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The PCI News



PCI NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Pacific Century Institute is pleased to welcome and introduce the newest members of its Board Members, who have recently joined the Institute's board.



(Michael Tutko)

Michael Tutko, CPA (Inactive), MBA, is a finance and accounting executive with extensive experience in corporate controllership, investment accounting, and SEC reporting. He served as Corporate Controller at Motorcar Parts of America (NASDAQ: MPAA), overseeing SEC reporting, financial planning, treasury management, and supporting the company's

expansion into Mexico. He later led the modernization of investment accounting for Northrop Grumman's \$24 billion corporate pension plan.

As a senior consultant with Resources Global Professionals, Michael advised Fortune 500 companies on technical accounting, financial reporting, and internal controls, including revenue recognition implementation at The Walt Disney Company and Sarbanes-Oxley compliance at Kaiser Permanente. Earlier in his career, he worked as a manufacturing engineer at Ford Motor Company and Honeywell International.

Michael earned an MBA in Finance and Accounting from the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business and a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from Virginia Tech. He is a Certified Public Accountant (Inactive) in California.

Now retired, Michael has managed his personal investment portfolio full-time since 2019. A lifelong student of macroeconomic and geopolitical trends, he has a particular interest in U.S.-Asia economic relations and capital flows and travels extensively throughout the Pacific Rim. He lives in the Greater Los Angeles Area with his teenage son.



(Nancy Staudt)

Nancy Staudt is vice president at RAND and the Frank and Marcia Carlucci Dean at the RAND School of Public Policy, the #10 ranked school in public policy analysis. Staudt is currently leading efforts to expand the school's impact, grow its student body, and strengthen its role in training the next generation of policy leaders.

A nationally recognized scholar in tax, tax policy, and empirical legal studies, Staudt previously served as dean and the Howard and Caroline Cayne Distinguished Professor at Washington University School of Law. Earlier in her career, she held senior academic leadership roles at the University of Southern California, including vice dean at the Gould School of Law and founding codirector of the Schwarzenegger Institute of State and Global Policy.

Staudt is the author or coauthor of numerous books and articles published in leading journals and university presses.

She holds a Ph.D. in public policy from the University of Chicago, a J.D. from the University of Minnesota, and a B.A. from The Ohio State University.



(Jessica Yom)

Jessica Yom is Director of Government Relations (Asia-Pacific) at RTX, where she leads strategic engagement with government and industry stakeholders across North-east Asia. She supports the business objectives of Raytheon, Pratt & Whitney, and Collins Aerospace by managing government relations, providing strategic policy analysis, and navigating complex regulatory environments.



New Board Members

Prior to joining RTX in 2021, Yom held leadership positions at Rolls-Royce, overseeing government affairs, public policy, and sustainability across Southeast Asia, South Korea, and the Pacific. Earlier, she served as Director of Policy Programs and Communications at the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), where she led international policy initiatives and collaborated with government institutions throughout the Asia-Pacific region. She began her international affairs career at the Asia-Europe Foundation, managing external relations with governments and the media.

From 2008 to 2021, Yom also served as Associate Editor of Policy and Society, contributing to the journal's academic profile and international reputation.

Yom earned both her B.A. and M.A. from Yonsei University and holds a certificate from the Sorbonne. Raised in an international environment, she attended international schools in several countries, cultivating a global perspective from an early age. She has lived in Singapore for more than 25 years and is fluent in Korean, English, and French, with additional proficiency in Finnish, Japanese, and Spanish.

Board Member Editorial

The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the official views of PCI.

This opinion editorial by PCI board member, Chung-in Moon, appeared in the Hankyoreh on July 13, 2026.

The view of China-South Korea relations from Beijing

by Chung-in Moon

Earlier this month, I visited Beijing to attend the World Peace Forum at Tsinghua University. Following the forum, I got to join an in-depth discussion of Korea-China relations and Northeast Asian affairs with several Chinese participants at the forum.

There was no disagreement that relations between Seoul and Beijing have greatly improved following Korean President Lee Jae Myung's state visit to China in January. But there were serious misgivings about Korea's

triumphalist rhetoric about the restoration of bilateral relations.

An issue of universal concern for my Chinese interlocutors was Taiwan, the most central of China's core interests. While the Chinese appreciate that Lee had endorsed the “One China” principle since the beginning of his presidency, they have viewed some of his more recent actions with suspicion.

