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The Korean Peninsula Deterrence Dilemma

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The Jeju Forum for Peace and Prosperity, which the Jeju Peace Institute (JPI) annually organizes and hosts, is an important venue for scholars, political leaders, diplomats, and activists from around the world to discuss current issues regarding peace, prosperity, and multilateralism.

The *Jeju Forum Journal* intends to bridge one forum to the next. While reviewing the ideas brought forward during that year's Jeju Forum, the journal navigates the path toward next year's Forum. At the same time, it aims to provide an independent platform for our readers to understand better the environment and circumstances surrounding East Asia and the world. Specifically, the *Jeju Forum Journal* publishes manuscripts analyzing events that shaped the world we live in today; events that are expected to have severe repercussions on relations between states; foreign policies of certain states that can affect other states' actions; and other issues that are widely discussed among the public, scholars, and global leaders today.

The two articles in this issue are contributed by the participants of the Jeju Forum. The first article, "The Korean Peninsula Deterrence Dilemma," is written by Professor Mason Richey (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies). The second article, "The Future Direction of South Korean Geopolynomic Positioning," is contributed by Professor Brendan Howe (Ehwa Womans University). The two articles examine the security situation surrounding the Korean peninsula and explore options South Korea could choose to deal with the challenges it faces and enhance its security.

The two essays in this issue are also contributed by the participants of the 2022 Jeju Forum. The first essay contributed by Professor Klaus Bosselmann (University of Auckland), “Earth Trusteeship: A call for institutional change,” discusses why we need “Earth Trusteeship” governance to better address the global ecological crisis. The second essay, “The Jeju April 3 Incident and United States Imperialism,” written by Professor John R. Eperjesi (Kyunghee University), explains the role the US played in the Jeju April 3 incident and why the US should consider apologizing for its actions.

These contributions cannot represent all the topics and issues discussed among the speakers at the Jeju Forum nor all the academic activities of the JPI. Still, through these four contributions, JPI hopes the readers will be able to get a glimpse of some of the essential topics and issues discussed at the Jeju Forum and throughout the year by the JPI.

The Jeju Forum for Peace and Prosperity has been a premier regional dialogue platform, shaping the discourse to promote peace and prosperity in the region. We hope that the *Jeju Forum Journal* will help expand the ideas that have been brought up at the annual forum and stimulate discussions for future forums.

The Korean Peninsula Deterrence Dilemma

Abstract

This article examines the question of how the emerging security dilemma on the Korean Peninsula can be moderated in order to lower the risk of conflict between North Korea and the US-South Korea alliance as they enter into a long-term nuclear deterrence relationship. To address this, the paper proceeds in the following way. The following section II explains why North Korea is extremely unlikely to denuclearize and thus the security dilemma between North Korea and the US-South Korea alliance is likely to continue and become more acute within the context of a long-term deterrence relationship. Section III discusses a range of possibilities that might be employed to attempt to check the security dilemma and reduce the chance of the intentional or inadvertent breakout of conflict (and reduce the danger of escalation if conflict breakout does occur). Section IV concludes with reflections on how the empirical situation of the Korean Peninsula security dilemma—which is asymmetric, insofar as the US-South Korea alliance is far more powerful than North Korea—might affect its dynamics differently than would be expected in a more orthodox security dilemma featuring a conflict dyad of more symmetric power relations.

Introduction

The security dilemma—a situation in which one state's actions to increase its security result in the perceived compromising of the security of another state, which responds in kind and perpetuates a spiral model of growing security risk and inter-state conflict potential—is one of the most intractable and destabilizing problems in international affairs.² It has long been thus, dating back at least to the epoch in which Thucydides analyzed the foundational distrust and relative power

1. Mason Richey is professor of international politics at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (Seoul, South Korea) and senior contributor at Asia Society Korea. Dr. Richey has also held positions as a POSCO Visiting Research Fellow at the East-West Center (Honolulu, HI) and a DAAD Scholar at the University of Potsdam. His research focuses on European foreign and security policy, as well as US foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific. Recent scholarly articles have appeared (inter alia) in *Political Science*, *Pacific Review*, *Asian Security*, *Global Governance*, *Journal of International Peacekeeping*, and *Foreign Policy Analysis*. Shorter analyses and opinion pieces have been published in *War on the Rocks*, *Le Monde*, the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, and *Forbes*, among other venues.
2. See: Robert Jervis. 1978. "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma." *World Politics*, 30/2: 167-214; G.H. Snyder. 1984. "The security dilemma in alliance politics." *World Politics*, 36/4: 461-495; Ken Booth and Nick Wheeler. 2008. *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

shifts between Athens and Sparta, the major city states driving the Peloponnesian War. Meanwhile, the Korean Peninsula—divided, antagonistic, militarized—has been a modern international security problem of dimensions more revisionist than dilemma. The post-Korean War period witnessed the slow installation of stalemated division, an emerging US-South Korea alliance with growing conventional military superiority backed up by US extended nuclear deterrence, and a declining North Korea (especially after the end of the Cold War and abandonment by the USSR/Russia). For decades both North and South Korea sought to revise the status quo and unify, and to that end North Korea certainly was capable of the occasional display of the “tyranny of the weak,” but the security dilemma on the Korean Peninsula was limited by Pyongyang’s many incapacities.

Over the last fifteen years, however, Pyongyang has successfully developed an apparently “irreversible”³ nuclear arsenal that is ushering in a new era of potential instability on the Korean Peninsula, as the US-South Korea alliance attempts to offset North Korea’s growing nuclear arsenal that threatens to decouple the US-South Korea alliance by making the US “choose between San Francisco and Busan.” Thus the Korean Peninsula powder keg is now subject to the influence of security dilemma dynamics,⁴ as South Korea develops advanced conventional strike (including decapitation) capabilities; the US-South Korea alliance improves combined warfighting ability, integrated deterrence (including both conventional capabilities and extended nuclear deterrence), and missile defense; North Korea attempts to neutralize those improvements through its own military modernization; and the cycle continues. Concomitantly, the risks of miscalculation, misperception, misunderstanding, and mistakes grow, especially as North Korea refines its defense (especially nuclear) posture and doctrine to neutralize the “use-it-or-lose-it” situation that arises as South Korea

operationalizes its pre-emptive strike (“Kill Chain”) capabilities.

All of this raises the question of whether and how this security dilemma on the Korean Peninsula can be moderated in order to lower the risk of conflict between North Korea and the US-South Korea alliance as they enter into a long-term nuclear deterrence relationship. To address this, the paper proceeds in the following way. The following section II explains why North Korea is extremely unlikely to denuclearize and thus the security dilemma between North Korea and the US-South Korea alliance is likely to continue and become more acute within the context of a long-term deterrence relationship. Section III discusses a range of possibilities that might be employed to attempt to check the security dilemma and reduce the chance of the intentional or inadvertent breakout of conflict (and reduce the danger of escalation if conflict breakout does occur). Section IV concludes with reflections on how the empirical situation of the Korean Peninsula security dilemma—which is asymmetric, insofar as the US-South Korea alliance is far more powerful than North Korea—might affect its dynamics differently than would be expected in a more orthodox security dilemma featuring a conflict dyad of more symmetric power relations.

3. Nikkei Asia. 2022. “North Korea makes nuclear weapons policy ‘irreversible.’” *Nikkei Asia*, Sept. 9, 2022. (<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/N-Korea-at-crossroads/North-Korea-makes-nuclear-weapons-policy-irreversible>).

4. See: Erwin Tan and Jaejeok Park. 2020. “The US-North Korea asymmetrical security dilemma: Past the point of nuclear no return?” *International Area Studies Review*, 23/2: 194-209.

II. The Security Dilemma of a Long-Term Deterrence Relationship: North Korea's Nuclear Arsenal and the US-South Korea Alliance Response

As of the end of 2022, the likelihood that North Korea can be persuaded or compelled to abandon or trade away its nuclear weapons and missile programs is at its nadir. Indeed, after a decade of diminishing prospects for denuclearization—punctuated momentarily by the *fata morgana* of nuclear diplomacy in 2018-2019—the probability that Pyongyang denuclearizes in the middle (and probably long) term is asymptotically approaching zero.

This is evident in North Korea's (a) stated intent and geo-strategic/geo-political situation; (b) emerging nuclear national identity, as well as strategic doctrine and posture; and (c) technological development. To begin with (a), since the bitter experience of the failed 2019 Hanoi summit, the Kim Jong Un regime has steadily increased the frequency and solidity⁵ of statements clarifying its fundamental refusal to denuclearize—or even discuss denuclearization—irrespective of both offered positive incentives and applied external pressure (notably via sanctions, which have for many been reasons been totally ineffective at *preventing* North Korean nuclear proliferation, and at best unsatisfactory in *limiting* North Korean nuclear proliferation). It justifies this stance by referring to nuclear weapons' role in national and regime survival, especially for a state located in a challenging geo-strategic position.

North Korea has backed up its refusal to consider denuclearization with a near total shut-down of diplomacy—especially concerning its nuclear weapons and missile programs—in part making a virtue of necessity insofar as COVID-19 prophylaxis has closed off the country anyway since January 2020. During this

period of relative isolation, North Korea has nonetheless made advancements in its nuclear and missile programs, aided in the effort by weak sanctions enforcement⁶ by China and a permissive international security environment (i.e., diplomatic protection from China and Russia guaranteeing no further international sanctions at the United Nations Security Council). Geo-politically, US-China rivalry and poisoned Washington-Moscow relations consequent to Russia's invasion of Ukraine have accelerated the aforementioned trend and even raised prospects for overall better relations between Pyongyang and Beijing and Pyongyang and Moscow, with even an emerging trilateral bloc possibly in a nugatory stage.

Regarding (b), in 2012 North Korea revised⁷ its constitution to enshrine North Korea as a nuclear state, thus anchoring the country's identity as a nuclear weapon-possessing power in the (nominal) highest law of the state. It is worth noting that the Kim regime learned from the example of Libya's Muammar Gaddafi, who abandoned his nuclear weapons program in 2003

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5. Arguably one of the most powerful of these statements was the November 2022 statement that North Korea's nuclear weapons program and arsenal is "irreversible," a position already advanced on multiple occasions but accompanied in November by several days of celebratory photos of Kim Jong Un and his second daughter (Kim Ju Ae) alongside the successfully launched Hwasong-17. See: Colin Zwirko. 2022. "Kim and daughter meet ICBM launch teams as nukes declared 'irreversible,'" NK News, Nov. 27, 2022. (<https://www.nknews.org/2022/11/kim-and-daughter-meet-icbm-launch-teams-as-nukes-declared-irreversible/>). Among many other possible messages, this media strategy seemed intended to communicate that North Korea would continue to possess nuclear weapons during the time of future generations.
 6. In any event, North Korea's COVID-19 response had the knock-on effect of indicating that Pyongyang was even less susceptible to sanctions pressure than previously thought, considering that its self-imposed border closure exceeded the impact of sanctions.
 7. K.J. Kwon. 2012. "North Korea proclaims itself a nuclear state in new constitution," CNN, May 31, 2012. (<https://edition.cnn.com/2012/05/31/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-constitution/index.html>).

and was in 2011 deposed and killed by a rebel group within the context of a Libyan civil war supported by France, the UK, and the US. Perhaps the timing was coincidental—like all nuclear weapon-possessing states, North Korea has little incentive to abandon an actually functioning nuclear program (which Libya’s was not, it must be noted)—but the 2012 constitutional revision enshrining North Korea as a nuclear state occurred only one year after Gaddafi’s demise, which the *Rodong Simmun*⁸ explicitly concluded would never have happened if Gaddafi had possessed nuclear weapons and thus (implicitly) served as an instructive example why North Korea should not surrender its nuclear arms.

A decade after the 2012 constitutional revision, in September 2022 North Korea passed a nuclear policy law⁹ that both reinforced via statute the state’s constitutional identity as a nuclear-armed state and functioned as a declaration of North Korea’s nuclear posture and doctrine. The law—roughly analogous to a US *Nuclear Posture Review*, but with greater legal force—explicates the role of nuclear weapons in North Korea’s national defense, outlines conditions under which nuclear weapons might be used, and refers to related policies including vague indications about nuclear command-and-control. Beyond the strategic and doctrinal elements implicated in the revelations of North Korea’s nuclear posture (about which more below), there is a performative element to the 2022 nuclear law: the law serves to normalize North Korea as a responsible, putatively acceptable nuclear-armed state outside the structure of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). In short, the Kim regime has communicated that it considers itself to be—and wants to be treated—like Pakistan, India, or Israel.

Finally, (c) North Korea’s military technological advancement—both in terms of nuclear warhead and missile (especially ballistic, but also cruise) development—supports Pyongyang’s identity as a nuclear-

armed state and the accompanying strategic doctrine and posture referred to above. In the first place, in order to achieve a functional nuclear arsenal, the Kim regime has spent a huge amount of resources (as a percentage of GDP and state budget) and endured significant economic hardship due to international sanctions (of course North Korea’s self-imposed economic inefficiencies, distortions, and mismanagement, which are inherent in an economic system that serves a totalitarian state, are largely responsible for North Korea’s shambolic economy). These considerable sunk costs in Pyongyang’s nuclear warhead and missile programs make it all the more credible that the Kim regime would inviolably incorporate nuclear weapons into North Korean state identity, and thus tendentially less credible that they could be willingly a subject of negotiation regarding their surrender in exchange for something else (sanctions removal, inward economic investment, security guarantees, etc.).

Second, with respect to the (logical) dovetailing of military (especially nuclear and missile) technological development and build-up with North Korea’s strategic doctrine and posture, the types/varieties of delivery systems, mix of both liquid fuel and solid propellant

8. Fyodor Tertiskiy. 2018. “Learning the lessons of Libya: North Korea and Gaddafi.” NK News, Nov. 22, 2018 (<https://www.nknews.org/2018/11/learning-the-lessons-of-libya-north-korea-and-gaddafi/>). Similar arguments have been made regarding North Korea’s perception of the fate of Saddam Hussein, and more recently the travails of Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression have served as a speculative example for why nuclear-armed states should not surrender their nuclear weapons (although it must be stated that Ukraine never had command-and-control over legacy USSR nuclear weapons on Ukrainian territory prior to their removal subsequent to the Budapest Memorandum).

9. Josh Smith. 2022. “New North Korea law outlines nuclear use, including preemptive strikes.” Reuters, Sept. 10, 2022. (<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/nkorea-passes-law-declaring-itself-nuclear-weapons-state-kcna-2022-09-08/>).

missiles, and plans for warhead design (including tactical nuclear warheads) indicate a nuclear weapon program that supports long-term national objectives for the Korean Peninsula: Kim regime security, national survival, and strategic independence in a difficult Northeast Asia region; deterrence vis-à-vis the US-South Korea alliance; decoupling of the US-South Korea alliance (including driving the US military from the Korean Peninsula); and (possibly) coercing unification with South Korea on North Korea's terms. Many of the technologies North Korea considers necessary to these ends were outlined by Kim Jong Un during the 8th Worker's Party Congress in 2021.¹⁰ As such, they are part of the public record (and thus a "costly signal") both domestically and internationally, making it difficult for Kim to backtrack.

