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The PCI News



2024 Korea-U.S. Friendship Night

The partnership between Friends of Korea (FoK) and the Pacific Century Institute (PCI) aims to maintain and strengthen the connection of PCI's Project Bridge Youth Ambassadors to Korea. FoK, dedicated to fostering cultural understanding between Koreans and Americans, ensures that Project Bridge alumni from all three regions remain engaged with Korea and the Korean-American community after graduation, enabling their participation in FoK's cultural and educational activities.



(Consul General of ROK Kim Youngwan giving welcoming remarks to attendees, Los Angeles, CA)

The 2024 Korea-U.S. Friendship Night took place on Saturday, October 19, at the residence of Consul General Youngwan Kim in Los Angeles, CA. The evening commenced with warm welcoming remarks from Consul General Kim, followed by insightful speeches from Gerard Krzic, President of Friends of Korea; Seokki Kim, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee of the Republic of Korea; and Spencer Kim, Co-founder of the Pacific Century Institute. Each speaker underscored the enduring partnership between Korea and the U.S., reflecting on shared values and the collaborative efforts that continue to strengthen this vital relationship.

This year's event followed the Friends of Korea Annual Meeting, bringing together members from across the U.S., including former Youth Ambassadors. It created an opportunity to honor and recognize Peace Corp volunteers' efforts

in the Republic of Korea, diplomatic ties, and also to celebrate cultural exchanges and acknowledge the contributions of individuals and organizations to this special bilateral relationship. The evening was enriched by a captivating performance by Ms. Yunja Ji on the Gayageum and Mr. Byungsang Lee on the Daegeum, adding a meaningful touch of traditional Korean artistry to the celebration.

The 2024 Korea-U.S. Friendship Night highlighted the deep connections between the two nations and served as a platform to recognize the ongoing efforts that continue to nurture and strengthen these ties.



((L)Ms. Yunja Ji on the Gayageum; (R) Mr. Byungsang Lee on the Daegeum, Los Angeles, CA)

SAVE THE DATE!

PCI Annual Award Dinner

Date: Thursday, March 6, 2025

Venue: The Beverly Hills Hotel

Reception 6:00 PM | Dinner 7:00 PM



Board Member Opinion Editorial

This opinion editorial by PCI co-founder, Spencer H. Kim, appeared in the Korea Daily on October 21, 2024.

North Korea & The World – Deal with them as they are, not as we wish them to be

by Spencer H. Kim

William J. Perry, the wise former US Secretary of Defense, who did the in-depth review of US policy toward North Korea for the second Clinton Administration, concluded that, “We have to deal with the North Koreans as they are, not as we wish them to be.”

For Koreans, the same applies today, and in the future, not only for North Korea, but for the world at large as well. But... how are the North Koreans... and the World? And, given how they are, how to deal with them?

For South Korea, both are challenges that need a coherent analysis and a consistent response. All around there is change.

Kim Jong Un has declared an end (at least from his regime’s point of view) to hopes for Korean unification. South Korea is now a separate state and an “absolute enemy.”

North Korea is moving even closer to China (even if fundamental prickliness remains), and much closer to Russia, and is trying to cozy up to Iran and the BRICS economic grouping, making international sanctions less relevant.

It is hell bent on developing its nuclear weapons and delivery systems. Gone is the optimism of Moon-Kim and Trump-Kim of 2018. The long, humiliating train ride back from Hanoi in February 2019 after the failed Trump summit, and the failure of Moon Jae-in to be able to follow through on the 2018 agreements, have taken their toll.

But North Korea and South Korea still share a common language, customs, history, and peninsula. Kim Jong Un can’t change that. He is a maximum leader, and the nukes and the repudiation of unification are a result of his decisions and his will. But he is not immortal. He will die someday.

The Communist Party of China, under Xi Jinping, seems bent on trying to recreate some past myth of Chinese power and glory; it may lead to an invasion of Taiwan and confrontation in the South China Sea. Certainly, it is leading to coercion as a strong element of Chinese policy.

Likewise, Vladimir Putin in Russia has decided to try to create

his vision of past Russian, or Soviet, glory and power. The result has been violence and coercion and confrontation with Europe and the US.

But how much of Chinese and Russian revanchism is just Xi and Putin, and how much is a part of fundamental driving forces in China and Russia?

In the United States a populist sentiment aggrieved by rapid economic and social change, and personified in Donald Trump, has led to a questioning of the perceived sacrifices Americans make to lead the post-WWII order that the US created. Would America be better off as “America First,” and if it retreated behind its two oceans and built a wall around itself?