A prime example was the deletion of the phrase “China (Taiwan)” (中國臺灣) from the Korean e-arrival registration form. The Korean government explained that the phrase was removed as part of a recent system update, but the Chinese believe the change was due to pressure from Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party.

Another move with which the Chinese took issue was a visit to Taiwan by a Korean parliamentary delegation. The Chinese were particularly annoyed that the delegation included members not only of the opposition People Power Party but also the ruling Democratic Party. Language in a joint statement issued after Lee's recent summit with the leaders of the EU was another source of discomfort for China. “We reiterate our support for the freedom of navigation and overflight, including in the South China Sea,” the two sides said in the statement. “We stress the importance of preserving peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and oppose unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the Indo-Pacific.”

The Chinese asked whether it was really necessary for the Korean leader to bring up the Taiwan and South China Sea issues on a trip to Europe.

Another worrisome trend is the circulation of unconfirmed Korean news reports in Chinese media. For example, Shanghai-based news website Guancha.cn, citing an article from the Korean media, reported that National Intelligence Service (NIS) director Lee Jong-seok had played up the leverage offered by Taiwan. “Chinese cooperation is of absolute importance for arranging inter-Korean dialogue and improving relations with the North. To set the stage, we should look for the right moment to play the Taiwan card,” the NIS director had



Board Member Editorials

supposedly said, at least according to the article.

I struggled to understand how Chinese leaders and Korea Peninsula experts were slamming the Korean government over an article that I'd personally confirmed was totally untrue.

A second sticking point was Japan.

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said before the House of Representatives on Nov. 7, 2025, that a contingency in Taiwan could represent “a crisis of national survival” for Japan that could permit the exercise of collective self-defense. The Chinese government responded to her remarks with a show of force against Japan. Beijing-Tokyo relations remain at a low point today. Chinese forum participants regarded Takaichi's comments as signaling the revival of Japan's past militarism, linking them to Japan's increased defense spending and the emerging outlines of a regional alliance. The Chinese argued that Korea should work with China to block Japan's turn toward militarism and to seek peace and stability in the region. They also expressed natural concern about Lee's “shuttle diplomacy” with Takaichi and Seoul's trilateral security cooperation with Tokyo and Washington.

The Chinese people with whom I conversed were also sharply opposed to Seoul's proposal for a trilateral summit with Beijing and Tokyo, a bigger role for the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat, and the resumption of talks for a trilateral free trade agreement. A former high-ranking diplomat bluntly advised Korea to shelve any idea of acting as a mediator between Beijing and Tokyo.

Third, my Chinese interlocutors thought it was suspicious that Lee had personally attended this year's NATO summit in Ankara, unlike last year, and that he has actively pursued security cooperation with NATO.

Considering that Lee was the only major figure from NATO's Indo-Pacific Four (IP4) partners (Korea, along with Japan, Australia and New Zealand) to attend the summit, they asked why Korea is so gung-ho about an “Asian NATO.”

My counterparts didn't buy my explanation about security cooperation related to Korea's business interests in the European defense procurement market and warned that South Korea's actions could provoke greater cooperation between China, Russia and North Korea.

At the same time, some of them were keenly interested in how Northeast Asian affairs might change after Xi's visit to the US in late September and what trilateral exchange and cooperation with Korea might ensue.

In addition to these issues, there's also an evident gap between Korean and Chinese attitudes on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, anti-Korean and anti-Chinese sentiment, and cooperation and competition on technology and the economy.

To be sure, Korea and China's national interests are bound to be different, and they could not possibly accommodate all of each other's demands.

That said, the national interest-oriented pragmatic foreign policy espoused by the Lee administration requires a clear-eyed, empirical understanding of reality and a strategic empathy that enables us to see the world as others do.

In light of that, it's time to make some sensible and prudent adjustments to our relationship with China.

—

This opinion editorial by PCI board member, John Delury was published on Substack on June 27, 2026

Pondering the Indo-Pacific on Korea's Island of Peace

by John Delury

Jeju Forum is among my favorite international affairs conferences and one that I've been lucky to attend a dozen times since 2010. The reason I love it has a lot to do with the island itself. There is something about the seas and winds and stones of Jeju that brings peace of mind. Being surrounded by rugged natural beauty, along with sorrowful island history (look up “Jeju 4.3 Incident”), reminds busy conference go-ers in their suits and slacks—certainly reminds me—of why peace matters, of what peace physically looks like.

