

UPF Europe and the Middle East ILC: The 71st Anniversary of the Korean War

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Europe and the Middle East -- The second session of the June 2021 International Leadership Conference was titled "Commemorating the 71st Anniversary of the Korean War."

Background

On June 25, 1950, North Korean troops crossed the 38th parallel, intent on reunifying by force the Korean Peninsula which had been divided in 1945 by the victors of World War II. The United Nations intervened, and 16 nations sent their soldiers to defend the South, while the North received support from five communist nations. About 4 million people lost their lives. This tragic war came to an end with the signing of the armistice on July 27, 1953.



What historical background and motives led to this fratricidal war? Why was this relatively unknown nation seen as so important that so many forces came from all over the world to defend it? As a peace treaty was not signed with the armistice, North and South Korea are still technically at war; they remain separated by a 241-kilometer long, 4-kilometer wide Demilitarized Zone.

Speakers

Moderator **David Fraser Harris**, the secretary general of UPF for the Middle East, explained that this session, which took place on June 25, was part of the ILC 2021 webinar series being held under the title "Toward the Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula: Peace and Security," as part of a global series held simultaneously all over the world. He announced that two more ILC webinar series were scheduled to follow in July and August 2021.

In his opening remarks, **Dr. Katsumi Otsuka**, co-chairman of UPF for Europe and the Middle East, said

that the ILC 2021 webinar series also commemorates the historic visit by UPF founders Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon to Pyongyang, North Korea, 30 years ago to meet the supreme leader of North Korea, Chairman Kim Il Sung.

Dr. Otsuka explained that both Rev. Moon and his wife were born in what is now North Korea, went through World War II and the Korean War, and were refugees in their own country, which explains why they have worked ever since for peace and unification on the Korean Peninsula.



The Korean War could be described as World War III, Dr. Otsuka said -- a clash between ideologies, between the democratic and communist worlds. The Korean Peninsula has remained divided. While today hope for a peaceful reunification has dwindled, especially among the young generation, UPF-Korea is determined to give them hope. The use of physical force is not an option, and neither is competition between the North and the South. The headwing vision proposed by Rev. and Mrs. Moon aims at embracing rather than destroying one's enemy or opponent. The key words that will lead to world peace and happiness must be empathy, togetherness, cooperation and hope, Dr. Otsuka concluded.

Next, a short video was shown about the Korean War and the creation of the Little Angels Children's Folk Ballet of Korea.



The next speaker, **Dr. No Hi Pak**, a senior adviser for UPF-Korea, gave an overview of the Korean War.

At the end of World War II, the Korean Peninsula was divided by a border at the 38th parallel, following the political bargaining of the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and China. According to Dr. Pak, as the colonial ruler over Korea, it was Japan that should have been divided.

When the Soviet Union withdrew its troops from North Korea in 1948, and the U.S. withdrew from the

South one year later, two ideologically opposed governments facing each other were left on the peninsula.

On June 25, 1950, North Korean leader Kim Il Sung, with the support of the Soviet Union, invaded the southern half of the peninsula, under the pretext of "liberating" it.

In response, the United Nations Command was formed, with 16 countries sending troops and five countries sending medical support to South Korea.

According to UPF founder Reverend Moon, the division of the Korean Peninsula is not only the result of geopolitical rivalries between superpowers, but part of God's Providence of Restoration in which the communist North and the democratic South first must be separated.

Dr. Pak testified about his brother Bo Hi Pak, who had entered the Korean Military Academy only three weeks before the Korean War broke out. His class of about 300 brand-new cadets, without any combat experience, was sent to the frontline. One hundred cadets were killed. Facing death numerous times during the war, Bo Hi Pak prayed that if he survived the war, he would devote his life to following the will of God.

This is what he did after meeting Reverend Moon, who had gathered many followers in North Korea, despite the surveillance and oppression of the communist regime. Accused of being a spy for the South, Reverend Moon was sentenced to three years at the Heungnam Labor Camp. He was released by the UN forces in October 1950. At that time the UN forces still intended to advance northward and reunite the country. However, when Chinese communist forces joined the war, the South Korean and UN forces retreated to the South again. Large-scale evacuation operations from North Korean territory were started.

The armed conflict stopped where it began, near the 38th parallel, when an armistice agreement was signed on July 27, 1953.

After the Korean War, Dr. No Hi Pak's brother Bo Hi was working at the Korean Embassy in Washington, D.C. To his disappointment, he found out that his country was known only as a nation of war, poverty and orphans. He suggested to Reverend Moon to establish a Korean folk dance troupe to show the world the rich cultural heritage of Korea. This happened in 1962, and the children's folk dance troupe was named the Little Angels. Their first world tour in 1965 was a great success. They truly became diplomatic envoys representing Korea and its artistic traditions.

In 2010, the 60th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War, Reverend Moon sent the Little Angels to perform in the 21 countries that had supported South Korea, to express his and the Korean people's gratitude to all the veterans and people who had helped Korea in its time of need. Bo Hi Pak conducted three tours with the Little Angels, covering 21 countries.

Since Reverend Moon's passing in 2012, his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, has been leading the Unification movement. She has said that to ensure peace in Northeast Asia and the world, the ideological confrontation between communism and democracy must be abolished by achieving the unification of the Korean Peninsula. Not only geopolitical unification but also the unification of values and ideology must take place among the Koreans. This can be achieved only by practicing true love.

Dr. No Hi Pak invited all the attendees to participate in this God-centered movement for a unified Korea.

