

Ordo socialis

Christlich - Sozial - Weltweit



Endangered Freedom: Political-
ethical thoughts of young Koreans on
the Korean conflict



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Introduction: Christian ethics in a fragile world and the future of young Koreans

Yeong Seo Lee / Lars Schäfers

The world is full of multipolar trouble spots. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has been preoccupying international politics and diplomacy for almost three years now. It is more than painful to have to stand idly by and watch as the Ukrainian people's existence is threatened and they have been suffering immeasurably for so long. However, if NATO were to intervene directly in the conflict, the worst consequence would be the threatened nuclear expansion of the conflict.

Last year saw the Israeli attack on Gaza in response to the horrific massacre of Israelis by Hamas on October 7, 2023. Following this largest massacre of Jews since the Shoah, Israel's military objective is to destroy Hamas and its organizational structures as far as possible in order to defend the security of its citizens and Israel's right to exist in the fragile region and guarantee it for the future. However, the nature of Israel's warfare is also being increasingly criticized in terms of proportionality and the number of civilian casualties, and the international expansion of the Gaza war is an acute danger.

As if this were not bad enough in addition to many other sources of conflict around the world, there is a constant threat of a new war of aggression in Taiwan: according to the ideology of the Communist Party of the People's Republic of China, Taiwan is part of its own territory and is therefore not recognized internationally as a sovereign state by most countries. Since the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, there has been growing concern that China could also invade Taiwan. Chinese military maneuvers in the vicinity of the island state, which is geostrategically important not least for China, fuel this fear again and again at irregular intervals.

Not far away, two states have been formally at war for over 70 years now: we are talking about North and South Korea. The political situation between South Korea and its nuclear-armed neighbor is currently extremely tense: Several worrying developments on and off the Korean peninsula have contributed to a significant deterioration in inter-Korean relations. The likelihood of open conflict has increased since then: "Perhaps the least noticed move in recent months is Kim Jong Un's decision to abandon the long-held goal of reunification with South Korea. In doing so, North Korea designated the South as its main enemy and abolished the bureaucratic institutions responsible for reconciliation with Seoul."^[1] To make this break visible, Kim also had the reunification monument in Pyongyang torn down. If it came to a direct war, however, this would be unwinnable for North Korea and would mean the end of the dictatorial regime. However, this does not stop Kim Jong-un from his current intensified sabre-rattling. According to him, it has become impossible to strive for reconciliation and peaceful reunification with the South.

All these and many other global trouble spots in today's highly fragile world pose serious challenges to Christian social and peace ethics, which *Ordo socialis* is committed to communicating. In his latest social and peace encyclical "Fratelli tutti" from October 2020, Pope Francis describes "genuine human encounter" and dialog as the "craft of peace". At the same time, however, the Pope is aware of today's global conflicts as a "world war in pieces" (no. 259). Christian peace ethics must therefore not be a naïve radical pacifism that gives free rein to wars and violence. Those who suffer injustice must sometimes also fight for justice in the sense of self-defense. Pope Francis also knows that true reconciliation must not avoid conflict, but is sometimes only achieved in conflict (No. 244). The necessity of defense justifies the existence of armed forces for the service of peace, because attacked states have the right and the duty to defend themselves by force of arms



as a last resort. However, according to Christian peace ethics, reconciliation must always be the goal, not only between people, but also between groups, societies and states. This requires an ethic of international politics which is guided by the goal of peace and reconciliation, but which is also aware of the diverse conditions, complex interrelationships and difficulties in political and diplomatic practice.[2] Political wisdom is therefore a fundamental requirement in this area.

A future in peace and reconciliation - this wish must not be given up in a Christian spirit, even for the inter-Korean conflict - especially not with regard to the young people who still have their future largely ahead of them.

Today, the conflict in South Korea can be seen 'anytime' in Seoul's 'Gwanghwamun' Square or in front of the Korean War-memorial Organization in Yongsan city. Conservative and liberal groups take each side of street and curse each other. There is no rational debate. The street in front of the beautiful Gyeongbokgung Palace is clearly divided into two sides. The same goes for the entrance of the Korean War-memorial Organization. This unfortunate conflict seems to encapsulate Korea's modern history.