The most mediatized aspect of Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal development has been the initial success in exploding six nuclear devices between 2006 and 2017 (thus achieving the status of a nuclear weapon state) and launching inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs such as the Hwasong-14, Hwasong-15, and Hwasong-17) that can ostensibly range the continental US with a nuclear payload. Assuming its reliability, this fundamental capability puts North Korea in elite international company and provides it a minimal nuclear deterrent (most immediately against the US). A minimal North Korean nuclear deterrent is nonetheless fragile, unstable, and strategically flawed. It is fragile notably because Pyongyang's ICBMs use liquid fuel, which exposes them to pre-emptive strikes from the US-ROK alliance during the fueling process prior to launch. This fragility is heightened if, in addition, North Korea has only a small number of single-warhead ICBMs also vulnerable to anti-ballistic missile defenses. In this circumstance of fragility, North Korea's nuclear posture is also unstable, as Pyongyang would be incentivized to launch quickly or pre-emptively (the "use-it-or-lose-

it" scenario of "shoot first and ask questions later"). In turn, a North Korean minimal nuclear deterrent would thus be strategically weak, with no credible counterforce options; little robustness translating into rushed decision-making/command-and-control timelines for momentous, potentially suicidal launches; and therefore a lack of calibration options on the nuclear escalation ladder and a corollary devaluing of the credibility of the nuclear deterrent as such. Presumably such a limited nuclear arsenal would greatly enhance regime survival and deterrence against the US-South Korea alliance, but it would be unsatisfactory for other (aforementioned) national goals such as decoupling the US-South Korea alliance and coercion of South Korea.

Consequently, the Kim regime is pursuing several capabilities—explicitly mentioned at the 8th Worker's Party Congress—to counter the unsatisfying limitations of its ICBMs. One task is to ensure serial production of larger quantities of ICBMs and sufficient procurement/production of mobile TELs (transporter-erector-launchers). In principle greater ICBM magazine depth would enhance arsenal survivability—to borrow from Stalin, quantity has a quality all its own. A second task is successfully developing solid-propellant ICBMs, which can be employed more quickly (e.g., rolled out from bunkers and launched) and are thus more survivable on the ground than liquid-fueled variants. Third, North Korea intends its ICBMs—especially the Hwasong-17 "monster" missile—to be capable of delivering multiple warheads (and/or possibly penetration aids), which would complicate US ballistic missile defense.

10. Gabriela Bernal. 2021. "5 Key Takeaways from North Korea's Party Congress." *The Diplomat*, Jan. 13, 2021. (<https://thediplomat.com/2021/01/5-key-takeaways-from-north-koreas-party-congress/>).

Even a more resilient and capable ICBM arsenal would primarily solve only the fragility and instability aspects of a minimal nuclear deterrent. In order to increase the strategic value of the nuclear deterrent, North Korea would need to diversify its arsenal in order to create calibrated, credible options on the escalation ladder, including counterforce options—and this is precisely the course undertaken by the Kim regime since the failed Hanoi summit brought to a halt nuclear diplomacy between Washington and Pyongyang. In this regard, two related developments are most noticeable.

First, there has been a general expectation from experts/analysts that North Korea will carry out a seventh nuclear test, likely intended to evaluate progress toward development of a tactical nuclear warhead. Although the test has not yet taken place (as of publication), experts/analysts expect it both because tactical nuclear weapons were one of the objectives for North Korea's nuclear modernization listed at the 8th Worker's Party Congress, and because they make sense within the context of North Korea's national objectives and nuclear policy and posture. To begin with, North Korea's 2022 nuclear policy law (mentioned above) explicitly countenances pre-emptive nuclear strikes if North Korea's vital, core interests are immediately and devastatingly threatened and no conventional response is sufficient. Tactical nuclear warheads would theoretically allow Pyongyang to more realistically threaten the use of nuclear weapons in/around the Korean Peninsula theater (e.g., in a warfighting scenario, including an "escalate to de-escalate" situation), thus making deterrence vis-à-vis the US-South Korea alliance more credible, and therefore in turn forcing the US and South Korea to consider whether or not the US would retaliate proportionally (on the basis of extended nuclear deterrence commitments) on behalf of South Korea if North Korea were to use tactical nuclear weapons to attack a South Korean military target. A potential

affirmative answer would risk escalation (via ICBM with a strategic warhead) to an attack on US territory, thus forcing on the US a choice to "trade San Francisco for Busan." A potential negative answer would undermine the US-South Korea alliance and the US's other extended nuclear deterrence guarantees to allies such as Japan, Australia, and even NATO member states.

Second, Pyongyang has developed, tested, and likely begun to deploy new short-range and intermediate-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs/IRBMs), some of which can likely deliver nuclear warheads to in-theater targets, or will be capable of doing so once Pyongyang has sufficiently mastered tactical nuclear warhead production. These missile systems include the KN-23 (Iskander-style SRBM), KN-24 (ATACMS-style SRBM), KN-25 (OTR-21 Tochka-style "super-large" short-range rocket), and KN-17/Hwasong-12 (IRBM) with ranges of between 380-600km with a roughly 500kg warhead for the tactical ballistic (KN-2X series) missiles and 4,500km with a roughly 500kg warhead for the IRBM.¹¹ The SRBM systems are solid-fueled and launched from a variety of platforms (including TELs and mobile rail mounts), while the IRBM uses liquid propellant and is fired from a MAZ-type vehicle. Several of these newer SRBMs/IRBMs are presumed to have maneuverable re-entry vehicles for defeating missile defense systems, although they seemingly do not rise to the level of "hypersonic" weapons, which is one of the aspirational technologies listed at the 8th Worker's Party Congress. These newer SRBMs/IRBMs—the operational status of some of which (KN-23, KN-24, Hwasong-12) is unclear—are complemented by other, already operational ground-launched ballistic missiles: Pukguksong-2/KN-15

11. CSIS. 2022. "Missiles of North Korea." CSIS, Nov. 22, 2022. (<https://missilethreat.csis.org/country/dprk/>).

medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM), KN-02 Toksa SRBM, Hwasong-series -5, -6, -7, -9 (a mixture of SRBMs and MRBMs), and possibly the BM-25 Musudan IRBM.¹²

The 8th Worker's Party Congress report also outlined a number of highly aspirational potential nuclear capabilities—including improved and increased ballistic missile submarines (GORAE/SINPO class SSBs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), potentially nuclear armed land-attack cruise missiles (LACMs), and hypersonic glide vehicles (HGVs)—that are presumably intended to fill out Pyongyang's flexibility in nuclear deterrence and warfighting.¹³

North Korea's SSBs are extremely limited¹⁴ in both number and quality: an operational GORAE class diesel-electric submarine with only one SLBM launch tube, and a successor SINPO class diesel-electric submarine with purportedly 3-4 SLBM launch tubes. North Korea's submarines are generally considered noisy and detectable, and the GORAE class submarine does not feature air-independent propulsion (AIP), which forces it to surface frequently enough that its strategic value (second-strike capability) is compromised.¹⁵ The SINPO class submarine under development reportedly has AIP, which, along with multiple launch tubes, makes it a more capable strategic system, if it is quiet enough to avoid US-South Korea anti-submarine warfare capabilities.¹⁶ The status of construction and operation of the SINPO class submarine is uncertain, however.¹⁷

The status of the Kim regime's nuclear-capable SLBMs is a mixture of potentially operational (although not necessarily deployed) and developmental, with the Pukguksong-1 and Pukguksong-3 successfully tested (and thus potentially operational) and the Pukguksong-4 and Pukguksong-5 revealed but as yet apparently untested.¹⁸ As for LACMs, Pyongyang claims to have tested in 2021 and 2022 at least two medium-range LACMs capable of carrying tactical nuclear warheads with ranges of 1,500-

2,000km.¹⁹ The status of these missiles is unknown, and their strategic value for nuclear deterrence and warfighting likely limited (as North Korea's ballistic missile forces can presumably accomplish the same objectives) to providing an additional possibility for defeating US-South Korea missile defenses. Finally, as of the end of 2022 North Korea claims to have tested two HGVs (a Hwasong-8 in September 2021 and an unnamed HGV in January 2022, both apparently based off of the Hwasong-12 IRBM booster) with a range of at least 1,300km.²⁰ The advantage of HGVs is that their boost-glide vehicle trajectories are extremely challenging for missile defense systems, and would be a significant

12. Ibid.

13. Another element on the list of developmental priorities is thermonuclear (hydrogen bombs) warheads.

14. Nuclear Threat Initiative. 2022. "North Korea Submarine Capabilities." NTI (Nuclear Threat Initiative), Oct. 14, 2022. (<https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/north-korea-submarine-capabilities/>).

15. Ibid

16. Ibid

17. Ibid

18. Vann Van Diepen. 2021. "North Korea's 'New-Type Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile': More Political Than Military Significance." 38North, Oct. 22, 2021. (<https://www.38north.org/2021/10/north-koreas-new-type-submarine-launched-ballistic-missile-more-political-than-military-significance/>); CSIS. 2022. "Missiles of North Korea." CSIS, Nov. 22, 2022. (<https://missilethreat.csis.org/country/dprk/>).

19. Vann Van Diepen. 2021. "Initial Analysis of North Korea's 'New-Type Long-Range Cruise Missile.'" 38North, Sept. 15, 2021. (<https://www.38north.org/2021/09/initial-analysis-of-north-koreas-new-type-long-range-cruise-missile/>); VOA. 2022. "North Korea Says It Has Deployed Cruise Missiles Able to Carry Tactical Nuclear Weapons." VOA, Oct. 12, 2022. (<https://www.voanews.com/a/north-korea-says-it-has-deployed-cruise-missiles-able-to-carry-tactical-nuclear-weapons-/6787816.html>).

20. Vann Van Diepen. 2022. "Implications of the Second Launch of North Korea's Second 'Hypersonic' Missile." 38North, Jan. 18, 2022. (<https://www.38north.org/2022/01/implications-of-the-second-launch-of-north-koreas-second-hypersonic-missile/>); Ralph Savelsberg and Tomohilo Kawaguchi. 2022. "North Korea's hypersonic missile claims are credible, exclusive analysis shows." Breaking Defense, Feb. 16, 2022. (<https://breakingdefense.com/2022/02/north-koreas-hypersonic-missile-claims-are-credible-exclusive-analysis-shows/>).

improvement over legacy systems (such as Nodong-class missiles). Still, it is unclear if North Korea has truly tested a genuine HGV (rather than a MaRV variant), just as it is unclear if Pyongyang's putative HGVs would be nuclear-capable or not.

Although it bears repeating that many of the aforementioned nuclear weapon systems (notably the tactical nuclear weapons) are developmental at best, and some clearly highly aspirational for a resource-challenged state like North Korea, North Korea is nonetheless a de facto nuclear-armed state with:

- (a) operational nuclear weapons (including ICBMs that can range the continental US);
- (b) a functioning nuclear proliferation program (including warhead stockpiles of unknown size and both plutonium and uranium pathways to further fissile material production);
- (c) a state identity secured in part in the Kim family regime's acquisition of nuclear weapons (making domestic political costs for denuclearization extremely high);
- (d) massive sunk costs in nuclear weapons acquisition (also making domestic political costs for denuclearization extremely high);
- (e) a high-level ability to resist external pressure such as sanctions (both due to the state's economic structure and the Kim regime's callous disregard for popular suffering);
- (f) diplomatic support from China and Russia (which, although potentially variable, is backstopped by Washington's poisoned relations with Beijing and Moscow);
- (g) a geostrategic location (as a buffer zone between South Korea and China and Russia) that makes it difficult for China and Russia to envision letting North Korean fail;
- (h) conventional military inferiority vis-à-vis the US-South Korea alliance that makes asymmetric weapons (such as nuclear weapons) a perceived necessity for strategic balance and state survival;
- (i) a defense posture and nuclear policy that is now path-dependent on nuclear weapons (including cycles of provocation and brinkmanship); and
- (j) national objectives, such as strategic independence from China and, possibly, coerced unification with South Korea on terms favorable to North Korea (subsequent to decoupling the US-South Korea alliance and driving the US off the Korean Peninsula), that are only even remotely achievable with nuclear weapons.

Considering all these factors, the probability of North Korean denuclearization under the current Kim family regime is asymptotically approaching zero over the medium (and possibly long) term. Consequently the US-South Korea alliance has made a decision²¹ to bolster its own combined defense and deterrence capabilities in and around the Korean Peninsula.²² In the first place, these capabilities include theater (both point and area) missile defense systems such as Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), Patriot systems (PAC-2 and PAC-3), and S-SAM/M-SAM/L-SAM (still in development) systems, some of which are operated by South Korea and some by the US, and at various levels of integration. On the South Korean side, missile defense (KAMD, Korea Air and Missile Defense) is one part of a "three-axis" response architecture that also includes the deterrence-by-denial "Kill Chain" (a pre-emptive strike system) and deterrence-by-punishment Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation (KMPR). The "Kill

21. On the South Korean side, this decision is bipartisan, as the investments span both progressive (North Korea "dove") and conservative (North Korea "hawk") administrations. South Korea's annual defense budget increase from 2018-2022 was 6.3%, reaching a total of USD48.3bn in 2022. This trend is expected to continue. See: Global Data. 2022. South Korea Defense Market, Budget Assessment and Drivers 2022. Global Data, May 25, 2022. (<https://www.globaldata.com/data-insights/aerospace-and-defence/south-korea-defense-market-budget-assessment-and-drivers-2022/>).

22. Moreover the US has made investments in ballistic missile defense intended to protect US territory from North Korean attack.

Chain” aims at pre-emptively striking North Korea’s nuclear and missile facilities with South Korea’s own ballistic (e.g., the Hyunmoo-series of precision-guided conventional strategic missiles) and cruise missiles, while KMPR would be carried out by South Korean F35s fitted with precision-guided munitions capable of decapitation strikes. South Korea is also in the process of procuring additional, upgraded ballistic missile submarines and a possible light aircraft carrier. When still a presidential candidate, conservative President Yoon considered asking the US to re-deploy tactical nuclear weapons to the Korean Peninsula, and there is increasingly mainstream discussion (backed by South Korean popular demand), for Seoul to acquire its own nuclear weapons.²³ As for the US, it frequently responds to North Korean missile launches with deployment of strategic assets (such as F35s, SSBNs, aircraft carriers, and B1B bombers) to communicate resolve to deter North Korea, and, if necessary, fight and win a war against it in partnership with its South Korean ally. To this latter end, the US-South Korea alliance has, since the exit from office of US President Donald Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in (who were both in agreement on the advisability of down-scaling US-South Korea combined military exercises in order to open space for diplomacy), restarted US-South Korea live field maneuver and combined air power exercises.

An arms race is clearly underway on the Korean Peninsula,²⁴ and the security dilemma dimension is unmistakable as the US-South Korea alliance enters into a long-term deterrence relationship with North Korea. The US-South Korea alliance (logically and understandably) acts to defend itself from North Korean nuclear proliferation, which Washington and Seoul assume (logically and understandably, given Pyongyang’s history of kinetic attack against South Korean territory) carries bellicose intent. North Korea—with a limited nuclear arsenal and fragile nuclear command-and-

control—then reacts by further developing its own capabilities (including pre-emptive strikes) to neutralize or mitigate the US-South Korea alliance’s advantages and ability to disrupt North Korean defense and warfighting plans, causing the US-South Korea alliance to respond (including its own pre-emptive strikes). And, so, on turns the spiral, which is made more complex and unstable by exercises, attempts to communicate resolve, and brinksmanship.