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Board Member Opinion Editorial

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The keynote session of this year’s Jeju Forum brought together five of the six candidates for United Nations Secretary General, a rare chance to see them side by side and hear their thoughts on the future of international organizations. Young people studying on the island were given a chance to ask questions from the floor, and the intergenerational dimension was a highlight of the program. Battle-scarred Ban Ki-moon presided, smiling and diplomatic yet by his own admission “angry” at the unraveling of internationalism. I walked out of the session thinking how badly the world needs a UN leader who is able to exert both bureaucratic and charismatic authority, strengthening the organization internally while, on the public stage, giving voice to the embattled cause of international cooperation. I hope whoever wins is up to the challenge.

The panel I moderated this year asked the question, “How to Reconcile the Indo-Pacific and Asia Pacific?” of a quartet of experts based in the US, China, Australia and Europe. As moderator, my job was easy—to elicit the collective wisdom of a group including my old friend Dan Smith, who has been doing brilliant work on conflict resolution and arms control as director of SIPRI for the last decade; my new mate Martin Walker, a seasoned Australian diplomat; and two colleagues whom I respect immensely in the wild wonderful world of US-China relations: Tsinghua professor and CICIR veteran Da Wei, and NCAFP director/ Yale Law senior fellow/ State Department survivor Susan Thornton. Panelists were encouraged to delve into the underlying questions of peace and security across the region, whatever they wished to call it, rather than dwell on the semantics of Indo-Pacific and Asia-Pacific per se. It was a rich conversation (I wish there were a YouTube video!).

Here for the Substack, I wanted to add a thought or two on the language itself. And that’s because this question of “Indo-Pacific versus Asia-Pacific” gained unexpected salience just last week, when the US “Department of War” abruptly announced that one of its global commands, headquartered in Hawai’i, would revert to its original 1947 name of Pacific Command, canceling the *Indo-Pacific* Command.

This erasure was a bit of head-scratcher, since it was the Trump administration that added INDO to INDO-PACOM, with considerable fanfare, back in 2018. That renaming ceremony was high-level discursive legitimization of a comparatively new strategic concept, originally floated by Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe in a 2007 address to the Indian Parliament and formally adopted first by Australia in its 2013 Defense White Paper. And the rechristening was hardly an isolated incident. Renaming the command was part of a massive US push to get allies and partners to adopt the nomenclature of Indo-Pacific as a shibboleth for siding with the US in the intensifying “great power competition” against China.

In the dying days of Trump 1.0, the administration declassified the ‘U.S. Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific’ for all the world to see, and mimic. The Biden administration embraced the idea wholeheartedly, creating the new position of Indo-Pacific Coordinator on the National Security Council for Kurt Campbell, who was fondly known as the Indo-Pacific Tsar. With steady urging from Washington, one by one ‘likeminded’ nations put out their own Indo-Pacific outlooks, visions or, as the Swedes called theirs, ‘defense policy direction’ papers.

There were awkward moments in this worldwide campaign, like when the launch of the “EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific” in September 2021 was marred by the announcement, that very same day, of Canberra’s cancellation of a French submarine contract as part of the new AUKUS grouping, royally pissing off Paris.

Seoul was a bit of a foot-dragger, never terribly enthusiastic about the whole Indo-Pacific thing. South Korea does not identify strongly as a Pacific power, certainly not an Indo-Pacific one, and the fact that a revisionist, right-wing Japanese leader coined the phrase did not help it much. Koreans were also not gung-ho about the campaign behind the term—they would prefer that the US and China figure out how to get along, and do *not* want to have to choose between the two. Nonetheless Seoul fell in line by producing a Strategy for a Free, Peaceful and Prosperous Indo-Pacific in December 2022.



Korea Peace Academy

I got a glimpse of how the Indo-Pacific idea made its way as far as Rome when, in the fall of 2023, Italian Parliament invited me to give expert testimony to its newly formed *Comitato permanente sulla politica estera per l'indo-pacifico*. The tone in Rome was decidedly less ‘anti China’ than Washington, which was enjoying a bipartisan consensus around passing *Let’s beat China!* legislation. But still, the subtext of the Italian subcommittee at the outset was anxiety over China’s rise and desire to align with Washington.

Fast-forward to the spring of 2025, when *il Comitato* invited me back for the launch event of their Indo-Pacific findings... and the conversation was no longer about China. Now, the Deputati, representing political parties right to left, were talking about the United States, and worrying about the unreliability of Washington’s commitment to its own Indo-Pacific strategy.

