed by international inspectors to assure the US that it was not engaged in making any nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, the US did not live up to its side of the bargain; it did not deliver the aid it promised or take meaningful steps towards normalization.

In 2001 President Bush declared North Korea to be part of the axis of evil and the following year unilaterally canceled the agreement. In response, the North restarted its nuclear program.

In 2003, the Chinese government, worried about growing tensions between the US and North Korea, convened multiparty talks to bring the two countries back to negotiations. Finally, in 2005, under Chinese pressure, the US agreed to a new agreement, in which each North Korean step towards ending its weapons program would be matched by a new US step towards ending the embargo and normalizing relations. But exactly one day after signing the agreement, the US asserted, without evidence, that North Korea was engaged in a program of counterfeiting US dollars and tightened its sanctions policy against North Korea.

The North Korean response was to test its first nuclear bomb in 2006. And shortly afterwards, the US agreed to drop its counterfeiting charge and comply with the agreement it had previously signed.

In 2007 North Korea shut down its nuclear program and even began dismantling its nuclear facilities—but the US again didn't follow through on the terms of the agreement, falling behind on its promised aid and sanction reductions. In fact, the US kept escalating its demands on North Korea, calling for an end to North Korea's missile program and improvement in human rights in addition to the agreed upon steps to end North Korea's nuclear weapons program. And so, frustrated, North Korea tested another nuclear weapon in 2009.

And the US responded by tightening sanctions.

In 2012 the North launched two satellites. The first failed, the second succeeded. Before each launch the US threatened to go to the UN and secure new sanctions on North Korea. But the North asserted its right to launch satellites and went ahead. After the December 2012 launch, the UN agreed to further sanctions and the North responded with its third nuclear test in 2013.

This period marks a major change in North Korean policy. The North now changed its public stance: it declared itself a nuclear state—and announced that it was no longer willing to give up its nuclear weapons. However, the North Korean government made clear that it would freeze its nuclear weapons program if the US would cancel its future war games. The US refused and its March 2013 war games included practice runs of nuclear equipped bombers and planning for occupying North Korea. The North has therefore continued to test and develop its nuclear weapons capability.

Here is the point: whenever the US shows willingness to negotiate, the North responds. And when agreements are signed, it is the US that has abandoned them. The North has pushed forward with its nuclear weapons program largely in an attempt to force the US

to seriously engage with the North because it believes that this program is its only bargaining chip. And it is desperate to end the US embargo on its economy.

We lost the opportunity to negotiate with a non-nuclear North Korea when we cut off negotiations in 2001, before the country had a nuclear arsenal. Things have changed. Now, the most we can reasonably expect is an agreement that freezes that arsenal.

However, if relations between the two countries truly improve it may well be possible to achieve a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula, an outcome both countries profess to seek.

New possibilities and our responsibilities

So, why does US refuse direct negotiations and risk war? The most logical reason is that there are powerful forces opposing them. Sadly, the tension is useful to the US military industrial complex, which needs enemies to support the ongoing build-up of the military budget. The tension also allows the US military to maintain troops on the Asian mainland and forces in Japan. It also helps to isolate China and boost right-wing political tendencies in Japan and South Korea. And now, after decades of demonizing North Korea, it is difficult for the US political establishment to change course.

However, the outcome of the recent presidential election in South Korea might open possibilities to force a change in US policy. Moon Jae-in, the winner, has repudiated the hard-line policies of his impeached predecessor Park Guen-Hye, and declared his commitment to re-engage with the North. The US government was not happy about his victory, but it cannot easily ignore Moon's call for a change in South Korean policy towards North Korea, especially since US actions against the North are usually presented as necessary to protect South Korea. Thus, if Moon follows through on his promises, the US may well be forced to moderate its own policy towards the North.

What is clear is that we in the US have a responsibility to become better educated about US policy towards both Koreas, to support popular movements in South Korea that seek peaceful relations with North Korea and progress towards reunification, and to work for a US policy that promotes the demilitarization and normalization of US-North Korean relations.

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TRUMP'S WAR ON THE KOREAN PEOPLE

By Gregory Elich | September 20, 2017

Originally published in *Counterpunch*.

Amid renewed talk by the Trump administration of a military option against North Korea, one salient fact goes unnoticed. The United States is already at war with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK – the formal name for North Korea). It is doing so through non-military means, with the aim of inducing economic collapse. In a sense, the policy is a continuation of the Obama administration's 'strategic patience' on steroids, in that it couples a refusal to engage in diplomacy with the piling on of sanctions that constitute collective punishment of the entire North Korean population.

We are told that UN Security Council resolution 2375, passed on September 11, was "watered down" so as to obtain Chinese and Russian agreement. In relative terms, this is true, in that the original draft as submitted by the United States called for extreme measures such as a total oil embargo. However, Western media give the impression that the resolution as passed is mild or mainly symbolic. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The resolution, in tandem with previous sanction votes and in particular resolution 2371 from August 5, is aimed squarely at inflicting economic misery. Among other things, the August sanctions prohibit North Korea from exporting coal, iron, iron ore, lead, lead ore, and seafood, all key commodities in the nation's international trade. The resolution also banned countries from opening new or expanding existing joint ventures with the DPRK. [1]

September's resolution further constrains North Korea's ability to engage in regular international trade by barring the export of textiles. It is estimated that together, the sanctions eliminate 90 percent of the DPRK's export earnings. [2] Foreign exchange is essential for the smooth operation of any modern economy, and U.S. officials hope that by blocking North Korea's ability to earn sufficient foreign exchange, the resolutions will deal a crippling blow to the economy. For North Korea's estimated 100,000 to 200,000 textile workers the impact will be immediate, plunging most of them into unemployment. "If the goal of the sanctions is to create difficulties for ordinary workers and their ability to make a livelihood, then a ban on textiles will work," specialist Paul Tija wryly notes. [3]

With around eighty percent of its land comprising mountainous terrain, North Korea has a limited amount of arable land, and the nation typically fills its food gap through imports. Sharply reduced rainfall during the April-June planting season this year reduced the amount of water available for irrigation and hampered sowing activities. Satellite monitoring indicates that crop yields are likely to fall well below the norm. [4] To make up for the shortfall, the DPRK has significantly boosted imports. [5] How much longer it can continue to do so remains to be seen, in the face of dwindling reserves of foreign exchange. In effect, by blocking North Korea's ability to engage in international trade, the United States has succeeded in weaponizing food by denying North Korea the means of providing an adequate supply to its people.

The September resolution also adversely impacts the livelihoods of North Korea's overseas workers, who will not be allowed to renew their contracts once they expire. They can only look forward to being forced from their jobs and expelled from their homes. [6]

International partnership is discouraged, as the resolution bans "the opening, maintenance, and operation of all joint ventures or cooperative entities, new and existing," which in effect permanently kills off any prospect of the reopening of the Kaesong Industrial Complex. With only two exceptions, all current operations are ordered to shut down within four months. [7]

A cap is imposed on the amount of oil North Korea is allowed to import, amounting to about a thirty percent reduction from current levels, along with a total ban on the import of natural gas and condensates. [8] Many factories and manufacturing plants could be forced to close down when they can no longer operate machinery. For the average person, hardship lies ahead as winter approaches, when many homes and offices will no longer be able to be heated.

What has any of this to do with North Korea's nuclear program? Nothing. The sanctions are an expression of pure malevolence. Vengeance is hitting every citizen of North Korea to further the U.S. goal of geopolitical domination of the Asia-Pacific.

Like North Korea, India, Pakistan, and Israel are non-signatories to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and have nuclear and missile arsenals. India and Pakistan launched ICBMs earlier in the year. North Korea is singled out for punishment, while the others receive U.S. aid. There is no principle at stake here. For that matter, there is something unseemly in the United States, with over one thousand nuclear tests, denouncing North Korea for its six. The U.S., having launched four ICBMs this year, condemns the DPRK for launching half that many. Is it not absurd that the United States, with its long record

in recent years of bombing, invading, threatening, and overthrowing other nations, accuses North Korea, which has been at peace for several decades, of being an international threat?

North Korea observed the fate of Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Libya, and concluded that only a nuclear deterrent could stop the United States from attacking. It is the “threat” of North Korea being able to defend itself that has aroused U.S. ire on a spectacular scale.

The U.S. war on the North Korean people does not stop with UN sanctions. In a recent hearing, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Ed Royce called for Chinese banks that do ordinary business with North Korea to be targeted: “We can designate Chinese banks and companies unilaterally, giving them a choice between doing business with North Korea or the United States...It’s not just China. We should go after banks and companies in other countries that do business with North Korea in the same way...We should press countries to end all trade with North Korea.” [9]

At the same hearing, the Treasury Assistant Secretary Marshall Billingslea mentioned that his department had worked with the Justice Department to blacklist Russia’s Independent Petroleum Company in June, along with associated individuals and companies, for having shipped oil to North Korea. Despite the fact that there was no UN resolution at that time which forbade such trade, the U.S. seized nearly \$7 million belonging to the company and its partners. [10]

Acting Assistant Secretary of State Susan Thornton was, if anything, more aggressive in her rhetoric than her colleagues, announcing that “we continue to call for all countries to cut trade ties with Pyongyang to increase North Korea’s financial isolation and choke off revenue sources.” She cautioned China and Russia that they must acquiesce to U.S. demands, warning them that if they “do not act, we will use the tools we have at our disposal. Just last month we rolled out new sanctions targeting Russian and Chinese individuals and entities supporting the DPRK.” [11]

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin had threats to deliver, as well, warning China that if its actions against North Korea fail to live up to U.S. expectations, “we will put additional sanctions on them and prevent them from accessing the U.S. and international dollar system.” [12] Since all international financial transactions process through the U.S. banking system, this threat is tantamount to shutting down Beijing’s ability to conduct trade with any nation. It was a rather extravagant threat, and undoubtedly a difficult one to pull off, but one which the Trump administration is just reckless enough to consider undertaking.

There is nothing illegal or forbidden in a nation trading with North Korea in non-prohibited commodities. Yet, a total trade blockade is what Washington is after. U.S. officials are preparing sanctions against foreign banks and companies that do business with North Korea. “We intend to deny the regime its last remaining sources of revenue, unless and until it reverses course and denuclearizes,” Billingslea darkly warns. “Those who collaborate with them are exposing themselves to enormous jeopardy.” [13] In essence, Washington is running an international protection racket: give us what we demand, or we will hurt you. This is gangsterism as foreign policy.

China opposed the UN sanctions that the Trump administration presented at the UN Security Council in September. However, according to U.S. and UN officials, the United States managed to extort China’s acquiescence by threatening to hit Chinese businesses with secondary sanctions. [14]

Before the August UN vote, similar threats were conveyed to Chinese diplomats at the U.S.-China Comprehensive Economic Dialogue, as U.S. officials indicated that ten businesses and individuals would be sanctioned if China did not vote in favor of sanctions. [15]

As a shot across the bow, the U.S. sanctioned the Chinese Bank of Dandong back in June, leading to Western firms severing contacts with the institution. [16]

Washington’s threats prompted China to implement steps in the financial realm that exceed what is called for by the UN Security Council resolutions. China’s largest banks have banned North Korean individuals and entities from opening new accounts, and some firms are not allowing deposits in existing accounts. [17] There is no UN prohibition on North Koreans opening accounts abroad, so the action is regarded as a proactive measure by Chinese banks to avoid becoming the target of U.S. sanctions. [18]

The demands never cease, no matter how much China gives way. U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson recently insisted that China impose a total oil embargo on North Korea. [19] China refused to go along, but it can expect to be subjected to mounting pressure from the U.S. in the weeks ahead.

U.S. officials are fanning out across the globe, seeking to cajole or threaten other nations to join the anti-DPRK crusade. Since most nations stand to lose far more by displeasing the U.S. than in ending a longstanding relationship with the DPRK, the campaign is having an effect.

In April, India banned all trade with North Korea, with the exception of food and medicine. This action failed to satisfy the Trump administration, which sent officials to New Delhi to ask for the curtailing of diplomatic contacts with the DPRK and help in monitoring North Korean economic activities in the region.[20] The Philippines, for its part, responded to U.S. demands by suspending all trade activity with North Korea. [21] Mexico and Peru are among the nations that are expelling North Korean diplomats, on the arbitrary basis of responding to U.S. directives. [22] In addition to announcing that it would reduce North Korea's diplomatic staff, Kuwait also said it would no longer issue visas to North Korean citizens. [23]

Many African nations have warm relations with the DPRK, dating back to the period of the continent's liberation struggles. U.S. officials are focusing particular attention on Africa, and several nations are currently under investigation by the United Nations for their trade with North Korea. [24] The demand to cut relations with North Korea is not an easy sell for Washington, as Africans remember the U.S. for having backed apartheid regimes, while the DPRK had supported African liberation. "Our world outlook was determined by who was on our side during the most crucial time of our struggle, and North Korea was there for us," says Tuliameni Kalomoh, an official in Namibia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [25] This is not the kind of language Washington likes to hear. U.S. economic power is sufficient to ruin any small nation, and with little choice in the matter, Namibia cancelled all contracts with North Korean firms. [26]

Egypt and Uganda are among the nations that have cut ties with the DPRK, and more nations are expected to follow suit, as the United States turns up the heat. Outside of the United Nations, the Trump administration is systematically erecting a total trade blockade against North Korea. Through this means, the U.S. hopes that North Korea will capitulate. That aim is premised on a serious misjudgment of the North Korean character.

The Trump administration claims that UN sanctions and its policy of maximum pressure are intended to bring North Korea to the negotiating table. But it is not the DPRK that needs to be persuaded to talk. President Trump has tweeted, "Talking is not the answer!" U.S. State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert laid down a stringent condition for negotiations: "For us to engage in talks with the DPRK, they would have to denuclearize." [27] The demand for North Korea to give the United States everything it wants upfront, without receiving anything in return, as a precondition for talks is such an obvious nonstarter that it has to be regarded as a recipe for avoiding diplomacy.

North Korea contacted the Obama administration on several occasions and requested talks, only to be rebuffed each time and told it needed to denuclearize. This sad disconnect continues under Trump. In May, the DPRK informed the United States that it would stop nuclear testing and missile launches if the U.S. would drop its hostile policy and sanctions, as well as sign a peace treaty ending the Korean War. [28] The U.S. may not have cared for the conditions, but it could have suggested adjustments, had it been so inclined. Certainly, it was an opening that could have led to dialogue.

It is not diplomacy that the Trump administration seeks, but to crush North Korea. If the ostensible reason for UN sanctions is to persuade a reluctant party to negotiate, then one can only conclude that the wrong nation is being sanctioned. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying was scathing in her criticism of American and British leaders: "They are the loudest when it comes to sanctions, but nowhere to be found when it comes to making efforts to promote peace talks. They want nothing to do with responsibility." [29] The months ahead look bleak. Unless China and Russia can find a way to oppose U.S. designs without becoming targets themselves, the North Korean people will stand alone and bear the burden of Trump's malice. It says something for their character that they refuse to be cowed.

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DIPLOMACY WITH NORTH KOREA HAS WORKED BEFORE, AND CAN WORK AGAIN

Tim Shorrock | September 26, 2017

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August 2017 was a reminder of the scariest, and riskiest, days of the Cold War. All month long, Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un engaged in a bitter war of words that escalated into tit-for-tat displays of military might and ended with mutual threats of mass destruction. The tensions peaked on September 3 with Pyongyang's stunning announcement that it had conducted its sixth, and largest, nuclear test—this time of a powerful hydrogen bomb—and had the capability to place the bomb onto an intercontinental ballistic missile. With the crisis spinning out of control, the opportunity for the diplomacy and negotiations promised by Trump's foreign-policy team in recent months seemed to fade with each passing day.

Ironically, the spiral of events began with a hopeful sign on August 15, when Kim uncharacteristically backed down from a highly publicized plan to launch ballistic missiles toward the United States garrison island of Guam. His surprise decision drew approving comments from Trump as well as Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who has been at the forefront of US proposals for diplomacy. He offered that Kim's "restraint" might be enough to meet the US conditions for talks—a halt to nuclear and missile tests—that he recently laid out in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed co-authored with Defense Secretary James Mattis.

But Kim, who has said he will negotiate only if the United States ends its "hostile policy and nuclear threats," had warned that he would reconsider his missile tests "if the Yankees persist in their extremely dangerous reckless actions." He was speaking of the US–South Korean military exercises launched on August 21 that, according to press reports, included training runs for a preemptive strike against the North as well as a computerized nuclear war game. To counter this show of force, Pyongyang test-fired three short-range rockets and followed up with a medium-range missile shot over the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido.

Predictably, Kim's moves sparked a US counter-action—a practice bombing run over Korean skies by Guam-based supersonic B1-B Lancer bombers, aided by four stealth F-35B advanced fighter jets flown from the US Marine base in Iwakuni, Japan. Days later, the North announced that it had developed a hydrogen bomb that could be placed on an ICBM—and, as mentioned, promptly tested the device in a massive underground explosion. Trump responded with a tweet denouncing the North as a "rogue" nation.

He then insulted South Korea by calling President Moon Jae-in's preference for engagement "appeasement," apparently ruling out the diplomacy sought by his top advisers.

Mattis, who had told reporters the week before that "we're never out of diplomatic solutions," quickly assured the public that the administration was in lockstep on Korea. After an emergency meeting at the White House on Sunday, he went on camera to say that Trump would meet more threats with a "massive military response" that would be both "effective and overwhelming." The United States, he added ominously, is "not looking for the total annihilation" of North Korea but only to end its nuclear program. United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley followed up on Monday, telling the UN Security Council that North Korea was "begging for war" and should be met with the "strongest possible sanctions." But she left the door open for talks, saying "the time has come for us to exhaust all of our diplomatic means before it's too late."

As the gravity of the situation dawned on Washington, the thin reeds of reassurance from Mattis and Haley seemed to suggest that the path of diplomacy and negotiation remains open—barely. "I don't think that this administration is ideologically opposed to negotiations," Victor Cha, a former Bush administration official who is about to be named US ambassador to Seoul, told *The Nation* on Tuesday. But therein lies a major dilemma.

Talking to North Korea is a hard sell in Washington. The predominant view is that direct negotiations are a bad idea because, in the opinion of many officials and pundits, Pyongyang can't be trusted. Exhibit One for these naysayers is the much-maligned "Agreed Framework" between President Bill Clinton and Kim's father, Kim Jong-il, which ended the first nuclear crisis with Pyongyang in 1994 and was cited by 64 Democrats in a recent letter to Tillerson as a model for future talks.

"The Clinton administration negotiated that deal, and the North Korean government immediately violated it," CNN's John King confidently informed his viewers on July 5, just after the North test-fired an ICBM that could hit the United States. King's view, which he repeated several times that day without providing a single shred of evidence, became the standard line on CNN and the rest of network television, which consistently blocks voices saying that engagement has worked in the past. This take has also become a mantra for advocates of tough sanctions and regime change.

"Engagement? I've been there, done that, and got the T-shirts—all of them failed," Bruce Klingler, a former CIA official and senior research fellow for northeast Asia at the right-wing Heritage Foundation, told a Washington forum last month of his brief

contacts with North Korean officials. Even Christopher Hill, a former US ambassador to Seoul who negotiated the “Six-Party Talks” in 2007 and 2008 for the Bush administration, has jumped into the no-talks camp, proclaiming that further negotiations would only “strengthen a rogue regime’s hand.” Similar arguments were made by three former US officials in interviews with *The New York Times* last week.

But what if these calculations aren’t true, and the official story is wrong? What exactly did the Agreed Framework do, and how and why did it come apart? Did President Clinton’s agreement really give North Korea the bomb, as many Republicans now claim? What did those 64 Democrats mean when they urged Tillerson to “make a good faith effort to replicate” its successes? A careful review of the 1994 agreement and interviews with former US officials with extensive experience negotiating with Pyongyang reveals that blame for its demise should be equally shared by the United States and North Korea. Because that’s not a popular view, and the risks are so high, it’s important to get the story straight.

The 1994 agreement was the United States’ response to a regional political crisis that began that year when North Korea announced its intention to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which requires non-nuclear states to agree never to develop or acquire nuclear weapons. Although it had no nuclear weapon, North Korea was producing plutonium, an action that almost led the United States to launch a preemptive strike against its plutonium facility.

That war was averted when Jimmy Carter made a surprise trip to Pyongyang and met with North Korea’s founder and leader at the time, Kim Il-sung (he died a few months later, and his power was inherited by his son, Kim Jong-il). The framework was signed in October 1994, ending “three years of on and off vilification, stalemates, brinkmanship, saber-rattling, threats of force, and intense negotiations,” Park Kun-young, a professor of international relations at Korea Catholic University, wrote in a 2009 history of the negotiations.

In addition to shutting its one operating reactor, Yongbyon, the North also stopped construction of two large reactors “that together were capable of generating 30 bombs’ worth of plutonium a year,” according to Leon V. Sigal, a former State Department official who helped negotiate the 1994 framework and directs a Northeast Asia security project at the Social Science Research Council in New York. Most important for the United States, it remained in the NPT.

In exchange for North Korea’s concessions, the United States agreed to provide 500,000 tons a year of heavy fuel oil to North Korea as well two commercial light-water reactors

considered more “proliferation resistant” than the Soviet-era heavy-water facility the North was using. The new reactors were to be built in 2003 by a US/Japanese/South Korean consortium called the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization, or KEDO. (The reactors, however, were never completed).

For Pyongyang, which had been in the economic wilderness since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the biggest prize was the US promise to stop treating the North like an enemy state. Specifically, the two sides agreed to move as rapidly as possible to full diplomatic and economic normalization. Here’s how it played out.

First, the Agreed Framework led North Korea to halt its plutonium-based nuclear-weapons program for over a decade, forgoing enough enrichment to make over 100 nuclear bombs. “What people don’t know is that North Korea made no fissible material whatsoever from 1991 to 2003,” says Sigal. (The International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed in 1994 that the North had ceased production of plutonium three years earlier.) “A lot of this history” about North Korea, Sigal adds with a sigh, “is in the land of make-believe.”