III. Tamping Down the Security Dilemma in a Long-Term Deterrence Relationship?: Options for the US-South Korea Alliance Vis-à-Vis a Nuclear North Korea

The security dilemma inherent in the North Korea vs. US-South Korea alliance long-term deterrence relationship implicates numerous potential conflict instabilities ranging from misperception/miscalculation/misunderstanding/mistakes to the stability-instability paradox²⁵ (which risks tipping over into nuclear crisis instability) to a conventional war of choice that could escalate to the nuclear level. The question therefore arises as to what measures are available to reduce the severity of the security dilemma and introduce stabilizing mechanisms into a risky deterrence relationship.

23. Sarah Kim. 2022. “Yoon Suk-yeol admits to looking at new deterrence options.” *Korea JoongAng Daily*, Oct. 13, 2022. (<https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2022/10/13/national/politics/Korea-tactical-nuclear-weapons-extended-deterrence/2022101318154e5418.html>); William Gallo. 2022. “As Trump Looms, South Koreans Mull Their Own Nukes.” VOA, Nov. 24, 2022. (<https://www.voanews.com/a/as-trump-looms-south-koreans-mull-their-own-nukes/6848246.html>).

24. Indeed in East Asia more generally, although this is beyond the scope of this article.

25. Robert Jervis. 1979. “Why Nuclear Superiority Doesn’t Matter.” *Political Science Quarterly*, 94/4: 617-633.

There is of course a spectrum of potential options, with arms control as the most diplomatically aggressive position. Among the think-tank/analyst community in Washington, and to a lesser degree the think-tank/analyst and university scholar communities in Seoul, there is some traction for attempting arms control with Pyongyang.²⁶ Surprisingly, Richard Haass, former US State Department Policy Planning Director under President G.W. Bush and the living embodiment of the Washington foreign policy mainstream, acknowledged that denuclearization was unrealistic and arms control thus advisable.²⁷ This perspective also got a small boost from “official Washington” when Bonnie Jenkins, US State Department Undersecretary for Arms Control, made a lengthy public statement positively assessing the possibility of arms control negotiations with North Korea.²⁸ However, Jenkins’s remarks were quickly walked back by the Biden administration, which reiterated that the US’s official policy—that North Korea’s nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs and arsenal are illegal under international law, with denuclearization the only acceptable goal—had not changed. With arms control thus officially off the table, numerous thorny questions are avoided: Would an arms control agreement explicitly or implicitly mean *de facto* recognition of North Korea as a nuclear state? What would be the scope and objective of arms control for North Korea? Would either side offer/demand incentives (e.g., sanctions relief for North Korea) for an arms control agreement? Would the arms control measures apply only to North Korea, or also to the US and/or US-South Korea alliance? How would an arms control agreement be verified? What would happen if either party failed to keep its arms control commitments?

Although the Cold War history of risk reduction between the US and the USSR is only imperfectly applicable to the contemporary Korean Peninsula situation between the US-South Korea alliance and

North Korea, some tools/lessons short of arms control from that experience are relevant. One important lesson is that information exchange is important to managing distrust between members of a conflict dyad. Asymmetric information fuels distrustful belief on one side that the other side’s intent behind an action or development is hostile or malign (leading to cycles of damaging reactive behavior), so means of information exchange—official diplomatic relations, hotlines, etc.—are valuable tools for tamping down distrust. Therefore one option for the Korean Peninsula would be for the US and North Korea to establish diplomatic relations, up to and including an exchange of ambassadors.²⁹ Exchange of information at such a high level is a useful lever for

26. Van Jackson. 2019. “Risk Realism: The Arms Control Endgame for North Korea Policy.” CNAS Report, Sept. 24, 2019. (<https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/risk-realism>); APLN. 2019. Seminar on US Policy Towards DPRK. Asia Pacific Leadership Network (APLN), Nov. 21, 2019. (<https://www.apln.network/events/past/seminar-by-prof-van-jackson>); Christian Davies. 2022. “North Korea has already won: US urged to abandon denuclearisation ‘farce.’” *Financial Times*, Oct. 9, 2022. (<https://www.ft.com/content/bf3fd056-8d74-4626-ba80-08bad80ca7dd>); Jeffrey Lewis. 2022. “It’s Time to Accept that North Korea Has Nuclear Weapons.” *New York Times*, Oct. 13, 2022. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/13/opinion/international-world/north-korea-us-nuclear.html>); Kim Yoo-chul. 2022. “Experts see growing chances for arms control talks amid NK’s rising belligerence.” *Korea Times*, Nov. 7, 2022. (https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2022/11/356_339324.html); Toby Dalton and Ankit Panda. 2022. “U.S. Policy Should Reflect Its Own Quiet Acceptance of a Nuclear North Korea.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Commentary, Nov. 15, 2022. (<https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/11/15/u.s.-policy-should-reflect-its-own-quiet-acceptance-of-nuclear-north-korea-pub-88399>).

27. Richard Haass. 2022. “The New Nuclear Era.” Project-Syndicate, Oct. 19, 2022. (<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/new-nuclear-era-wider-proliferation-risks-catastrophe-by-richard-haass-2022-10>). Haass did add the caveat that denuclearization could remain a long-term goal.

28. CNN. 2022. “US official’s suggestion of ‘arms-control’ talks with North Korea raises eyebrows.” CNN, Oct. 29, 2022. (<https://edition.cnn.com/2022/10/29/asia/us-north-korea-nuclear-policy-unchanged-intl-hnk/index.html>).

29. This would be much harder for the two Koreas, as neither accepts the legitimacy of the sovereignty of the other.

lowering tension during crises, and, if space in the relationship is made for dialogue in addition to military readiness, can aid in preventing a crisis dynamic in the first place.

If official diplomatic relations are deemed unfeasible for political or strategic reasons (as is likely the case), then an alternate solution could be the establishment of lower-level liaison offices in the US and North Korea. These offices would go beyond the “New York channel” and the various ad-hoc US-North Korea back-channels in terms of institutionalization of cooperation potential.³⁰ If political obstacles to liaison offices prove insurmountable, then a US-North Korea military-military hotline could be envisioned. The two Koreas already benefit from such a hotline (although North Korea goes through periods in which it does not communicate), but a US-North Korea military-military hotline could be useful in potential crisis scenarios.

Military and technical/diplomatic confidence building measures could also figure into the menu of options for tamping down the security dilemma inherent in a North Korea vs. US-South Korea alliance long-term deterrence relationship. For instance, the US-South Korea alliance could provide North Korea advance notice of the nature of US-South Korea combined military exercises, including selected information on assets used, troop numbers, etc. This information-sharing should in principle also be reciprocal. Depending on conditions and circumstances, both the US-South Korea alliance and North Korea could extend reciprocal invitations for military officer observation of exercises. On the technical side, the US could offer (*mutatis mutandis*) North Korea a version of the “Liaison Committee” that it operated for Pakistan to help it improve nuclear safety. Although the above confidence building measures are low-level, the information and observation exchange they implicate are both symbolically important and can contribute to putting a floor on distrust.

None of the above measures—with the possible/likely exception of arms control—require *de facto* recognition of North Korea as a nuclear-armed state, or even abandonment of denuclearization as an implicit extreme long-term goal. What the above measures do require is the tricky balancing of diplomacy with deterrence, as overemphasis on one undermines the efficacy of the other, even as both are critical to managing the deterrence relationship. This balancing act necessitates a change in mentality and expectations. Indeed, even more important than specific tools for managing the security dilemma inherent in the North Korea vs. US-South Korea alliance deterrence relationship, the fundamental issue is the emergence of a mentality (on both sides) that accepts the mutuality of deterrence. This is difficult. This is difficult for official Washington because, after becoming accustomed to unipolar-moment military dominance in the post-Cold War period, it is still adjusting to a multi-polar world with diluted US relative power advantages. Thus Washington still loves the idea of deterring other states, but struggles to accept the fact of being deterred itself. As for North Korea, given its closed-off nature it is harder to envision what the Kim regime thinks about mutual nuclear deterrence. However, it is likely that it is “learning on the job,” as it has only recently acquired nuclear weapons.

Of course this is a deeply unsatisfying optic, but an approach aiming at a lose-lose outcome that all parties can accept may be the best available equilibrium. It would not be the worst.

30. Such a liaison office does carry political/diplomatic risk, as North Korea demonstrated in detonating South Korea’s liaison office in Kaesong during a diplomatic breakdown in 2020.

IV. Conclusion³¹

As adumbrated at the end of the last section, quite apart from their advisability per se and relative merits vis-à-vis the status quo (or other alternative options), there is one big question for all of the aforementioned tools for managing the security dilemma dynamics of the North Korea vs. US-South Korea alliance deterrence relationship: does Pyongyang have any interest in any of these risk reduction measures? If the answer is affirmative, then these tools can at least in principle be tested, and both sides of the conflict dyad can learn through trial and (hopefully minimal) error. If it goes this route, that would indicate that North Korea does in fact view itself as a “responsible” nuclear-armed, non-NPT power like India, Pakistan, or Israel, and would in principle both act and expect to be treated accordingly. However, North Korea’s rebarbative attitude toward diplomacy—especially since the failed 2019 Hanoi summit—and history of brinksmanship support the analysis that the answer is very possibly negative, at least at a reasonable diplomatic, economic (i.e., sanctions relief), and reputational cost for the US-South Korea alliance. That is, as the weaker of the two sides in an asymmetric security dilemma situation, North Korea may be risk-acceptant to the point of seeking to compensate for its weakness by weaponizing the absence of stabilizing mechanisms through escalating provocations allowing it to extort generous terms for return to the status quo ante.

In this way, North Korea would embody Thomas Schelling’s (in)famous example of the reckless driver—in the game of chicken—who visibly tosses the steering wheel out of the vehicle. The difficulty would emerge in earnest when a serious escalatory provocation occurred that the US-South Korea alliance would (logically) consider intentional and to which it would be obligated to respond proportionately—with fewth/no tools for

maintaining stability, only the terror of nuclear arms themselves could prevent nuclear crisis instability tipping over into hot war.

31. The author would like to thank an anonymous official from United States Forces Korea for feedback that greatly improved the considerations in the Conclusion, notably concerning the way that the asymmetric nature of the Korean Peninsula security dilemma could express itself through the weaponization of the absence of stability mechanisms.

The Future Direction of South Korean Geopolynomic Positioning¹

Abstract

South Korea has often been described as a ‘shrimp among whales,’ whereby a small weak state finds itself surrounded by regional and global behemoths, dramatically limiting the country’s strategic options. Within these narrow geostrategic constraints, different administrations in Seoul have tried to leverage Seoul’s competitive advantages through policy platforms which also consider the relative weakness of the Republic of Korea (ROK), especially when faced with the additional challenge of the hostile Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) regime to the North. These range from traditional balancing, band-wagoning, and hedging, through conceptualizations of South Korea as a ‘pivot,’ ‘hub,’ or ‘bridging’ state, to assorted incarnations of ‘middlepowerhood.’ This paper looks, however, on the one hand to expand geostrategic considerations to wider ‘geopolynomic’ ones, embracing the intersection of geostrategy, geopolitics, geoeconomics, geohistory, and geoculture; and on the other to reconceptualize South Korea as a second-tier power with far more resources than would generally be the case for a middle power, let alone a shrimp among whales. Instead of dwelling on the geostrategic challenges and limitations of the ROK, it highlights opportunities for South Korea, either acting unilaterally, or in conjunction with others, to get the most diplomatic bang for its buck.

Introduction

Much of the internal perception of South Korea,³ as well as the external strategic analysis of its policy options, has focused on the relative weakness and vulnerability of the country in what has been described as one of the most dangerous regions in the world.⁴ Indeed, it had long seemed the geostrategic destiny of the country to suffer the fate of a shrimp in the old Korean proverb and get crushed to death in the fight between whales, as has been repeatedly referenced by commentators from all political and paradigmatic backgrounds, across an extended analytical period. In terms of strategic discourse, the shrimp among whales narrative finds the greatest support from a power political or ‘realist’ view of the world, wherein a small weak state, surrounded by regional and global

1. Geopolynomic is a term used to aggregate geostrategic, geopolitical, geoeconomic, geohistorical, and geocultural considerations of the distribution of power and influence. Brendan Howe, “Three futures: geopolynomic transition and the implications for regional security in Northeast Asia” *Modern Asian Studies* 39(4) (2005): 761-792. Some of the concepts in this paper first appeared in Brendan M. Howe, “Whither South Korean Niche Diplomacy in an Era of Competing Triangulation” *Korea-Europe Review* 2(1): 1-18 and are reproduced here by permission.
2. Brendan M. Howe is Dean and Professor of International Relations at Ewha Womans University GSIS, and President of the Asian Political and International Studies Association. He researches on traditional and non-traditional security and has authored, co-authored, or edited around 100 publications including: *The Niche Diplomacy of Asian Middle Powers* (2021), *UN Governance in Cambodia and East Timor* (2020), *Regional Cooperation for Peace and Development* (2018), *National Security, Statecentricity, and Governance in East Asia* (2017), *Peacekeeping and the Asia-Pacific* (2016), *Post-Conflict Development in East Asia* (2014), and *The Protection and Promotion of Human Security in East Asia* (2013).
3. South Korea and Republic of Korea (ROK) are used interchangeably in this article.
4. Kent Calder and Min Ye, *The Making of Northeast Asia* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2010).

behemoths, has severely limited options, in the face of a geostrategic operating environment within which the “the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.” Available strategies are traditionally restricted to ‘balancing’ or ‘bandwagoning’ with the strong. Yet, such are the geostrategic and geoeconomics constraints upon South Korea, that the country has been conceptualized as being stuck between a ‘rock and a hard place’ in terms of its military dependency upon its closest ally, the United States, and its largest market and trading partner, China.⁵ Pressured by the U.S. strategic ‘rebalancing’ in the region, and China’s geostrategic ‘wedge’ policy platform,⁶ rather than balancing or bandwagoning with either, often the Republic of Korea (ROK), has tried to operationalize some form of ‘hedging’ strategy or ‘strategic ambiguity.’

