

WFWP USA: How a Peaceful Korean Peninsula Will Change the Global Landscape

Kaeleigh Moffitt
August 15, 2024

WOMEN'S FEDERATION FOR WORLD PEACE USA

GLOBAL WOMEN'S PEACE NETWORK FORUM

KOREA AS A PIONEER: HOW A PEACEFUL KOREAN PENINSULA WOULD CHANGE THE GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

HANNA TACHIIRI
BA Candidate,
International Liberal Studies,
Waseda University, Japan

KATARINA CONNERY
Vice President,
WFWP USA

KAELEIGH MOFFITT
President,
WFWP USA

MODERATOR: ADIA LANCASTER
GWP Network Field Coordinator

**AUGUST 22, 2024
8:00 PM EDT**

RSVP: [HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/PEACEFUL-KOREA](https://tinyurl.com/peaceful-korea)

On August 15 each year, South Korea celebrates "Gwangbokjeol," or National Liberation Day, commemorating the country's liberation from 35 years of Japanese colonial rule on August 15, 1945. Despite significant efforts over the past seven decades, the Korean Peninsula remains divided. To explore the potential of a reunified Korea and its global impact, the Women's Federation for World Peace USA hosted the GWP Network Forum: "Korea as a Pioneer: How a Peaceful Korean Peninsula Would Change the Global Landscape."

Ms. Adia Lancaster, the GWP Network Field Coordinator, welcomed the audience and introduced the three speakers. The first speaker, **WFWP President Kaeleigh Moffitt**, encouraged attendees to explore Korean culture through historical dramas that emphasize loyalty to family, nation, and monarchy. These dramas provide insight into Korea's shared history and devotion to the nation across both North and South Korea.

President Kaeleigh also highlighted that the co-founders of WFWP were born in North Korea and later immigrated to the South when communism took hold in the North. Despite North Korea being geographically close, South Koreans who left family in the North face great difficulty in visiting them. This painful separation inspired the mission of Father and Mother Moon, who longed for a reunited Korea and lasting peace. President Kaeleigh recalled Father and Mother Moon's 1994 meeting with Chairman Kim Il Sung, particularly the powerful embrace between Father Moon and Chairman Kim, which showed that, despite ideological differences, they were one people. Father and Mother Moon believed that peace requires setting aside individual perspectives and embracing the other. To achieve peace on the Korean Peninsula, South Korea must consider the necessary changes to embrace the North, while the global community must work collectively to ensure peaceful reunification and stability.

President Kaeleigh concluded, "People-to-people diplomacy is the best way to bring about peace. If we approach this from a purely political standpoint, it will be difficult to achieve peace. The more we work together and get to know one another, the more we realize that the other side is not our enemy but just like us. Through this understanding, we can slowly bring about change."

Ms. Hanna Tachiiri, with her BA in International Liberal Studies and a focus on Global Governance from Waseda University, brought a unique perspective to the discussion following her return from a semester abroad in Korea. During her time there, she attended the Jeju Forum of Peace and Prosperity and gained insights into the complexities surrounding the reunification of North and South Korea. In her experience, Hanna engaged in discussions with classmates who held varied opinions on the topic. Some advocated for reunification, emphasizing that North and South Koreans are one people, while others highlighted the practical challenges, pointing out that over 70 years of division had created significant societal differences that would take years to bridge. Hanna was struck by the range of opinions but noted that the unifying theme was the aspiration for peace, even if the paths to achieve it were debated.

One of the key moments in her reflection was reading Mother Moon's memoir, where she learned of a proposal from 2015 to establish the 5th UN office at the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Hanna strongly resonated with the idea that placing an international office in a region symbolic of conflict and division could be a powerful step toward lasting peace. She shared Mother Moon's belief that such a monumental decision would be an influential call to address reunification, providing a constant reminder of the journey from division to unity. Hanna also reflected on her participation in the Jeju Forum, which was notable for bringing together influential global leaders, such as former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg. The forum was especially significant in light of the Jeju Uprising, a tragic event that had been repressed by the South Korean government for years. Hanna recognized the importance of acknowledging and addressing historical grievances as part of the peace process, using the Jeju Forum as a prime example of meaningful peace dialogue.

In Hanna's view, reunification of North and South Korea holds immense potential for peace in the region. It would ensure the rights of North Koreans are upheld and contribute to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, promoting greater regional stability.