A short video was shown featuring testimonies from three Korean War veterans -- one British, one Russian and one Belgian.

Mélanie Komagata, a graduate student in East Asian studies at the University of Geneva, gave a historical overview of the Korean War, in commemoration of the 71st anniversary of its start.

She addressed the following questions:

Q: What historical background and motives led to the fratricidal war?

A: Korea was a unified country for centuries, with a common history and political unity. However, under the Japanese occupation, tensions appeared between Koreans who advocated independence and those who supported the colonizers. Kim Il Sung, for instance, supported the guerrilla groups against the Japanese, especially in Manchuria. He also fought alongside Chinese communists in the Chinese civil war.

In the South, Syngman Rhee, who had studied in the United States, had a strong link to the Western world. He presided over the Korean Provisional Government in exile in Shanghai, China.

Both leaders opposed the Japanese occupation. During World War II, Koreans were in various troops -- such as the Red Army, the Japanese Imperial Army and some even in the US troops -- fighting one

another.



What truly divided the Korean people, however, was the territorial division of the peninsula by the superpowers at the end of World War II, without the Koreans having been consulted. Initially, the superpowers planned to reunite the two Koreas into an independent and democratic nation. Unfortunately, in the Cold War context they were unable to come to a consensus about the future of Korea.

In 1948, the Republic of Korea was established, with pro-Western Syngman Rhee as president. The UN did recognize the new state, but not the DPRK under the regime of Kim Il Sung, a communist. This brought much confusion and discontent among the Korean population. In 1950, Kim Il Sung saw his chance to invade the South with the intention to reunite the peninsula under his ideology.

Q: Why did so many military forces from all over the world come to the rescue of South Korea?

A: When the US had vetoed a resolution introduced by Russia to accept the People's Republic of China as a member of the UN Security Council, Russia boycotted the council by leaving its chair empty. When the Korean War broke out, the UN voted to intervene in the war, in the absence of the Soviet ambassador. Four resolutions were accepted condemning the DPRK's aggression and asking UN member states to intervene.

Q: What is the background of the signing of the truce?

A: A proposal for a cease-fire was first made to the UN by the Soviet Union in June 1951. Subsequently, the war was stalemated in 1951, and negotiations between the US (represented by the UN), the ROK, the DPRK and China started. China was in favor of a peninsula divided by the 38th parallel. The ROK and the DPRK, on the other hand, wanted to reunify Korea under their governments. The final ceasefire was signed in July 1953, when Chairman Kim of the DPRK accepted the status quo. Unfortunately, the ROK was not included among the signatories, leaving the parties technically at war.

In conclusion, Ms. Komagata said that the tensions between the two Koreas can be overcome if both countries find a new paradigm and go beyond their national and ideological interests. Also, the external powers need to be included in the negotiations, and they must defend the interests of the Korean people rather than their own.

Subsequently, moderator David Fraser Harris presented some questions from the audience to the speakers.

In his closing remarks, **Jacques Marion**, co-chairman of UPF for Europe and the Middle East, spoke about the UPF founders' vision on the Korean issue.

Strategically located in Northeast Asia between China, Japan, Russia and the United States, Korea is meant to play an important role in the 21st century. These four great powers are competing for influence and sovereignty. Their competition caused the division of the Korean Peninsula in 1945 and to a great extent contributes to the stalemate today.

In his memoirs, Reverend Moon described Korea's role in relation to these big powers as the ball bearing of a machine, which allows the various components of a machine to rotate harmoniously.

Despite countless invasions by their powerful neighbors, and the influence of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Christianity, the Koreans maintained their unique culture, language and culture.

A reunified Korean Peninsula would be a center for trade and economic development in Northeast Asia and the world, Mr. Marion said. This vision is embodied in the International Peace Highway initiative launched by Reverend Moon, which includes proposals for a tunnel between Japan and Korea and a tunnel under the Bering Strait.

Reunification by military power has been shown to be a disaster, Mr. Marion said, while reunification by power competition, in which South Korea's economic superiority opposes North Korea's nuclear superiority, cannot bring peace either.

The third way for reunification, promoted by Reverend Moon, is trust based on cooperation, centering on the common values embodied in the Korean culture. Following the biblical model of Esau and Jacob, often used by Rev. and Mrs. Moon to describe the peace process, they met Kim Il Sung in Pyongyang 30 years ago. Even though North Korea considered him to be an archenemy, Reverend Moon embraced Kim Il Sung and offered him all the economic support he could muster.

The division at the 38th parallel also bears witness to the two opposing ideologies that separated East and West during the Cold War, Mr. Marion said. One of the factors is the opposition of Juche ideology in the North and liberal democracy in the South. For the reunification of North and South, political and economic cooperation do not suffice, Mr. Marion said. Peace must be rooted in common values centering on the highest principle of peace, which is love.

Rev. and Mrs. Moon teach Unification Thought, aka Headwing ideology, which can transcend the right wing and the left wing, just as the head and brain harmonize the right and left arms. This philosophy, which transcends both the collectivism of socialist ideology and the individualism of liberal democracies, is expressed through the principles of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values that UPF has been promoting.

China has a key role to play in the reunification of the Korean Peninsula because of its influence on North Korea, whose ideology is similar to China's. Dialogue with China is difficult today, Mr. Marion said, and yet UPF organized hundreds of seminars throughout the country for 10 years -- thanks to its "Headwing approach," centering on family values.

People-to-people diplomacy can go a long way indeed to overcome political barriers, he said.