Second, the framework remained in effect well into the Bush administration. In 1998, the State Department’s Rust Deming testified to Congress that “there is no fundamental violation of any aspect of the framework agreement”; four years later, a similar pledge was made by Bush’s then-Secretary of State Colin Powell. “I get really aggravated when I hear people in Congress say the agreement wasn’t worth the paper it was printed on,” says James Pierce, who was on the State Department team led by Robert Gallucci that negotiated the framework. “The bottom line is, there was a lot in the 1994 agreement that worked and continued for quite some years. The assertion, now gospel, that the North Koreans broke it right away is simply not true.”

“There was a lot in the 1994 agreement that worked and continued for quite some years. The assertion, now gospel, that the North Koreans broke it right away is simply not true.” — James Pierce

Third, the framework and the ongoing engagement that resulted allowed the Clinton administration, led by Secretary of Defense William Perry, to launch a remarkable set of talks that nearly led to a final breakthrough with Pyongyang. As the negotiations unfolded, Kim Jong-il made a startling offer: In return for an end to enmity, Pyongyang was prepared to shut down its development, testing, and deployment of all medium- and long-range missiles. But the agreement was never completed. (Wendy Sherman, the top deputy to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, later wrote that the two sides were “tantalizingly close.”) “In effect, they were willing to trade their missile program for a

better relationship” with Washington, Sigal told me. “And this was before they had the nukes!”

Fourth, the United States itself may have violated the framework by delaying the most important part of the agreement for Pyongyang—US oil shipments and the full normalization of political and economic relations. By 1997, Sigal recalls, the North Koreans were complaining bitterly that the United States was slow to deliver its promised oil and stalling on its pledge to end its hostile policies—the very reason Kim Jong-il had signed in the first place. In a House hearing in 1998, Gallucci warned of failure unless the US government did “what it said it would do, which is to take responsibility” for delivery of the oil. “It was against this backdrop—Pyongyang’s growing conviction the US was not living up to its commitments—that the North in 1998 began to explore” other military options, Mike Chinoy, a former CNN reporter and the author of *Meltdown: The Inside Story of the North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, wrote recently in an incisive article in *The Cipher Brief*.

Finally, the framework collapsed in 2003 after the Bush administration—which had come to office with grave doubts about the agreement—dredged up US intelligence from the 1990s to accuse the North of starting a highly enriched uranium program as a second avenue to the bomb. (It hadn’t yet, though it was scouting the world for enrichment machinery to use later.) Bush tore up the framework agreement, exacerbating the deterioration in relations he had sparked a year earlier when he named North Korea part of his “axis of evil” in January 2002. In response, the North kicked out the IAEA inspectors and began building what would become its first bomb, in 2006, triggering a second nuclear crisis that continues to this day. “I think they were [cheating] to hedge their bets because we were cheating too,” Lawrence Wilkerson, the chief of staff to Colin Powell in 2002, recently told *The Real News*.

In other words, the full story is complicated, and blame can easily be cast on both sides. But the results were disastrous, as Sigal summarized in his masterful history of US–North Korean negotiations published last year by the Korean Institute for National Unification and Columbia Law School.

“When President Bush took office, North Korea, thanks to diplomacy, had stopped testing longer-range missiles,” he wrote. “It had less than a bomb’s worth of plutonium and was verifiably not making more. Six years later, as a result of Washington’s broken promises and financial sanctions, it had seven to nine bombs’ worth [of plutonium], had resumed longer-range test launches, and felt free to test nuclear weapons.” Since then, he noted in a recent commentary, “any achievements have been temporary” because “neither side kept its commitments or sustained negotiations.”

In fact, the situation worsened during the Obama administration, which never got negotiations back on track despite Obama's promises during his 2008 campaign that he would talk to North Korea's leaders. Trump is dealing with the residue of these failed policies, and seemed to grasp that when he reluctantly endorsed the idea of direct talks on August 9. "They've been negotiating now for 25 years," he told reporters. "Look at Clinton. He folded on the negotiations. He was weak and ineffective. You look what happened with Bush, you look what happened with Obama. Obama, he didn't even want to talk about it. But I talk. It's about time. Somebody has to do it."

Trump's facts, as usual, are off the mark—but his conclusion that talks are necessary is sound. To conduct them, however, his administration will have to deal with the same political attacks that helped sink the Agreed Framework. And then, as now, the opposition is likely to come from foreign policy hardliners who don't believe that diplomacy has ever worked with North Korea.

Most histories of the Agreed Framework overlook a critical fact: one month after it was signed, the GOP captured Congress for the first time in four decades. "No sooner had the agreement been concluded than the Republicans took control of the House and Senate, putting it in jeopardy," Sigal wrote in his history. Even before the ink was dry, Newt Gingrich and other party leaders, notably Senator John McCain, were attacking the framework as a sellout that would essentially bribe North Korea to follow international law on nuclear proliferation and put the United States at further risk. "We're going back to the days of President Carter, of appeasement," McCain told *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* in October 1994.

Over the course of the agreement, the GOP delayed critical funding for KEDO and the fuel oil, forcing the Clinton administration to seek funds elsewhere and significantly delaying shipments—"in some cases for years," says Chinoy. That created difficulties for the US diplomats who were directly involved with the North Koreans in implementing its terms, recalls Pierce, who spent many days in Pyongyang working with North Korean officials to monitor where the fuel oil was flowing after it reached the North. "We scraped [the funds] together, because we knew we weren't going to get any more money from Congress," he says. "But we had to deliver on our side."

The North Korean government, well aware that Congress and the executive had equal power, viewed these delays as an abrogation of the agreements made in 1994. Yet despite its anger, the government of Kim Jong-il, who consolidated power shortly after his father's death, made no attempt to reprocess the spent fuel that was stored under IAEA inspection at Yongbyon or to restart the reactor. But as a defensive measure,

Pyongyang started to build medium- and long-range missiles, which had never been part of the negotiations. By 1997 it had tested two of them, causing shivers of fear at the Pentagon.

In 1998, in a desperate attempt to persuade the United States to end its hostile policy, North Korea offered to put its missile program on the table for negotiations. When Clinton demurred, Pyongyang launched a three-stage rocket called the Taepodong in a botched attempt to put a satellite into space. This led Clinton to appoint Defense Secretary Perry his envoy to Pyongyang to begin the missile negotiations that came close to ending the standoff.

A key factor in Kim Jong-il's decision to re-enter negotiations was the progress he had made in lowering tensions with South Korea's president, Kim Dae-jung. Since winning office in 1996, the South's former opposition leader had championed a new "Sunshine Policy" toward the North that sought to end the country's division through economic, political, and cultural engagement. In 2000, in an extraordinary scene that gave hope to millions of Koreans on both sides of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), the two Kims met for the first intra-Korea summit meeting in history and declared that their peninsula would be nuclear-free.

Those developments gave impetus to the US–North Korean talks. Not long after the North-South summit, Marshal Jo Myong-rok, a high-ranking North Korean who was Kim's second-in-command, visited Washington, DC, and met President Clinton and other top US officials at the White House. They signed a joint communiqué designed to end US–North Korean tensions once and for all, and pledged to begin talks to "formally improve" bilateral relations, including replacing the 1953 armistice that ended the Korean War with "permanent peace arrangements," according to Sigal. Soon after, Albright flew to Pyongyang to meet with Kim.

The missile deal—including Kim's commitment to end all production and testing—was to be capped with a visit to Pyongyang by Clinton himself. But he never made the trip, largely because his advisers kept him in Washington during the legal imbroglio that shook America over the disputed 2000 election between Democrat Al Gore and Republican George W. Bush. The agreement was never signed, although North Korea's missile moratorium lasted until 2007. "That was the moment when everything could have gone differently," Perry told *The New York Times* in a recent podcast about the 1999 talks.

Then came the neocons, and talks went out the window. "Under President Bush, the clock was turned back, the [Agreed Framework] became a Clinton mistake, something

to be voided and then abolished," wrote Park, the professor of international relations at Korea Catholic University.

Chief among the framework opponents was Donald Rumsfeld, Bush's defense secretary. During the Clinton years, he had chaired a national commission on missile defense that identified North Korea and Iran as dangerous "rogue states" that necessitated tough policies and, of course, a robust missile-defense system. Meanwhile, at the State Department, John Bolton, also a die-hard opponent, sharply criticized the terms of the framework as Under Secretary of State for Arms Control. (Today he says that the United States can only eliminate North Korea's nuclear program by "eliminating North Korea.")

Early on in his administration, Bush signaled his displeasure with Clinton's Korea diplomacy when he met at the White House with Kim Dae-jung. Kim, still basking in the glow of his 2000 summit with Kim Jong-il, hoped to convince Bush that negotiations should continue. But he was humiliated when the president told him, on live television, that he did not trust North Korea and would not endorse Kim's "Sunshine Policy."

A few months later, when pragmatists at State under Colin Powell decided after a review to restart talks with Pyongyang, the hard-liners—led by Bolton—seized on the uranium "discovery" from 1998 to scuttle the framework. "I wanted a decisive conclusion that the Agreed Framework was dead," Bolton later explained.

In October 2002, Bush sent James Kelly, a deputy assistant secretary of state, to Pyongyang to deliver an ultimatum to North Korea. He had strict orders from Vice President Dick Cheney and Bolton not to negotiate in any way—a dictate he followed even after his North Korean interlocutors denied that they had a uranium program in place but offered to discuss the accusations. "Kelly had minders from both the VP's office and John Bolton's staff," recalls John Merrill, the former chief of the northeast Asia division of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research at the State Department. "He had absolutely no room too explore the issue. Instead, he took what they said as an admission that they had a program and went home."

According to this account, the North Koreans told Kelly that the country had a "right" to a uranium program but was willing to discuss the issue as part of the broader negotiations over missiles. But the hard-liners in the administration rejected the offer and decided to terminate the framework. Within months, Pyongyang had thrown out the IAEA inspectors, withdrawn from the NPT, restarted Yongbyon, and was on its way to its first bomb.

Condoleezza Rice, in her memoirs about her experience in Bush's government, described the US refusal to talk to the North Koreans about the highly enriched uranium program, or HEU, as a huge mistake. "Because [Kelly's] instructions were so constraining, Jim couldn't fully explore what might have been an opening to put the [nuclear] program on the table," she wrote. Later, when she ran for president in 2008, Hillary Clinton picked up on this theme, blasting the Bush administration for using the HEU program as an excuse to abrogate the Agreed Framework. "There is no debate that, once the [framework] was torn up, the North Koreans began to process plutonium with a vengeance because all bets were off," she told *The Washington Post*.

Since then, many analysts have cast doubt on whether North Korea actually had a full-fledged uranium-based nuclear weapons program in 2002, suggesting instead that what it really had was a pilot program for uranium enrichment that "thus posed no serious and imminent threat to the security of the United States," according to Park, the international-relations scholar. In 2007, a senior US intelligence official seemed to confirm that when he told Congress that the CIA only had "mid-confidence" that a uranium program existed. (The North eventually developed one, and displayed its facilities in 2010 to US scientists.)

Still, Pyongyang hung on: In October 2003, it offered to abandon its nuclear-weapons program if the United States would sign a non-aggression pact similar to the language worked out with Clinton and Perry. But this was a bridge too far for Bush. "We will not have a treaty," he said. "That's off the table." By 2006, North Korea had processed enough plutonium to make a bomb, and it exploded its first nuclear device that same year. (For a detailed timeline of US–North Korean talks, see this chronology published by the Arms Control Association.)

Yet despite the enormous influence of the neocons under Bush, talks continued between Washington and the North, as well with China, Russia, Japan and South Korea, under the Six-Party Talks. Amazingly, in 2006, three weeks after North Korea tested its bomb—the "red line" that the United States had been trying to head off since the 1980s—Bush agreed to open direct talks with Pyongyang as part of the Six-Party process.

These talks were a result of North Korea's declaration in 2005 that it would be willing, if certain conditions were met, to abandon its nuclear weapons and return to the NPT. In February 2007, after the stalemate and crisis that led to the 2006 test, the North suspended its nuclear testing and shut down its reactor; a few months later, it agreed to disable its plutonium facilities at Yongbyon. In return, the United States promised to ease sanctions and take North Korea off the list of countries sponsoring terrorism. But

the agreement soon fell apart over the issue of verification of Pyongyang's enrichment and plutonium activities.

As with Clinton's 2000 agreement, Bush's negotiations were eased by developments inside Korea, including the second North-South summit in October 2007. But soon after that meeting, South Korea's progressive president Roh Moo-hyun was succeeded by Lee Myung-bak, a right-winger dead set against the Sunshine Policy. Backed by a new conservative government in Japan, which also rejected engagement, Lee demanded a system of written verification that Bush quickly agreed to.

North Korea, however, bitterly opposed the demand as a violation of the 2005 accords signed by the Roh government. In response, both South Korea and Japan cut off their energy assistance to the North, leaving the Six-Party Talks in limbo. (Lee's hard-line policies, which were also adopted by his successor, Park Geun-hye, greatly heightened tensions with the North and helped bring on the current crisis, current President Moon Jae-in told me in an interview with *The Nation* in May.)

The Six-Party Talks, however, didn't fall apart until the first months of the Obama administration. According to Sigal's detailed history, President Obama and Jeff Bader, his top adviser on Asia, decided in 2009 to adopt President Lee's proposals to use the suspension of energy aid as pressure to force North Korea to accept the verification plans they were now demanding. Lee also had the advantage of a close, friendly relationship with President Obama, which *The New York Times* characterized as "a presidential man-crush."

The idea of direct talks with the North, championed during Obama's 2008 campaign, was abandoned. Washington's policy, according to Sigal, became "pure pressure without negotiations." Officially, the doctrine was known as "strategic patience," but behind it was an assumption that North Korea was headed for collapse. The Obama-Lee pressure tactics only increased tensions, leading to further North Korean nuclear and missile tests, as well as a shelling incident in 2010 that almost caused a military confrontation.

As the situation deteriorated, Obama embarked on a series of military exercises with South Korea that increased in size and tempo over the course of his administration and are now at the heart of the tension with Kim Jong-un. Still, dialogue continued sporadically, particularly through a channel of former US officials that has included Sigal.

At some point, the United States is going to have to sit down with Kim's representatives and seek to hammer something out that will put the North on the path to denuclearization—or accept it as a nuclear power and seek to temper its program.

In 2010, the North proposed through this channel to ship out its nuclear fuel rods, the key ingredient for producing weapons-grade plutonium, to a third country in exchange for a US commitment to pledge that it had “no hostile intent” toward the North. But the Obama administration “didn't even listen,” according to Joel Wit, a former negotiator who participated in the meeting. In 2015, Pyongyang made a sweeping proposal for a peace treaty that would end the enmity; this, too, was rejected out of hand.

By the end of 2016, as David Sanger chronicled in the *Times*, Obama had decided on an aggressive cyber strategy that used electronic attacks to “sabotage” North Korea's missiles and its supply chains. As Obama left the scene and Trump arrived at the White House, relations were frayed almost beyond repair.

In April of this year, following a series of missile tests, Trump turned up the heat, and tensions since then have gone through the roof. Yet, as I reported in *The Nation*, North Korea clings to the idea that negotiations will be possible only if the United States ends the “hostile policy” that Pyongyang thought Washington had jettisoned with the Agreed Framework 1994.

Today the Trump administration is trying to combine sanctions against Pyongyang with pressure on China to bring the North to the table. That may have worked to a certain degree: Kim Jong-un's pullback on August 14 came hours after Beijing said it would immediately ban imports of North Korean coal, iron, and seafood. This decision followed China's extraordinary August vote in favor of the tough sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council.

But at some point, the United States is going to have to sit down with Kim's representatives and seek to hammer something out that will put the North on the path to denuclearization—or accept it as a nuclear power and seek to temper its program, as James Clapper, the former director of National Intelligence, and other former US officials have proposed. (Some past negotiators disagree.) Last week, CNN's Will Ripley reported, Pyongyang told him that a US acknowledgement of its nuclear program would clear the way for diplomacy.

At the UN this week, China and Russia argued again that the best way to start those talks is a “freeze for freeze,” in which the North suspends its nuclear and missile testing in exchange for a moratorium or scaling back of the massive US-South Korean military

exercises that have so inflamed the North. While this exchange has been rejected by the Trump administration (Haley called it “insulting”), a former US negotiator recently reminded a group of Korea watchers in a confidential conference call that Clinton’s suspension of the US “Team Spirit” exercises in South Korea were “critical” to getting the Agreed Framework passed. Meanwhile, a recent poll suggests that 60 percent of Americans favor a negotiated settlement with North Korea.

As in 1994, the trade-off will have to come between ending the enmity and finding the peace. Somewhere in the history of those negotiations, Tillerson and his president may find the key to resolving a conflict that dates back to 1945 and the dawn of the Cold War. But they will have to do it with the full cooperation of South Korea, as President Moon has frequently reminded Trump. “No one should be allowed to decide on a military action on the Korean Peninsula without South Korean agreement,” Moon declared in an unusually blunt statement on August 15. The purpose of sanctions and pressure, he added, “is to bring North Korea to the negotiating table, not to raise military tensions.”

Yoon Young-kwan, who worked with President Moon as South Korea’s foreign minister in the Roh Moo-hyun administration, reinforced those comments on September 5 at a Washington conference on US-South Korean relations. During these tense times, he said, “we must keep our diplomatic channels open and explore what is possible.”

He pointed to the clause in the 1994 framework on normalizing US-North Korean political and economic relations. “North Korea had high expectations of that,” he said. “We must provide them with some kind of incentive” to negotiate. As the historian Bruce Cumings reminded us a few weeks back, another war of “fire and fury,” as Trump famously threatened on August 9, is out of the question.

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SOUTH KOREA, STRAYING OFF THE LEASH?

By Ramsay Liem | February 10, 2018

Originally published in *Counterpunch*.

Never before has North Korea loomed so large in the U.S. imagination. No longer just a problem “over there,” North Korea has emerged as a much more immediate threat, one with the power to unleash nuclear Armageddon on not only East Asian but also North American shores. Months of “fire and fury” exchanges between the leaders of the United States and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) have stoked American fears of impending nuclear carnage. Exacerbating these anxieties is widespread U.S. ignorance of the origins and history of seven decades of hostile U.S. relations with North Korea, a country dismissed in the past as a failed state.

In sharp contrast to alarmist views of an erratic and hostile North Korea, the dominant American narrative of South Korea depicts U.S.-South Korea relations as an enduring and equal partnership in the face of a shared enemy. By the grace of U.S. sacrifice during the Korean War, decades of continuing friendship, and a rock-solid U.S.-South Korean mutual defense alliance, the Republic of Korea (ROK) has prospered as a free and independent democracy, or so the narrative goes.

I. North and South Korean Cooperation as a “Wedge”

What belies this comforting bilateral scenario, however, is the cynical U.S. response to recent joint ROK–DPRK initiatives during the upcoming winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea. Both sides have agreed that North Korean athletes will participate in the games supported by their own cheer squads. They have further agreed to march under a unification flag at the opening ceremonies, to have their ski teams prepare for competition at an alpine facility in the north, and to field a joint women’s hockey team.

Immediately following news that South Korean president Moon Jae-in had accepted North Korean leader Kim Jong-un’s proposal for talks on Olympics cooperation, key U.S. officials and prominent news outlets sounded a new specter, the “wedge.” Not to be confused with an NFL football tactic, the “wedge” portrays mutual overtures between the North and South as an ominous sign that Kim Jong-un is trying to sow discord between Seoul and Washington in order to weaken the longstanding U.S.-ROK alliance. Recent headlines have sounded the alarm:

*“Kim Jong-un’s Overture Could Drive a Wedge Between South Korea and the U.S.,”
Choe Sang-Hun and David Sanger, New York Times, 1/1/2018*

*“Yes, North Korea could drive a wedge between the U.S. and South Korea” Oriana
Skylar Mastro and Arzan Tarapore, Washington Post, 1/12/2018*

*“We will not allow North Korea to drive a wedge through our resolve or solidarity,
Tillerson said.” Matthew Pennington, Associated Press, 1/16/2018*

The most telling of these pronouncements are illustrated by these excerpts from a *New York Times* article (Mark Landler, 1/3/2018) reporting on prospects for the North-South dialogue on the upcoming Olympics.

“Trump administration officials said on Wednesday that they were not opposed to the idea of talks, provided that they be limited to the Olympics and that the South Koreans not make any concessions to the North that they, and the United States, would later regret.”

“Above all, the officials said, the Trump administration will resist efforts by the North to drive a wedge between the United States and its ally.”

“It is fine for the South Koreans to take the lead, but if they don’t have the U.S. behind them, they won’t get far with North Korea,” said Daniel R. Russel, a former assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs in the Obama administration. ‘And if the South Koreans are viewed as running off the leash, it will exacerbate tensions within the alliance.’”

These warnings in response to inter-Korean attempts to lower tensions on the Korean peninsula speak volumes about the Trump administration’s near-total rejection of diplomacy with regard to North Korea. They also convey the unmistakable presumption that Seoul must walk in lockstep with Trump’s policy of “maximum pressure” on North Korea through catastrophic sanctions and his threat to launch a so-called surgical strike (the “bloody nose” option) against North Korea. More worrisome to U.S. officials and observers, though, is the possibility that North Korea could drive a wedge between Washington and its South Korean ally and historic junior partner by encouraging the latter to undertake *independent* initiatives to cooperate during the Olympics. This concern reflects a deeper anxiety that the U.S.–ROK Mutual Defense Treaty, the foundation for seven decades of U.S. military presence in South Korea, may itself be vulnerable. The alliance formalized through this treaty has been lauded by every administration since the hot-fighting days of the Korean War as a model of equal

partnership bound by shared vigilance against North Korea. The specter of re-triangulation, with North Korea and South Korea taking steps toward peace at a time when the United States is gunning for war, challenges the notion that U.S.–ROK interests are in fact one and the same.