How much of the new isolationist sentiment is Trump being able to articulate inchoate grievances, and will fade away when the 78-year-old does, and how much is a new American worldview?

If America retracts its nuclear umbrella from the world, how many countries will feel the need to develop their own nuclear weapons, multiplying the chances of nuclear war somewhere, with the fallout reaching the entire globe?

How much will climate change – with its leading edge of more violent natural disasters already destabilizing the global insurance industry that can no longer reliably predict; and the specter of climate refugees adding to the migrant issues already roiling many countries – change calculations everywhere?

Likewise, the rise of Artificial Intelligence, access to advanced computer chips, and access to rare earth elements.

Likewise, birthrates in most advanced countries, most certainly including South Korea, are falling, while the population of other parts of the world, the poorer parts, continues to grow.

So, seeing North Korea and the World, as they are, is a confusing, boiling stew of a mixture of issues.

Only after the “what” is understood can the details of the “dealing” with them be decided. Pretending that things are as we wish them to be is a path to disaster.

One thing is for sure as a starting point. In South Korea the current system of deep political polarization between

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Board Member Opinion Editorial

This opinion editorial by PCI board member, Dr. Chung-in Moon, appeared in the Hankyoreh on October 7, 2024.

Korean reunification: Between idealism and realism by Chung-in Moon

“Let’s not reunify. Wouldn’t it be better for us to just live separately, respecting and helping one another and being happy together? Let us build a solid peace and leave the future of the Korean Peninsula after that to later generations. Let us accept the objective reality and the existence of two states. Let us either strike or amend the territorial terms in Article 3 of the Constitution.”

These remarks were made not long ago by former Blue House chief of staff Im Jong-seok. Their impact has been considerable.

Seoul Mayor Oh Se-hoon derided Im for “echoing Kim Jong-un’s ‘two hostile states’ frame” and “going beyond mere ‘sympathies with the North’ to outright allegiance.”

Park Choong-kwon, a National Assembly member who himself defected from North Korea, went so far as to accuse Im of being a secret agent “supplying a pretext for the legalization of North Korea’s ‘two hostile state’ frame.” President Yoon Suk-yeol personally singled Im’s remarks out as an “anti-constitutional idea,” asking whether he was suggesting that it was “even possible to have two states coexisting peacefully in a situation where North Korea has declared its willingness to wage a nuclear attack.”

Even other progressives and members of the Democratic Party have voiced fears that Im was getting too far ahead of things, suggesting that his idea of abandoning the goal of reunification and coexisting as two states showed a disregard for popular sentiment and was potentially contrary to the Constitution.

Without a doubt, Im’s remarks come across as extreme. But it is also clear that they are not too far off from the current reality of the Korean Peninsula.

First, let us consider his call to abandon the goal of reunification. That does not seem much different from the “Korean community” unification formula of 1989, which served as a key element of unification policies under past administrations.

The Korean community unification plan consists of three stag-

es, including a first one that involves seeking out reconciliation, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence between South and North and a second intermediate one that involves constructing an inter-Korean confederation to create a situation of de facto unification, where people and goods are able to move freely between the two sides.

Under this framework, the final stage is institutional unification into a single nation-state, where after the two sides have restored their homogeneity under a basic order of liberal democracy, the decision is made through peaceful means such as a referendum.

In other words, Im’s “let’s not reunify” message is less an expression of opposition to reunification per se than a deeply ironic way of describing reunification that takes the practical constraints into consideration.

The same can be said for his “two states” frame. After the adoption of the Korean community unification plan, South Korean administrations clearly indicated that this would be a two-state system, with one nation but two states, two sets of institutions, and two governments.

While the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement of 1991 referred to their relationship as “a special interim relationship stemming from the process towards unification,” it is also true that since their simultaneous admission to the United Nations that same year, the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea have clearly existed as two sovereign states.

Indeed, the sort of inter-Korean confederation that past South Korean administrations have proposed is premised on the idea of a union among states, along the same lines as the European Union. This alternative conception stemmed from consistent characterizations of the Confederal Republic of Koryo unification plan proposed by the North — with its system of one nation, one state, and two sets of institutions and local governments — as being a “Trojan horse” aimed at achieving unification under a communist regime.