Ultimately even the hedging approach was abandoned with the inauguration of the Yoon Suk-yeol administration. Prior to coming to power President Yoon had made it clear that ‘rebuilding’ South Korea’s alliance with the US was to be central to his geostrategic policy commitments and was also a recognition of Washington’s frustrations with the hedging of the outgoing government of President Moon Jae-in (2017-2022).⁷ Yoon has come off the fence and chosen sides between the whales. For Ramon Pardo the extent to which this was ever in doubt has been exaggerated by other commentators, that rather than a strategic dilemma, Seoul was faced with a strategic non-dilemma, and had “long ago decided that when it comes to foreign policy and security, its past, present, and future lies with the US and other like-minded partners.”⁸ To try to create some policy space within these hierarchical power constraints, successive Korean governments have, however, embraced the language and self-identification of a ‘middle power’ in their diplomatic narrative, and as a framework for their foreign policy vision and strategy.⁹

Carsten Holbraad introduced the significance of a

hierarchical conceptualization of middle powers in the 1970s, criticizing the then dominant discourse in international relations, of a simple dichotomy between the great powers who do what they want, and the rest who suffer what they must.¹⁰ He evaluated the function of certain states situated between great powers and weak states in accordance with physical capacities related to economy, military, and population.¹¹ Laura Neack has also relied upon such ‘resource power’ measurements in further expanding a hierarchical model of middlepowerhood.¹² According to such conceptualizations, middle powers lack ‘compulsory power,’ the military resources to dominate other countries or the economic resources to bribe countries into adopting policies that they would not otherwise pursue. Yet they differ from the small or ‘system ineffectual’ states which have little or no influence. They are, potentially, ‘system affecting states’ which can have

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5. Ellen Kim and Victor Cha, “Between a rock and a hard place: South Korea’s strategic dilemmas with China and the United States” *Asia Policy* 21 (2016): 101-121. http://www.nbr.org/publications/asia_policy/free/120516/AsiaPolicy21_Kim_Cha_January2016.pdf
 6. Jahyun Chun and Yangmo Ku, “Clashing Geostrategic Choices in East Asia, 2009-2015: Re-balancing, Wedge Strategy, and Hedging” *Korean Journal of International Studies* 18(1) (2010): 33-57.
 7. Michelle Yee Hee Lee, “South Korean President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol unveils foreign policy goals” *Washington Post* April 14, 2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/14/south-korea-president-interview/>
 8. Ramon Pacheco Pardo, “South Korea as a ‘global pivotal state’: the role of partners” *CSDS Policy Brief* April 21, 2022. https://brussels-school.be/sites/default/files/CSDS%20Policy%20brief_2207_0.pdf
 9. Jeffrey Robertson, “South Korea as a Middle Power – Capacity, Behaviour, and Now Opportunity” *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 16(1) (2007): 151-174.
 10. Carl Holbraad, “The Role of Middle Powers” *Cooperation and Conflict* 6(1) (1971): 77-90.
 11. *Ibid.*
 12. Laura Neack, “Empirical Observations on ‘Middle State’ Behavior at the Start of a New International System” *Pacific Focus* 7(1) (1992): 5-21.

a significant impact within a narrower policy area, or in conjunction with others.¹³

South Korea's has consistently striven for a geostrategic niche role amid the great power East Asian triangle. The Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2008) government's middle-power aspiration was expressed in the Northeast Asian Initiative, which projected South Korea's pivotal role as a 'balancer' or 'hub' in the region to facilitate regional cooperation in the realms of economy and security.¹⁴ During the Lee Myung-bak administration (2008-2013), South Korea's self-identification as a middle power took a more explicit form. Under the overarching slogan of 'Global Korea,' the concept of middle power was used to support the aspiration to increase the country's international influence by enhancing its networking capacity and convening power.¹⁵ The Park Guen-hye administration (2014-2016) was more reluctant to apply the middle-power nomenclature to its diplomatic posture due to fear of provoking apprehension and/or misunderstanding in the US and China. Yet, even though the use of middle-power language started to diminish early in Park's term, related geostrategic policies were still pursued, such as the establishment of the middle power grouping of Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey, and Australia (MIKTA), and the promotion of the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative. Among the public and academics in Korea and abroad, the terminology has also been used to describe South Korea's 'middle' position between China and the U.S. under progressive administrations in Seoul, peaking with Moon Jae-in's hedging and 'bridging' endeavors.¹⁶ Despite abandoning the 'betwixt' conceptualizations of South Korea's geostrategic position of his predecessors, Yoon Suk-yeol's 'Global Pivotal State' owes much to their ideational legacy. The details of the policy platform imply a continuation of the broadening of middle power aspirations and niche diplomatic activities begun by previous administrations to include non-strategic

initiatives. But they also reflect an enhanced aspirational role for a Korea seen as more influential than a 'mere' middle power.

This paper looks, therefore, first, to expand geostrategic considerations to wider 'geopolynomic' ones, embracing the intersection of geostrategy, geopolitics, geoeconomics, geohistory, and geoculture. It secondly considers the extent to which South Korea may be reconceptualized as a second-tier power with far more resources than would generally be the case for a middle power, let alone a shrimp among whales. While recognizing the ongoing geostrategic limitations of the ROK, a third analytical section highlights opportunities for South Korea, either acting unilaterally, or in conjunction with others, to get the most diplomatic bang for its buck, as well as considering the future implications for South Korea's geopolynomic rise.

From Geostrategic to Geopolynomic

Geostrategy is based on analysis of the relative spatial distribution of power. Yet, although the notion of 'power' underlies most analyses of politics, it remains one of the most contested concepts in the social sciences.¹⁷ Despite

13. Matthias Vom Hau, James Scott, and David Hulme, "Beyond the BRICs: Alternative Strategies of Influence in the Global Politics of Development" *European Journal of Development Research* 24(2) (2012): 187-204, 187-188.

14. Inkyo Cheong, "The progress of Korea's FTA policy in the context of Northeast Asian Economic Cooperation" in Jeehoon Park, T.J. Pempel, and Gerard Roland (eds.) *Political economy of Northeast Asian regionalism: Political conflict and economic integration* 56-66, (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2008).

15. Michael Green, "Korean middle power diplomacy and Asia's emerging multilateral architecture" In Victor Cha and Marie DuMond (eds.) *The Korean pivot: The study of South Korea as a global power* 17-34 (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2017).

16. Kim and Cha, "Between a rock and a hard place."

17. Tellis, Ashley J., Janice Bially, Christopher Layne, Melissa McPherson. *Measuring Power in the Postindustrial Age*. (Santa Monica: RAND, 2000).

the apparently wide variety of definitions and usages, however, most notions of power in international relations boil down to references to 'allocation of resources', 'ability to use these resources', and the 'strategic character' of power, meaning its use not only against inertia, but also opposing wills. "This tripartite approach to power can be restated using a simple taxonomy that describes power as 'resources', as 'strategies', and as 'outcomes'."¹⁸ Power base theory is the starting point for the first and third of these concepts; access to resources, and the strategic character of power. The problems here break down into (1) delimitation, or which variables to use, (2) aggregation, or how to combine them, and (3) salience of variables over time. Proponents of long cycle theory, for instance, rely on analysis of changes in the concentration of sea power/global reach capability.¹⁹ Other single-variable indicators of power have included military personnel, military expenditure, and national income.

Worries over the 'realism' of single-variable analysis, especially combined with changing salience, has led other authors to include different measurements and combinations of power. Most include some measurement of land area, population, industrial/economic capability, and military might. David Singer's is the most popular multivariate analysis of power due to its association with the mammoth Correlates of War project. It has three dimensions of capability divided into six variables: demographics [total population; urban population (cities of 20,000 or larger)]; industrial capability [energy consumption; iron and steel production]; and military [expenditure; personnel].²⁰ Singer's formula is also perhaps the simplest of the multivariable power measurements. While very elegant, however, Singer's method has attracted a great deal of criticism regarding its equal weight aggregation. It is also considered particularly vulnerable to changes in salience. Other approaches, therefore, have attempted to find more accurate (if more complicated) aggregation

equations. Each of these, however, introduces greater subjectivity in the measurement, as different aggregation models are essentially 'eyeballed' for best fit. No formula for measurement or aggregation provides a perfect picture of state power, and no matter how accurate its initial findings, all decay over time due to technological change.

The aim of strategic policymaking is to structure the decision-making of others, so they pursue courses of action preferred by the strategic actor, and refrain from undesirable actions. Strategic policies include the power-political concepts of defense and deterrence, as well as inducements to the 'other' to be more collaborative. The strategic wielding of military and economic might to coerce, bribe, or at least structure the cost-benefit rational decision-making of the 'other'; the formal, often bilateral, diplomatic dance or game between the official representatives of states in their official capacities; and confidential, even secret negotiations and agreements carried out in the corridors of power form the basis of geostrategy. Yet, a further area of contestation is that these measurements of 'hard power' and their influences are themselves anachronistic within the contemporary geostrategic operating environment. Not only are there some operational contexts where the degree of influence a state can have over international affairs is not dependent on military might, but also other means, resources, and the utilization of such 'new' resources are increasingly important to measuring influence.

18. Ibid. 13-14.

19. George Modelski and William R. Thompson, *Seapower in Global Politics, 1494-1993* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988).

20. David J. Singer and Paul. F. Diehl, eds. *Measuring the Correlates of War*. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1990).

These new resources are closely entwined with Joseph Nye's conceptualization of 'soft power.'²¹ For Nye, there are three ways to get what you want when interacting with others: you can coerce them with threats; you can induce them with payments; or you can attract and co-opt them to want what you want. This third way is soft power and is appealing not only because it is more legitimate to attract rather than coerce or bribe, but also because it can be exerted by those less well-endowed with the traditional resources of hard power. This includes not only small and medium-ranked states, but also by other international actors such as NGOs, international organizations, and even academics.²³ A related, but as I have argued elsewhere, strategically distinct concept, can be found in the emergence of the public diplomacy discourse.²⁴ Public diplomacy has often been seen as a component of soft power. Indeed, Jan Melissen claims that "public diplomacy is one of soft power's key instruments, and this was recognized in diplomatic practice long before the contemporary debate on public diplomacy."²⁵ Thus, "public diplomacy can be seen as the implementation process that appropriately uses the soft power assets of the country by targeting the foreign public with the fundamental starting point and purpose of heightening the country's image or national brand."²⁶ By combining public diplomacy based on soft power assets, with traditional diplomacy, a nation can enhance its national image and increase its influence on the global stage. Yet public diplomacy is neither an altruistic affair nor necessarily a 'soft' instrument. "It can pursue a wide variety of objectives, such as in the field of political dialogue, trade and foreign investment, the establishment of links with civil society groups beyond the opinion gatekeepers, but also has 'hard power' goals such as alliance management, conflict prevention or military intervention."²⁷ This combination of hard power and soft power in the contemporary discourse is termed 'smart power.'

These 'smart power' areas of foreign policy platform construction have been of particular importance in the middle power discourse. Given their lack of compulsory power, middle powers need to pursue 'niche diplomacy,' which involves concentrating resources in specific areas best able to generate returns worth having, rather than trying to cover the field, allowing them, therefore, to 'punch above their weight.'²⁸ Often, this resource concentration occurs in the normative, humanitarian, or human-centered rather than state-centric areas of international relations and global governance. As such the conceptualization of power and influence is more related to a liberal internationalist perspective than power political ones. Liberal international relations scholars have emphasized 'middlepowermanship,' relating to the diplomatic behavior and intentions of states, as the key factor for (self)identification of middle power polities.²⁹ Liberal perspectives tend to focus

21. Joseph Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990); *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

22. Nye, *Bound to Lead* 1990.

23. Nye, *Soft Power* 2004.

24. Brendan Howe, "Challenges and Opportunities for South Korean Diplomacy in an Era of New Varieties of Power and Influence" *Korean Journal of Security Affairs* 22(1) (2017): 4-22.

25. Jan Melissen, "The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice" in Jan Melissen ed. *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 4.

26. Jiwon Yun, "The Role and Task of Military Diplomacy as a Middle Power in the Global Era" *Korean Journal of Security Affairs* 20-1 (2015): 50-69: 46.

27. Melissen, "The New Public Diplomacy" 14.

28. Alan Henrikson, "Niche Diplomacy in the World Public Arena: the Global 'Corners' of Canada and Norway" in Jan Melissen ed. *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 67.

29. John Holmes, "Is There a Future for Middlepowermanship?" in John Holmes (ed.) *The Better Part of Valour: Essays on Canadian Diplomacy* 18-49 (Toronto: Carleton Library, 1970).

on policy initiation and advocacy, the participatory attributes of middle powers, by highlighting states that participate actively in global issue areas like human rights, human security, non-traditional security (NTS), peace, environment, and development. In addition, according to this conceptualization, middle powers are willing to take a role of mediator based on their 'positional power' from structural power vacuums in international relations. They position themselves strategically as a mediator or a broker and show their normative issue leadership in certain areas where they can fill in the gaps related to the relational configuration of power dynamics.³⁰

Yet it can be argued that South Korea possesses greater resources (related to both hard and soft power considerations) than those that would allow it only to play the role of a 'mere' middle power. The extent to whether the ROK is currently or will in the future become a 'second-tier power' with the capacity to harness these resources, depends on both political will and geopolitical room to maneuver. The next analytical section assesses the claims of analysts and aspirations of policymakers related to this conceptualization.

From Shrimp to Global Power?

In hierarchical power measurement terms, the ROK has long been more than a middle-ranked power. While in terms of territory it is on the small side, especially when compared with global powers, and its population base is somewhere in the middle of the pack, measurements of its military and economic might are far in excess of such a hierarchical position.

Purely in terms of size, the ROK military of 550,000 active service men and women places the country eighth in global power, while if reserves are included, South Korea's total of 3,699,000 is second only to that of Vietnam. South Korea's defense budget is in the top

10 at more than US\$50 Billion. All this, apparently, makes the ROK military the 6th most powerful in the world.³¹ South Korea has emerged as the world's fastest-growing arms exporter, vastly outpacing the growth of other major market players in recent years. The largest markets for Korean weapons are the Philippines (16%) Indonesia (14% of sales), other potential regional second tier powers. Yet it has recently been announced that South Korea will supply Poland with US\$15-20 Billion of NATO-specification weapons including 1,000 K2 tanks, 648 K9s self-propelled guns, and 48 FA-50 light combat jets.³² This is an area of major policy continuity between the Moon and Yoon administrations, with both pushing for South Korea to improve its arms exporting ranking – the country is already in the top eight, with big deals to Egypt and Australia, but aiming to round out the top four after the US, Russia, and France, and overtaking likes of China, the UK, and Germany. Generally, Seoul's military hardware is seen to provide a less expensive but extremely capable alternative to Washington's weapons systems.³³ Importantly the prioritization of arms development and exports which has become known as K-Defense, further links to geoeconomic considerations. While hosting a meeting on promoting defense exports, President Yoon pledged to step up efforts to boost

30. Andrew Cooper, *Niche diplomacy: Middle powers after the Cold War*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

31. Evan Hecht, "Who has the biggest military? Breaking it down by active and reserve members" *USA Today* August 27, 2022. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2022/08/27/who-has-biggest-military-world-most-powerful/7888866001/>

32. Jung Min-ho, "South Korea emerges as fastest-growing arms exporter" *The Korea Times* July 24, 2022. https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2022/07/113_333257.html

33. Brad Lendon and Gawon Bae, "President Yoon wants South Korea to become one of world's top weapons suppliers" *CNN* 17 August 2022. <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/08/17/asia/south-korea-arms-exports-yoon-intl-hnk-ml/index.html>

weapons exports and secure cutting-edge defense technologies while shifting the industry's focus in South Korea from supply of domestic needs to external customer's demands.³⁴

And a similar story can be told regarding South Korea's geoeconomic ranking and positioning as that regarding its military power. The ROK makes it into the top 10 in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) according to the World Bank, just behind Canada, but ahead of the relative whale or Russia.³⁵ These figures are from 2021, so before the consequences for the Russian economy of the invasion of Ukraine and the impact of international sanctions. In terms of GDP per capita, South Korea ranks 27th, but a lot of the countries ahead are much smaller, with only the United States, Germany, and France ranking above among countries with similar or larger populations. Notably the United Kingdom, Japan, and Italy rank below. Hence the ROK is part of an exclusive club of only eight states with over 50 million population, and over US\$30,000 per capita, with Turkey just breaking the latter threshold in 2022.³⁶ Overall, therefore, from a traditional powerbase measurement, South Korea ranks 6th in Global Power, behind only the three great powers of US, China, and Russia, and two other second tier powers, Germany, and the UK.³⁷

From the perspectives of soft power, the ROK's recent gains have, if anything, been even more impressive. Successive governments in Seoul have emphasized the functional aspect of middle-power diplomacy to legitimize South Korea's role as a convener, conciliator and proactive agenda-setter in international negotiations and multilateral platform such as the 2010 G20 Seoul Summit, the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011, the Nuclear Security Summit in 2012, and the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) which was first launched as a think tank in 2010 by Korean President Lee Myung-bak, and was later converted into an international treaty-based organization in 2012 at

the Rio+20 Summit in Brazil. 30 years since acceding to membership of the UN, the ROK has grown from being the host of the largest UN enforcement operation to date, to being a major contributor to international peacekeeping operations. The South Korean military has also contributed substantially to humanitarian operations. South Korea has been part of the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination teams since 2003 and the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group since 1999. The ROK specializes in search and rescue efforts and has participated in the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)-administered Asia Pacific Humanitarian Partnership since its establishment in 2004. The Moon Jae-in administration's proposal for a Northeast Asia Peace Community (NEAPC) contained three components: a Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Platform (NAPCP), a New Northern Policy (NNP) and a New Southern Policy (NSP). The ambitious aim was to build a sustainable regional system of cooperation with the 10 Member States of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the middle power grouping of MIKTA, India and Northeast Asian states. President Yoon has already proposed an 'ABCD Strategy' toward Southeast Asia (advance human capital, build

34. Hyonhee Shin, "South Korea's Yoon looks to boost arms exports, develop defence tech" *Reuters* November 24, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/south-koreas-yoon-looks-boost-arms-exports-develop-defence-tech-2022-11-24/>

35. World Bank, "GDP All Countries and Economies" *World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files* 2021. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/Ny.Gdp.Mktp.Cd?most_recent_value_desc=true

36. World Population Review, "GDP per Capita by Country 2022" <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/gdp-per-capita-by-country>

37. US News, "Most powerful countries" <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/rankings/power>

health security, connect cultures, and digitize Asian infrastructure) that looks to be a continuation of Moon's New Southern Policy focused on people, peace, and prosperity.