This March I mused about whether the Iran War would mark the end of the Pivot to Asia and acceleration of Washington’s retreat from the Indo-Pacific. Last week, the Department of War literally took the Indo out of the Indo-Pacific Command. It is hard not to read the name change as an expression of strategic retrenchment.

But staring at the volcanic rocks of Jeju Island as the wind whipped the sea, I could not resist a further thought. Good riddance to INDOPACOM. The world I want my children and grandchildren to inherit is one of peace agreements, arms reductions, defense cuts, and shrinking commands—indeed, a world without global combatant commands at all. There’s a heretical thought for a security conference.

Of course, there is a good way to get there, and then there is a chaotic and violent one. You tell me which path we are on.

Korea Peace Academy

2026 Korea Peace Academy Begins Under the Theme “The Era of Conflict, Strategies for Negotiation”

The 2026 Korea Peace Academy (KPA) officially launched on May 13 with an opening lecture by Chairman Kim

Yeon-chul under the academy’s overarching theme, **“The Era of Conflict, Strategies for Negotiation.”** Designed to foster deeper understanding of peacebuilding, diplomacy, and inter-Korean relations, this year’s academy has attracted strong interest from professionals, policymakers, and emerging leaders interested in the future of peace on the Korean Peninsula.



(Top: 2026 Inaugural Session; Bottom: : A lecture by Moon at the Academy, Seoul, South Korea)

A total of 40 participants were selected for the 2026 program, including 14 officials from South Korea’s Ministry of Unification, reflecting the academy’s growing reputation as an important forum for dialogue and professional development in the field of Korean Peninsula affairs.

The opening session featured Chairman Kim Yeon-chul’s lecture examining the challenges and opportunities for negotiation in an increasingly complex global environment. The lecture set the stage for a series of discussions exploring conflict resolution, diplomacy, and strategies for engagement amid evolving regional and international dynamics.

Subsequent sessions have featured distinguished scholars and practitioners with extensive experience in Korean Peninsula affairs. On May 20, Dr. Chung-in Moon, Professor Emeritus at Yonsei University, delivered a lecture

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Project Bridge

On Saturday, June 13, the Pacific Century Institute (PCI) celebrated the completion of the 2025–2026 Project Bridge Youth Ambassadorship Program at PCI Headquarters in Los Angeles.

Family members, alumni, supporters, and community partners gathered to recognize eight outstanding Youth Ambassadors from the Los Angeles cohort who successfully completed the year-long leadership and cultural exchange program.

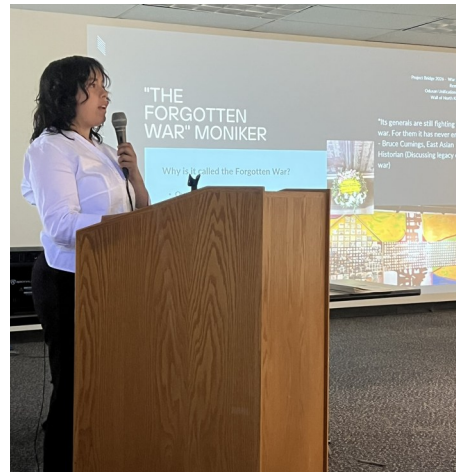


(2025–2026 Youth Ambassadors with James Mayer (L), Spencer Kim (R), and Lynn Turk (R) at PCI HQ in Los Angeles, CA)

Their graduation marked the culmination of months of learning, reflection, and personal growth focused on leadership development, multicultural understanding, Korean history and culture, and U.S.-Korea relations. Originally known as Kids to Korea, Project Bridge was founded in 1993 in the aftermath of the Los Angeles civil unrest. The program seeks to build bridges of understanding among diverse communities while developing the next generation of globally minded leaders. Each year, the program selects 24 Youth Ambassadors from Los Angeles, New York, and Missoula, Montana—eight students from each region—to participate in workshops, discussions, cultural activities, and an educational study tour to South Korea.

The graduation program began with welcoming remarks by Angie Pak, Executive Director of the Pacific Century Institute and Program Director of Project Bridge. She reflected on the students' commitment throughout the year and emphasized the importance of cross-cultural understanding and relationship-building in an increasingly interconnected world.

A highlight of the morning was a series of expert presentations delivered by the Youth Ambassadors. Throughout the program, each student selected a topic related to Korea and developed expertise through independent research, workshops, discussions, and firsthand experiences during the study tour. During the graduation ceremony, the students shared thoughtful presentations on a diverse range of topics, including Korean education, religion, politics, social structure, economic development, gender roles, the Korean War, and traditional and contemporary arts.