It also calls into question the premise of equal partnership and shared authority as foundational to the U.S.–South Korean alliance. While Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and others moderate their dismay at Moon’s initiative by framing North Korea as a threat, Russel’s admonition to South Koreans not to “run off the leash” reveals the inequality at the heart of the U.S. relationship with South Korea. It conveys in no uncertain terms the expectation that South Korea, the second most important U.S. ally in Asia, will heel at the command of the United States when called upon. Hardly a metaphor for a mutual alliance a “dog on a leash” ironically aligns with the familiar North Korean denunciation of its southern neighbor as a client of the United States.

II. South Korean Semi-Sovereignty

We should ask: how valid is Russel’s depiction of the subservience at the heart of the U.S.–ROK alliance? The groundwork for formal mechanisms establishing U.S.-South Korean relations ironically began with Korean liberation from 35 years of Japanese colonization in August of 1945. Following the U.S. authored-division of Korea at the 38th parallel, to which the Soviet Union acceded, the United States established an official military government in the south (USMGIK). The formation of a separate southern government flouted incipient local democratic institutions, the People’s Committees that had sprung up throughout the peninsula and the declaration of the Peoples’ Republic of Korea by Korean nationalists. The USMGIK pronounced itself the sole arbiter of state policy in the south until the founding of the Republic of Korea in 1948 under the leadership of Syngman Rhee, a thirty-year expat in the United States who returned to Korea under U.S. auspices. Although independence activists and other Korean nationalists waged a blood-shedding struggle to prevent a separate election that would doom the country to permanent division Rhee ruthlessly ascended to power with U.S. backing. Under cover of the United Nations, the United States pushed through elections bringing the pro-U.S. Rhee Government to power.

But South Korea’s taste of independence was all too brief. With the full outbreak of north – south civil war in June, 1950, the United States re-established control of the ROK through its leadership of the United Nations Command, rescued Syngman Rhee’s administration from collapse, prevented unification under North Korean leadership, and forged a permanent “wedge” between the two Koreas. Following the truce in July 1953 that halted the fighting but failed to end the war, the U.S. formalized the U.S.-ROK

Mutual Defense Treaty. The treaty ceded continuing authority over South Korean forces to the United States, which also retained control of the UN Command but now charged with policing the Armistice Agreement and directing U.S. and Korean forces in the south.

In 1978, control of U.S. forces stationed in Korea and the South Korean military shifted to the U.S.-ROK Combined Forces Command (USROKCF) led by a four-star U.S. general with the support of an ROK deputy commander. Notwithstanding the principle of cooperation, the CFC command structure reaffirmed South Korea's junior status in relation to the United States. In this remarkably candid statement, General Richard Stillwell, the first U.S. officer to lead the CRC, declared the command structure to be "the most remarkable *concession of sovereignty* in the entire world." [1]

In 1994, the command of South Korean forces during peacetime reverted to a South Korean general yet the United States retained authority during wartime or in the face of an imminent threat of armed conflict. This concession, however, did not alter the fact that the United States retains ultimate authority over the consummate guarantor of South Korea's sovereignty, its military forces. Enshrined in the Combined Forces Command structure, this extraordinary concession of independence distinguishes the U.S.-South Korean alliance as unique in the world.

Furthermore, the global status of the United States as an economic and military superpower buttresses its CRC authority over South Korean affairs. In 2000, president Kim Dae Jung defied Washington's warnings and agreed to a historic summit with North Korean leader, Kim Jong-il. Shortly thereafter, George W. Bush declared the DPRK a member of the "axis of evil" and formally withdrew the United States from an earlier Agreed Framework that had frozen North Korea's incipient nuclear program for eight years. South Korea had virtually no voice in this matter.

The current South Korean president Moon Jae-in, a protégé of earlier liberal leadership, has clearly learned the lesson to tread carefully in the face of conflicting South Korean and U.S. interests. During his summit meeting with Trump shortly after the U.S. presidential election, he appeared to be in lock-step with the U.S. administration's hard-line stance on North Korea's nuclear program. But when Trump unleashed his "fire and fury" rhetoric and escalating threats of a pre-emptive strike against North Korea, Moon pushed back by declaring that war on the Korean peninsula was not an option absent South Korean consent. More recently, he has taken bold steps to engage in joint Olympics planning with the North. Almost immediately, however, he gave a nod to Washington by publicly crediting Trump for this opening with the North. Moon's delicate balancing act within the alliance attests to the ever-present tug of the U.S. leash.

Provoked by the nuclear standoff with North Korea, the sharpening of differences in U.S. and South Korean national interests has both exposed the U.S.–ROK neocolonial relation and made it increasingly untenable. Moreover, the strain in the alliance is likely to intensify in the near future, should the threat of war escalate and recent U.S. efforts to assert its dominance in the wider East Asian region continue. To illustrate:

+ North Korea's rapid development of its nuclear and missile programs has Washington officials clamoring for a muscular response with some declaring that "collateral damage" from pre-emptive action would happen "over there, not here." This ill-informed and disturbing belief portends a deepening, likely irreparable chasm between U.S. and South Korean interests should the Trump administration adopt it in practice. .

+ Since Obama's declaration of a "pivot to Asia," South Korea has been drawn further and further into efforts to bolster U.S. influence in Northeast Asia. Targeted at China's rising global influence, the pivot includes expansion and coordination of military capabilities among regional allies. For example, the installation of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system in South Korea, although aimed at protecting South Korea against North Korean strikes, has limited capacity to intercept close-quarter attacks from the North. It employs a radar system, however, that can be used to monitor China's nuclear program. Just one illustration of South Korea's integration into the U.S. regional military structure, this acquiescence to the imposition of THAAD places South Korean citizens in the cross-fire of military conflicts not of their making. It has already provoked Chinese economic and cultural retaliation, damaging South Korea's relations with its number one trading partner. Further exacerbating this strain on the ROK economy is Trump's insistence that Seoul renegotiate the U.S.–Korea Free Trade Agreement and his pronouncement that the country will continue to be a market for billions of dollars of U.S. arms sales.

III. The Future Looms Large

For nearly seventy years the U.S.–ROK Mutual Defense Treaty has been touted as preserving the peace in Korea and demonstrating how democratically minded states can co-prosper. Yet the U.S.–ROK alliance as a bulwark against communism in Asia is in point of fact a relic of the Cold War. Recent U.S. warnings to South Korea not to "run off the leash" have opened U.S.–ROK relations to a long overdue examination.

Assuming that North–South cooperation during the Olympics is successful, the Moon administration appears prepared to broker even more far-reaching talks not only between the DPRK and ROK, but also the North Korean and U.S. leadership. Such

initiatives have the potential to create openings for a negotiated approach to the nuclear crisis. Vocal advocates in both the United States and South Korea have called for reopening economic and cultural cooperation between the two Koreas, suspending or moderating U.S.–ROK military exercises, freezing arms build-up throughout the Korean peninsula and U.S. holdings in the Pacific, and direct U.S.–DPRK talks.

At the same time these bold actions, especially if taken in partnership with the North, could provoke an even greater outcry from U.S. officials than the “wedge” alarm. It is therefore essential for international solidarity to resist Washington’s march to war but also the anachronistic alliance that usurps South Korean sovereignty. By opposing Trump’s sabre rattling through support of Korean initiatives for dialogue, the work of the growing antiwar consensus to avert this crisis simultaneously affirms a new and more equitable alignment in U.S. – Korea relations. Success on both fronts would constitute a remarkable and historic achievement.

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Notes.

[1] Richard Stillwell, “Challenge and Response in Northeast Asia of the 1980s: The Military Balance,” in *Strategy and Security in Northeast Asia*, edited by R. Foster et al. (New York: Crane-Russak, 1979), 99, italics added.



SOUTH KOREA: THE DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLE

US Policy And Korea: A Korea Policy Institute Reader

UNION-LED POPULAR PROTESTS PUSH TO OUST SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT

Hyun Lee and Gregory Elich | December 8, 2015

Originally published in *Labor Notes*

Massive protests have rocked South Korea's capital city of Seoul over the past month, as workers demand the ouster of President Park Geun-hye and an end to her plans to make drastic, anti-worker changes to the country's labor laws.

South Korea has historically been one of the United States' strongest allies in the region. Its government, like so many others in the age of corporate globalization, is trying to weaken unions and restrict democratic debate.

But there's a growing resistance—led by organized labor. The Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) is anchoring a coalition of workers, farmers, the urban poor, and students to oppose President Park's pro-corporate agenda and neo-authoritarian rule.

Tens of thousands faced off against the police on November 14, braving high-pressure cannons and tear gas. Undeterred, they marched again on December 5, donning facemasks in defiance of the president's threats to ban rallies with masks. A 69-year-old farmer remains in critical condition after being doused at short range by a water cannon.

Police have arrested nine members and officials of the Korean Public Service and Transportation Workers Union over the past two weeks, and imprisoned five officials of the Korean Construction Workers Union. In the lead-up to the December 5 demonstration, they raided 12 offices of eight KCTU unions and affiliates, copying files and confiscating documents and computer hard drives.

And police have surrounded a Buddhist temple where KCTU President Han Sang-gyun has been taking sanctuary since November 14 to avoid arrest. If the government doesn't change course in the coming weeks, Han has called for a general strike.

FOUR-YEAR TEMPS

Why are South Korean workers so upset? And why is their government responding with such force?

President Park and her ruling New Frontier party want to introduce a package of laws that would fundamentally change the country's labor market and undermine the power of unions. They would let employers fire workers arbitrarily, increase the use of temporary labor, and extend the contract term for temporary workers from the current two years to four.

"If the reform passes, an employer could hire workers for four years, fire them temporarily, then rehire them for another four years, and they would have no incentive to hire permanent, regular workers," Han warned in a recent interview.

Contract workers are not entitled to the four major types of insurance that South Korean employers must legally provide to permanent workers—health insurance, unemployment insurance, industrial-accident compensation, and social security. Unions say employers will use this loophole to replace regular workers with contract workers.

Another proposed law would replace the country's seniority-based salary system with a performance-based system, and let employers terminate workers based on subjective assessments of "low performance." (Currently, "low performance" cannot be grounds to fire an employee legally, so employers resort to all manners of harassment and humiliation tactics to force employees to leave their jobs voluntarily.)

Also, if companies want to push workers into early retirement, they are legally required to pay them 30 days or more of average wages for each year of consecutive service as severance pay. This new system "would allow a company to get rid of unwanted workers without spending a dime," Han said.

The new law would also allow employers to change their employment regulations as they please without worker consent. By law, employers of ten workers or more are required to prepare rules of employment, such as payment method of wages and annual paid-leave, etc., and submit them to the Ministry of Labor, as well as post them where workers can have free access to them. A company can alter its employment regulations only with the explicit consent of the labor union, or, if there is no labor union, the majority of its workers.

"This is designed to eliminate all means of resistance by organized labor, and this is precisely the aim of the Park Geun-hye government," Han said.

The government is also introducing a peak-wage system, in which pay is automatically cut for workers at age 55. The government argues that businesses need to cut the pay of

older workers, because they become less productive as they age, and with the money they save, companies can hire more young people and solve the country's growing youth unemployment. The government is trying to pit the young against the old, but its feigned concern for young people masks the real beneficiaries of the labor reform – companies that stand to reap enormous profits from cutting the wages of older workers and increasing their reliance on temporary labor.

TROUBLE STARTED IN 1997

At the height of its development in the 1980s, South Korea's economy was highly export-driven and controlled by a handful of family-owned conglomerates, such as Hyundai and Samsung. Workers at large industrial plants produced steel, automobiles, electronic parts, and textiles for export.

Once a worker was hired by one of these companies, he or she was considered to have a job for life. A worker generally devoted his or her entire career to one company and had an opportunity to climb the ladder, with salaries based on seniority.

The movement for democracy against the military dictatorship during the 1970s and 1980s produced a strong, militant labor movement, based in large industrial unions. At its height in 1996, for example, three million workers shut down auto and ship production, and disrupted hospitals, subways and television broadcast for 4 weeks to oppose newly passed labor laws that would give employers more power to lay off workers.

That all changed after the Asian financial crisis in 1997. Foreign investors bought up shares in South Korean companies at bargain prices. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailed out South Korea's economy—but at a steep price.

It introduced two laws that devastated worker standards. One legalized layoffs for the first time in South Korea, and another legalized the use of dispatch workers through employment agencies and popularized the practice of in-house subcontracting.

Almost overnight, workers with decent, well-paying, secure jobs became “precarious workers”—part-timers or temps without benefits or job security. Today, among Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, South Korea ranks number one for the most precarious workforce.

Now the government wants to make workers even more precarious—and is intent on passing its controversial reform before the year is over.

LABOR-LED UNITED FRONT

Park, the daughter of a former military dictator, has come under widespread criticism for introducing neo-authoritarian practices that hark back to her father's era.

For instance, since taking power, she has used the outdated National Security Law to jail an opposition lawmaker and dissolve an opposition party, and has outlawed the Korean Government Employees' Union and the left-leaning Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union. Now she wants to replace all history textbooks in public schools with a single, government-authored history text.

The recent protests are part of a coalition effort. Fifty-two organizations representing various sectors of society came together earlier this year to establish a national coordinating body, with regional chapters across the country.

They're united not only against the labor law changes, but also the rest of Park's pro-corporate agenda and anti-democratic initiatives. Farmers are especially opposed to the series of free trade agreements that her government is pursuing—including the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which will further undermine the domestic rice market with a flood of cheap imports and weaken the country's ability to feed itself.

KCTU, the coalition's anchor, is the second largest labor federation in South Korea and by far the most militant. With 626,035 members, it accounts for approximately 40 percent of trade union members in South Korea and has more than 1,200 affiliated enterprise-level trade unions.

The larger and historically more pro-government Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU) had pledged earlier this year to not participate in the tripartite negotiations with government and business representatives about the changes to the labor laws. But its leadership did an about-face in the fall of this year and entered the talks, giving legitimacy to the government's push for anti-worker changes to the Labor Standards Acts and other labor laws. Rank and file members of FKTU, especially those in the financial, metal, and public sectors, strongly oppose their leadership's compromise with the government.

KCTU President Han, who boycotted the tripartite committee, considered by many as a rubber-stamping institution, is no stranger to struggle. In 2009, as head of the Ssangyong Motor branch of the Korean Metal Workers Union, he led 900 workers in a

77-day occupation of a SsangYong Motor plant to protest mass layoffs (their slogan: “Layoffs equal murder”), and this earned him a three-year jail sentence.

After he was released from prison, he launched a new protest—occupying an electrical transmission tower, 164 feet in the air, for 171 days, making the SsangYong layoffs a major issue in the 2012 presidential elections.

In 2014 he became KCTU president in the labor federation’s first direct election in which all 600,000 members were eligible to vote.

He ran on a pledge, if elected, to launch a general strike and make KCTU into Park’s “greatest fear.”

Hyun Lee and Gregory Elich are both members of US-Korea Solidarity Committee for Democracy and Peace. Gregory Elich is also the co-author of Killing Democracy: CIA and Pentagon Operations in the Post-Soviet Period. Lee is a KPI fellow and Elich is on the KPI Advisory Board.

THE US MILITARY'S TOXIC LEGACY IN KOREA

Gregory Elich | September 12, 2016

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By this time next year, the Yongsan Army Garrison in Seoul will be in the final stage of closing down, as U.S forces shift farther south and consolidate around Pyeongtaek. South Korea intends to convert the site into a series of six parks, but there are unresolved concerns regarding alarming levels of toxic contamination.

In the decade after an oil leak became known in 2001, cleanup efforts by the Seoul Metropolitan Government removed nearly 2,000 tons of oil-contaminated underground water from areas outside of Yongsan.[1] U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) claimed that it rectified the problem at its source in 2006, yet the level of petroleum hydrocarbon pollution in nearby groundwater continued to grow, multiplying by a factor of nearly thirteen times over the last four years.[2] The measured level of contamination outside Yongsan now stands at well over eight thousand times the Korean government safety standard. It can only be presumed that the situation inside the base is substantially worse.

Among the more harmful chemicals found in surrounding groundwater are benzene, toluene, and xylene. Benzene is a natural component of crude oil, and scientists working with the Lymphoma Program at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia performed a statistical analysis which found “significantly higher” rates of non-Hodgkin lymphoma near facilities “that released benzene into the surrounding air or water.”[3] According to the World Health Organization, “Benzene is a well-established cause of cancer in humans.”[4]

Toluene can serve as a solvent and is also used in making aviation fuel. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry reports, “Effects such as incoordination, cognitive impairment, and vision and hearing loss may become permanent with repeated exposure, especially at concentrations associated with intentional solvent abuse. High levels of toluene exposure during pregnancy, such as those associated with solvent abuse, may lead to retardation of mental abilities and growth in children. Other health effects of potential concern may include immune, kidney, liver, and reproductive effects.”[5] The New Jersey Department of Health warns, “Repeated exposure may cause liver, kidney and brain damage.”[6]

Xylene is a hydrocarbon that naturally occurs in petroleum, and affects the central nervous system. One study found that xylene “disturbs the action of proteins essential

to normal neuronal function,” and long-term exposure can lead to “impaired concentration and short-term memory.”[7]

Certainly, a major cleanup effort is needed to make the area suitable for park visitors. The first order of business is to identify the full extent of contamination. Yet, for more than ten years, USFK repeatedly rejected requests by the South Korean national government and the Seoul city government for permission to conduct an onsite inspection.[8] It was not until last year that U.S. Forces Korea relented, allowing Korean inspectors to enter Yongsan and test the soil and groundwater.[9] The results of that inspection remain under wraps.

Green Korea United, Lawyers for a Democratic Society, and other civic groups filed a suit in the Seoul Administrative Court, asking for the release of the ministry’s report on its inspection of Yongsan. The Ministry of Environment opposed the request, citing what it termed “diplomatic issues,” an apparent reference to the perceived need to cater to the sensitivities of the U.S. military. The court ruled in favor of the civic groups, which produced no result, as the Ministry of Environment is expected to lodge an appeal with the Supreme Court.[10]



Civic groups demanding the release of information on pollution at Yongsan US military base in Seoul.

Who will ultimately pay for the cleanup of toxic contamination at Yongsan remains to be seen, but if the past is any guide, then it can be expected that the Korean people will

shoulder the entire burden. Among other bases that the United States failed to clean up is Camp Casey, the future home of a university, with pollution covering 42 percent of its area.[11] In addition to the usual presence of hydrocarbons at U.S. bases, many also exhibit elevated levels of cadmium, which the U.S. Occupational and Health Administration reports is “highly toxic and exposure to this metal is known to cause cancer.”[12]

To date, the United States has not paid to decontaminate any base it has vacated, and the South Korean government has acquiesced every time. The most recent two conservative administrations have taken an odd stance on the matter, ultimately agreeing each time after long negotiations that the polluter bears no responsibility. Responding to criticism last year, Environmental Minister Yoo Seong-kyu asserted, “Who carries out the cleanup efforts is a secondary issue.”[13]

Efforts to persuade U.S. military officials to adopt a responsible attitude have been futile. Korean environmental activists noted that oil leaks at the various bases “are continually caused by the same reasons,” yet nothing is ever done to address the issue. “It costs less to prevent pollution than to take care of pollution after it has happened,” they point out.[14] True enough, but who pays for preventive measures is not the same party that covers the cost of cleanup. For the U.S. military, it is clearly more cost effective to do little or nothing, since remediation costs are invariably borne by the Korean people.

The Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the U.S. and South Korea, as signed in 1966, did not include an environmental provision, and it was not until 2001 that an amendment addressed the issue.[15] That amendment committed the United States to “promptly undertake to remedy contamination caused by United States Forces in Korea that poses a known, imminent and substantial endangerment to human health.”[16] In practice, this phrase, often referred to by its acronym, KISE, has been a bone of contention between U.S. and South Korean environmental officials.

It is instructive to consider how the document’s promise that the United States would “work together” with South Korea on environmental issues has played out in practice. There is no agreed upon standard on pollution remediation, and each case is separately negotiated between U.S. and Korean officials. It has been the Korean Ministry of Environment’s position that its standards ought to apply, whereas American officials insist on KISE as the sole determining factor in assessing cleanup responsibility.

Over a three-year period ending in 2007, the SOFA Joint Committee surveyed 41 military sites that had been closed down. Investigations were limited to 105 days per

location, of which only sixty days were given for onsite inspections. Moreover, the U.S. side proved unwilling to cooperate on surveys and consultations. The Korean firms selected to conduct the investigations were not provided with full data on the sites until near the end of the scheduled thirty-day period for assessment of records. When an extension was requested for onsite inspections, the Koreans were firmly rebuffed.[17]

Despite such constraints, inspectors identified dangerous levels of carcinogenic substances at all but one of the 23 military bases that had been recently returned, at levels generally measuring far above Korean safety standards.

The United States points to Article IV of the SOFA, which stipulates that it “is not obliged...to restore the facilities and areas” to their original condition, asserting therefore that it bears no responsibility for cleanup.[18] However, in the agreed minutes amended to the SOFA in 2001, the United States “confirms its policy to respect relevant Republic of Korea Government environmental laws, regulations, and standards.”[19]

It appears that while the United States had promised to “respect” Korean environmental laws, it does not feel compelled to adhere to them. KISE remains the standard. U.S. military officials assert that there are no relevant health issues among its personnel. Therefore, it cannot be said that any U.S. bases meet the KISE guidelines. But this is not how carcinogens typically work. It can take years, or even decades, for exposure to toxic substances to produce cancer. Tours of duty for U.S. personnel tend to be relatively short, and it is unlikely that U.S. officials checked the medical records of former personnel who served in Korea to ascertain their health status. Plainly put, there would have to be immediate or near-immediate lethality or severe illness among large numbers of personnel before the United States would concede the need to fund cleanup efforts.