In late December of last year, Kim Jong-un fully abandoned the idea of a confederation, calling instead for a system with two nations and two hostile states along the same lines as East Germany. As a reason for this, he stressed that “reunification can never be achieved with the ROK authorities that defined the ‘unification by absorption’ and ‘unification under liberal democracy’ as their state policy” and that

(Cont. Page 7)



PCI Sponsored Programs

EWC International Media Conference

The East-West Center International Media Conference (IMC) is a biennial event that brings together journalists from the US, Asia, and the Pacific to discuss regional issues, media trends, and common challenges. It features notable keynote speakers and expert panels, along with media training workshops and networking opportunities. As the only regular media conference focused on Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the US, it attracts over 400 participants from more than 30 countries, fostering connections and collaborations. Past keynotes have included Nobel Laureates, senior government officials, and technology leaders. The Pacific Century Institute has been its long-time sponsor.



By Devon Grandy

The East-West Center held its eighth International Media Conference in June, attracting over 400 attendees from 35 countries. Held over four days in Manila, the 2024 conference was themed The Future of Facts and featured timely discussions of generative artificial intelligence and its impacts on media, democracy, global affairs, and the journalism profession itself. Prominent speakers included oceanographer and climate advocate Sylvia Earle; Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique Manalo; Philippine Secretary of the National Economic and Development Authority Arsenio Balisacan; and US Ambassador to the Philippines MaryKay L. Carlson. Pacific Century Institute, a longtime supporter of the conference, sponsored this year's Gala Dinner honoring seven extraordinary journalists from the US-Asia-Pacific for their exceptional commitment to quality reporting and freedom of the press, often under harrowing circumstances.

Testimonials

“I loved the size and depth of the network... it was a great experience to meet and get to know journalists from other countries covering similar and different topics.”

“[The AI programming] was invaluable and I am returning to my own newsroom filled with useful and actionable ideas for how to reinvent ourselves for the future.”



(Top: Honorees from the Gala Dinner, *Journalists of Courage and Impact*; Middle: IMC founder Susan Kreifels with honoree Soe Myint of *Mizzima*; EWC President Suzanne Vares-Lum with honoree Tom Grundy of *Hong Kong Free Press, Manila, Philippines*).

For more information please visit <https://www.eastwestcenter.org/>



PCI Sponsored Programs

Taiwan Policy Database

By PCI President Raymond Burghardt

At the end of 2023, the Asia Society Policy Institute (ASPI) initiated a collaboration with PCI on a new project: a digital "Taiwan Policy Database." For those involved in Taiwan-related issues, there is often confusion, misinterpretation, or disagreement about key events shaping Taiwan and cross-strait relations over the past eighty years.

The Center for China Analysis at the Asia Society envisioned a product that in the most neutral way possible would offer the perspective of each of the three parties to the Taiwan issue: Taiwan (the Republic of China), the People's Republic of China government in Beijing, and the United States. This one-of-a-kind interactive website would house the deepest repository of policies, agreements, laws, exchanges and key events that have shaped cross-strait policy from World War II until the present. The Database would also include in depth analyses, called "narratives," that would unpack the complexity of key issues and the foundations of each of the parties' policies over the past decades. The material would be in both English and Chinese. Dubbed by the Asia Society "The Taiwan Policy Timeline and Living Archive Project," the database will continuously be updated and new material added to its historical record.

PCI contributed to the project by providing declassified documents and reviewing the platform during its development, offering feedback on its design and content. In addition, the PCI board approved a grant to support the work of assembling the database.

The Taiwan Policy Database was launched on July 31, 2024. It was very quickly hailed by scholars and practitioners as a very useful tool. The official launch was a virtual event on September 11. Lyle Morris, the Asia Society Policy Institute's lead figure for this project, moderated a panel discussion with the ASPI's Managing Director Rorry Daniels; Wen-ti Sung, a Taiwanese who is a non-resident fellow at the Atlantic Council; Xin Qiang, Director of the Institute for Taiwan Studies at Shanghai's Fudan University, and myself. We discussed the virtues of the database and addressed Lyle's questions on key current issues: the election in Taiwan of President Lai Ching-de and what it meant for cross-strait ties; potential changes in Taiwan policy following the US election; and policy recommendations to stabilize the situation and reduce the risk of conflict. Lyle commented later that our discussion, providing views from all three sides (Taiwan, PRC and US) was a rare public event and very much in "in keeping with the mission of the Taiwan Policy Database."

Korea Peace Academy

The PCI-sponsored Korea Peace Academy at the Korean Peninsula Peace Forum is an initiative aimed at promoting peace education and fostering dialogue among participants about issues related to peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. This program seeks to cultivate "Peacemakers" who will work towards improving inter-Korean relations and fostering a culture of peace and stability in Northeast Asia. Through its planned curriculum, the academy provides participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to a new era of peace and prosperity in the region.