In terms of cultural power and public diplomacy, Sue Mi Terry has described South Korea as becoming something of a "global soft-power juggernaut."³⁸ This has been the result of a combination of the ROK hosting high-visibility global sporting events such as the Seoul Summer Olympics of 1988, the 2002 FIFA World Cup and the 2018 Olympic Winter Games in PyeongChang 2018, and the dramatic and exponential impact of the 'Korean Wave' or *Hallyu*. From the official government ministry-supported impact of K-dramas and K-pop in the 1990s, initially limited to other Asian countries, through the expansion to other parts of the globe thanks to streaming and social networking services, to the global phenomenon of 'Gangnam Style' in 2012, becoming the first YouTube video to reach 1 billion views. This was followed by the global success of the K-pop group BTS, and then in 2020, the film *Parasite* winning the Academy Awards for Best Picture and Best Director, becoming the first non-English film to win the prize for the year's best film, South Korean actor Youn Yuh-Jung taking home the Oscar for Best Supporting Actress the following year for her role in the film *Minari*, and the record-breaking *Squid Game*, which became Netflix's most-watched drama in 2021, and O Yeong-su's Golden Globe win the first for a Korean-born actor.³⁹ As a result of such impacts, South Korea rose to second place in *Monocle's* annual global soft power rankings behind only Germany.⁴⁰

There remain numerous obstacles to, and caveats about South Korea's global rise. Attempts at securing niche diplomatic geostrategic relevance have met with, at best, limited success. First, the legacy of a colonial history, and territorial disputes, overshadow shared interests between South Korea and Japan. Indeed,

despite the contemporary Japan-ROK dyad sharing democratic constitutions, free market economies, and alliances with the US, in recent years tensions have escalated gravely between the two countries. Optimistic assessments regarding the incoming administration of President Yoon Suk-yeol might suggest a thawing of relations between Seoul and Tokyo, as has been the case with previous conservative administrations. Yet, the strategic relationship has been so severely damaged, that de-escalation will probably not come from traditional geostrategic or security foci, but rather cooperation and confidence building in non-traditional security (NTS) fields or arenas. Playing political hardball with Japan has not resulted in diplomatic gains for South Korea and may even have damaged the country's international reputation.

Second, despite endeavoring to nurture a cooperative relationship with China in the fields of trade, investment, culture, and tourism, relations significantly deteriorated over the 2016-2017 deployment in South Korea of the American Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-ballistic missile defense system with its penetrating radar system, and potential to be used against not only North Korean weapons, but also those of China. The cooperative relationship is predominantly dependent on Seoul not giving offense to its superpower neighbor and can easily founder on geostrategic realities. As mentioned above, the Yoon administration has come

38. Sue Mi Terry, "The Korean Invasion: Can Cultural Exports Give South Korea a Geopolitical Boost?" *Foreign Affairs* October 14, 2021.

39. Lee Jeung-eun, "Why South Korea Needs to Be a Global Player" *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* November 22, 2022. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/11/22/why-south-korea-needs-to-be-global-player-pub-88421>

40. KBS News, "Monocle Ranks S. Korea 2nd in Soft Power" November 27, 2020. http://world.kbs.co.kr/service/news_view.htm?lang=e&Seq_Code=157901

off the fence firmly down on the US side in the greater geostrategic game, potentially including expansion of THAAD deployment and aligning with anti-Chinese coalitions such as the Quad. Beijing has already warned of serious consequences. This not only risks Chinese retaliation, but also demonstrates the relative weakness of the ROK when dealing with the US. Indeed, in the greater geostrategic game South Korea is in danger of being relegated to the role of bystander, cheerleader, or 'reactive' state, effectively just bandwagoning on the US geostrategic policy platform. Even the recent adoption of the 'Indo-Pacific' geostrategic terminology demonstrates the extent to which Seoul has given up its previous policy independence.

In terms of geoeconomics, South Korea, as a predominantly export-oriented economy is particularly vulnerable to downturns in global trade (exacerbated by Sino-US competition, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the geopolitical tensions listed above), occupies a precarious place in the global supply chain, and is perhaps not as nimble as it should be in reacting to the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, due to the preponderance of the great business conglomerates or *Chaebol*. Furthermore, the national economy is riven with socio-economic and political cleavages and threatened by a demographic timebomb combining one of the world's most rapidly ageing populations, with the lowest birthrate.⁴¹

There are also concerns that, even in terms of soft power projection, Seoul has failed to put its money where its collective and metaphorical mouth is. While portraying itself as a champion of green growth, the Climate Action Tracker (CAT) rates South Korea's 2030 climate target as 'insufficient,' and inconsistent with the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C temperature limit, noting that if all countries pursued the Korean domestic level of ambition, it would lead to 3°C of global warming; with current policies and actions

'highly insufficient,' equivalent to a 4°C rise if globally implemented.⁴² Official development assistance (ODA) has been a key plank of South Korean soft power dating to before the country even joined the OECD and its Development Assistance Committee. Yet, this element of Korean niche diplomacy also has its critics. Overt use of the term 'Korean Model of Development' has been criticized as implying a singular mode of development which does not fit with the global norms on foreign aid and development cooperation. Seoul risks its policies being viewed as self-centered and derived from overconfidence in the country's own development success, and it might be "received as arrogance unless carefully executed."⁴³ South Korea has been further criticized not only for its relatively low level of ODA as a proportion of GDP, but also for high levels of tied aid. Finally, the ROK has been criticized for focusing too greatly on bilateral rather than multilateral assistance.

The soft power politics of attraction only work when a country is viewed generally, and globally, as attractive. There is a danger that the gloss is coming off Asia's 'shining city on the hill.' The country is rightly lauded for a double 'Miracle on the Han River.' First, in terms of economic rebuilding and development from

41. Chung Min Lee, "How South Korea is Honing a Competitive Edge" *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* November 22, 2022. https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/11/22/how-south-korea-is-honing-competitive-edge-pub-88419?utm_source=carnegieemail&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=announcement&mkt_tok=ODEzLVhZVS00MjIAAAGIPyYOL4uys4ZeUXU_ZbBXXnjrslmo0KmKMWbt2TIIhFuAinM4ZmeTAObMzgNyAICBDxQxUnWmpfAIrmYh0WmIT5eB4x2zL6eLR38ee4

42. Climate Action Tracker, "Korea" March 8, 2022. <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/south-korea/>

43. Hong-min Chun, Elijah Munyi, and Heejin Lee. 2010. "South Korea as an Emerging Donor: Challenges and Changes on Its Entering OECD/DAC." *Journal of International Development* 22 (6): 788-802: 799.

being one of the one of the poorest countries in the world after the Korean War, to its current stellar global ranking despite having to do so under conditions of insecurity. Second, regarding political transition and consolidation as one of Asia's most stable and vibrant democracies. Yet, macroeconomic models and aggregate measurements do not take sufficient account of the distribution of economic wellbeing. While rapid economic development lifted many out of poverty, and in the early decades of growth these economic benefits were relatively equitably distributed, this began to change in the mid-1990s. The major turning point was the 1997 Asian financial crisis which had devastating consequences for the economy and for the livelihoods of the working population. Since then, economic inequality has greatly increased. Likewise, the 'quality' or 'thickness' of democratic governance has been questioned in a country which has a very poor record on gender issues, has been extensively criticized by international society actors for its labor rights and safety issues, faces ongoing and even increasing issues over press freedom and freedom of speech, and has the highest suicide rate in the world.

From Shrimp to Lead Fish in a School?

Perhaps, then, as pointed out by Ramon Pardo, before focusing on becoming a global pivotal state, the ROK should focus on becoming a 'pivotal middle power,'⁴⁴ or in the terminology utilized by this paper, a 'pivotal second-tier power.' Middle powers have been seen as countries that have the power to assert their influence in regional settings and have the intention enthusiastically to advocate multilateral cooperation with the countries that share similar values and purposes. Hence, "middle power states have most recently been defined by their internationalism.

States that exhibit certain collaborative foreign policy behavior are considered middle powers. Qualifying behavior might include good 'global citizenship,' niche diplomacy, and accepting roles as mediators, followers, or staunch multilateralists."⁴⁵ In the East Asian region (including both Northeast and Southeast) this means cooperation between the value-sharing polities of South Korea, ASEAN, some of the Member States of ASEAN, Japan, and potentially, Australia. Indeed, the rapidly shifting nature of peacebuilding and development cooperation in the 21st century presents second-tier powers in Asia with a 'noble opportunity' to do something that is both normatively right and beneficial to others, while also in the national interest.⁴⁶

The Yoon administration is again 'talking the talk' when it comes to this element of geopolynomic pivotal power. President Yoon's explicitly 'principled' foreign policy platform is already committed not only to build on existing NTS partnerships, but also to a greater engagement with multilateral institutions and networks of peace and security – an area where previous administrations have been criticized for their shortcomings. He has noted that Seoul needs principled foreign policy should be one that "advances freedom, peace, and prosperity" in defence of a liberal

44. Ramon Pacheco Pardo, "A Pivotal Middle Power" *Korea JoongAng Daily* November 28, 2022. <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2022/11/28/opinion/columns/middle-power-pivotal-state-South-Korea/20221128200051831.html>

45. M.A. Rudderham, "Middle Power Pull: Can Middle Powers use Public Diplomacy to Ameliorate the Image of the West?" *York Centre for International Security Studies Working Paper* 46 (2008): 2 <http://yciss.info.yorku.ca/files/2012/06/WP46-Rudderham.pdf>

46. Seungjoo Lee. "South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy: Multilayered World Order and The Case of Development Cooperation Policy." *EAI MPDI Working Paper* (2014). <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/185179/28.10.2014.pdf>

international order.⁴⁷ He aspires to the ROK playing a “leading role in the areas that necessitate our part,” and “when we are asked by the international community to participate more, we need to firmly demonstrate our attitude of respect for the international rules-based order.” A role that “advances freedom, peace, and prosperity through liberal democratic values and substantial cooperation.”⁴⁸ This means that the ROK needs to take on more NTS responsibilities, including providing more ODA, humanitarian assistance in times of crisis including vaccine assistance in the face of global pandemics, and action on climate change.⁴⁹ He acknowledges that, while South Korea is home to the UN-backed Green Climate Fund and International Vaccine Institute, and is well positioned to take a leadership role on climate change and pandemic response, to date the country has failed to “take advantage of those assets and step up to the most important global challenges of our time.”⁵⁰

What is needed going forward is a clearer demonstration of a willingness and ability to go further and actually ‘walk the walk.’ At the level of second-tier activism, South Korea needs not only to set a good example in its own domestic governance, to follow up words with action, and to abide by the rules of, and show support for the principles of the liberal world order, but it also needs to proactively engage with other second-tier powers, especially within the East Asian region, to demonstrate leadership. The ROK is well positioned to provide this leadership. South Korea has no imperial or neo-imperial baggage. Although slightly tarnished, it still represents a beacon of success which many neighboring countries seek to emulate, and the impact of the Korean wave has been felt most strongly, and for the longest period, in the East Asian region.

Historically, South Korea has played as a ‘bridging role,’ focusing on issue-specific cooperation activities through sharing its own experiences, profiting from

the country’s positional advantage or ‘in-betweenness’ in the regional hierarchy between the developed North, and the developing South. It can further serve as a bridge between the liberal ‘West,’ and the more communitarian focused ‘non-West.’ Furthermore, as Pardo also notes, other second-tier powers like to deal with and often seek out South Korea, but for a variety of reasons.⁵¹ Indeed, East Asian second-tier powers like the ROK operate under different strategic and normative constraints to those of the traditional Western middle powers which have hitherto dominated the global agenda-setting of international commissions. To gain more recognition, therefore, they should look to play a more independent regional leadership role in NTS affairs and focus on geopolymic cooperation. With both South Korea and Japan already playing significant NTS-promoting roles in the region there is even an opportunity for trust and confidence building between Seoul and Tokyo. Rather than lament geostrategic inadequacies and challenges, it would benefit regional second-tier actors (including South Korea, Japan, middle powers, and regional international organizations like ASEAN), to divert at least some of their resources to exploring solutions to seemingly intractable challenges through radical NTS thinking.

In business theory, the term ‘disruptive innovation’

47. Yoon Suk-yeol, “South Korea Needs to Step Up” *Foreign Affairs* February 8, 2022. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/south-korea/2022-02-08/south-korea-needs-step>

48. Ibid.

49. Michelle Yee Hee Lee, “South Korean President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol unveils foreign policy goals” *Washington Post* April 14, 2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/14/south-korea-president-interview/>

50. Yoon Suk-yeol, “South Korea Needs to Step Up”

51. Pardo, “A Pivotal Middle Power”

was coined to describe an innovation that creates a new market and value network and eventually disrupts an existing market and value network.⁵² The term was later generalized to identify disruptive science and technological advances.⁵³ Here it is proposed that we adopt the term in a more positive way to apply to the radical out of the box thinking and practices needed to address traditional security and NTS challenges in East Asia. These would include but would not be limited to regional international commissions on such varied issues as nuclear proliferation (North Korea), governance failure (Myanmar), water security, the South China Sea dispute, pandemic response, transnational pollution (yellow dust in Northeast Asia and haze in Southeast Asia), DRR, and the promotion and protection of human security. Thus, South Korea can be seen as having a responsibility and a capacity to lead and to disrupt.