In meetings with their South Korean counterparts, American environmental subcommittee members argued that no remediation can be done unless the standard of KISE is met, and none of the returned bases qualified. Counter-arguments that contamination levels far exceeded Korean environmental standards fell on deaf ears. Eventually, to placate its Korean partners, the U.S. side offered to implement eight remediation actions over a six-month period. The U.S. side chose the eight activities, without prior agreement by the Koreans, and in the end declared that it had completed its responsibilities. It was a sop, leaving myriad issues of contamination unaddressed. Korean environmental officials were particularly annoyed at the bioslurping that was performed at pilot sites, as this method had only a peripheral and temporary impact. [20] Bioslurping is a technique whereby oil is vacuum-pumped from soil and the top of the water table. It has the advantage of having a lower cost than alternative measures,

although it fails to treat residual soil contamination. It can be a useful approach, but not where the source continues to pollute. In such cases, areas processed by bioslurping are quickly re-contaminated.

Once USFK returned the 23 bases to Korea, the Ministry of Environment conducted a desultory one-month inspection, focusing only on confirming whether or not the U.S. side had completed the eight cleanup actions. The ministry found that it had not. USFK had failed even to remove the oil in the water that resulted from the bioslurping operation.[21]

The South Korean government acquiesced to the U.S. position, even though soil and groundwater pollution remained largely untouched. South Korean officials were not given the opportunity to review and assess cleanup operations while they were taking place, as American officials felt they were only doing the Koreans a favor.[22]





South Korean technicians test for toxic chemicals at Camp Carroll.

In 2011, claims by former U.S. servicemen that they had helped bury around 250 drums of Agent Orange at Camp Carroll in Chilgok in 1978 triggered an investigation. But when inspection results indicated that trace amounts of the defoliant found fell well within safety levels, the issue was considered closed and mostly forgotten. By limiting attention to the question of whether or not dioxin was still buried in the camp, other important matters went unexplored.[23]

Although USFK maintains that dioxin was never present at Camp Carroll, it admitted that it had buried other toxic substances at the camp. These were later dug up and removed, along with 40 to 60 tons of contaminated soil.[24] Records show that some barrels of toxic substances were shipped to Utah, without indicating their final disposition.[25] What became of the remainder is unclear, and the lack of military records hints at improper disposal procedures. As *Stars and Stripes* reported, "Nobody knows where they were taken." [26] Could it be that some of the barrels were disposed of elsewhere in Korea or dumped in the sea?

Green Korea United feels the investigation was handled in a superficial manner, as boring had extended less than ten feet below the surface. Steve House, one of the former servicemen who had been involved in the burial of dioxin, reports that the substance

was dumped in a trench and covered by twenty to thirty feet of soil. The investigators failed to dig deeply enough, so if there had been any substantial leakage into the ground from the buried drums, it would not have been discovered. In another curious omission, investigators interviewed none of the former officers in charge of the burial operation.[27]

According to the U.S. Army, its internal investigation found no trace of Agent Orange. Environmental expert Steve Brittle, who was later shown a copy of the Army's report, pointed out that two components of Agent Orange were present. "They weren't entirely truthful, let's be honest. The testing says what it says," he observed. "They found it. They found what would reasonably be considered a cooled off version. Time has worn it down, but it's still there." [28]

Generally overlooked is what the investigators did find in abundance: volatile organic compounds in the water near the camp exceeding 900 times safe levels for drinking water.[29] Worrying measurements of trichloroethylene and tetrachloroethylene, used for metal degreasing, were discovered.[30] Both substances are classified as carcinogenic.[31] An earlier inspection uncovered high levels of heavy metals and pesticides in water samples, as well as toluene in soil recorded at more than twelve times the allowable level.[32]

Environmental Compliance Supervisor Tom Curry noted that the groundwater at Camp Carroll was contaminated with trichloroethylene and perchloroethylene. In all, more than one hundred toxic substances were buried on the base in 1978. "The more contaminants you have, the worse the water has got to be for public health," Curry pointed out. "No one should be drinking this water," Brittle says. Concerning the several children living nearby who developed leukemia, Brittle adds, "I would say there's a 99 percent likelihood that their leukemia was caused by these chemicals. I would be concerned for the people who are drinking water from those wells." [33]

Camp Carroll quickly became a non-issue in the U.S. media — not that it ever held any particular prominence — once the question of Agent Orange was dismissed. Koreans residing near the camp were not so sanguine and questioned why they were witnessing abnormally high rates of cancer. Suspicions ran high, and as one resident put it in a meeting, "The USFK disposed defoliants, which is an outright criminal act. Who in the world lets the accused do the investigation?" [34]

The case of Camp Hialeah in Busan is typical. Leading up to the base's turnover to the Busan city government in 2006, the Ministry of Environment was only allotted the standard 105-day investigation period, leaving one-quarter of the base unexamined. As

so often, U.S. military officials rejected Korean requests to extend the inspection period. [35] What the investigation did manage to uncover in its limited period of access was disturbing enough, and the resulting report has never been made public. Opposition assemblywoman Lee Mi-kyung was informed by a government source, however, that a groundwater sample contained petroleum residue at 481 times the legal limit, and several carcinogenic substances were also measured at well above safety standards.[36] After four years of fruitless negotiations over the issue of who would pay for remediation of toxic contamination at Camp Hialeah, the Korean government agreed that it would foot the bill.[37]

In every case, USFK has succeeded in evading responsibility for the pollution it has caused, based on the dubious standard of KISE. Ten years ago, an estimate placed the cost of cleaning the 59 camps to be returned by 2008 to the level of Korean standards at more than half a trillion dollars.[38] If one factors in the bases handed back since that time, the overall total could double that amount.

It may be too much to expect the Park Geun-hye administration to put the needs of its people ahead of U.S. interests, but it can be hoped that a new government in 2017 will exhibit more care for its citizens. Overcoming U.S. obstinacy will present a challenge, but one that must be met. Yongsan would be a good place to start.

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A CANDLELIGHT REVOLUTION

International Strategy Center | January 2017

Sitting in Gwanghwamun square, the screen rapidly dialed up to 10,000,000 as it added up the number of participants in the past ten candlelight protests. Every Saturday evening for the last two months of 2016, people had come out calling for impeachment in the streets. A few weeks before, the impeachment motion had passed the National Assembly in overwhelming numbers.

We were saying goodbye to the year with a candlelight protest on New Year's Eve complete with Christmas jingles about impeachment. The rally was followed by two separate marches, one to the presidential Blue House, the other to the constitutional court: a reminder that, whether villain or hero, the judges too were actors in this candlelight story. Yet, the protagonists resided not in the halls of power, but in the streets holding candles. Now, a month, and three candlelight protests later, as the special prosecutor gears up to question President Park and the constitutional court set a March deadline for its verdict, the candlelight protests are achieving what many thought impossible: impeachment of the president. In the process, the candlelight revolution is transforming Korean democracy and its people.

It was the candlelight protests that pushed politicians past the safeguards of the status quo and emboldened/pressured them to represent the will and outrage of their constituents. The candlelight protests began with demands for President Park's voluntary resignation. As evidence for abuse of power, leaked state secrets, and bribery mounted against her, and as it became clear that neither a million, nor two million people protest were enough for her to step down, the chants for resignation changed to impeachment and incarceration.

However, elected representatives lagged behind public opinion and will. In fact, faced with the awesome task before them, the opposition parties grew timid, then wavered when politically expedient solutions presented themselves. The first instance was at the beginning as the scandal was unraveling. Park proposed that for the sake of returning the country to normal, she would allow the National Assembly to nominate a new prime minister with extensive powers in domestic affairs. The main opposition party – the Democratic party – wavered. Phone blitzes from the public later, they returned back to the popular demand of resignation. As it became clear that President Park would not step down no matter the political cost or size of the candlelight protests, calls for resignation turned into impeachment. As public outrage swelled to nearly 2 million, the opposition parties jumped on the impeachment bandwagon.

Yet, just before the impeachment motion was to be introduced, the second carrot was dropped and dangled before them: President Park, in a public address, introduced the possibility of voluntary resignation by April.¹ The anti-Park faction of the ruling party that had abandoned ship and had plotted a course towards cooperation with the opposition parties now was shifting towards the April voluntary resignation. Faced with the prospect of insufficient votes (without the anti-Park faction votes) for approval of the impeachment, the opposition wavered. The people mobilized: They blitzed the phones of individual Saenuri Party members and protested outside their offices. Even the opposition that had grown timid was dragged back to the front of the impeachment struggle.

Then that Saturday, 2.3 million people came out insisting on either an immediate resignation or impeachment. By Monday, the politicians had changed: The opposition party members had grown bold in their pursuit of impeachment, even holding mini-rallies; the anti-Park faction was once again speaking about impeachment; and even the pro-Park faction made the crucial decision to allow members to vote at will. Thus, 234 assembly members voted for impeachment, far exceeding the necessary 200. Not only had the anti-Park faction voted for impeachment, so had many from the pro-Park faction.

With the president stripped of her powers during the impeachment, the special prosecution² no longer faced the daunting task of investigating a president with full powers. Kim Jong-min, chair of the Seoul branch of the Justice Party, notes, "The prosecutor has the power to search and to summon people for interrogation. Yet, until now they have always been careful of those in power. But this special prosecutor doesn't have to do that. That's because of the candlelight protests." While the special prosecutor's investigation is separate from that of the constitutional court, the former's findings still impact the latter's verdict.

The Choi Soon-Sil scandal may have initiated the process, but the impeachment process has not just been about Park's misdeeds with Choi Soon-sil. The candlelight protests created a space to revisit Park's other misdeeds, in particular her deadliest: the Sewol ferry accident that killed 304. Not only was the rescue under her watch a perfect storm of incompetence and negligence, but the investigation that followed was also plagued by repression and cover-up by a Park administration unwilling to reveal the truth or learn its lessons. Despite its gravity, the Sewol ferry tragedy didn't just naturally appear in the impeachment motion.

Yoo Kyung-geun, a father of one of the high school victims and chair of the 4/16 Sewol Families for Truth and a Safer Society, relates how the families kept the Sewol issue

afloat when the protests first broke out, “When the Choi Soon Sil scandal first broke out, we were afraid that it would simply drown out the issue of the Sewol. So, we took a very bold and desperate gamble. In the first candlelight protest, we gathered and chanted that President Park should be incarcerated and that they 7 hours after the Sewol ferry should be investigated. We were very nervous about a backlash, but we took the chance anyways because we were so desperate. While everyone was chanting that the President step down, we were the only ones chanting that she be imprisoned. On the next protest, it wasn’t just us that started protesting, it was also those around us. By the third candlelight protest, people on stage started calling out for her arrest.”

Despite the growing calls for an investigation to the seven hours following the Sewol ferry accident, the opposition parties hesitated in placing it in the impeachment motion. “Three days before the motion was introduced a member of the opposition called me, ‘Isn’t the impeachment important? The anti-Park faction won’t vote for impeachment because of this provision, couldn’t you please understand our situation? Maybe we could pursue the investigation [to the Sewol tragedy] later,’” recalled Yoo. His answer was resolute. They would not accept an impeachment motion without the Sewol issue. In fact, they would actively protest any motion without it. The Sewol was included in a motion that passed amidst the flickering lights of 2.3 million.

Having witnessed the candlelight protests first hand, it becomes clear that it is not just about impeaching President Park but also about transforming Korean democracy and people. People come out in the hundreds of thousands and millions and sit on the pavement in sub-zero temperature. They come out with their unions and organizations. Many simply come out with their families and friends. Students ranging from elementary to university come out wearing their school uniforms stirring the imagination about the collective education on democratic action for the next generation. The stage that facilitates this transformation are massive productions at the scale of outdoor rock festivals: multi-screens so that millions can see and hear the stage, chants prepared in advance, hundreds of thousands of candles, lists of performers and speakers, and the organization and logistics of the marches that follow. The productions are carried out by the People’s Emergency Action to Bring to Bring Down President Park, a coalition of 1,500 groups that comes up with the chants, line-up of performers, and sets the stage. Ahn Jin Geol, a standing member of the operations committee, explains that the chants come from the grassroots up through their network of 1,500 groups.

Being at the protests, it’s clear that they are different in character from previous ones. While the chants are militant, the songs that play are not the same militant songs usually heard in protests. Rather, they are rock concerts, from reggae rock to ballads.

They not only entertain, but they also move and touch. “The change started on Nov. 5 and 12 as the singers came out, as families came out with their toddlers, as students came out. The space became firmly established as a cultural night.” The second moment was when the organizers succeeded in marching peacefully to up to 100 meters of the Blue House. “The performances were moving, and we were going strictly by the law in the march and creating a peaceful atmosphere,” explains Ahn.

The constitutional court has announced it will deliver a verdict before March 13. All signs and evidence point to an impeachment, which means that a presidential election would be held by May. Yet, a new president is not enough. “We can’t just demand a change in government, but we must call for deep fundamental reforms,” expresses Kim. How far this candlelight revolution goes will be determined by its protagonists.

1. An April resignation would have created a whole different set of conditions than the current one. The special prosecution would have had to carry out their investigation against an acting president with full powers, as opposed to one stripped of her powers.
2. The constitutional court and the special prosecutor are both part of two different processes. The constitutional court became involved after the impeachment motion was passed. The special prosecutor became involved after a special bill approving him on November 17. While the constitutional court determines whether the president violated the constitution in her role as president, the special prosecutor conducts a separate investigation. While both undoubtedly influence each other, they are part of two separate spheres.

Special thanks to Kim Jong-min Chair of the Seoul Branch of the Justice Party, Ahn Jin-geol General Secretary of People’s Solidarity for Participatory Democracy and an a standing member of the Operations Committee of the People’s Emergency Action to Bring Down President Park, Yoo Kyung-geun, chair of the 4/16 Sewol Families for Truth and a Safer Society, and Kim Sang-gyun (former producer at MBC).

HONORING THE CANDLELIGHT REVOLUTION IN A TIME OF LOOMING WAR IN KOREA

Jang Jinsook | September 17, 2017

Jang Jinsook, Director of Planning of the Minjung Party of South Korea, presented the following two-part speech at the People's Congress of Resistance at Howard University in Washington, D.C., on September 16-17.

The Minjung Party (formerly called the New People's Party) is a new progressive party that will formally launch on October 15. Its stated aim is to complete the "candlelight revolution" that ousted former President Park Geun-hye by unifying South Korean progressives and fighting for systemic change and the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula. This talk can also be viewed on KPI's youtube channel.

Part 1: Urgent Tasks for South Korea's Progressive Movement in a Time of Looming War Threats

North Korea Expands Its Theater of Operation to the Pacific

We are in the midst of renewed war threats between the United States and North Korea. The only thing that's different from past tensions between the two countries is that the Korean peninsula is no longer the only place faced with the threat of becoming a battlefield. The U.S. mainland, too, is no longer sheltered from the threat of a nuclear strike.

What North Korea wants is genuine talks with the United States. It demands the United States cease the U.S.-ROK combined military exercises and abandon the idea of denuclearization as a precondition for talks. Absent such steps toward dialogue, North Korea, it appears, will not stop developing nuclear weapons and missiles, as these guarantee its survival. Determined that the United States should also feel the constant threat of war that has become normalized on the Korean peninsula, North Korea has threatened to surround the U.S. territory of Guam with a missile strike.

Despite North Korea's warning, the United States went ahead with the Ulchi Freedom Guardian exercises in August and threatened military action, including a "preventive war" and a first strike. In response, North Korea conducted its first military exercise in the Pacific Ocean by launching the Hwaseong-12, an intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM), over Japan and hitting its mark in the North Pacific on August 29. The U.S. response was calling for stronger sanctions and threatening military action. On September 15, North Korea conducted its second Hwaseong-12 test-launch. This missile

flew a greater distance than the first, and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un praised the combat efficiency of the “strategic ballistic rocket” as “perfect.” What this means is that North Korea’s theater of operation has now expanded to the Pacific.

During his visit to the site of the second test-launch of the Hwaseong-12, Kim Jong-un reportedly said, in reference to the U.S. sanctions against North Korea, “How absurd that the so-called superpowers still believe they can force us to surrender through sanctions.”

The UN sanctions are, of course, painful for North Korea, but they cannot force the country to capitulate. That’s because North Korea experienced and survived even harsher isolation due to sanctions in the 1990s. That experience taught the country that the only way to survive U.S. aggression is to bolster its military strength and build a self-reliant economy that can withstand an economic embargo. And this is what North Korea has been preparing for the past ten years.

This is the history and the present reality. But the Trump administration continues to call for more and stronger sanctions. His administration really knows nothing about North Korea. If the current situation continues, the people of the United States will face the same chronic war threats that I and others on the Korean peninsula have faced all our lives.

The Dilemma of “Enveloping Fire” around Guam

North Korea’s threat of surrounding Guam with “enveloping fire” poses a growing dilemma for the United States.

According to international law, a North Korean missile strike around Guam cannot be construed as an act of war. What Kim Rak-gyom, the head of North Korea’s Strategic Rocket Forces, threatened on August 9 is not that North Korea would actually attack Guam, but that it would launch missiles into the international waters near Guam. Given that most countries with IRBMs have test-launched their missiles in international waters, North Korea’s action cannot be regarded an act of war.

Albeit legal according to international law, North Korea’s threat of an “enveloping fire” around Guam poses a political challenge to the United States.

The United States has repeatedly said it is reviewing plans to shoot down North Korean missiles if launched toward Guam. But as North Korea’s “enveloping fire” around Guam cannot be deemed an act of war according to international law, it does not

constitute the legitimate grounds for a military attack on North Korea. By contrast, a U.S. military response to North Korea's "enveloping fire" would be an act of war and, in turn, could justify a North Korean military attack. On the other hand, if the United States failed to shoot down North Korea's missiles, it would be humiliated in the eyes of the international community.

This is what we are witnessing today. On September 15, the United States and Japan did not shoot down the Hwaseong-12 missile.

After every North Korean missile test, the United States and Japan warned, "If you do it again, we will shoot it down!" They announced that they had detected North Korea fueling its missile the day before the latest test-launch. But even as they watched the missile first being fueled, then flying over Hokkaido, Japan, and finally landing in the Pacific Ocean, they did nothing to intercept it. They just sat there staring at the missile's trajectory.

A U.S. government official said the missile posed no threat to warrant interception. Even a passing dog would laugh at his statement. The U.S. government should be more honest. Shooting down the missile could trigger an all-out war, and failing while attempting to shoot it down would expose the ineffectiveness of its missile defense capability and hurt its ability to produce and sell these costly weapon systems. That's why they just stared at the sky.

The United States is now discussing the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons. The U.S.-North Korea crisis is a bonanza for the military industrial complex.

But as North Korea intensifies its pressure, the United States will fall deeper into its dilemma of whether to exercise a military option or not. Even if only for their own security and welfare, the people of the United States need to call for immediate talks between the United States and North Korea toward a permanent peace agreement.

Next Steps for the South Korean Progressive Movement

Step one: Demand immediate U.S.-North Korea talks for a peace agreement on the Korean Peninsula.

We regard the current situation as the greatest crisis since the Korean War.

There are those in South Korea who do not consider the current situation to be so serious. There are two reasons for this. One is desensitization because of the chronic

nature of war threats in Korea. The other is a false sense of security from the belief that North Korea's nuclear weapons and missiles guarantee deterrence. This is based on false understanding of the nature of imperialism and the military industrial complex. War often erupts when we're least expecting it. In the current situation of heightened tension, even a minor accident or miscalculation can trigger a war with catastrophic consequences.

We will unite all who desire peace in South Korea to call for immediate talks between the United States and North Korea for a permanent peace agreement on the Korean peninsula.

Trump plans to visit South Korea in November. We will organize a mass anti-Trump action to express our opposition to war and to call for peace on the Korean peninsula.

Step two: Build progressive political power.

The people of South Korea have great expectations of the Moon Jae-in government because it was born out of the candlelight revolution. But as the additional deployment of the THAAD launchers has clearly shown, the Moon administration is powerless in a system centered on the U.S.-ROK alliance. It even chose to prioritize the U.S.-ROK alliance over its pledge to the Seongju residents and the South Korean people.

What the Moon government's THAAD deployment proved is that unless the people create our own party, we cannot become protagonists in our own society. It reaffirmed that unless all South Korean progressive forces come together to fight against U.S. aggression and the forces of reaction, there can be no peace on the Korean peninsula. We aim to unify all progressive forces in this time of war threats and to strengthen our political power through unified struggle for a peace system on the Korean peninsula.

Step three: Use every opportunity to expose the problematic nature of the U.S.-ROK alliance and U.S. troops in Korea.

We expect a series of issues related to the U.S.-ROK alliance and the presence of U.S. troops in Korea to emerge in the coming months: Trump's proposed renegotiation of the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement; the annual U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting; U.S.-ROK negotiations on defense burden-sharing, the exposure of corruption in the defense industry, the expansion of the U.S. military base in Pyeongtaek, the environmental pollution left behind by the relocation of the Yongsan military base, and the U.S. Military Chemical and Biological Weapons Lab in Busan.

We will turn all these issues into opportunities to call for an end to the unequal U.S.-ROK alliance, which subordinates South Korea's interests, and regain our sovereignty.

The United States seeks to transform the mission of the U.S.-ROK alliance from the defense of South Korea to the defense of the U.S. mainland.

The U.S.-ROK alliance and U.S. troops in Korea only aggravate the current tension. Once the current tension is resolved and a peace system is established, they will no longer have a reason to remain.

Our next steps will focus on mass education on the problematic nature of the U.S.-ROK alliance and U.S. troops in Korea. We will also prepare for a post-Peace Agreement Korea without the presence of U.S. troops.