The third speaker, **Katarina Connery, Vice President of WFWP**, brought a scholarly approach to the forum. With a bachelor's degree in International Political Economy and Diplomacy from the University of Bridgeport, a master's degree in International Development from the University of Pittsburgh with a concentration on Human Security, and a Graduate Certificate in Advanced Asian Studies from the University of Pittsburgh's Asian Studies Center focusing on the Korean Peninsula, her academic background provided a solid foundation for her insights on peace and security in the region. Drawing from Father and Mother Moon's peace philosophy, Katarina emphasized that finding a lasting solution for peace requires love, and true love cannot exist without understanding. She stressed that understanding doesn't mean agreeing, but rather seeking to comprehend the other's perspective to build trust and sincerity. Katarina noted that it is misguided to assume that North Korea must change first; instead, mutual understanding of each other's historical realities and ideologies is crucial.

In this context, Katarina delved into the North Korean ideology of "Juche," which emphasizes self-reliance. She connected this to the Korean proverb "고래 싸움에 새우등 터진다" (Gorae ssaueme saeudeung teojinda), or "When whales fight, the shrimp's back is broken." This saying highlights how smaller, vulnerable entities suffer when larger forces clash. Katarina suggested that North Koreans might view themselves as the "shrimp" caught between powerful nations, reinforcing the need for thoughtful engagement and a peace-building approach that considers their unique position in the geopolitical landscape.

As far back as 500 CE, Korea has experienced significant influence from neighboring powers, starting with China, followed by invasions from the Mongols and Japan. Despite these external pressures and the cultural demoralization inflicted by the Japanese occupation, Korea has made a concerted effort to preserve its culture and language, maintaining a sense of national identity through resilience and pride.

After World War II, the division of Korea at the 38th parallel occurred without input from the Korean people themselves, leading to a separation that remains to this day. In North Korea, the state-adopted ideology of "Juche," which emphasizes self-reliance and independence, ironically overlooks the reality that North Korea has long relied on external support. Though the government promotes Juche as a core national principle, North Korea has received substantial aid from South Korea, the Soviet Union, China, and various humanitarian organizations in the West.

Unfortunately, it is incredibly difficult to gain an accurate picture of what regular citizens of North Korea think due to the heavy regulation of travel and communication. Even for the few who are allowed to leave the country, such as athletes, travel is closely monitored, and foreigners visiting North Korea face strict supervision with limited movement. The regime enforces severe punishments for those who consume outside media, including execution for something as simple as watching South Korean dramas or listening to foreign radio broadcasts. The rare glimpses we have into the lives of North Koreans primarily come from defectors who manage to escape. Among the population, there are various groups: those who are disillusioned and manage to escape; those who are equally disillusioned but remain trapped due to restrictions or family obligations; those who are simply focused on surviving day to day; and finally, those who sincerely adhere to the regime's propaganda and the hero worship of the Kim family. The North Korean government's ability to maintain control is partly due to the loyalty of enough citizens who subscribe to the state's narrative, allowing the regime to do whatever it takes to ensure its survival.

For North Korea, pursuing peace may seem unappealing, particularly when considering the example of Libya. In collectivist cultures like Korea, the leader's honor is intertwined with the group's honor, and the leader's shame reflects on the entire group. Katarina Connery emphasized that attempts to humiliate Kim Jong Un or seek justice for his regime might backfire, as they could reinforce loyalty among North Koreans rather than fostering change. To effectively engage North Koreans, it is crucial to understand their perspectives and desires, even if this means recognizing their current reverence for the Kim regime. Long-term progress requires cultivating trust and approaching North Koreans with genuine understanding and sincerity, focusing on their best interests rather than immediate political gains.

The forum broadened our understanding of peace and underscored the importance of sincerity in our approach. To achieve lasting peace, it's crucial that all parties recognize the long-term benefits despite the immediate challenges. Engaging South Koreans and encouraging them to gain a deeper understanding of North Korea is vital. Despite their shared heritage, the division of the two nations over decades has created significant distance, and taking the time to hear the stories from defectors can be one way to help bridge this gap. A person-to-person approach can help build common ground and foster dialogue, gradually paving the way for peace and unity on the Korean Peninsula.

We hope our readers/listeners feel inspired to delve deeper into Korean issues and support initiatives aimed at reunification. Through genuine engagement and understanding, we can work towards a harmonious future for both nations.