During the 2024 Korea Peace Forum, participants had the privilege of attending a lecture by Kim Joon-hyung, Member of the National Assembly, on the "2024 U.S. Presidential Election and Peace on the Korean Peninsula." This lecture ignited thoughtful discussions on the future of diplomacy and security in the region.



(Former ROK President Moon Jae-in with Korea Peace Forum participants, Pyeong-san Village, South Korea)

As part of the forum, participants also embarked on a memorable two-day field trip (July 12-13) to Bongha Village, the hometown of former President Roh Moo-hyun, and Pyeong-san Village, where former President Moon Jae-in resides. In Bongha Village, they toured the memorial hall and attended a lecture that explored President Roh's leadership and vision. The following day, they had the distinct honor of meeting with former President Moon Jae-in to discuss his recently published autobiography and his insights on foreign affairs and security.

The program concluded on November 5 with a final lecture, marking the end of an enriching and impactful forum.



PCI Sponsored Programs

James T. Laney Professorship

The James T. Laney Professorship at Yonsei University, organized by the Yonsei Institute for North Korean Studies, honors former U.S. Ambassador to South Korea and Emory University president James T. Laney. It fosters dialogue on American and global affairs, providing a platform for thought leaders to address contemporary challenges, especially those affecting the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia.

The highly anticipated James Laney Distinguished Professorship program for the 2024-2025 academic year at Yonsei University started on November 14, 2024 at Kim Dae-jung Library in Yonsei University Sinchon Campus.

This year's series, titled *East Asia in the World: Transition Period Orders and Key Conflicts*, will be led by renowned scholar Moon Jung-in, Special Lecture Professor and James Laney Chair Professor at Yonsei University. Professor Moon is a leading expert on East Asia's geopolitical landscape, and this series will provide invaluable insights into the shifting dynamics of the region amid global power struggles.

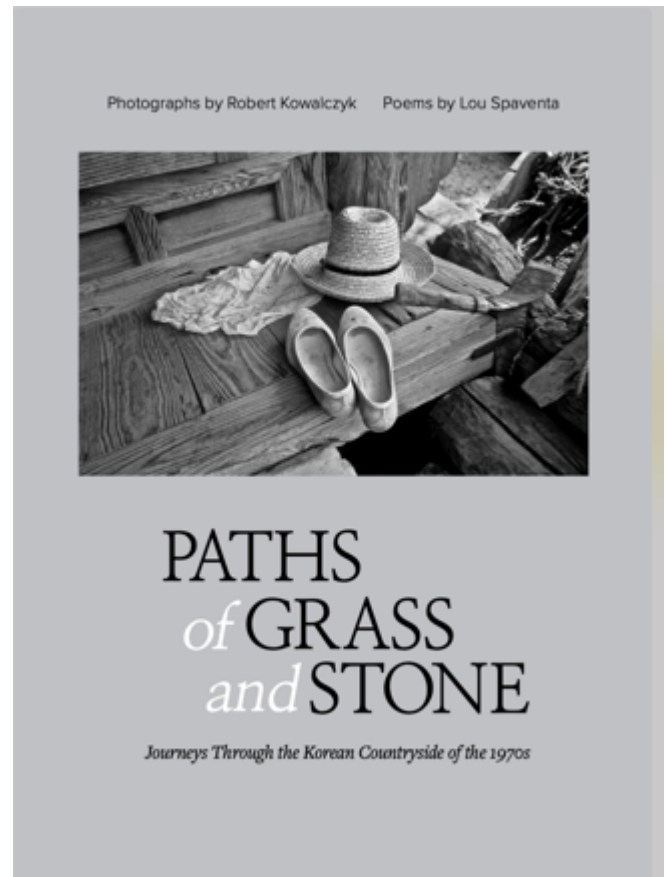


(Top: Professor Chung-in Moon (C) with the lecture attendees. Bottom: Professor Moon giving his lecture, Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea)

This series will explore crucial topics affecting East Asia's role in the global order, such as the rise of China, the strategic dilemmas faced by Japan and Korea, North Korea's nuclear

ambitions, and the intensifying U.S.-China rivalry. With 12 comprehensive lectures spanning over eight months, participants will gain a deeper understanding of the political, historical, and strategic challenges that define East Asia today and in the future. Each session will offer a thought-provoking analysis of East Asia's complex dynamics within the context of global geopolitical shifts.