((Top) Marely Rodriguez Diaz presenting on “the Korean War + the DMZ” (bottom) Daniel Nagata presenting on “Korean Economic Development” at PCI HQ in Los Angeles, CA)

Drawing upon both their research and experiences in South Korea, the students demonstrated a deeper understanding of contemporary Korean society and its global significance. Their presentations reflected not only academic growth, but also the curiosity, confidence, and leadership skills they cultivated throughout



Project Bridge

the year.

Many students incorporated reflections from their ten-day study tour to South Korea, discussing how visits to historical and cultural sites, educational institutions, government offices, and leading industries brought their research topics to life. These experiences enabled them to connect classroom learning with real-world observations and gain a more nuanced appreciation of Korea’s history, culture, and rapid development.



(2025–2026 Youth Ambassadors (L to R) Amy Lucha; Clement Chen; Steven Tu; Daniel Nagata; Joshua Her; Kristin Kim; Hapse Kabir; and Marely Rodriguez at PCI HQ in Los Angeles, CA)

Following the presentations, students participated in a Q&A session, engaging students in discussions about their research topics, study tour experiences, and future aspirations.

The ceremony concluded with PCI Board Member Lynn Turk presenting certificates recognizing the students’ successful completion of the program. Among those in attendance were James Mayer, Vice President of Friends of Korea, and Consul Soo-in Kim of the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Los Angeles. Spencer H. Kim, PCI Co-Founder, delivered closing remarks, congratulating the Youth Ambassadors on their accomplishments and encouraging them to continue serving as bridge-builders in their schools, communities, and future careers.

As the 2025–2026 cohort joins the growing network of Project Bridge alumni, the Pacific Century Institute remains committed to empowering young leaders with

the knowledge, experiences, and perspectives necessary to foster greater understanding across cultures and borders.

Youth Ambassador Expert Presentation Topics:

- Korean Education System by Steven Tu
- Religion in Korea by Amy Lucha
- Korean Government and Politics by Clement Chen
- Social Class in Korea by Kristin Kim
- Korean Economic Development by Daniel Nagata
- Gender Roles in Korean Society by Hapse Kabir
- The Korean War and the DMZ by Marely Rodriguez
- Korean Music and Dance by Joshua Her

Follow us on Instagram @project_bridge_ to stay updated on the Project Bridge program!

Junior Fellow



Kwan Woo Hahn

Kwan Woo Hahn received his B.A. from Yonsei University and an M.A. in Regional Studies–East Asia from Harvard University. His master’s thesis examined the Korean authoritarian regime’s use of criminal organizations to suppress public dissent. He is currently a doctoral candidate specializing in the political and social history of modern Korea.

His dissertation investigates daily life reform projects in Korea as a manifestation of a mass-consumerist everyday ideology. Specifically, he explores how this ideology was conditioned by the colonial past, formulated by Korean elite women, and subsequently transformed in the everyday lives of women on the ground.

Kwan Woo is also assisting Dr. John Delury with his ongoing book projects, which examine potential pathways toward peaceful coexistence on the Korean Peninsula amid continuing debates surrounding unification and denuclearization. His research focuses on Korean perspectives on these issues, drawing on the views of government officials, scholarly and media publications, and public opinion.



Korea Peace Academy

(Cont. from pg 5)

titled **“Is the North Korean Nuclear Negotiation Still Valid?”** examining the current state of denuclearization efforts and the prospects for future negotiations. On May 27, former Minister of Unification Jeong Se-hyun shared his insights on **“North Korea’s Negotiation Strategies,”** drawing upon decades of experience in inter-Korean dialogue and diplomacy.

In addition to classroom lectures, participants engaged in a field workshop on May 29 in Yanggu, Gangwon Province. The excursion included visits to the DMZ Observato-

ry and the DMZ Botanical Garden, providing participants with a firsthand perspective on the history, significance, and ecological importance of the Demilitarized Zone. The workshop complemented the academy’s academic discussions by connecting policy issues with on-the-ground realities along the Korean Peninsula.

The 2026 Korea Peace Academy will continue through July 22, convening weekly sessions that bring together leading experts, government officials, academics, and practitioners to explore pathways toward peace, cooperation, and sustainable dialogue in Northeast Asia.



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