Part 2: Lessons from South Korea's "Candlelight Revolution": Consciousness of Protagonism

In 1987, the South Korean people, through a blood-stained struggle, won the democratic right to directly elect the president. Everyone celebrated the end of military dictatorship and the beginning of a democratic era. And through the liberal governments of Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun, there was actual progress in the areas of democracy and peace.

But this so-called democratic system produced the very anti-democratic Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye administrations. The latter largely stemmed from the inadequacy of the current system of democracy, but it also reflected the choice of the majority of the people for whom the question of "how to put food on the table" became the primary concern.

Of course, these reactionary governments failed to provide a solution for "putting food on the table" for the majority of the people. They also rolled back democratic gains, and their authoritarian style was not much different from that of previous military dictatorships.

The so-called Democratic Party and the National Assembly, which were born out of the struggle for democracy, failed to defend hard-won democratic gains and sometimes even acted as an accomplice to the reactionary Park Geun-hye government. In the fall of 2016, the corrupt nature of the Park Geun-hye government was laid bare in front of the people, but the so-called opposition party and the National Assembly did nothing.

The people, however, were different. “I elected this government into power,” they said, “So I will be the one to end it.”

October 29, 2016 marked the first candlelight mass demonstration. Nineteen mass demonstrations followed, and the candlelight caught fire across the country and culminated in 1.7 million people pouring out into the streets. This eventually led to the impeachment of Park Geun-hye.

How were the South Korean people able to fight and win?

First of all, it was through continuous, ceaseless struggle.

During the nine years of the reactionary Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye governments, South Korean progressive activists were accused of being “North Korea sympathizers,” the Unified Progressive Party was forcibly dissolved by the government, and labor unions suffered barbarous state crackdowns. And the Park Geun-hye government took complete control of the judicial branch and the corporate media.

But the people did not give up and continued to fight. In 2015, workers, farmers, and the urban poor came together in a broad national anti-Park Geun-hye united front and organized a mass demonstration. The more the government cracked down, the more the people responded by coming together in unity and solidarity.

It was at this mass demonstration in 2015 that farmer-activist Baek Nam-gi was hospitalized in a coma as a result of the murderous use of force by the police.

Meanwhile, the Park Geun-hye government continued to commit heinous crimes, such as its mishandling of the Sewol tragedy and the “comfort women” issue. Even ordinary people without complex ideological views regarded the government’s actions on these issues as egregious. And it was the people’s experiences in these struggles that culminated in the candlelight revolution.

In 2016, after lying in a coma for a year, farmer Baek Nam-gi passed away. The South Korean government, in an attempt to cover up its culpability, deployed hundreds of police officers to surround the hospital where his body lay to snatch it away and alter the truth about the cause of his death. Progressive activists physically confronted the police in an attempt to deter them.

In the midst of all this, news of the so-called Park Geun-hye/Choi Soon-sil scandal broke in the media. The left was already fired up and ready to fight, and the people who

said, “Can’t take it no more”—including office workers, housewives, junior high school students, and the elderly—all came out to the streets.

The organized left and civil society—these two forces came together and held candlelight demonstrations at the city, county, and province levels across the country. This became the basis for a sustained movement.

Second of all, when people realize that they are the protagonists of change and have the power to uncover the truth, nothing can stop them.

When people merely think of themselves as helping or supporting a cause, they tend to de-prioritize it when they get busy with other things. But when we think of something as our own imperative, we don’t put it off. Likewise, when the majority of the people felt that it was their own imperative to bring down the repressive government, this created a revolutionary possibility.

I think this is critical. Everyone here is the protagonist of their own lives, this society, and the world. Everyone on this earth was born with the right to be a protagonist. But we don’t yet have the consciousness of protagonists.

How do people become protagonists of change? How can we make this happen? The importance of this question was the greatest lesson of the candlelight revolution.

The U.S.-North Korea Conflict: The Final Stage

Military tension between North and South Korea has always been headline news in Korea. Every year in March and August, when the U.S. and South Korean militaries conduct their massive military exercises, tensions escalate, and each time, people in Korea experience renewed fear: “Maybe this time, it will really lead to war.”

The U.S. and South Korean militaries say these are routine exercises, but they deploy weapons of mass destruction, rehearse the occupation of North Korea, and simulate real-war scenarios as well as the decapitation of the North Korean leadership. North Korea has strongly objected to these exercises, but this has been going on for a long time.

The Korean peninsula has always lived with the imminent threat of war. But until recently, it never made headline news in the United States.

I've been seeing the headlines in U.S. news in the few days I've been here: "Kim Jong-un, North Korea, missiles...." This ironically pleased me because finally what was once considered only a problem of the Korean peninsula has now become a U.S. problem. Now that the war threats are acute, it has finally become headline news in the United States.

It is the United States that has conducted the greatest number of nuclear tests, possesses the greatest nuclear arsenal, and has actually dropped atomic bombs on a civilian population. North Korea is in the stage of developing and testing nuclear weapons, opposes U.S. aggression and sanctions, and demands a peace treaty. Which party is the real threat?

For the first time in a long time, defending the U.S. mainland from the threat of nuclear war has become a priority policy agenda for the U.S. government. Of course, news about North Korea must be distressing for the people who live in the United States.

But it is the U.S. government that has created this situation, and the solution is quite simple. It is to realize a peace agreement between the United States and North Korea.

The more the United States piles on sanctions against North Korea through the UN, the more North Korea will become hostile and the two countries will inch closer to war. And the more this crisis intensifies, the U.S. government will sell more weapons to South Korea and increasingly meddle in South Korea's internal affairs.

For the past sixty years, since the Korean War and the 1953 signing of the Mutual Defense Treaty between South Korea and the United States, South Korea has been a military outpost for the United States. The so-called U.S.-ROK alliance seriously undermines the sovereignty of South Korea. The forced deployment of the U.S. THAAD missile defense system is a case in point.

We demand the following:

1. The United States must end sanctions against North Korea, which are an act of war.
2. North Korea and the United States must sign a permanent peace agreement.
3. U.S. forces in Korea should withdraw from the Korean peninsula along with their weapons of mass destruction.
4. The United States must stop meddling in South Korea's internal affairs.

Lastly, we must build enduring solidarity for peace in Korea and across the world.

The Minjung Party Is a Party of the Candlelight Revolution

The Minjung Party is a party of workers, farmers, urban poor, youth, and women. It is a party that aims to unify all progressive forces in South Korea.

The Minjung Party aims to realize people's sovereignty through the self-reliant unification of the Korean peninsula, class and social equality, and the practice of direct democracy.

The era of voting for politicians and hoping they will represent us is over. What we demonstrated through the candlelight revolution is that the people, when unified in action, are more competent than any career politician.

The Minjung Party will move the arena of politics from Yo-ui-do, where the National Assembly is located, to the public square, where the people gather. We are a party that aims to realize people's sovereignty through direct democracy.

"The most competent political leader is the unified people" is our slogan, and we will fight for a people-centered society and peace on the Korean peninsula and the world.

Jang Jinsook is the Director of Planning of the Minjung Party (formerly New People's Party) of South Korea. She earned a PhD in Sociology at Sungkonghoe University and studied Political Science and Policy Planning at the Sungkonghoe University Graduate School for NGO Studies. She was formerly a member of the Policy and Education Committee of the Seoul branch of Kyoreh Hana, a South Korean NGO devoted to peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula.

THE GWANGJU UPRISING AND NORTH KOREA: WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM DECLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS

By Tim Shorrock | October 10, 2017

Originally published in *38North*.

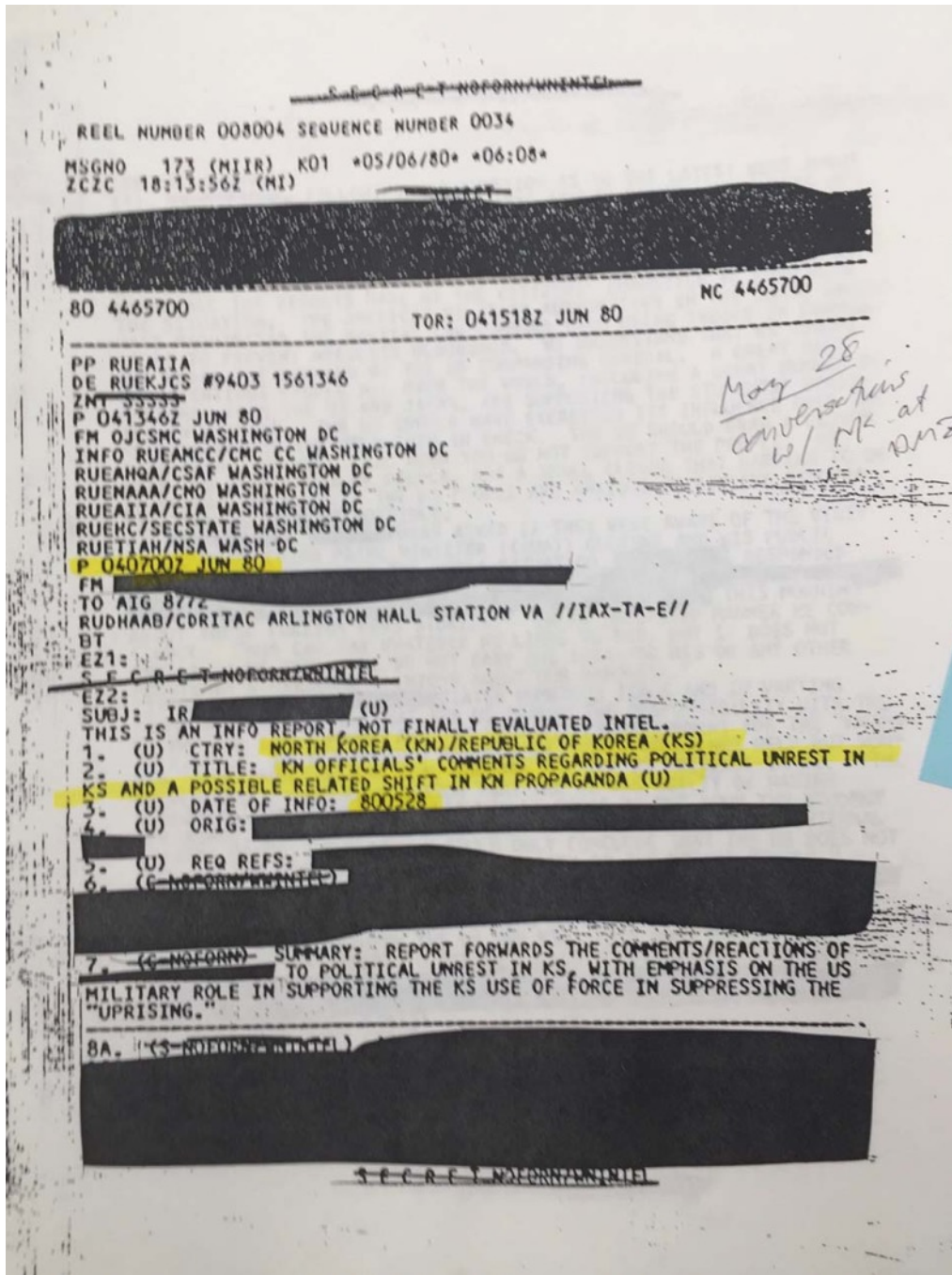
Recently declassified information on the responses of the South Korean and US governments to the uprising in the southwestern city of Gwangju in 1980 and North Korea's reaction to those events underscore two critical lessons that the Trump administration is hopefully learning during the nuclear standoff with Kim Jong Un.

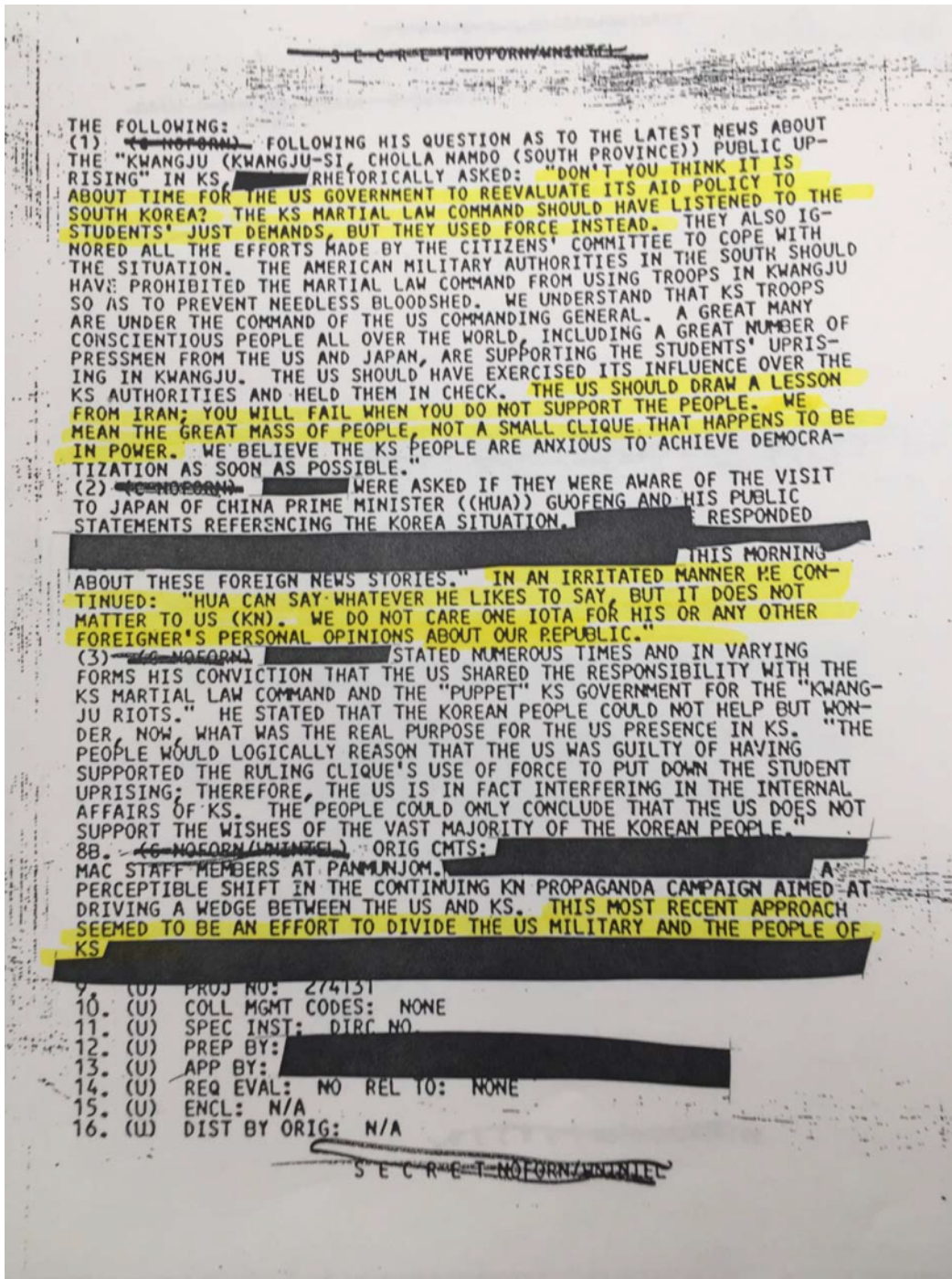
- First, when it comes to its internal affairs, the DPRK's animosity to Chinese influence can be intense, and goes back decades. That's especially important to remember at a time when the Trump administration is trying to persuade China to exert economic, political and even military pressure on Kim to force him to stop his weapons testing and move towards disarmament. And it underscores why so many experts scoff at the idea of outsourcing US policy to China and instead urge direct talks and negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang.
- Second, as a result of this information, a spotlight is now shining on the Carter administration's decision in 1980 to support the ROK Army's decision to end the Gwangju Uprising with troops from the US-South Korean Joint Command. This was a giant setback to US-South Korean relations and stirred up a deep sense of betrayal and anti-Americanism in the South that could easily resurface if the Trump administration is seen by the Korean public as bullying the Moon government into accepting its approach to dealing with the North Korean crisis.

On May 28, 1980, American and North Korean military officials met at the Panmunjom Truce Village on the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The timing was propitious: just 24 hours earlier, the ROK Army, with full US approval, had rolled into Gwangju to end the first violent rebellion in South Korea since 1953. Dozens of citizens who had taken up arms against the martial law forces of Lt. General Chun Doo-hwan had been killed in the assault, adding to a death toll of several hundred.

Because of the intense press controls imposed by Chun's martial law command at the time, few in South Korea had any inkling about what had happened. But the North Koreans knew, and they had plenty to say about it, according to a declassified Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) summary of the meeting that was sent to Secretary of State Edmund Muskie and other senior US officials.

"Don't you think it is about time for the US government to reevaluate its aid policy to South Korea?" the North Koreans asked their American counterparts. The United States, they insisted, "should have prohibited" Chun from using troops in Gwangju "so as to prevent needless bloodshed." Apparently taken aback, one of the US officials asked if they "were aware" of recent comments made by Chinese Prime Minister Hua Guofeng about the situation in South Korea.





The initial response is blacked out in the cable, one of several thousand documents I obtained about the US role in Gwangju under the Freedom of Information Act. But the rest of his answer is clear. Talking in "an irritated manner," the North Korean officer seemed to spit out his words. "Hua can say whatever he likes to say, but it does not matter to us (KN)," he said. "We do not care one iota for his or any other foreigner's personal opinions about our Republic." Discussion over.

The CIA cable, along with several other documents that analyze North Korean policy and actions in the crucial year of 1980, is now relevant because Gwangju has suddenly been thrust back into South Korean consciousness in a major way. The most popular movie today in South Korea is "A Taxi Driver," the true story of Jurgen Hinzpeter, the late German photo-journalist who captured the first images of Chun's attack on the citizens of Gwangju with help from a Seoul taxi driver. The film has been seen by over 12 million people, making it the nation's 10th most popular film, and got a major boost on August 13 after a public showing for President Moon Jae-in and Edeltraut Brahmstaedt, Hinzpeter's widow (he died in 2016). It will be South Korea's nomination for best foreign film at next year's Oscars and has brought the story of Gwangju to a global audience.

With the film's recounting of the massacre seared into the public's mind, Moon recently ordered a government investigation into who ordered Chun's martial law army to shoot protesters in Gwangju. His announcement had been expected since May 18, when the president spoke movingly at the national commemorations of the uprising at Gwangju's cemetery in the hilly outskirts of the city (I was in the audience as a guest of the city). "The truth of Gwangju is a rage I cannot ignore," he declared.

As he did in his early campaign stops in the city, Moon joined local citizens in singing the "March of the Beloved," the famous tribute to the fallen democratic fighters of Gwangju. Under the probe he ordered, the Ministry of Defense said this week it will investigate reports that soldiers were ordered to fire on protestors from helicopters and that Chun and the martial law command had readied fighter jets to Gwangju to support their crackdown.

The North Korean connection to Gwangju is crucial because, under the conservative administrations of Moon's predecessors, Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye, right-wingers have attempted to diminish the uprising's significance. These groups, and Chun himself, charge that the rebellion was secretly organized by North Korean military officers and was therefore a communist-backed uprising that deserved to be put down with force.

This theory is spread by rightist groups who claim to have photographic evidence of North Korean military officers who infiltrated the citizen's army that fought Chun's martial law forces (this claim has been debunked by reporters and researchers who have identified the "North Koreans" as locals). Another ludicrous claim is that the Anthem, which is sung with such gusto in Gwangju, is a pro-North Korean tribute to Kim Il Sung (by embracing the song, President Moon has effectively put that one to rest).

Even though these smears have largely been debunked, they remain a painful reminder to Gwangju of the divisions that wracked the country in 1980. In this context, the US documents of this period are important—and may even help resolve some of the issues being raised in the government’s investigation of one of the great tragedies of Korean history.

One of the more intriguing documents in my FOIA collection is a CIA report about a “secret meeting” chaired by North Korean leader Kim Il Sung at his presidential mansion in Pyongyang on May 19, 1980, the second day of the uprising in Gwangju. Its purpose, according to the CIA, was to discuss “KN actions” in connection with the rebellion—in other words, to debate whether the Korean People’s Army should intervene or not. Unless the CIA had a human source within Kim’s inner circle (unlikely), the intelligence was probably obtained from electronic intercepts. That conclusion is strengthened by notations on the cable showing it was sent by the US Army’s Intelligence and Security Command—which operated many of the National Security Agency’s listening posts around the world—and received by INSCOM’s famous Arlington Hill Station in northern Virginia.

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SUBJ: IR [REDACTED]

THIS IS AN INFO REPORT, NOT FINALLY EVALUATED INTEL

1. (U) CTRY: NORTH KOREA (KH)/REPUBLIC OF KOREA (KS)

2. (U) TITLE: KN INTENTIONS/PERCEPTION IN CONNECTION WITH
KWANGJU INCIDENT (U)

3. (U) DATE OF INFO: 800518 - 800527

4. (U) ORIG [REDACTED]

5. (U) REQ REFS: [REDACTED]

6. (U) [REDACTED]

7. ~~(U) [REDACTED]~~ SUMMARY: ON 19 MAY 80, AMIDST THE STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS AND SUBSEQUENT RIOT IN KWANGJU, KS; A 'SECRET MEETING WAS HELD AT THE KN PRESIDENTIAL MANSION BETWEEN KN PRESIDENT ((KIM)) IL-SONG (6855/2480/2052); KN MINISTER OF PEOPLE'S APPLIED FORCES ((SO)) CHIN-U (0702/2182/1342); AND OTHER KN LEADERS (NOT FURTHER [REDACTED])

29 MAY 80

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IDENTIFIED). EXACTLY WHAT WAS DISCUSSED AT THE SECRET MEETING IS NOT KNOWN; HOWEVER, THE MEETING WAS PRESUMED TO HAVE COVERED THE COURSE OF FUTURE KN ACTIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE RIOT IN KS.