52. Clayton Christensen, *The Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1997).

53. Lingfei Wu, Dashun Wang, & James A. Evans, "Large teams develop and small teams disrupt science and technology" *Nature* 566 (2019): 378-382.

Earth Trusteeship: A call for institutional change

Abstract

The global ecological crisis, on the one hand, and responses by nation states, on the other, are in complete disconnect. At the heart of this systemic failure is a broken human-nature relationship. This relationship needs to be restored.

In taking an ecological perspective, the article shows how the law and institutions of governance can become more effective. We can, for example, advance traditional interpretations of human rights, legal procedures and democratic processes to include ecological relationships. To this end, we need to ask who speaks for the beyond-human world and indeed for the Earth as a whole.

Most legal systems include trusteeship functions of individuals or institutions act on behalf and in the interest of those who cannot speak or act for themselves. They can be advanced for the effective protection of non-human beings and the Earth. Guidance for Earth Trusteeship exist in the form of two agreements created by global civil society, the 2000 Earth Charter and the 2018 Hague Principles. Current opportunities include the draft Global Pact for the Environment, the UN Secretary General's call for "repurposing the Trusteeship Council" and developments in a number of countries towards implementing ecological integrity and rights of nature into their legal systems.

1. Introduction

The global ecological crisis, on the one hand, and responses by nation states, on the other, are in complete disconnect. Governments seem mere by-standers, unable, perhaps unwilling, to revert the forces of human self-destruction. They no longer govern. Rather, democratically elected governments are caught up in crisis management as the Covid-pandemic and climate change have shown. At the heart of this systemic failure is a broken human-nature relationship. This relationship needs to be restored. We need to think about the

1. Professor Klaus Bosselmann, PhD, is an internationally renowned scholar of environmental law who has significantly contributed to the discourse on environmental ethics, policy, law and governance at national and international levels. The impact of his work on ecological legal theory, rights of nature, ecological integrity, eco-constitutionalism, the Earth Charter and legal developments in Germany and New Zealand are widely acknowledged. This is also visible in award-winning books such as *Im Namen der Natur* (1992), *When Two Worlds Collide* (1994), *The Principle of Sustainability* (2008/2017), *National Strategies for Sustainability* (2014) and *Earth Governance* (2015). Professor Bosselmann is the founding director of the New Zealand Centre for Environmental Law at the University of Auckland, Chair of the Ecological Law and Governance Association, Chair of the Earth Trusteeship Initiative, Co-Chair of the Global Ecological Integrity Group, Expert Member of the UN Harmony with Nature Dialogue and legal advisor to the UN High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism. His global awards include the Inaugural Senior Scholarship Prize of the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law and the Carlowitz Sustainability Award 2021.

environment as our *natürliche Mitwelt* (German for natural 'with-world' or 'co-vironment') and partner in dialogue.

From an ecological point of view, the interrelations between the human and the beyond-human world are obvious and imply recognition of the intrinsic value of all beings. From a legal point of view, the question arises how this ethical shift can be articulated, implemented and practised. We can ask, for example, how traditional interpretations of human rights, legal procedures and democratic processes can be advanced to include ecological relationships. To this end, we need to ask who speaks for the beyond-human world and indeed for the Earth.

In law, the typical tools for allowing someone to speak on behalf, and in the interest of, those who cannot speak for themselves is the concept of trusteeship. In an ecological context, the challenge is to determine who should act as a trustee for Earth. The short answer is: each of us. We are all citizens of a country and, at the same time, of the Earth, our common home. As global citizens we should therefore be acting as Earth trustees. Likewise, our political institutions should be acting as Earth trustees.²

Essentially, the global climate and ecological crisis is a symptom of the broken relationship between humans and nature. This has both, negative and positive implications. The threat for humanity is existential and undeniable, at stake is nothing less than our survival on planet Earth. On the positive, humanity has never been in a better position to realize that human well-being depends on the well-being of Earth as a whole. In other words, humans and nature are intricately connected. This shift of awareness requires new forms and institutions of governance, which I call Earth governance.³

Current international law can be summarized as a combination of good intentions and absent obligations.

A foundational document for international environmental law is the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.⁴ Its Article 2 reads: "States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies (...)." This reveals the traditional Western property paradigm! Like a private owner of land, the nation state has the undisturbed right to exploit its territory.

The second half of Article 2, however, says that states have "the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction." Furthermore, Principle 7 of the Rio Declaration reads: "States shall co-operate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem." So, is there an obligation of states to protect the global environment and the integrity of the Earth's ecosystem after all?

The answer is no. Crucially, under current international law states have no legally enforceable obligation to protect the natural environment within or across their boundaries. There is only an expectation to consider - but not necessarily avoid - disastrous environmental consequences of a state's action or non-action. Only negotiated treaties and fundamental

2. K.Bosselmann, *Earth Governance: Trusteeship for the Global Commons*, 2015; K.Bosselmann, "Human Rights and Responsibilities towards the Earth System", *Environmental Policy and Law*, 2022, Vol. 52.2, 213-322; K. Bosselmann., *Earth Trusteeship and State Sovereignty: Transforming Global Governance*, forthcoming 2023.

3. K. Bosselmann, *Earth Governance: Trusteeship of the Global Commons* (Edward Elgar, 2015).

4. UNGA A/CONF.151/26 (Vol.I) https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_CONF.151_26_Vol.I_Declaration.pdf

principles of international law could change that, but so far all treaties have been too weak and fragile - not to mention the lack of enforcement - to urge states into the logic of responsibility for the Earth. Nor have general principles like precaution or sustainability made a difference. For effective protection and restoration of the global, a deliberate, bold move towards Earth trusteeship is needed.

2. Earth trusteeship

There is an ever-growing ecological movement that has found its legal expression in Earth jurisprudence, Earth law and ecological law.⁵ Some recent developments give us a sense just how significant this legal movement has been. In 2016, one hundred professors of environmental law adopted a manifesto called “From Environmental Law to Ecological Law” at the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law Colloquium in Oslo, Norway. The “Oslo Manifesto”⁶ has since been endorsed by many hundreds of environmental lawyers and environmental law organizations from around the world and has led to the establishment of the Ecological Law and Governance Association (ELGA)⁷ in 2017. ELGA is a global network of lawyers and environmental activists that coordinates initiatives for transforming law and governance.

One of these initiatives is the Earth Trusteeship Initiatives (ETI)⁸, established on 10 December 2018 in the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands. This day marked the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. With the support and endorsement of many human rights, environmental and professional organizations, the ETI launched the “Hague Principles for a Universal Declaration on Responsibilities for Human Rights and Earth Trusteeship.”⁹

The three “Hague Principles” set out the framework for Earth trusteeship. All rights that human beings enjoy

depend on responsibilities that we have for each other and, crucially, for the Earth. We cannot live in dignity and well-being without accepting fundamental duties for each other and for Earth. These are trusteeship duties. We must understand ourselves as “People for Earth”¹⁰ or trustees of Earth. As citizens of our respective countries, we must demand our governments to accept Earth trusteeship. State sovereignty implies obligations as trustees of human rights and the Earth.

In our current legal system, Earth has no meaning or status. Earth is taken for granted as if it does need to be protected. On the other hand, we all know that critical planetary systems are at risk (the atmosphere, oceans, global biodiversity). We also know that protection efforts based on negotiations between states have not worked very well. A logical step forward is, therefore, to rather than relying on political compromises between states establish trusteeship obligations of states themselves. The sovereign state is not so sovereign as to ruin its own territory, transboundary ecological systems and Earth as a whole.

In the light of what we know about our age of human planetary dominance (the Anthropocene), we need to revisit the concept of state sovereignty inherited from an age when a global environmental crisis did not exist. Now is the time to advance the concept of sovereignty as a concept of rights and responsibilities. The rights of self-determination and non-intervention must be complemented by responsibilities for human rights and

5. See K. Bosselmann and P. Taylor (eds.), *Ecological Approaches to Environmental Law* (Edward Elgar, 2017).

6. Oslo Manifesto <https://www.elga.world/oslo-manifesto/>

7. Ecological Law and Governance Association <https://www.elga.world/>

8. Earth Trusteeship Initiative <https://www.earthtrusteeship.world/>

9. The Hague Principles <http://www.earthtrusteeship.world/the-hague-principles-for-a-universal-declaration-on-human-responsibilities-and-earth-trusteeship/>

10. People for Earth <http://www.peopleforearth.kr/eng/default.asp>

the Earth.

The case for Earth trusteeship can be summarized in this way:

“The ethics of stewardship or guardianship for the community of life is one of the most foundational concepts in the history of humanity. It is inherent in the teachings of the world’s religions and the traditions of indigenous peoples and is, an integral part of humanity’s cultural heritage. Yet, our political and legal institutions have not taken Earth ethics to heart. The Earth as an integrated whole may be featuring in images, in science and in ethics, but does not feature in law. Earth and the areas outside national jurisdictions (the global commons) are considered as *res nullius*, a legal nullity without inherent rights. Not that Earth cares about such rights. We humans must choose to care about them. If we keep ignoring them, then basically we are saying that the Earth system doesn’t really matter. We take it for granted - like sunshine and rain - and of no relevance to the system of law that govern us in societies and states. Given that the ethics of earth stewardship are widely accepted today we should be ready for taking the next step: Earth trusteeship.

Earth trusteeship is the essence of what Earth jurisprudence is advocating, but, more importantly, it has also been advocated in key international environmental documents. Earth trusteeship is the institutionalization of the duty to protect the integrity of ecological systems.

This duty is expressed in no less than 25 international agreements - from the 1982 World Charter for Nature right through to the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement!¹¹ To act on this duty ‘states need to cooperate in the spirit of global partnership’ as, for example, Principle 7 of the 1992 Rio Declaration says.¹²

The legal argument for Earth trusteeship can be firmly based on ethics common to all cultures and fundamental obligations of states expressed in many international agreements. The challenge ahead is to

convince governments that the step to Earth trusteeship is not only necessary, but actually possible and not too difficult to take.

An important part of meeting this challenge is the public debate around the global commons. As climate change has become the most pressing issue of our time - largely thanks to powerful protests of young people all over the world! - a shift of thinking seems to be occurring. Rather than having to justify calls for action, people put governments on the back foot: lack of action can no longer be justified. More radical measures are needed than negotiating climate deals.

3. State Sovereignty and Trusteeship

The legitimacy of the sovereign state rests on its function to act for, and on behalf of, its citizens. This requires consent with the governed.¹³ Governmental duties can therefore be understood as fiduciary obligations towards citizens.¹⁴ Such fiduciary obligations are recognized typically in public law,¹⁵ exist in common law and civil law (although in varying forms and

11. R. Kim, R. and K. Bosselmann, “Operationalizing Sustainable Development: Ecological Integrity as a Grundnorm in International Law”, *Review of European, Comparative and International Environmental Law*, 24:2, 2015, 194-208.

12. *The Next Step: Earth Trusteeship*, Address to the United Nations General Assembly, April 2017, p. 2/3 <http://files.harmonywithnatureun.org/uploads/upload96.pdf>

13. J. Locke: “(G)overnment is not legitimate unless it is carried on with the consent of the governed” (R. Ashcraft (ed.): *John Locke: Critical Assessments*, Routledge, 1991, 524).

14. E. Fox-Decent, *Sovereignty’s Promise: The State as a Fiduciary* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012; T. Frankel, “Fiduciary Law” (1983) 71 *Calif Law Rev* 795.

15. Including constitutional law, administrative law, tax law, criminal law and environmental law.

degrees¹⁶) and are also known in international law.¹⁷

The fiduciary function of the state can also be described as a trusteeship function.¹⁸

How then can state sovereignty can be reconciled with trusteeship? *Prime facie* both seem to have different purposes, yet they are part of the same basic function of the state, i.e. to serve the citizens it depends on and is accountable to.

Furthermore, global commons governance brings sovereignty and trusteeship close together.¹⁹ As has been noted, the traditional concept of sovereignty is less compelling today than it was in the past because of a “glaring misfit between the scope of the sovereign’s authority and the sphere of the affected stakeholders”²⁰ This “glaring misfit” engenders inefficient, undemocratic and unjust outcomes for under- or unrepresented affected stakeholders.²¹ Non-citizens, future generations and the natural environment all fall into such a category of “affected stakeholders”. To overcome this misfit, states need to increasingly perform trusteeship functions.

4. Fiduciary Duties of the State

The state gains its legitimacy exclusively from the people who created it. While the legality of a state depends on recognition by other states, once in existence a State can only ever legitimize its continued existence through ongoing trust by its people. The core idea of the modern democratic state is that it acts through its people, by its people and for its people. This implies a fiduciary relationship between people and state and is arguably the only legitimate basis for political authority in the English civil war, American Revolution, and then again confirmed in the French Revolution.²² It is echoed in constitutional documents such as the 1776 Pennsylvania Declaration of Rights: “[A]ll power being . . . derived from the people; therefore all officers of government, whether legislative or executive, are their

trustees and servants, and at all times accountable to them.”²³ John Locke had famously asserted that legislative power is ‘only a fiduciary power to act for certain ends’ and that ‘there remains still in the people a supreme power to remove or alter the legislative, when they find the legislative act contrary to the trust reposed in them.’

Likewise, Immanuel Kant drew the moral basis of fiduciary obligations from the duty-bound relationship between parents and children.²⁴ Kant claimed that children have an innate and legal right to their parents’ care. In a similar sense, he believed that state legitimacy was the result of a contract that is necessarily created between people to form a Rousseauian *volonté général* (“general will”). Through this process, Kant claimed, we jointly authorize the state who in turn acts in the form of trusteeship governance.

16. For example, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand recognize them with respect to indigenous peoples, ratepayers and (with the exception of New Zealand) in the form of public trusts, whereas continental European countries more fundamentally rely on public law to assume fiduciary relationships between individuals and governments.

17. M. Blumm and R. Guthrie, ‘Internationalizing the Public Trust Doctrine’ (2012) 45 *UC Davis L Rev* 741; H. Perritt, ‘Structures and Standards for Political Trusteeships’ (2004) 8 *UCLA J Int’l L & Foreign Aff* 391; E. Brown Weiss, ‘The Planetary Trust: Conservation and Intergenerational Equity’ (1984) 11 *Ecology Law Q* 495

18. P. Finn, ‘The Forgotten ‘Trust’: The People and the State’ in Malcolm Cope (ed), *Equity: Issues and Trends* (The Federation Press, 1995) 131-151.

19. S. Stec, ‘Humanitarian Limits to Sovereignty: Common Concern and Common Heritage Approaches to Natural Resources and Environment’ (2010) 12 *Int C L Rev* 361, 384-385, 378-380.

20. E. Benvenisti, ‘Sovereigns as Trustees of Humanity: On the Accountability of States to Foreign Stakeholders’(2013) 107(2) *AJIL* 295, 301.

21. *Ibid.*

22. W. Reisman, ‘Sovereignty and Human Rights in Contemporary International Law’ (1990) 84 *AJIL* 886, 867.

23. E. Criddle and E. Fox-Decent, ‘A Fiduciary Theory of Jus Cogens’ (2009) 34 *Yale J Int’l Law* 331; Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776, art IV.

24. *Ibid.* 352.