Book Release



Paths of Grass and Stone: Journeys Through the Korean Countryside of the 1970s captures the beauty and resilience of rural Korea during the time former Peace Corps volunteers lived there. Featuring photographs by Robert Kowalczyk, poetry by Lou Spaventa, and short essays by Kathleen Stephens, former U.S. Ambassador to Korea, Michael E. Robinson, Professor Emeritus at Indiana University (East Asian History), and Brother Anthony of Taizé, translator of modern Korean poetry, the collection offers a rich portrayal of Korea's landscapes, culture, and history in the 1970s, a period of profound change.

For a copy, please contact pci@pacificcenturyinst.org.



Board Member Opinion Editorial cont.

North Korea & The World – Deal with them as they are, not as we wish them to be

(Continued from page 2)

conservatives and progressives, and the change of presidents every five years, often rotating directly between conservatives and progressives, and creating a “new” policy for dealing with North Korea, and the wider world, every five years is not conducive to coherent analysis and consistent response.

There is the example of West Germany and how it dealt with East Germany and the world as it was at that time. Both sides of the political spectrum came together to create a policy of “Ostpolitik” that recognized East Germany as it was, and established the best way for West Germany to maneuver in the Cold War environment, and global economic order, of the 1970s and 1980s. The policy was expansive and quite magnanimous. It was followed by every administration, whether from the right or left. And, most importantly, it was successful.

Can South Korea emulate West Germany and create a coherent, consistent set of policies for dealing with North Korea and the outside world?

My suggestion is that the most effective thing President Youn can do in response is to create a commission of leading thinkers from both the conservative and progressive sides to undertake a fulltime, deep, comprehensive, non-ideological dialogue – including talking to experts, scientists, and economists, and engaging directly with North Korea, China, Russia, Japan, the US, and Europe – to create a fundamental policy going forward that all sides of the Korean political spectrum can agree on.

A well-funded and staffed commission could take a couple of years to do its work and announce its policy proposals prior to the 2027 presidential election and ask all presidential candidates to commit to following such a policy if elected.

If achieved, such a consistent policy, followed by every South Korean president for years to come, would be a major legacy of President Youn, remembered as at least equal to King Sejong’s creation of Hangul. And the commission could be remembered in Korean history as a modern-day version of Sejong’s Hall of Worthies.

PCI Board Members, Founders and Fellows often contribute to the media. The opinions expressed are solely those of the individuals involved and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Pacific Century Institute.

Korean reunification: Between idealism and realism

(Continued from page 3)

under liberal democracy’ as their state policy” and that “north-south relations have been completely fixed into the relations between two states hostile to each other and the relations between two belligerent states, not the consanguineous or homogeneous ones any more.”

In this light, the system of “one people in two peacefully co-existing states” described by Im is more of a continuation of the stepwise unification approach adhered to by past South Korean administrations. What it cannot be seen as is an answer to the course chosen by Kim Jong-un.

We also cannot overlook the issues that Im raised about the territorial terms in Article 3 of the South Korean Constitution.

At a Supreme People’s Assembly meeting in January of this year, Kim Jong-un directed the amendment of the North Korean constitution with the addition of new territorial land, water and airspace provisions that would redefine the scope of territory where sovereignty would be exercised. If these territorial definitions are put in place and implemented, they would inevitably run into conflict with Article 3 of the South Korean Constitution.

The reason that this provision was established in the first place was to legitimize the Republic of Korea’s status as the sole lawful government on the Korean Peninsula. In no one’s eyes can it be seen as effectively legally binding; if anything, it increases the likelihood of a conflict erupting. This is why it warrants careful examination.

In view of all this, what Im was suggesting was that we set aside our “unification idealism” and seek out practical solutions that clearly take reality into account. At the same time, his approach of “progressive realism” carries with it a number of issues that would need to be dealt with.

North Korea appears very unlikely to accept his call for peaceful coexistence, and the Yoon Suk-yeol administration is similarly unlikely to revise its aim of achieving reunification through a northward expansion of liberalism. Given all the issues surrounding North Korea’s nuclear program, it is difficult to even imagine how a space for discussing peaceful coexistence could be created.

But hopefully the controversial questions that Im has raised can go some way in bridging the gap between reunification idealism and realism.



Project Bridge



2024-2025 Youth Ambassadors

Kezia Araujo	Downtown Magnets High School
Evelyn Diaz	John H. Francis Polytechnic High School
Logan Li	Mark Keppel High School
Bryan Lopez	Theodore Roosevelt High School
Yarel Mendez	Abraham Lincoln Senior High School
Joel Nam	Van Nuys High School
Abdalmhman Sheer	Francisco Bravo Senior High Medical Magnet
Ashley Yu	South El Monte High School



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