[REDACTED]

THE KN LEADERS ALLEGEDLY DECIDED "NOT TO REFRAIN FROM INVADING KS, IF THE KWANGJU RIOT DEVELOPED INTO A NATIONWIDE POPULAR REVOLT." HOWEVER, NO UNUSUAL, SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES INDICATING KN READINESS TO ATTACK KS HAVE BEEN NOTED BY KS. REPORTEDLY THE KS GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY LEADERS SPENT A "NERVE-RACKING TIME" AFTER THIS INFORMATION WAS RECEIVED, UNTIL THE SITUATION IN KWANGJU WAS CONTROLLED.

8A. (U) DETAILS: NONE

8B. ~~CONFIDENTIAL/NOFORN~~

[REDACTED]

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THAT TIME, HE HAD BEEN DESCRIBED AS "EXTREMELY INTENSE" ON ALL MATTERS PERTAINING TO KWANGJU. [REDACTED], LTG CHON TIED MUCH OF HIS FUTURE TO THE SUCCESSFUL ENDING OF THE KWANGJU RIOT.

- 9. (U) PROJ NO. 270134
- 10. (U) COLL MGMT CODES: NONE
- 11. (U) SPEC INST: DIRC-NO
- 12. (U) PREP BY: [REDACTED]
- 13. (U) APP BY: [REDACTED]
- 14. (U) REQ EVAL: NO
- 15. (U) ENCL: N/A
- 16. (U) DIST BY ORIG: N/A

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At the meeting, which was said to include the “KN Minister of [the] People’s Armed Forces Chin-U and other KN leaders,” Kim and his advisers allegedly decided “not to refrain from invading KS, if the Kwangju riot developed into a nationwide popular revolt.” That is, they *would* enter the fight if South Korea was engulfed in revolution, but otherwise would remain neutral. “However,” the cable adds, “no unusual, significant activities indicating KN readiness to attack KS have been noted by KS.” These claims would seem to repudiate any notion that the uprising was “organized” by North Korea, as claimed today by Chun and his right-wing allies; but if true, they indicate an intent by the DPRK to intervene later if the Gwangju rebellion turned into a full-fledged insurrection of national proportions (which it decidedly did not).

The fact that US officials understood that Gwangju was an indigenous uprising is strengthened by the notes of a high-level meeting held at CIA headquarters on May 23, 1980, and described in a declassified report the agency included in its “CREST” database of intelligence reports brought on line earlier this year. The meeting was chaired by Frank Carlucci, the CIA’s deputy director, and begins with an analysis of North Korean intentions from Richard Lehman, who was famous inside the CIA for developing and delivering daily intelligence briefings to presidents from JFK to Reagan.

Undoubtedly aware of the SIGINT (signals intelligence) on Kim Il Sung and his “secret meeting” in Pyongyang, Lehman reminded Carlucci that he had advised CIA in the fall of 1979 that, if the ROK government lost control, “chances are better than even that North Korea will intervene.” But regarding the current situation, he insisted: “there are no signs of anything untoward underway in North Korea” while noting that the CIA is “remaining alert to the situation.” (I cited this document in an interview last April for a South Korean documentary produced by the Seoul Broadcasting System on the North Korean connection).

Other cables further repudiate Chun’s claims of North Korean involvement. A Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) report dated June 5, 1980, and based on unnamed sources within the South Korean military, made the startling claim that some 2,000 people in the Gwangju area had “secured arms and made their way into the wilds” after the uprising was put down on May 27. While participants in the rebellion have denied any such movement in Gwangju’s nearby mountains, which were heavily patrolled by the ROK Army, they point with pride to the DIA’s observations that “the motivation to go into the hills was not communist inspired,” and that “the rebels...are truly representatives of the people of Cholla Namdo.”

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
MESSAGE CENTER

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CIA reports
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- 1. (U) CTY: REPUBLIC OF KOREA (KS)
- 2. (U) TITLE: POK CIVIL UNREST IN KWANGJU AREA (U)
- 3. (U) DTD OF INFO: 800602
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.



PAGE 1

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
MESSAGE CENTER

PAGE 2

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7. SUMMARY: THIS REPORT TRANSMITS INFORMATION ABOUT ACTIVITIES OF ARMED DISSIDENTS IN THE KWANGJU AREA.

RA. DETAILS: A BATTALION SIZE ELEMENT OF ARMED DISSIDENTS HAD ESCAPED INTO THE MOUNTAINOUS AREA NEAR KWANGJU, IN A SUBSEQUENT MEETING INDICATED THE NUMBER OF YOUNG, ARMED DISSIDENTS, WHO FLED INTO THE MOUNTAINS WAS GREATER THAN PREVIOUSLY REPORTED.

IN THE CHOLLA NAMDO AREA IT APPEARED CLOSE TO 2000 HAD SECURED ARMS AND MADE THEIR WAY INTO THE WILDS. REITERATED MOST OF THESE YOUTHS HAVE EITHER HAD THEIR MILITARY COMMITMENT OR BEEN EXPOSED TO ROTC. THEREFORE, THEY POSSESS AT LEAST BASIC KNOWLEDGE ABOUT WEAPONS AND TACTICS. ASKED IF COMMUNIST INFILTRATORS WERE INVOLVED IN THIS, HE SAID IT COULD NOT BE RULED OUT, HOWEVER, THE MOTIVATION TO GO INTO THE HILLS WAS NOT COMMUNIST INSPIRED. HE DID NOT EXPECT THESE ELEMENTS TO BECOME A COMMUNIST PAWN. AT THE MOMENT THE DISSIDENTS WERE NOT FORMED INTO OPERATIONAL UNITS, BECAUSE THEY EXPECTED GOVERNMENT COUNTER INSURGENCY ACTIONS AGAINST THEMSELVES, THEREFORE THEY WERE HIDING IN SMALL GROUPS WHICH WOULD BE MORE DIFFICULT TO DETECT. HE CONFIRMED THAT IF THE PEOPLES DEMANDS FOR AN END TO MIL AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REASONABLE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT ARE NOT RESPONDED TO IN A POSITIVE WAY WITH HOPES OF EARLY REALIZATION, THEN HE BELIEVES THIS 2000 MAN FORCE WILL ENGAGE IN GUERRILLA WARFARE AGAINST WHAT THEY TERM IS THE "MILITARY DICTATORSHIPS OF SOUTH KOREA." ASKED WHEN? HE RESPONDED THAT A GOOD GUESS WOULD BE EARLY FALL (IF: SFP). HE EXPLAINED THAT AT THE MOMENT STUDENTS ARE AFRAID TO MOVE AGAINST CHON, TIL HWAN'S STRENGTH, HOWEVER BY LATE AUGUST OR EARLY SEPTEMBER THE LIKELIHOOD OF FURTHER STUDENT UNREST, ABETTED WITH WIDER SUPPORT THAN BEFORE IS LIKELY TO OCCUR. HE SAID ALTHOUGH SOME COMPARE CHON'S POSITION NOW WITH THAT OF PRESIDENT PARK IN 1961, HE NOTED THERE IS ONE BIG DIFFERENCE - PRESIDENT PARK HAD SOME POPULAR SUPPORT OUTSIDE THE MILITARY AND CHON HAS NONE.

non communist


military law

chun has no support, unlike park did

Moreover, US military intelligence openly scoffed at Chun's claims of North Korean involvement. That can be seen in a secret DIA cable (dated June 2, 1980) about an official ROK Ministry of Defense report claiming that a North Korean agent had been captured in Seoul after "agitating demonstrators" in Gwangju. "The data is one-sided and somewhat distorts" the picture, DIA concluded about what it called the "alleged

communist infiltration." The analyst added, somewhat sarcastically: "The ROKG would have it believed that because of these aggitations (sic)...extended ML [martial law] was the will of the people."

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INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION REPORT
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COUNTRY: REPUBLIC OF KOREA (KS) REPORT NO: [REDACTED]

TITLE: MND Outline of Civil Unrest (U)

DATE OF INFO: 800527 REPORT DATE: 800602
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ORIGINATOR: [REDACTED] REQ REFERENCES: [REDACTED]

SOURCE: [REDACTED]

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SUMMARY: ~~(S/NOFORN)~~ This report transmits at Enclosure 1 a general translation of a MND Document giving the ROKG (MND) viewpoint of the:

- (1) "Background on Implementation of ML"
- (2) Why they extended ML and
- (3) "the true picture of Civil Disturbance in Kwangju."

ORIG CHFS: ~~(S/NOFORN)~~ Enclosure 1 gives the official background data which the ROKG (MND) presented to foreign military attaches for transmission. As could be expected the data is one-sided and somewhat distorts the circumstances as gathered by other means. Alleged communist infiltration as evidenced by the capture of one agent in Seoul and the turnover of five suspects by the militants in Kwangju to the government forces was blamed by the ROKG as one prime reason for the May demonstrations and riots. The activities of certain irresponsible politicians was stressed as another important cause. The ROKG would have it believed that because of these aggitations and the resultant riots extended ML was the will of the people. Enclosure 1 suggests that there is very little difference between the partial ML before 17-18 May and the full ML of Post 17-18 May. Technically this may be true, however practically it appears the military has emboldened by the situation and has in a much more open way dictated remedien to the government. Those politically enlightened generally

assess that the Army has near total control of the Chni government.

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DECLASSIFICATION DATA

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CLASSIFIED BY: [REDACTED]
REVIEW: 1 [REDACTED] 1998
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DB FORM 1396 REPLACES DB FORM 1001 FROM 6/27/78 EDITION WHICH IS OBSOLETE 18 JUL 80

It is also notable that the detailed reports sent to Washington from US Ambassador William Gleysteen during and after the uprising mention nothing of North Korean involvement except in the context of US determination to prevent it. A famous cable he sent at the height of the rebellion, for example, states that General John Wickham, the commander of US Forces Korea at the time, had "agreed to a high internal alert status against infiltration." Wickham, Gleysteen added, might consider additional US forces "if we become increasingly concerned about the potential for North Korean exploitation." But this was only speculation: the cable also calls the "massive insurrection" in Gwangju an "internal threat" to the Chun group within the ROK military, which he noted "obviously feel threatened by the whole affair."

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EXDIS

E.O. 12065: TRDS-3 5/21/00 (GLEYSTEN, W.H.) OR-M
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PINS, KS
SUBJECT: THE KWANGJU CRISIS

1. (S - ENTIRE TEXT)

2. THE MASSIVE INSURRECTION IN KWANGJU IS STILL OUT OF CONTROL AND POSES AN ALARMING SITUATION FOR THE ROK MILITARY WHO HAVE NOT FACED A SIMILAR INTERNAL THREAT FOR AT LEAST TWO DECADES. THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE IS OBVIOUSLY THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE POLITICAL CRACKDOWN HIT KIM DAE JUNG (M-R: KIM TAE-CHUNG) AND OTHER NATIVES OF CHOLLA, BUT BY NOW ALMOST ALL ELEMENTS OF THE POPULATION SEEM TO BE ENGAGED IN A VIOLENT, PROVINCIAL FREE FOR ALL REFLECTING DEEP-SEATED HISTORICAL, PROVINCIAL ANTAGONISMS. AT LEAST 150,000 PEOPLE ARE INVOLVED, THERE HAS BEEN GREAT DESTRUCTION, AND OUR MOST RECENT INFORMATION IS THAT THE RIOTERS HAVE BROKEN INTO ARMORIES AND SEIZED WEAPONS, LIVE AMMUNITION, AND DEMOLITIONS. THE KOREAN ARMY PLANS TO PULL ITS MILITARY FORCES OUT OF THE CITY TONIGHT, MAINTAINING ROADBLOCKS AND CONCENTRATING DEFENSE ON TWO MILITARY INSTALLATIONS AND A PRISON CONTAINING 2,000 LEFTISTS. THE AUTHORITIES ARE TRYING TO GET A CEASEFIRE SO THAT THEY CAN TALK TO THE RIOTERS ABOUT THEIR DEMANDS FOR AN APOLOGY, RELEASE OF PRISONERS, AND REMOVAL OF MARTIAL LAW FORCES.

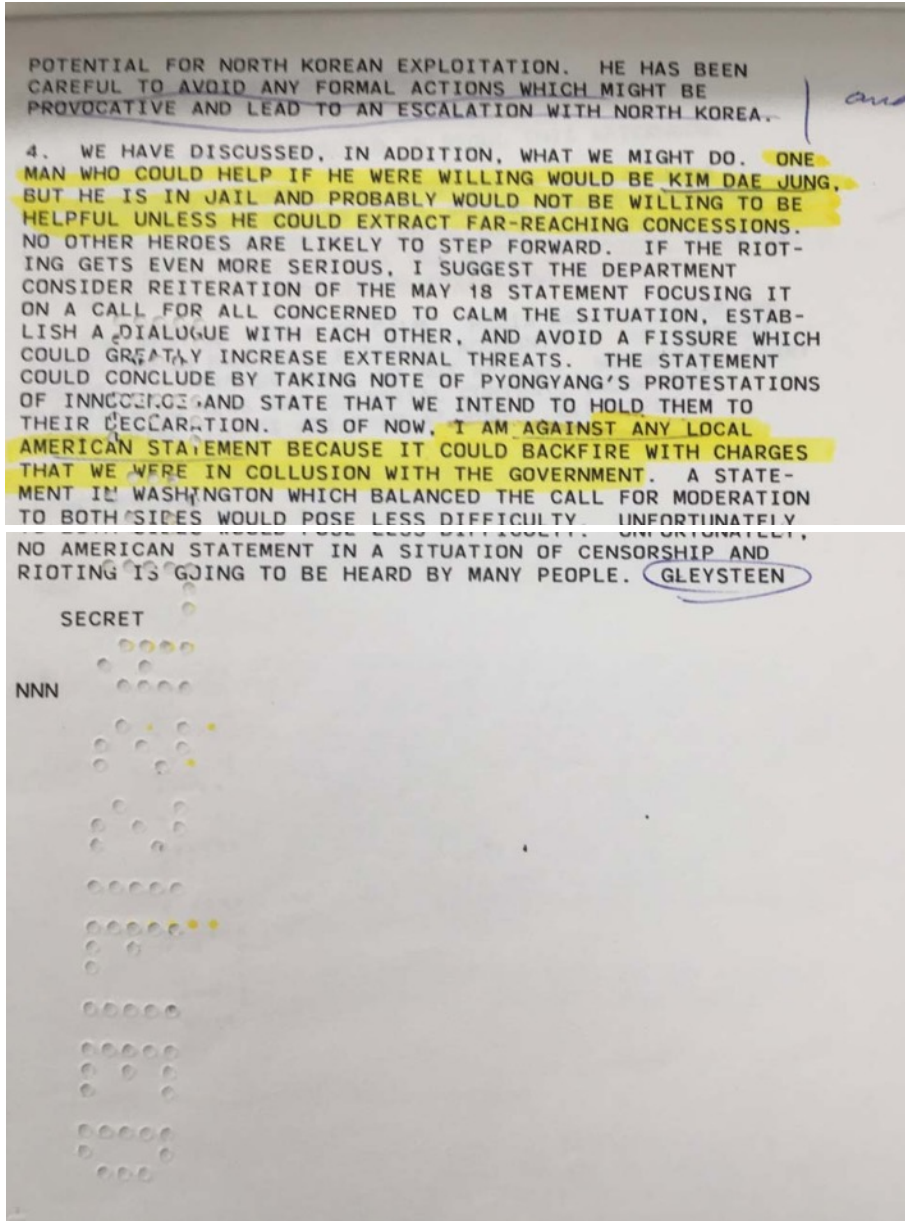
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WHILE ALL THESE MOVES SEEM INTELLIGENT, THEY HAVE NOT WORKED SO FAR AND THE DECEMBER 12 GENERALS OBVIOUSLY FEEL THREATENED BY THE WHOLE AFFAIR.

3. GENERAL WICKHAM HAS AGREED TO A HIGH INTERNAL ALERT STATUS AGAINST INFILTRATION, AND HE HAS INFORMALLY TAKEN SOME MEASURES ASSOCIATED WITH DEFCON 3. HE HAS ALSO URGED THAT DEFENSE CONSIDER WHAT FORCE AUGMENTATIONS MIGHT BE POSSIBLE IF WE BECOME INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE

PAGE NO.



Gleysteen was well-briefed: the Korea country team he headed with Wickham also included the CIA Station Chief, whose reports (which are heavily redacted) don't include any references to North Korean involvement in the "insurrection." As I've told audiences in South Korea, the Korean peninsula was, and is, one of the most surveilled spots on earth. If the combination of US SIGINT and human intelligence had picked up any evidence whatsoever of North Korea infiltration into Gwangju or the Cholla area where the rebellion took place, Gleysteen's team would have made this information immediately known to the US government and most likely made it public.

But sadly, despite the lack of North Korean involvement, the Carter administration agreed to support the ROK Army's decision to end the Gwangju Uprising with troops from the US-South Korean Joint Command. This decision was made for national security reasons at a high-level meeting at the White House on May 22, 1980, one day after the ROK army's massacre of civilians on May 21 that was captured by Hitzpeter and shown in graphic detail in "A Taxi Driver." As I reported in my story on the FOIA documents in 1996, the minutes state that, after a full discussion, "there was general agreement that the first priority is the restoration of order in Kwangju by the Korean authorities with the minimum use of force necessary without laying the seeds for wide disorders later."

As we know, the Carter administration's decision was a giant setback to US-South Korean relations, and stirred up a deep sense of betrayal and anti-Americanism in the South. The new film about Gwangju and the Moon government's investigation into the massacre and uprising could open the door for greater scrutiny into the US role in South Korea in the crucial year of 1980. That might complicate bilateral relations at a time of severe tension with North Korea, yet could also help heal wounds that in the 1980s came close to tearing the US-South Korean alliance apart.

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VOICES FOR PEACE

US Policy And Korea: A Korea Policy Institute Reader

ALCHEMY ON JEJU ISLAND

Koohan Paik | December 26, 2013

I recently spoke with two members of Veterans for Peace, who had become involved with Korea issues in only the past few years. Each of them came to know Korea through their support for the Gangjeong villagers who have been battling, for nearly eight years straight, construction of a huge, high-tech navy base being built on their Jeju-Island coastline. Both men said that before Jeju, their work with northeast Asia was Japan-centered, and that “no one ever talked about Korea.” But through their engagement with Gangjeong, they have learned about the April 3 massacre, about the unending Korean War, about the unprecedented tonnage of bombs that the U.S. levied upon the Korean people in the early 1950s, and about modern Korean history, in general. Today, they recognize that the Korean War was certainly as consequential in U.S. history as the war in Vietnam. It now perplexes them that Korea had been effectively erased from the books.

The sad truth is, the vast majority of even the most progressive Americans know very little about Korea, let alone that the U.S. has been at war with it for the past 60 years. Many don't even know *where* Korea is. This absurd knowledge void presents a challenge so daunting for those working toward unification, that nothing short of alchemy would seem to hold any promise for peace on the peninsula.

On the other hand, it appears that the tragedy unfolding at Gangjeong village might offer just the sort of alchemy that could conjure Korea into the wider consciousness. Ecumenical groups, environmental groups, artists, lawyers, social workers, peace-studies groups, student groups, indigenous-rights groups, and food-sovereignty groups have all passed through the tiny village whose fame is now of global proportion. Numerous articles on the villagers' plight have been published in Europe, South America, the Asia-Pacific and the U.S. Last summer, I was at the San Francisco airport with Gangjeong's charismatic Mayor Kang Dong-kyun on his first foray outside of northeast Asia, when a woman behind him in line said, “Aren't you Mayor Kang? From Gangjeong village?” It turned out she had studied Gangjeong as part of a peace-studies program in Virginia, and recognized him from internet videos. Little Gangjeong has put Korea “on the map” and affirms that the Korean War is indeed alive and well.

Then, in fall of 2013, the City of Berkeley, California, was the first city in the world to formally declare its support of the Gangjeong villagers in the form of a resolution opposing the navy base. Shortly thereafter, in Madison, Wisconsin, the National Board of Veterans for Peace passed a similar resolution to “Stop the Second U.S. Assault on

Jeju Island.” The document not only describes what is at stake if the base project is allowed to proceed, but also gives historical context, such as the 1948 genocide on Jeju and how the ever-increasing militarization of Korea violates the 1953 Armistice. It reads like an overview of modern Korean history vis a vis the United States.

One of the most poetic declarations in support of the Jeju struggle was made by a group of Afghani peace activists based in Kabul who have established a Skype relationship with their counterparts in Gangjeong. They write: “We are confident that if ordinary Chinese or North Koreans ever gave you trouble, you would have tea with them, using your imagination and citizen diplomacy to calm the troubles, non-violent paths which are far more effective and kind, and a far better use of tax-payer money (it takes no tax-payer money to drink tea!) than the multi-million premises, personnel and war equipment.”

The global draw of the Gangjeong village struggle owes much to the fact that the land, water, heritage and culture at stake have already garnered international recognition. Gangjeong’s culture and environment have earned UNESCO designations. It is one of Korea’s few remaining traditional, indigenous villages; it contains some of Korea’s best farms and richest soil, its purest water and its haenyo diver tradition; its coast was home to Korea’s only pod of dolphins and one of the world’s finest, soft-coral forests (now being dredged); and its 1,900 residents practice authentic local democracy.

True, all these elements attract an international crowd. But the most enduring appeal of the humble village sits squarely in its remarkable community spirit. The community is comprised of an eclectic mix of villagers, clergy and Seoul activists, who strategize and carry out campaign after campaign. There are cooks, videographers, and kayakers who monitor environmental violations by construction crews. There are people setting up for “Hundred Bows” every morning, or for a music concert in the evening. There are people manning the Peace Center, ready to welcome new arrivals disembarked off the public bus steps away. There are people printing up information pamphlets to disseminate at any one of the big, international conventions that regularly take place on Jeju. It is no exaggeration to say that the village is as fueled on dynamic love as it is by donation.