That state sovereignty is fundamentally a trust relationship cannot be dismissed as a mere ideal. Trusts and the implicit fiduciary relationships can be traced back to Middle Eastern origins, Roman and Germanic law. They are also inherent in the teachings of the world's religions and are prevalent in non-Western cultures.²⁵ In fundamental terms, trust relationship is also anchored in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 21(3) states that “the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government.”²⁶

At its most simplistic, the state's legitimacy to govern is based on its ability to serve the will of the people usually described as the common interest. Aristotle saw the purpose of the State as for the ‘common good’. John Locke also hinted at such a purpose. But of course who defines common good and what does it include? According to Locke's definition the ‘common good’ was what arose from there being surplus produce that could be sold in the marketplace.

Following Eyal Benvenisti, we can conceive of three normative arguments for state trusteeship. Firstly, sovereignty should be viewed as a vehicle for the exercise of personal and collective self-determination.²⁷ Collective self-determination embodies the freedom of a group to pursue its interests, further its political status, and “freely dispose of [its] natural wealth and resources”²⁸ or of course protect and preserve them. Secondly, sovereign states are agents of humanity as a whole²⁹ as all human beings are holders of rights not because states granted them, but because they are entitlements of free born, equal human beings. The legitimacy of a state ultimately depends on its ability to honour and respect human rights, hence the trusteeship function of the state with respect to humanity. Thirdly, the right to own natural resources (‘territorial sovereignty’) is intrinsically linked with the responsibility to protect them. Any disjuncture would jeopardize the sustained use by citizens, hence the need for state trusteeship of natural resources.

In essence, the legitimacy of the state of the 21st century utterly rests on its ability to function as a trustee of human rights and the natural environment.

5. A case study: Trusteeship for the Korean Demilitarized Zone?

An intriguing example of the usefulness of trusteeship of nature, at least potentially, is the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The DMZ has become one of the most well-preserved temperate habitats in the world due to the isolation and lack of interference that it has experienced over the past 70 years. As a result, it is now an area which is inhabited by more than 5,000 species, including several endangered plant and animal species.³⁰ In 2019, the Gyeonggi and Gangwon Province Governors, along with the Cultural Heritage Administrator of South Korea signed a memorandum of understanding concerning the joint registration of the DMZ as a world heritage site.³¹ Under this agreement, the Cultural Heritage Agency committed to seek negotiations with North Korea over a joint inscription plan in cooperation with the two regional governments.

25. Ibid. 378-379.

26. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* GA Res 217 A(III) (adopted 10 December 1948) (UDHR)

27. Benvenisti (n 19) 301.

28. *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* 999 UNTS 171 (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 23 March 1976), art 1 (ICCPR).

29. Benvenisti (n 19) 305.

30. Claire Harbage “In Korean DMZ, Wildlife Thrives. Some Conservationists Worry Peace Could Disrupt it.” (20 April 2019) National Public Radio www.npr.org

31. “Move to Jointly Register DMZ as World Heritage Site with N.Korea” (12 July 2019) Hankyoreh hankyoreh.com

Although the DMZ is not currently designated as an UNESCO Biosphere Reserve - the application having failed in 2012³² -, South Korean municipalities bordering the DMZ have been designated as UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in recognition of their biodiversity.³³ In light of these and other efforts to promote peace on the Korean peninsula, if an application for recognition as an UNESCO Biosphere Reserve would be made jointly by North and South Korea, it would send a strong signal to the world, that all people are united in their concern and responsibility for the Earth.

The importance of protecting the DMZ extends beyond keeping peaceful relations between North and South Korea. With North and South Korea as joint trustees of the DMZ, it would be demonstrated that self-interests of states can be limited for the greater good. More specifically, citizens in both countries would be more protected from animosities caused by power games.

The idea of the DMZ serving as a “peace park” between the North and the South has been emphasised through recent South Korean initiatives which expanded tours of the DMZ by developing new hiking trails, as well as consideration of a railway connection between North and South Korea. It is estimated that over 1 million people tour the DMZ every year.³⁴ Given the popularity of the DMZ as a tourist attraction, it is evident that not only is it an ecological asset to both North and South Korea, but it also provides resources such as research and education opportunities to global citizens. However, a balance needs to be struck between granting citizens access to these areas and protecting the environment with its rich biodiversity created by many years of isolation. Joint trusteeship governance would be most favourable in order to preserve and actively protect these resources, as it would recognise the value of the DMZ beyond being an asset to the adjacent states. As a dedicated Peace Park under joint trusteeship governance,

the DMZ would not only symbolize commitment to world peace, but also commitment to Earth trusteeship. North and South Korea would create something entirely new not only for the Korean people, but for all humanity in our need for a peaceful, sustainable future.

6. Steps towards institutionalizing Earth Trusteeship

Guidance for Earth Trusteeship exist in the form of two agreements created by global civil society, i.e. the *Earth Charter*³⁵ and the *Hague Principles*.³⁶ The Earth Charter, launched in 2000, provides for an ethical framework for global governance based on the three principles of a) respect and care for the community of life, b) ecological integrity and c) social and economic justice. On 10 December 2018, the 70th anniversary of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 80 indigenous, environmental and human rights organizations adopted the *Hague Principles for a Universal Declaration on Responsibilities for Human Rights and Earth Trusteeship* in the Peace Palace in The Hague. The three principles are a) responsibilities for the Earth, b) responsibilities for the community of life and c) responsibilities for human rights. The Hague Principles define trusteeship responsibilities that both people and states have for

32. Mok Jeong-min “UNESCO Denies Designation of DMZ as Biosphere Reserve” (13 July 2012) The Kynghyang Shinmun <khan.co.kr>

33. Ko Dong-hwan “South Korean Border now UNESCO Biosphere Reserves” (20 June 2019) The Korea Times <https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/>

34. Cristina Varriale “Balancing Peace and Conservation in the DMZ” (5 July 2019) The Diplomat www.thediplomat.com

35. <https://earthcharter.org/>

36. <https://www.earthtrusteeship.world/the-hague-principles-for-a-universal-declaration-on-human-responsibilities-and-earth-trusteeship/>

human rights and the Earth.

Ongoing efforts to adopt a *Global Pact for the Environment*³⁷ provide an opportunity to include these three principles and make them legally binding. The current draft text includes important references to ‘the Earth’s community of life’, ‘the balance and integrity of Earth’s ecosystem’ (Preamble) and the state’s duty to take care of ‘conservation, protection and restoration of the integrity of the Earth’s ecosystem’ (Article 2). These notions are reflective of Earth Charter principles, the Hague Principles and of an Earth system approach to international environmental law. However, the text needs further strengthening to fully accommodate the Earth system approach and associated Earth trusteeship responsibilities. The UN Summit of the Future³⁸ planned for September 2024 provides an opportunity for this.

The Summit needs to consider a “repurposed UN Trusteeship Council” as called for by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in his Report *Our Common Agenda*³⁹ (September 2021). A Trusteeship Council to benefit future generations and the Earth has already been proposed by former UN Secretary Generals, in particular Kofi Annan, and by several UN members states. The recently established High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, is set to deal with this matter in its report to the United Nations.⁴¹

Developments all around the world show trends towards Earth trusteeship governance. One example is New Zealand with its recognition of the Whanganui River as a legal person. To ensure health and integrity of the Whanganui ecosystem, appointed trustees are acting on behalf of the river.⁴² Another example is the recognition of rights of nature in the constitution of Ecuador requiring people and institutions to preserve and restore the integrity of ecological systems.⁴³ In the same vein, the German Network for Rights of Nature recently launched the initiative towards changing the constitution.⁴⁴ The call for implementing rights of

nature into the *Grundgesetz* (constitution) has found an enormous echo in the media and legal literature.⁴⁵ initiative has And the Economic and Social Committee of the European Union has received a comprehensive report towards a “EU Charter of the Fundamental Rights of Nature”.⁴⁶ All these and other initiatives signal a shift in the way how law and governance views nature.

Nature does not need humans, but humans need nature. Our survival depends on the integrity of the Earth’s ecological systems. This simple logic requires us to rethink human-nature relationships and act as trustees for local, regional and global ecosystems.

37. <https://globalpactenvironment.org/en/>

38. M.F. Espinosa and D.Turk, Making the Most of the 2023 UN Summit of the Future, *PassBlue 20 April 2022*, <https://www.passblue.com/2022/04/20/making-the-most-of-the-2023-un-summit-of-the-future/>

39. <https://www.un.org/en/un75/common-agenda>

40. <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2022-03-18/note-correspondents-secretary-general%E2%80%99s-high-level-advisory-board-effective-multilateralism-comprises-12-eminent-current-or-former-global-leaders-officials>

41. See K. Bosselmann, “Integrating Earth into Global Governance”, Recommendations to the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, November 2022, <https://highleveladvisoryboard.org/download/integrating-earth-into-global-governance/>

42. K.Bosselmann and Williams, T., “The River as a Legal Person: The Case of the Whanganui River in New Zealand, in: S. A. Ribeiro and V. L. Catalao (eds.), *Water, Sharing and Peace Culture*, International Center on Water and Transdisciplinarity, Brasilia, 169-178.

43. S. Knauß, “Pachamama als Ökosystemintegrität”, *Zeitschrift für praktische Philosophie*, 2020, Vol. 7.2, 221-244 <https://www.praktische-philosophie.org/zfpp/article/view/222/214>

44. https://www.rechtenatur.de/files/opensauce/pdf/Netzwerk%20Rechte%20der%20Natur%20_%20Grundgesetzreform%2022%20April%202022_.pdf

45. Google search for “Rechte der Natur” shows 62 million references (as per 20 Nov 2022).

46. <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/publications-other-work/publications/towards-eu-charter-fundamental-rights-nature>

The Jeju April 3 Incident and United States Imperialism

Abstract

The Jeju April 3 Incident and US Imperialism

The Jeju April 3 Incident should be situated in the long history of US imperialist expansion into the Pacific and Asia, a history that began, in part, with the Wilkes Naval Expedition in 1838, intensified during the 1890s as the US colonized the Philippines, Hawai'i, the Philippines, and Sāmoa, and that exploded during the Cold War when the US conducted 67 nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands. The Truman Doctrine and Cold War strategy of containment were used to justify both the Korean War and the invasion of Southeast Asia – Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos – the latter an act of imperialist aggression that led Martin Luther King Jr. to declare that “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today: my own government.” The path to greatness began on Jeju Island at the dawn of the Cold War.

Ever since the publication of Richard Drinnon's groundbreaking work in American Studies, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (1980), American Studies scholars have been approaching the intersection of culture and imperialism through the formation of an American empire in the Pacific. And yet the April 3 Incident is absent from transnational, postcolonial American Studies. As the 75th anniversary of the Jeju uprising and massacre approaches, scholars, artists, activists, students, community leaders, religious groups, and peace-loving citizens around the world should come together to learn about and discuss this ongoing history and reflect on how it relates to their own local struggles for peace and justice. Increased international awareness about the April 3 Incident will hopefully condense into a broad movement calling for the United States to apologize to the people of Jeju Island for its role in the bloodshed that devastated the island at the inception of the Cold War.

As the 75th Anniversary of the April 3 Incident approaches, it's time for the United States Government to apologize to the people of Jeju Island.

On April 3, 1948, a violent uprising rocked Jeju Island. The uprising aimed to disrupt the May 10 national election because the insurgents believed, as did many Jeju people, that separate elections would lead to the permanent division of the Korean Peninsula. The national election went according to schedule all over

the county, everywhere except Jeju Island, and separate national governments were established: the Republic of Korea (ROK) in the south, and the Democratic

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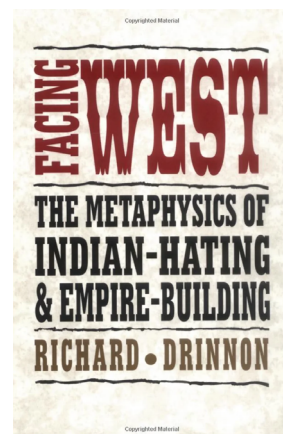
People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the north. As the Cold War intensified, so did hostilities between the newly created states, and the Korean people continue to be divided by the most heavily militarized border in the world, a border that might soon be reinforced in the south by a domestic nuclear weapons program.

The success of the uprising in initially stopping the election on Jeju triggered a horrifically violent crackdown by the Korean military, police, and right-wing paramilitary groups such as the Northwest Youth League. Over the course of seven years, from 1947 to 1954, between 25,000 and 30,000 Jeju people were killed (1/10th of the population); one-third of the victims were elderly, women, or children; 95% of mountain villages were burned during scorched earth campaigns; between 80,000 and 90,000 people living in mountain villages were forcibly relocated; 3,994 people were disappeared.² The indiscriminate counterinsurgency campaign was overseen by the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK), which took control of the southern half of the peninsula immediately after World War II, ending thirty-five years of Japanese colonial rule in Korea. The US military government arrived on Jeju on November 9, 1945, and relations with the islanders were relatively peaceful at first, but quickly deteriorated. For many Jeju people, life under the Americans was much worse than under the Japanese.

The "Jeju April 3 Incident," as this event has come to be known, or more starkly as "4.3," should be situated in the long history of US imperialist expansion into the Pacific and Asia, a history that began, in part, with the Wilkes Naval Expedition in 1838,³ intensified during the 1890s as the US colonized the Philippines, Hawai'i, the Philippines, and Sāmoa, and that exploded during the Cold War when the US conducted 67 nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands. The Truman Doctrine and Cold War strategy of containment were used to justify

both the Korean War and the invasion of Southeast Asia – Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos – the latter an act of imperialist aggression that led Martin Luther King Jr. to declare that "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today: my own government."⁴ The path to greatness began on Jeju Island.

I began studying the histories of US imperialism twenty-five years ago. In *The Imperialist Imaginary: Visions of Asia and the Pacific in American Culture* (2005), I argue that imperialism designates the multiple, interconnected forms of overseas expansion – political, economic, cultural, military – that have made the United States into a global empire. Ever since the publication of Richard Drinnon's groundbreaking work in American Studies, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (1980), American Studies scholars have been exploring the intersection of culture and imperialism, and working to understand how massacres and atrocities committed by the US military in the past continue to haunt the present. The Jeju April 3 Incident has been a major blind spot in this scholarship.



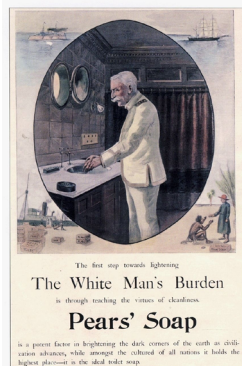
2. These numbers are from the 4.3 Exhibition at the Jeju 4.3 Peace Park.
3. See Eperjesi, "Basing the Pacific: Exceptional Spaces of the Wilkes Expedition, 1838-842," *Amerasia Journal* 37:3 (2011).
4. Martin Luther King Jr., "Beyond Vietnam" (1967).

If the past is any indication, I believe that if Americans heard the story of the April 3 Incident, and the stories of ordinary villagers, they would express outrage at the conduct of the USAMGIK and compassion for the people of Jeju. The more I learn about 4·3, the clearer it becomes that the United States needs to acknowledge and apologize for its role in the bloodshed that terrorized the people of Jeju Island at the dawn of the Cold War. A local social movement composed of bereaved families and civic groups on Jeju and around South Korea has been demanding an apology from the US for a long time now, and as the 75th anniversary of the uprising and massacre approaches, hopefully more Americans, and people around the world, can learn about and consider joining this movement.

The Emergence of Imperialism in American Studies

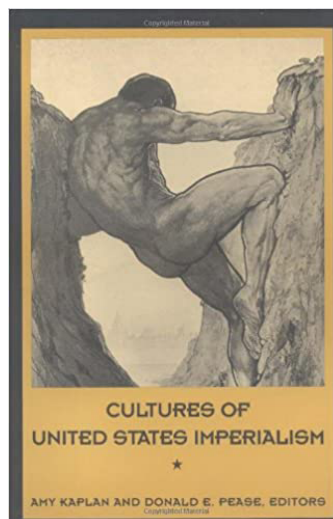
When I was starting out in graduate school in the early 1990s, the text in one of my seminars included an advertisement for Pear's Soap which appeared in *Harper's Weekly* in 1899. The ad copy reads:

The step towards lightening The White Man's Burden is through teaching the virtues of cleanliness.



Like most people, I found this advertisement shockingly racist, but I had no idea who the uniformed white man washing his hands was, or which “dark corner of the earth” needed brightening. The white man with a burden, I learned, was Admiral George Dewey, who led the US Navy in the Spanish-American War, a war that helped liberate Cubans and Filipinos from a corrupt and oppressive Spanish Empire, but which quickly turned into a Philippine-American War. I remember thinking at the time, “Philippine-American what?” I had never heard about a war between the United States and the Philippines. My interest in the history of US imperialism began at this moment, with a desire to learn more about this forgotten war.

This interest was supported and encouraged by a transnational turn in American Studies and the emergence of postcolonial, “New Americanist” scholarship that began in the 1990s and was constructed through anthologies such as the monumental *Cultures of United States Imperialism*.⁵



5. *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, eds. Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease (Duke UP, 1993).
6. See Beverly Gage, *The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in Its First Age of Terror* (Oxford UP, 2010).

Postcolonial American Studies worked to disrupt the spatial antinomies – inside/outside, domestic/foreign, center/periphery – that have historically sustained hegemonic narratives of the US nation state. The inside of the nation, New Americanist scholars argued, was constituted through its entanglements with the outside. Global-localism, decentered cosmopolitanism, the borderlands, and the transnational were an emergent set of geopolitical descriptors through which New Americanist scholars began to grasp one of the more embattled terms in American political and economic rhetoric: imperialism.

The word imperialism first entered public discourse in the 1890s in the context of US expansion into the Pacific and Asia. During the long 1890s, the United States seized colonies in the Pacific as business and political leaders struggled to find a way out of the post-bellum economic crises that were repeatedly shocking American society, crises which were increasingly taking the form of open class warfare. Between 1881 and 1905 there were more than 37,000 labor strikes in the United States.⁶ The idea that new foreign markets would solve the crisis of domestic overproduction and thus end class warfare became the hegemonic framework within which economic questions were discussed and debated. In order to find a solution to overproduction, the United States, making a series of exceptions to its founding anti-empire rhetoric, colonized Guam, Hawai'i, the Philippines, and Sāmoa, creating a line of “stepping stones” that would secure commercial circulation, keep a rising Japanese empire in check, and provide access to the mythical China market.

During my research, I was surprised to learn that the word imperialism did not always have negative connotations, as it does now. Many political and business leaders at the time argued that the new American imperialism was an improvement over the old European colonialism. For example, Charles Conant, a banking and monetary advisor to the McKinley and Roosevelt administrations, argued that imperialism simply meant “that

the United States shall assert their right to free markets in all the old countries which are being opened to the surplus resources of the capitalistic countries and thereby given the benefits of modern civilization.”⁷

Debates over the meaning and ethics of imperialism intensified in the context of the Philippine-American War. Emilio Aguinaldo led Philippine forces against the Spanish during the Philippine Revolution (1896-1897), and was led to believe that the United States was coming to fight for Philippine independence. On July 12, 1898, the Philippine Declaration of Independence was proclaimed by Aguinaldo. The US refused to recognize the independent republic and proceeded to take over where Spain left off by launching a devastating counter-revolutionary war against a people who had suffered under and struggled against a violently corrupt Spanish Empire for three hundred years. The war officially ended in 1902, but fighting continued until 1912. After three hundred years of Spanish colonialism, liberation should have been a time of joy and celebration for Filipinos, just as liberation from Japan should have been a time of celebration for Jeju Islanders, but instead there were massacres, scorched earth, water torture, and concentration camps that turned the Philippines into an archipelago of suffering and death. An estimated 200,000 Filipinos died from violence, famine, and disease, though some scholars put the number over one million.⁸

Despite efforts to block the flow of information coming from the Philippines, atrocities committed by the US military were well-documented, thanks in part to soldiers' letters home, which were occasionally published in hometown newspapers. An editorial cartoon criticizing the

7. See Charles Conant, “The Economic Basis of Imperialism,” *North American Review* (September 1898).

8. See Luis H. Francia, *A History of the Philippines: From Indios Bravos to Filipinos* (Overlook Press, 2014).

use of the “water cure” on Filipinos appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine in 1902. Apparently, the new American imperialism was not that different from the old European colonialism after all. Many Americans were shocked by such images, and a broad coalition of public figures came together to form the Anti-Imperialist League. A founding member and vice president of the Anti-Imperialist League was Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens), author of the Great American Novel, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885).⁹

Mark Twain was furious about the violence that was terrorizing innocent people in the name of civilization. No amount of Pear’s Soap could erase the stain of this dirty war in the Philippines. Twain was sickened by the Moro Crater Massacre (First Battle of Bud Dajo), a counterinsurgency campaign in which the United States Army attacked Muslim rebels and villagers who were living in the crater of a dormant volcano, many of whom were women and children. Twain, writing with a pen drenched in sarcasm, wrote:

The enemy numbered six hundred -- including women and children -- and we abolished them utterly, leaving not even a baby alive to cry for its dead mother. *This is incomparably the greatest victory that was ever achieved by the Christian soldiers of the United States.*¹⁰



After seeing the headline, “Death List Now 900,” Twain sardonically declared, “I was never so enthusiastically

proud of the flag till now!” I can only imagine what Twain would have written if he saw the daily report of the Korean Constabulary’s 9th Regiment, 2nd Battalion, for December 20, 1948:

Near Goak: 12 killed. Items captured: 1 raincoat.¹¹

By the middle of the twentieth century, in the rhetorical heat of the Cold War, imperialism became a political curse word that the US and Soviet Union hurled at each other, and the decolonizing Third World directed at the First World. Anxiety about the charge of imperialism had a direct impact on the Jeju April 3 Incident. As Ho-joon Heo demonstrates in his remarkable book *American Involvement in the Jeju April 3 Incident*:

To ensure a successful election on May 10, USAMGIK had to quickly suppress the disturbance on Jeju. But directions were issued twice to Mansfield, the military governor on Jeju, stressing that US forces should not intervene. If the US military were to become directly involved in combat, that might escalate the uprising into an international issue and draw condemnation from the public; accordingly, they were instructed not to be present at the scene of combat activities.

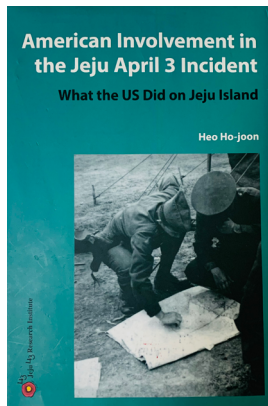
Heo points out that US intervention in Jeju, as in the Greek Civil War, was carefully orchestrated so as not to be denounced for “imperialism.”

9. On the complicated politics of the Anti-Imperialist League, and the history of anti-imperialism in the US, see Richard Seymour, *American Insurgents: A Brief History of American Anti-Imperialism* (Haymarket Books, 2012).

10. Mark Twain, “Comments on the Moro Massacre” (1906).

11. Ho-joon Heo. *American Involvement in the Jeju April 3 Incident: What the US Did on Jeju Island* (Jeju 4.3 Research Institute, 2021).

On orders from Hodge, US troops did not appear at the scene of activities. Instead, they played an “invisible hand” role in organizing all operational plans and implementing them by means of the Constabulary.



Unlike previous massacres in the history of U.S. imperialism—Wounded Knee (1890), the Moro Massacre (1906), No Gun Ri (1950), My Lai (1968), the Haditha Massacre (2005)—the “invisible hand” of US troops did not pull the trigger in Jeju, but it did put powerful Garand rifles into Korean hands, did fly spotter planes to flush guerrillas out of hiding places on Mt. Halla, did provide a naval blockade of the island so that news of the massacre could not reach mainland Korea or global news circuits, and did shell the coastline which created further panic and drove people back into the mountains. As Su-kyoung Hwang points out, “Just how much they were involved in the active violence in Cheju [Jeju] has not been fully disclosed, since the American presence was mostly on the fringes of the violence as policy advisers, providers of resources, and detached overseers.”¹²

This “invisible hand” and the conflicts over the May 10 election need to be situated in the context of a new foreign policy regime that began to emerge in Washington in the mid 1940s. In June of 1947, a plan to help rebuild Western Europe after the destruction of World War II was announced. The Marshall Plan, named after U.S.

Secretary of State George Marshall and passed in 1948, ultimately provided \$12 billion in assistance to war-torn countries across the Atlantic and had a direct impact on US policy toward Korea. With massive resources being directed toward Europe, it was becoming too expensive to stay in Korea, and as grassroots resistance to the military occupation intensified in the form of the October Uprising of 1946, the United States needed to find a way to exit the country “quickly and gracefully,” as John Merrill put it.¹³

That exit strategy was composed in part with another major foreign policy initiative that appeared in June of 1947, the Truman Doctrine, which in the long run has meant that the goal of U.S. global foreign policy was to provide “assistance to anticommunist regimes throughout the world, no matter how undemocratic, and for the creation of a set of global military alliances directed against the Soviet Union.”¹⁴ The strategy of containment evolved out of the Truman Doctrine and led the U.S. to sponsor separate elections in South Korea through which the anti-communist Syngman Rhee would enable the US to exit the country quickly, but not very gracefully, knowing that US interests in the region would be secure. Opposition to the election, to Syngman Rhee, and to the USAMGIK took the form of a violent uprising that seized the island on April 3, 1948. The indiscriminate counterinsurgency campaign that followed was, as Hwang puts it, “last incident of mass violence under USMGIK and first under the South Korean government.”¹⁵

12. Su-kyoung Hwang, *Korea's Grievous War* (U of Penn Press, 2016).

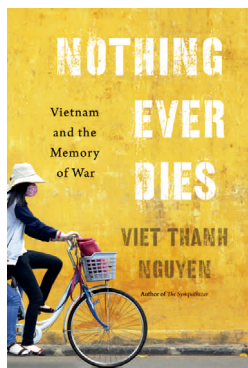
13. John R. Merrill, “The Cheju-do Rebellion,” *Journal of Korean Studies* 2 (1980).

14. Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History* (W. W. Norton, 2008).

15. Hwang, *Korea's Grievous War*.

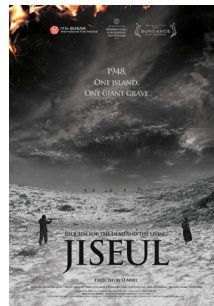
The Battlefield of Memory

“All wars are fought twice,” the Pulitzer-prize winning author Viet Thanh Nguyen writes, “the first time on the battlefield, the second time in memory.”¹⁶ The survivor testimonies included in *The Jeju April 3 Incident Through Women’s Eyes* are an important contribution to the battle over memory. In 1948, Chun-ho Hong was ten years old and living in a bucolic mid-mountain village named Mudeungiwat with her parents, three younger brothers, and a cousin. Before the police burned her village, she remembers playing with her friends:



We kids had a great time playing. We met up to play jacks and the saegaksi [newlybride game], and in spring we played *ppingichigi*, as well as *baetteullak*, hopscotch and the horse-riding game. In the old days there were no proper jacks, so we made them by cutting stones or grinding pieces of old pots or mud into round shape.¹⁷

On November 19, 1948, Grandmother Hong’s childhood ended abruptly when “police swooped in and began killing people for no reason at all... The next day, we went in hiding.” The family hid at first in the bushes around the village, and then in a series of caves.¹⁸ They spent fifty days hiding in Keonneolgwé Cave along with other villagers, which became the basis for *Jiseul* (2013), a film directed by Jeju native O Muel.



Around 20 Mudeungiwat villagers were massacred after hiding in Keunneolgwé Cave. Grandmother Hong and her parents survived, but the harsh experience of being on the run and living in caves around Mt. Halla killed her three younger brothers. Grandmother Hong remembers her mother’s grief-stricken words, “If only I could’ve given them a mouthful of millet water.”

The symbol of the April 3 Incident is the camellia, which originated from Kang Yo-bae’s 1991 exhibition entitled “The Camellia has Fallen,” in which the petals represent the souls of the victims of 4·3 who were lost without a sound to the cold, snow-covered ground. The petals of Suk-ja Kang’s family were lost to the violence that ravaged the island, victims of the Truman Doctrine and the strategy of containment. In *The April 3 Incident Through Women’s Eyes*, Grandmother Kang tells readers that:

Just thinking about the Jeju April 3 Incident makes my blood boil. My immediate family members died in the incident. My cousin died in all her beauty. I’m just furious. How could innocent people be killed like that? It’s disgusting.

16. Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and Memory of War* (Harvard UP, 2016).

17. *The Jeju April 3 Incident Through Women’s Eyes: Jeju Women Tell Their Story* (Jeju 4.3 Research Institute, 2021).

18. On the importance of caves in relation to 4.3, see Eperjesi, “Caves as Storied Matter: The Jeju April 3 Events and US Imperialism,” *Journal of American Studies-Korea* 51:2 (2019).

There is a long history of anti-imperialism in the United States, a history that connects Mark Twain and the Anti-Imperialist League to the antiwar movement of the 1960s to Code Pink and Women Cross DMZ in the present.¹⁹ And there is a vast archive of American Studies scholarship on the atrocities committed by the United States military as it expanded across the North American continent, across the Pacific, and into Asia. And yet the April 3 Incident is absent from nearly all histories of the Cold War, both academic and popular – there is no mention of Jeju in the Wikipedia entry for Cold War – and absent from transnational American Studies. If 4·3 does appear, it is usually in the form of a brief preface to the Korean War. American Studies scholars, and the American public, need to hear the stories included in *The Jeju April 3 Incident Through Women's Eyes*. Encountering these testimonies radically transformed my emotional understanding of 4·3, an experience that confirmed Margot Norris's argument that "Reading testimony can therefore alter us, inhabit us, haunt us, augment us more profoundly than other acts of reading."²⁰

As the 75th anniversary of the Jeju uprising and massacre approaches, scholars, artists, activists, students, community leaders, religious groups, and peace-loving citizens around the world should come together to learn about and discuss this ongoing history and reflect on how it relates to their own local struggles for peace and justice. Increased international awareness about the April 3 Incident will hopefully condense into a broad movement calling for the United States to apologize to the people of Jeju Island for its role in the bloodshed that devastated the island at the dawn of the Cold War. The United States needs to acknowledge and respond to Grandmother Kang's simple question, "How could so many innocent people be killed like that?"



19. See: <https://www.womencrossdmz.org/>

20. Margot Norris, *Writing War in the Twentieth Century* (UP of Virginia, 2000).