Most recently, there have been scores of knitters – yes, knitters! – sitting crosslegged in the Peace Center for hours at a time, lashing together enormous woolen quilts in rainbow hues, out of over a thousand knitted squares sent to them by supporters from all over Korea. December 2013 in Gangjeong saw the streets festooned with the quilts, and even the skeletal trees were given cheery, colorful “sweaters” that fit snugly over their trunks and branches. The sight of this whimsical riot of color splashed across

winter's dreary landscape, in contrast with the phalanxes of stern and smooth-faced cops who robotically pull away every protestor from blocking cement trucks, is indeed chilling — yet somehow, transcendent. Even an atheist once commented that life in Gangjeong was the closest one could come to living with God. Maybe that's why, when visitors return to their own countries, either voluntarily or through deportation, they are compelled, almost evangelically, to "spread the word" through events, writing articles, and making films. Something special is going on in Gangjeong.

But it wasn't always this way. Initially, the villagers were highly suspicious of outsiders, particularly those from the Korean mainland. They carried the trauma of the April 3, 1948 massacre in living memory, when the South Korean army, under U.S. orders, unleashed wholesale terror on the island and murdered at least a third of the population. Understandably, the South Korean government's announcement that their village would be the site for a navy base only reinforced their mistrust of outsiders. In those beginning years, the Gangjeong villagers battled alone, in total obscurity. But at a certain point, with everything at stake, they had no choice but to embrace the support of mainlanders who seemed authentically sincere. One such mainlander was artist Sung-hee Choi, board member of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space and the pivotal person in exposing the struggle internationally. She started a blog, *No base stories of Korea*, in December 2008 which first introduced Gangjeong outside of Korea in 2009. Choi moved to Gangjeong in 2010 and has been there ever since.

Update: environmental destruction, incarceration, depression

Today, almost eight years since the announcement of the base project, the Gangjeong coastline is unrecognizable, carpeted with enormous stacked cement forms of varying shapes and sizes that resemble a giant's erector set. The 86 species of seaweed and over 500 species of mollusks – once food for the village – have all but perished. The sea is no longer a clear dark blue, but grayish brown. Gargantuan concrete cubes called "caissons," 10 stories high apiece, sit on the ocean floor where biodiverse coral habitats once thrived. On land, an enormous rebar mold for manufacturing the caissons looms hideously over the horizon. The rumbling and scraping sounds of construction fill the air night and day. The base is slated to start operation in 2015.

To add insult to injury, resistance leaders are jailed for months on end, often caught in a revolving door of multiple prison sentences. Currently, three beloved individuals languish unjustly behind bars: 22-year-old Kim Eun-hye, Brother Park Do-hyun, and film critic Yang Yoon-mo, who has been incarcerated for about a year.

Depression and suicidal tendencies have skyrocketed in Gangjeong, according to the Jeju media. Women weep in the streets. Often, there are scant visitors to boost morale (and the visitors really do make a positive difference). During the winter when it's off-season for tourists, they feel alone and helpless against the cranes, dredges and cops of the transnational defense industry's destructive juggernaut.

Community creativity

Someone once asked Gangjeong Mayor Kang Dong-kyun, "What keeps you going?" He said, "Knowing that this is not just for me, not just for my children, or my children's children, or for my ancestors. It is for world peace." But Mayor Kang left out a key component as to how the villagers have maintained their resilience for as long as they have: through dance. As silly as it may sound, a series of four wacky dances that celebrate Gangjeong has served as an indispensable catharsis ritual that ends each day. The villagers will also spontaneously break out into the Gangjeong dances when times get tough, such as what happened upon the tearful announcement at the IUCN convention that a resolution to stop base construction had been defeated. It's how they let off steam so they can keep going.

In a certain sense, Gangjeong uses creativity as a weapon in psychic self-defense. Once the villagers mounted a film festival of anti-war videos directly in the gaze of a row of riot cops surrounding the base. It is as if, for every harsh blow, every broken bone, every dead dolphin, every prison sentence, and every fine levied upon them, they emerge with a surprising rejoinder of equal, positive force. Recently they lined the village streets with six-foot high stacks of books, 30,000 in all, creating both political art and a library al fresco — a stunning visual juxtaposition against the squadrons of police.

The Gandhi-esque villagers seem to have captured the hearts and imaginations of the world. When a former attorney with the Clinton administration came to Gangjeong, he marveled, "In the face of brutal opposition, they display only grace and persistence." When a German IUCN bioethicist spent several days in the village, he remarked, "their joy is infectious." When a Hollywood film director was asked what he liked best about his visit to Gangjeong, he said, "The dancing." At the core of such astonishing creativity is – again — the community. Perhaps *this* is the alchemy that can heal all of Korea.

One could say that the villagers have metamorphosed Gangjeong into a premiere destination for political tourism. Gangjeong is an excellent place for foreigners starting at a zero knowledge base, to learn about Korea's place in history and in the region. And the benefits are reciprocal; while visitors learn about Korea, they invariably take their

lessons home and spread the information, which, in turn, supports the movement. Professor Rob Fletcher gave a seminar at Costa Rica's University for Peace on the base struggle. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, one of the original drafters of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, has been in communication with villagers about staking out their identities as indigenous Tamna (which could lead to advantages through processes at the UN). British attorney Harry Jonas wrote a case history of Gangjeong as an example of how legal constructs violate what he calls "natural justice." Such developments have given new hope to villagers who have lost all faith in their own government.

As a result of such exchanges, villagers have become extraordinarily sophisticated about other Asia-Pacific islands also under assault by militarization and the Pentagon's "Pacific Pivot." Solidarity has been built with Taiwan, Okinawa, Guam, Hawaii, and elsewhere. Now, when President Park Geun-hye echoes her father's dream of turning Jeju into "Korea's Hawaii," a tourist mecca complete with navy base, the villagers steadfastly oppose. They do not want to see militarization kill all life in their sea, as it did in Pearl Harbor, which is now a toxic Superfund site. Like all indigenous people, they know that without their natural resources, they die — economically, culturally, spiritually.

Recently, an American pragmatist looked out at the machines bulldozing the coast and said to me, in a defeated tone, "You're not going to stop the base." He's likely right. But maybe I'm not looking only for linear cause-and-effect results – like I used to. The way of life here has connected me with my own humanity and the humanity of others. Just as its residents have transformed this physically disfigured place into a village of spiritual beauty, I, too, have been transformed. And I know many others who have been similarly changed. Gangjeong is like the Chinese character that means not only "crisis," but also "opportunity."

Koohan Paik, who was raised in Korea during the Park Chung-Hee era, is a journalist, media educator, and Campaign Director of the Asia-Pacific program at the International Forum on Globalization. In 2011 and 2013, she helped to organize the Moana Nui conference in Honolulu, which brought together international activists, scholars, politicians and artists to consolidate Asia-Pacific discourse as it relates to geopolitics, resource depletion, human rights and global trade. She is the co-author of "The Superferry Chronicles: Hawaii's Uprising Against Militarism, Commercialism and the Desecration of the Earth," and has written on militarism in the Asia-Pacific for The Nation, Progressive, and other publications.

OPINION: CONTINUING THE CENTENNIAL WORK OF WOMEN AND CITIZEN DIPLOMACY IN KOREA

Christine Ahn | May 4, 2015

Originally published by *IPS News Agency*

A century ago, the suffragist Jane Addams boarded a ship with other American women peace activists to participate in a Congress of Women in The Hague. Over 1,300 women from 12 countries, “cutting across national enmities,” met to call for an end to World War I. That Congress became the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), which is now gathering in The Hague under the theme Women Stop War.

Just as Addams met women across national lines to try and stop WWI 100 years ago, from May 19 to 25, a delegation of 30 women from 15 countries around the world will meet and walk with Korean women, north and south, to call for an end to the Korean War.

As WWII came to a close, Korea, which had been colonized by Japan for 35 years, faced a new tragedy. After Japan’s surrender in 1945, the United States proposed (and the Soviets accepted) temporarily dividing Korea along the 38th parallel in an effort to prevent Soviet troops, who were fighting the Japanese in the north, from occupying the whole country.

Japanese troops north of the line would surrender to the Soviets; those to the south would surrender to U.S. authorities. It was meant to be a temporary division, but Washington and Moscow failed to establish a single Korean government, thereby creating two separate states in 1948: the Republic of Korea in the south and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in the north.

We are walking on May 24, International Women’s Day for Disarmament and Peace, because we believe that there must be an end to the Korean War that has plagued the Korean peninsula with intense militarization.

This division precipitated the Korean War (1950-53), often referred to in the United States as “the forgotten war”, when each side sought to reunite the country by force. Despite enormous destruction and loss of life, neither side prevailed.

In July 1953, fighting was halted when North Korea (representing the Korean People’s Army and the Chinese People’s Volunteers) and the United States (representing the

United Nations Command) signed the Korean War Armistice Agreement at Panmunjom, near the 38th parallel.

This temporary cease-fire stipulated the need for a political settlement among all parties to the war (Article 4 Paragraph 60). It established the Demilitarized Zone, two-and-a-half miles wide and still heavily mined, as the new border between the two sides. It urged the governments to convene a political conference within three months, in order to reach a formal peace settlement.

Over 62 years later, no peace treaty has been agreed, with the continuing fear that fighting could resume at any time. In fact, in 2012, during another military crisis with North Korea, former U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta acknowledged that Washington was, “within an inch of war almost every day.”

In 1994, as President Clinton weighed a pre-emptive military first strike against North Korea’s nuclear reactors, the U.S. Department of Defense estimated that an outbreak of war on the Korean peninsula would result in 1.5 million casualties within the first 24 hours and 6 million casualties within the first week.

This assessment predates North Korea’s possession of nuclear weapons, which would be unimaginable in terms of destruction and devastation. We have no choice but to engage; the cost of not engaging is just too high.

The only way to prevent the outbreak of a catastrophic confrontation, as a 2011 paper from the U.S. Army War College counsels, is to “reach agreement on ending the armistice from the Korean War”—in essence, a peace agreement—and “giv[e] a formal security guarantee to North Korea tied to nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction.”

Recent history has shown that when standing leaders are at a dangerous impasse, the role of civil society can indeed make a difference in averting war and lessening tensions. In 1994 as President Clinton contemplated military action, without the initial blessing of the White House, former President Jimmy Carter flew to Pyongyang armed with a CNN camera crew to negotiate the terms of the Agreed Framework with former North Korean leader Kim Il Sung.

And in 2008, the New York Philharmonic performed in Pyongyang, which significantly contributed towards warming relations between the United States and DPRK.

Christiane Amanpour, who traveled with CNN to cover the philharmonic, wrote that U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry, a former negotiator with North Korea, explained to her that this was a magic moment, with different peoples speaking the same language of music.

Amanpour said Perry believed that the event could positively influence the governments reaching a nuclear agreement, “but that mutual distrust and fear can only be overcome by people-to-people diplomacy.”

That is what we are hoping to achieve with the 2015 International Women’s Walk for Peace and Reunification of Korea, citizen-to-citizen diplomacy led by women. We are also walking on the 15th anniversary of the passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325, which calls for the full and equal participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution, and in peace-building.

Women from Cambodia, Guatemala, Liberia and Northern Ireland all provided crucial voices for peace as they mobilized across national, ethnic and religious divides and used family and community networks to mitigate violence and heal divisions among their communities.

Similarly, our delegation will walk for peace in Korea and to cross the De-Militarized Zone separating millions of families, reminding the world on the tragic 70th anniversary of Korea’s division by foreign powers that the Korean people are from an ancient culture united by the same food, language, culture, customs, and history.

We are walking on May 24, International Women’s Day for Disarmament and Peace, because we believe that there must be an end to the Korean War that has plagued the Korean peninsula with intense militarization. Instead of spending billions on preparing for war, governments could instead redirect these critically needed funds for schools, childcare, health, caring for the elderly.

The first step is reconciliation through engagement and dialogue. That is why we are walking. To break the impasse among the warring nations—North Korea, South Korea, and the United States—to come to the peacemaking table to finally end the Korean War.

As Addams boarded the ship to The Hague, she and other women peace activists were mocked for seeking alternative ways than war to resolve international disputes.

Addams dismissed criticism that they were naïve and wild-eyed idealists: “We do not think we can settle the war. We do not think that by raising our hands we can make the

armies cease slaughter. We do think it is valuable to state a new point of view. We do think it is fitting that women should meet and take counsel to see what may be done.”

It is only fitting that our women’s peace walk in Korea takes place on this centennial anniversary year of the first international act of defiance of war women ever undertook. I am honored to be among another generation of women gathering at The Hague to carry on the tradition of women peacemakers engaged in citizen diplomacy to end war.

Christine Ahn is the International Coordinator of Women Cross DMZ, a campaign of 30 international women walking for peace and reunification of Korea in May 2015.

IN GUAM, THE GRAVEST THREAT ISN'T NORTH KOREA — IT'S THE UNITED STATES

Leilani Ganser | August 13, 2017

This article was originally published jointly by *Foreign Policy In Focus* and *In These Times*.

This past Fourth of July, while I listened to the fireworks outside the Capitol building, my phone started buzzing with news alerts. North Korea, they said, had tested an intercontinental ballistic missile. Headlines emphasized that it could supposedly reach Alaska.

But much closer than Alaska is the tiny island of Guam — a U.S. colonial possession in the Pacific long exploited as a military base. My grandmother was born there, and much of my family remains. At just 30 miles long and 8 miles wide, Guam is often called “the unsinkable aircraft carrier,” as a third of the island is covered in military bases.

That’s long made it a strategic target for enemies of the United States. In fact, during the Cold War, it was said that the Soviets were the only ones who could point out Guam on a map. For as long as the West has been aware of Guam’s existence, it’s been a target.

During World War II, while my grandmother still lived there, the Japanese occupied Guam and terrorized the indigenous Chamoru population, rounding them up and herding them into concentration camps. In the Manenggon camp, 18,000 Chamorus were interned and surrounded by machine guns set up by the Japanese soldiers for a planned massacre.

Today, with the Japanese long gone and the Soviet Union dissolved, the island still faces a battery of live-fire military ammunition with no foreseeable end. But the immediate danger doesn’t come from North Korean missiles. It comes from the United States military, which freely uses the Pacific territory as its own private firing range.

While tourist ads depict the South Pacific as a tranquil safe haven, that tranquility is pierced by the roars of B-52 bombers and submarine water-to-shore artillery blasts. For as long as the United States has maintained Guam as a colony, it has been a simulated warzone.

It’s not simply the military firing weapons that can make life difficult for locals, however. The issue is often the presence of the military itself.

With military bases come extreme pollution, the occupation of sacred lands, and what some scholars describe as an invisible public health crisis. While the primary argument for these bases is national security, there are countless examples of these bases damaging the health and security of the local population.

Over the years Guam has been home to nuclear weapons, mustard gas, and countless other carcinogens. In the 1980s, the Navy discharged radioactive water into a harbor my family has used for fishing. This increased exposure to radioactivity is linked to toxic goiters, a major contributor to thyroid issues which are now abundant in the local population. Multiple wells accessing the island's one aquifer have had to be shut down due to chemical contamination from areas under or adjacent to these military bases.

Indigenous groups have largely led the fight against military pollution. The largely Chamoru-led We Are Guahån — *Guahån* is the indigenous name for the island — has worked for years to engage and mobilize the local community to prevent further military buildup. Their efforts are fundamental to the mission of a sustainable Guam.

In this, they're drawing inspiration from activists on Puerto Rico — which, like Guam, is a U.S. imperial acquisition from the Spanish-American war whose strategic location has subjected it to exploitation from the U.S. military. There, residents of Vieques led protests in 1999 that ultimately resulted in the shutdown of the Navy's base on the small island, which lies off the coast of Puerto Rico proper. Unfortunately, the lasting consequences of these bases, active or abandoned, are faced by locals daily.

Vieques was a live fire training site for the Navy for over 60 years and has since become one of the single sickest populations in the Caribbean. Along with skyrocketing rates of cancer, the people living on Vieques have a seven times higher risk of diabetes and eight times higher risk of cardiovascular disease than the rest of Puerto Rico.

The Navy has since admitted to the use of heavy metals and chemical agents on Vieques, including depleted uranium and Agent Orange, but denies any link between their use and the health of the residents. But Arturo Massol Deyá, a professor of microbiology and ecology at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüe — and the only independent scientist allowed to conduct research on Vieques — continues to find high concentrations of heavy metals in his samples of vegetation, crabs, lagoons, and other local food sources.

In both Guam and Puerto Rico, such pollution is devastating to the ecology of the local areas — and to any argument that the bases encourage economic growth for the impoverished local populations. In fact, they restrict the indigenous populations' ability

to engage in traditional means of subsistence and poison the resources locals rely on for self-sustainability.

In places like these, plans to expand U.S. military facilities — which could soon cover 40 percent of Guam, if plans initiated during the Obama administration go through — are a far greater threat than any missiles from Korea.

These bases of empire are an affront to self-determination and a reminder of our families caught in the crossfire of Western wars for “rights” and “freedom” that my grandmother and my family should have, too.

Leilani Ganser is an indigenous rights organizer and political science major at Reed College. She's a Next Leader at the Institute for Policy Studies.

THE URGENCY OF KOREA SOLIDARITY: INTERVIEW WITH JUYEON RHEE, TASKFORCE TO STOP THAAD IN KOREA

Paul Liem, August 23, 2017 | December 29, 2017

This is the fifth and last in a series of interviews with the five-member U.S. Solidarity Peace Delegation to South Korea from July 23 to July 28, 2017. The delegation coordinator, Juyeon Rhee, was denied entry to South Korea under a travel ban imposed by the Park Geun-hye administration, a ban that remained in force under the new administration of President Moon Jae-in.

The delegates met with South Korean peace and labor activists, the Chair of the National Assembly Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee Shim Jae Kwon, and villagers of Seongju, Gimcheon, and Soseong-ri who are waging a struggle against the deployment of the THAAD anti-missile system in their communities. The delegation was sponsored by the Taskforce to Stop THAAD in Korea and Militarism in Asia and the Pacific as well as the Channing and Popai Liem Education Foundation. It was hosted in South Korea by the National People's Action to Stop the Deployment of THAAD in South Korea (NPA), a coalition of 100 civil society organizations.

Delegates Medea Benjamin of CODEPINK, Reece Chenault of U.S. Labor Against the War, Will Griffin of Veterans for Peace, delegation coordinator Juyeon Rhee, Jill Stein of Green Party USA, have since spearheaded an international petition campaign calling upon presidents Moon Jae-in and Donald Trump to pull back from the brink of war in Korea by halting the war games and negotiating a freeze on missile and nuclear weapons testing with North Korea.

Following the delegates' return to the United States, Paul Liem, KPI Chairperson, interviewed the delegates about their experiences in Korea and their reflections on how to strengthen solidarity between peace activists there and in the United States. His interview with Juyeon Rhee follows.

PL: It's August 23 and we're talking with Juyeon Rhee, one of the organizers of the Solidarity Peace Delegation that visited Korea in July. Juyeon, you were the only Korean American on this delegation and you've been involved in Korea peace work based in the United States for many, many years since your college years. What started you on your trajectory of activism and what were the circumstances leading to your immigration to the U.S.?

JR: I was a sophomore in college in 1988 when my family decided to leave for the U.S. My idea was to come, help my family adjust, and then go back because I was involved in the student movement as a freshman.

PL: What school?

JR: I was at Ewha Womans University, a freshman in 1987. So, starting in April, there were many street demonstrations and rallies against the continuation of military dictatorship, and many study groups were being formed. I had no idea before I went to college what was going on or knowledge of social issues. But as students, we got mobilized through various clubs and study groups. That was the atmosphere then; as a college student you owed society and you had to do something for the community and society.

I wasn't fully participating until the beginning of May, but I got arrested just by walking through the street where there was a rally. The police picked me up. And then I was confined to this police car for four hours. The detention center in Seoul was full. It was full and no one could check in so they dropped me off, I think it was in Suwon or Incheon in Kyonggido, and I had to find my way back to Seoul. After that, I wanted to find out what was going on.

PL: This was the great popular uprising against the military dictatorships. That period, right?

JR: Right. At the time Chun Doo Hwan was trying to make Roh Tae Woo his successor so people were demanding that they wanted direct voting, popular election. People wanted to vote for the president. We won. The June uprising happened and we won. The next year, my parents told me that we were going to the U.S., the beast of the imperialist forces, the one that had divided Korea, and the center of global imperialism. I didn't want to come to the U.S.

Anyway I came. I went to Stony Brook State University of New York the following year. I think in the late '80s and early '90s there were nine different organizations in New York. These sprung up in response to the Kwangju massacre in 1980.

PL: Korean organizations?

JR: Yes, all predominately Korean-speaking, just like in Korea. They were trying to mobilize and educate the communities. And my school, because it was only one hour away from New York City, there were people coming in to teach how to play *buk* and

janggu and *pungmul*. Slowly I got exposed to them and I thought, oh, maybe we can do something here while I stayed in the U.S.

I got involved in a student organization called Center for Korean American Culture and I played *janggu* and *buk*. It was a cultural troupe. Our goal was to demystify the "American Dream."

Then in 1992, the LA Uprising happened and, just before then, an African American teenager, Latasha Harlins, was killed by a Korean liquor store owner, Du Soon Ja. There were also tensions between African Americans and Korean store owners in Brooklyn, Flatbush. So there were a lot of racial tensions.

At that time, we had a lot of discussions about what is the best identity or identifier for immigrants. Are we Koreans in the U.S., or "Korean-hyphen-Americans," or "Korean Americans," or are we "Americans with Korean heritage"? There were a lot of discussions and studies about immigration, civic rights, and about what are the best ways to change the society or community. I felt that Korean people in Korea can do the reunification work and that Koreans here in the U.S. should do more on immigration issues or racial issues.

PL: So what did you make of what happened in Los Angeles and the killing of Natasha Harlins? How did you process that?

JR: In our organization, we did a study group and concluded that the Korean community was like a filler between blacks and whites in the context of a racist society. We were caught up in the middle of the racial tensions and ended up playing by the rules of the racist society, chasing the American Dream. We concluded that we needed to educate our community that the American Dream is a myth, and that we needed to work and build our identity as a people of color in solidarity with other communities of color. We were saying that we are workers, we are people of color. And so we created these songs, too, in Korean.

PL: What's an example of the lyrics of some of the songs, do you remember.

JR: (singing in Korean). So it's [the song is] about a worker who has to wake up very early in the morning and then go and then stand in the deli store for 12 hours and work. And she sees the people going back and forth and she's just a cashier, not a person. And what's our hope? When I quit this job, another person will come and be treated like that. But we are the ones who are forming the community and who's holding the

community or society up from the bottom up. So we are capable of being an agent for change. This type of thing.

PL: Later on, though, you also got involved in reunification work.

JR: Yes, so good friends of mine went to North Korea with a community organization based in New York, Nodutdol for Community Development or "NDD." I think I started paying membership dues starting in 2000. I went to a couple meetings and back and forth but I was never really deeply involved until 2002 when I went to North Korea for the first time with an NDD education and exposure delegation, called the DPRK Education and Exposure Program (DEEP).

PL: It seems like a big transition to go from being focused on working on Korean immigrant issues to organizing a DEEP delegation to North Korea. What transpired to make that change?

JR: So Nodutdol had three committees at that time. We had a health committee and we had the education committee and then we had a Korea solidarity committee. I didn't want to be on the Korea solidarity committee, but since I was not a teacher or in the health field, I joined the Korea solidarity committee.

I thought, ok, these people are second generation and don't know as much about Korea. So maybe it's important for them as second generation or non-Korean speaking Korean Americans to get connected to their Korean heritage, claiming it as their own. So I was kind of a bystander to reunification work. Anyway, when my friends came back from the first delegation to North Korea, they insisted that I should go. It's an eye-opening experience, they said. That's when I went.

Those on the first delegation were Korean-speaking. Those on the second delegation, with the exception of me, were English-speaking. That's a big difference. Off we went, but North Korea was not ready. There was no translator for us. They expected that, like the Koreans from Japan, we should all speak Korean. From day one, we were struggling with language issues. We didn't speak Korean at all. They didn't expect it. It was a horrible trip for me. Horrible, horrible. I came back and I said we really need to work on this program, otherwise this is not worthwhile to repeat. That was what I reported, and in 2003, I volunteered to be the program coordinator for the 2004 delegation.

I wrote to North Korea six or seven, eight months ahead of the trip. I wrote to them and said we need an English translator and we need to diversify the program a little more. I told them that I want to go here, I want to go there, I want to go to a court, we need to

spend a little more time on a farm, etc. Anyway I wrote a seven-page long letter. My friends were skeptical. They felt, well, it's not going to change. North Korean people have their agenda. They want us to see certain things. And you know, it's going to fall on deaf ears. So I said I'm just going to write to them and see what happens. I got no reply. But when we arrived in Pyongyang, our hosts were carrying a copy of my letter all underlined, highlighted and commented with notes. And you know, they came and they switched the entire program around to accommodate our interests. And that was one of my biggest lessons. Even if you think it's not going to work, you still have to try, you can't just assume it's not going to work. All we needed to do was ask.

They realized we were different from the groups coming from Japan but they didn't know what our goals were, what we wanted to see, what our interests were. They said they all read my letter, and the only criticism I got was that we would need to stay a month to do all the things we asked. They said try to prioritize your goals and then communicate them beforehand.

On that trip, the North Koreans provided an excellent, amazing English speaker as a translator. She stayed with us most of the time. All site visits, she came. She never visited the U.S. or England or traveled elsewhere abroad, but her English was perfectly understood. Everyone loved her and the more she spent time with us, the more we got to know her. You know, she was someone that we really connected with at a very personal level.

I think the peace group, Women for Genuine Security, published an article about translation. It said that translation is a political act. And through that experience, I learned that language is really, really important. The vocabulary, the right vocabularies are critical. But all that does not come to you naturally. You have to study it. You have to acquire it. Afterwards, I created a vocabulary list of easy North Korean words for our curriculum.

DEEP is a people's delegation so the delegates also make an impression on the people they meet in North Korea. Our delegates need to interact appropriately, conveying their thoughts, and attitudes, in words and gestures, that resonate with the people on the receiving end.

So after 2004, I realized, okay, as a first-generation immigrant activist who is bicultural and bilingual I may have an important role to play in the Korean solidarity movement. I can help build solidarity between activists here and those in Korea. What do we need to do? What motivates people to learn, what motivates people to connect? How can I be a better mediator of these two coming together?

In my mind, that's the process of reunification. I realized that we have many different levels of division.

Reconciliation and reunification became something that I wanted to see and I wanted to practice with in our community organizing.

PL: The NDD delegations to North (DEEP) and South Korea (KEEP) were composed of Korean Americans. This most recent delegation, the Solidarity Peace Delegation to South Korea, was composed of American peace activists. Why the change in composition?

JR: We came to realize that in the eyes of the Koreans in Korea, we tend to be accepted as one of them rather than as representative of the U.S. peace movement. So it's important for our delegations to represent the peace movement more broadly. The mission of the Solidarity Peace Delegation was to support the Seongju villagers in their struggle against THAAD deployment, against the militaristic policies of the U.S. We wanted to make sure that we were more representative of U.S. peace groups. We decided to bring on representatives from diverse sectors.

PL: Did you feel like that was accomplished?

JR: I think so. Ramsay [Liem] is actually the one who has to be commended for this. Jill Stein has a long history with environmental groups, and also understands the U.S. political system and party politics; Medea Benjamin is a leader in the women's movement who understands the importance of advocacy work and the inner workings of Washington D.C.; then we had Will Griffin of Veterans for Peace and is connected with the more militant sector of the peace movement; and Reese Chenault who is connected to the progressive voices in U.S. labor—the anti-racist and anti-imperialists sectors of the labor movement. All the delegates have histories of struggling against U.S. militarism abroad and for struggling social justice here in the U.S. It was a very diverse group and they did an excellent job of representing progressive forces here.

PL: Do you think there was any breakthrough in terms of making connections between American peace movement and the villagers in Seongju at a human level?

JR: The delegation was only four people. It's a very small number but they made a lasting impression on villagers. Before, when the villagers talked about the U.S., the U.S. was assumed to be unknown entity, forcing this THAAD war machine onto their village. And now, after meeting the delegates, they have a clearer idea about the U.S.—

that, ah, it's a country and they have citizens just like us who are fighting against the THAAD and militarism.

So the delegation did an impressive job in making people aware that there are people who are fighting against the militaristic approaches of the state in the U.S. as well. But for the peace movement, I don't know. It's hard, though, Paul, when there is a problem or when there is a bombing or bombing in Afghanistan and then the next day the North Korea issues flare up and the following day there is Palestine. Addressing all of those issues and connecting the struggles without emphasizing one over the other is a big challenge. We have more work to do.



Juyeon Rhee and Hyun Lee banned from entry at Incheon Airport, July 25, 2016

PL: Unfortunately you were not able to join up with the Solidarity Peace Delegation in Korea. The South Korean government had banned your entry into the country a year earlier when you and peace activist, Hyun Lee, had organized another delegation of peace activists. That ban was still in effect while you were organizing the Solidarity Peace Delegation. But you still bought your ticket and were ready to go. What made

you decide to go for it when you knew that the odds were not in your favor? And how do you feel about that whole issue of being banned?

JR: I think I feel a little sad. At the time I didn't know how to feel, to process it all. It was kind of numbing. It was a survival instinct to try not to feel. I wanted to go for it because when Moon Jae-in became president everyone said everything has changed. People acted as if all the misdeeds of the South Korean state are over, and the new Moon administration will be different. I cannot deny that I had similar hopes too. So I was hoping for the best.

PL: Will you continue to work on these kinds of delegation projects even though you may not be able to travel to Korea? Do you feel like this is work that you can continue under the present circumstances?

JR: Yes. As much as I can, I would like to. However, if you cannot participate and share in the moments there are limitations. You cannot help rectify something when something's not going right, or step in and mediate right away, so it's frustrating.

But I'm not the only one who has been denied entry into South Korea. Others have been denied entry; people in Japan historically, numerous times, and people in Germany, too. I heard that a committee in South Korea has been gathering the names of people who have been denied entry under the past administrations. So there are many of us, and we all have to work under similar circumstances in with the same restriction. They never stopped working for reunification and to end the Korean War with a peace treaty.

So I take this as a challenge, and I am trying to sort out what my roles can be in terms of supporting future solidarity trips. But that South Korea is banning peace activists from its shores, that the U.S. is banning South Korean peace activists from its shores and also banning the travel of U.S. citizens to North Korea, is outrageous. It's political repression. But I do have a dream. I want to organize more delegations to South Korea and North Korea. I think it's of high importance as the U.S. peace movement does not fully understand the impacts of U.S. policy on Korea, and especially North Korea.

PL: What do you see as the endgame of the Korea solidarity movement in this country?

Peace treaty is the only thing. We must have a guarantee that there will never be another Korean War. If we cannot have a peace treaty right away, then we can call for non-aggression treaty as a first step towards agreeing upon the terms of a peace treaty. Diplomacy has to start right away. So many people even in the U.S., ex-politicians and ex-officials of the U.S. government, are calling for engagement with North Korea. I think

the U.S. government should learn something from history, its own history, and act now to make peace with North Korea. Without the guarantee of peace, denuclearization is not realistic.

PL: I think certainly that the timing of the Solidarity Peace delegation was critical—just in time to start speaking out against Trump’s “fire and fury” bluster. In closing I wanted to ask if there anything else that you would like to share, or anything that we missed?

JR: Unfortunately I don’t think we can rely on the Moon Jae-in administration. Although he may want to take the lead in facilitating peaceful North and South relations, as the South Korean President, he is under pressure not to undermine the U.S.-South Korea military alliance. It doesn’t seem that he’s inclined to push back on those pressures. Still, we must continue to push his administration in that direction, especially now, as Trump is threatening to engulf North Korea in fire and fury. Of course this cannot be done without engulfing all of Korea in fire and fury.

And I do want to end this interview by saying I was really touched by all the support that I got. A lot of people contacted me personally. A lot of people wrote signed petitions denouncing the ban. The delegation also worked on a press release opposing the ban. They spoke beautifully in support of my entry, and I really appreciated that. All of this support lifts my spirits and encourages me to keep working to build solidarity between progressive forces in the U.S. and in all of Korea.

PL: You are loved by all who have worked with you. Certainly among the younger activists, you’re a role model and even for us older ones. You’ve always been out there in front, and we will always have your back.

JR: Thank you so much.

Juyeon Rhee is a first-generation Korean immigrant grassroots organizer whose work is focused on de-militarization, minority rights, reunification and reconciliation in Korea. Juyeon is a member of the Taskforce to Stop THAAD in Korea and Militarism in Asia and the Pacific, Solidarity Committee for Democracy and Peace in Korea, Nodutdol for Korean Community Development, and the editorial advisory board of Zoom in Korea, as well as a board member at the Korea Policy Institute.



A HOPEFUL START TO AN ERA OF PEACE

US Policy And Korea: A Korea Policy Institute Reader

PANMUNJEOM DECLARATION FOR PEACE, PROSPERITY AND UNIFICATION OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA

President Moon Jae-in of the Republic of Korea and Chairman Kim Jong Un of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea issued the Panmunjeom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula, August 27, 2018, declaring that there will be "no more war on the Korean peninsula and thus a new era of peace has begun."

The declaration referred to the 2007 October 4 Declaration with regard to promoting "balanced economic growth and co-prosperity of the nation," and reaffirmed the Non-Aggression Agreement "that precludes the use of force in any form against each other." In addition to these two agreements President Moon and Chairman Kim agreed to "fully implementing all existing agreements and declarations adopted between the two sides thus far. These agreements would include the Joint Communiqué of July 4, 1972; the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula of 1992 and the Joint Declaration of June 15, 2000.

What follows is the full text of the declaration as published on the South Korean government website at www.koreasummit.kr.

Apr 27, 2018

Panmunjeom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula

(Unofficial Translation)

During this momentous period of historical transformation on the Korean Peninsula, reflecting the enduring aspiration of the Korean people for peace, prosperity and unification, President Moon Jae-in of the Republic of Korea and Chairman Kim Jong Un of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea held an Inter-Korean Summit Meeting at the 'Peace House' at Panmunjeom on April 27, 2018.

The two leaders solemnly declared before the 80 million Korean people and the whole world that there will be no more war on the Korean Peninsula and thus a new era of peace has begun.

The two leaders, sharing the firm commitment to bring a swift end to the Cold War relic of longstanding division and confrontation, to boldly approach a new era of national

reconciliation, peace and prosperity, and to improve and cultivate inter-Korean relations in a more active manner, declared at this historic site of Panmunjeom as follows :

1. South and North Korea will reconnect the blood relations of the people and bring forward the future of co-prosperity and unification led by Koreans by facilitating comprehensive and groundbreaking advancement in inter-Korean relations. Improving and cultivating inter-Korean relations is the prevalent desire of the whole nation and the urgent calling of the times that cannot be held back any further.

① South and North Korea affirmed the principle of determining the destiny of the Korean nation on their own accord and agreed to bring forth the watershed moment for the improvement of inter-Korean relations by fully implementing all existing agreements and declarations adopted between the two sides thus far.

② South and North Korea agreed to hold dialogue and negotiations in various fields including at high level, and to take active measures for the implementation of the agreements reached at the Summit.

③ South and North Korea agreed to establish a joint liaison office with resident representatives of both sides in the Gaeseong region in order to facilitate close consultation between the authorities as well as smooth exchanges and cooperation between the peoples.

④ South and North Korea agreed to encourage more active cooperation, exchanges, visits and contacts at all levels in order to rejuvenate the sense of national reconciliation and unity. Between South and North, the two sides will encourage the atmosphere of amity and cooperation by actively staging various joint events on the dates that hold special meaning for both South and North Korea, such as June 15, in which participants from all levels, including central and local governments, parliaments, political parties, and civil organizations, will be involved. On the international front, the two sides agreed to demonstrate their collective wisdom, talents, and solidarity by jointly participating in international sports events such as the 2018 Asian Games.

⑤ South and North Korea agreed to endeavor to swiftly resolve the humanitarian issues that resulted from the division of the nation, and to convene the Inter-Korean Red Cross Meeting to discuss and solve various issues including the reunion of separated families. In this vein, South and North Korea agreed to proceed with reunion programs for the separated families on the occasion of the National Liberation Day of August 15 this year.

⑥ South and North Korea agreed to actively implement the projects previously agreed in the 2007 October 4 Declaration, in order to promote balanced economic growth and co-prosperity of the nation. As a first step, the two sides agreed to adopt practical steps towards the connection and modernization of the railways and roads on the eastern transportation corridor as well as between Seoul and Sinuiju for their utilization.

2. South and North Korea will make joint efforts to alleviate the acute military tension and practically eliminate the danger of war on the Korean Peninsula. Alleviating the military tension and eliminating the danger of war is a highly significant challenge directly linked to the fate of the Korean people and also a vital task in guaranteeing their peaceful and stable lives.

① South and North Korea agreed to completely cease all hostile acts against each other in every domain, including land, air and sea, that are the source of military tension and conflict. In this vein, the two sides agreed to transform the demilitarized zone into a peace zone in a genuine sense by ceasing as of May 1 this year all hostile acts and eliminating their means, including broadcasting through loudspeakers and distribution of leaflets, in the areas along the Military Demarcation Line.

② South and North Korea agreed to devise a practical scheme to turn the areas around the Northern Limit Line in the West Sea into a maritime peace zone in order to prevent accidental military clashes and guarantee safe fishing activities.

③ South and North Korea agreed to take various military measures to ensure active mutual cooperation, exchanges, visits and contacts. The two sides agreed to hold frequent meetings between military authorities, including the Defense Ministers Meeting, in order to immediately discuss and solve military issues that arise between them. In this regard, the two sides agreed to first convene military talks at the rank of general in May.

3. South and North Korea will actively cooperate to establish a permanent and solid peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. Bringing an end to the current unnatural state of armistice and establishing a robust peace regime on the Korean Peninsula is a historical mission that must not be delayed any further.

① South and North Korea reaffirmed the Non-Aggression Agreement that precludes the use of force in any form against each other, and agreed to strictly adhere to this Agreement.

- ② South and North Korea agreed to carry out disarmament in a phased manner, as military tension is alleviated and substantial progress is made in military confidence-building.
- ③ During this year that marks the 65th anniversary of the Armistice, South and North Korea agreed to actively pursue trilateral meetings involving the two Koreas and the United States, or quadrilateral meetings involving the two Koreas, the United States and China with a view to declaring an end to the War, turning the armistice into a peace treaty, and establishing a permanent and solid peace regime.
- ④ South and North Korea confirmed the common goal of realizing, through complete denuclearization, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula. South and North Korea shared the view that the measures being initiated by North Korea are very meaningful and crucial for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and agreed to carry out their respective roles and responsibilities in this regard. South and North Korea agreed to actively seek the support and cooperation of the international community for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

The two leaders agreed, through regular meetings and direct telephone conversations, to hold frequent and candid discussions on issues vital to the nation, to strengthen mutual trust and to jointly endeavor to strengthen the positive momentum towards continuous advancement of inter-Korean relations as well as peace, prosperity and unification of the Korean Peninsula.

In this context, President Moon Jae-in agreed to visit Pyongyang this fall.

April 27, 2018

Done in Panmunjeom

Moon Jae-in
President
Republic of Korea

Kim Jong Un
Chairman
State Affairs Commission
Democratic People's Republic of Korea

KOREAN PUBLIC SERVICE & TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION HAILS PANMUNJEOM DECLARATION

Calling for a new era of peace and prosperity, the Panmunjeom Declaration of April 27, 2018, offers hope for working people throughout Korea, and in the region. Reprinted here is the statement on the Panmunjeom Declaration of the Korean Public Service and Transport Workers' Union, which is an affiliate of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions.



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27 April 2018

KPTU Position On The Panmunjeom Declaration

Today an historic agreement to dramatically improve relations between South and North Korea and achieve denuclearisation and a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula was reached between President Moon Jae-in and Chairman Kim Jong Un. The Korean Public Service and Transport Workers' Union (KPTU) welcomes the agreements contained in the "Panmunjeom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula" and hopes that this will mark a turning point in Korean history.

Through this agreement, the two leaders confirmed the joint goal of "realising, through complete denuclearisation, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula" and agreed to "actively seek the support and cooperation of the international community" towards denuclearisation. This agreement is welcomed by workers not only in Korea, but throughout East Asia and the world. We recall that real denuclearisation means not only North Korea's abandonment of its nuclear weapons, but also removal of the nuclear threat from the United States, including withdrawal of the U.S.' nuclear preemptive strike policy and discontinuation of military exercises involving nuclear strategic assets.

The root cause of the nuclear crisis surrounding the Korean Peninsula lies in the failure to truly end the Korean War. Recognising this, we sincerely welcome the commitment to

actively pursue trilateral meetings involving the two Koreas and the United States, or quadrilateral meetings involving the two Koreas, the United States and China with a view to declaring an end to the war and concluding a peace treaty.

Any plan for denuclearisation must be agreed to and implemented as part of a wider plan for establishing a peace regime. We have high hopes that such a plan will be discussed and agreed to during the U.S-North Korea Summit. In order to make this possible, the United States must be ready to agree to reverse its hostile policies towards North Korea, sign a peace treaty, normalise relations with North Korea and lifting sanctions at the upcoming summit. We state clearly that we will do everything in our power to push the US-North Korea Summit and the process of implementation afterwards in the right direction.

We also place great significance in the two leaders' reaffirmation of "the Non-Aggression Agreement between the two countries, which precludes the use of force in any form against each other", and their agreement to "carry out disarmament in a phased manner." These measures are important for creating the material conditions for a real peace. As a first step, the South Korean government must remove the THAAD system being illegally operated in the Soseongri Village.

In addition, we note that these agreements indicate a direction different from that indicated in the US-South Korea joint statement of 30 June 2017, which states, "The ROK will continue to acquire the critical military capabilities necessary to lead the combined defence, and detect, disrupt, destroy, and defend against the DPRK's nuclear and missile threats, including through interoperable Kill-Chain, Korean Air and Missile Defense (KAMD), and other Alliance systems." As such, we understand this agreement between the U.S. and South Korea to increase South Korea's war capacity to be null and void, and declare our intention to work for continuous disarmament.

Finally, we welcome the agreement between the two leaders to strengthen civilian exchange and cooperation. In particular, as the union representing the public sector and workers in charge of rail and road transport, we assign great significance to the agreement to connect and modernize the rail and roads on the eastern transportation corridor as well as between [Seoul](#) and Sinuiju. We stress that the right to exchange, participation and leadership of South and North Korean workers in this process must be guaranteed.

The 'peace and prosperity' referred to in the Panmunjeom Declaration must be shared equally by all. To this end we plan to deepen exchange and solidarity with the workers

we will come into contact with on the Peninsula and Eurasian Continent through the process of integration.

We are deeply aware of that the tasks we as workers must now undertake in order to bring about peace and reunification are now more varied and more urgent than before. We thus make clear our intention to increase our capacity in the area of anti-war, peace and unification work, in order to be able to concretise a workers' vision for a peace regime and a unified nation, to fight for peace and prepare for the difficulties created by economic integration.

27 April 2018

Korean Public Service and Transport Workers' Union

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