After the division of Korea, South Koreans were taught 'Growth values' based on anti-communism ideals during the military regime. The continuing political confrontation and economic hardship left a mental imbalance in South Korea. This influence was passed on to the next generation public education, and strong anti-communism ideology was constantly reproduced to perpetuate the North-South divide. This process may have been a necessary part of history, unfortunately, the powerful anti-communism ideologies set clear limits for people to this day: When people think about 'North Korea', it is either 'left' or 'right'. But what is needed is solving problems and moving forward. It is not about placing the blame on one side. From a perspective of peace, the problem with North Korea is essentially a Korean problem. On a macro level, it's a problem for all East Asia, and it's a problem for the world.

Since the division in the 1980s, Koreans have been dreaming of reunification and striving for it. Also, the Catholic Church has been part of that process. But now people seem to be much different than in the past. What is the difference between past and today? How do people think, who were born in the divided country? What are the political views of those born under the US nuclear umbrella? As North Korea prepares their next leader, it is proper and important time to hear from the young people who hold the future in their hands.

The following collection of interviews provides examples of what young people in South Korea think about the conflict with North Korea and the impact it has had on their lives, their everyday lives and their political thinking. This interview project as part of the Ordo socialis Dialogue follows on from the collection of essays by young Koreans in the OS Working Paper from June 2023.[3] We would like to thank the interview participants for their contribution.

[1] Eric J. Ballbach, On the brink: Why the conflict between North and South Korea could escalate, at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/am-abgrund-warum-der-konflikt-zwischen-nord-und-suedkorea-eskalieren-koennte> (accessed on 04.08.2024).

[2] Cf. Bernard Sutor, Katholische Soziallehre als politische Ethik. Achievements and Deficits, Paderborn 2013, 221ff.

[3] Lee Yeong Seo et al: Social Ethics in Korea: Social Challenges from the Perspective of Young People (OS Working Paper No. 6), at: https://ordosocialis.de/wp-content/uploads/Social-Ethics-in-Korea_Social-Challenges-from-the-Perspective-of-Young-People_OS-Working-Paper-No.-6-1.pdf (accessed on 04.08.2024).



**1. Interview: A German political NGO:
“To prevent North Korea from further isolating themselves, it is crucial
to develop a coherent and unified policy towards North Korea.”**

Our interview partner works for a German political NGO. At their request, we are keeping her name anonymous.

Question 1

The primary goal of the international community’s policy towards North Korea is denuclearization. Besides this, there are various policy areas such as humanitarian aid, human rights improvement, and economic cooperation. Specifically, discussions can focus on improving the quality of life for North Korean residents, ensuring regional stability, or adhering to global human rights standards. Which policy area do you think is necessary? Why do you consider this area important.

Answer:

I believe that all policy areas are equally important when dealing with North Korea. It is crucial to focus on improving various aspects simultaneously, such as humanitarian aid and economic cooperation. One area cannot significantly improve without the others also improving.

However, it might be more practical to prioritize areas that are not politically sensitive. It is challenging to address human rights issues directly with North Korea because of the political implications. Therefore, focusing on less politically charged areas, such as environmental cooperation, could be a more effective strategy.

This approach can establish a foundation for dialogue and build trust, which can eventually lead to discussions on more sensitive topics. Among those important agendas, I find that focusing on environmental cooperation can open a space for broader discussions. For example, we can deal about how to prevent global warming in there. Because there’s not much talking about how to deal it in North Korea or so.

While human rights are critically important, addressing them directly with North Korea is unlikely to yield immediate results. It is essential first to find a common ground in less controversial areas to pave the way for more challenging conversations in the future.

Question 2

Recently, North Korea has launched garbage balloons towards South Korea, increasing tensions. Do you think this situation could potentially impact Europe’s security, economy, and diplomatic relations?

Answer:

While the situation has been reported in the news, but it is important to acknowledge that North Korea does not significantly impact Europe. Europe generally do not prioritize North Korea on



their agendas, as because of geographical distant. They does not directly affect Europe. More urgent issues, such as relations with China, take precedence.

North Korea's actions may have an indirect impact on Europe through its relationship with South Korea. If South Korea signals increased tensions with North Korea, this could influence Europe's diplomatic and economic partnerships with South Korea. However, on a direct level, North Korea's influence on Europe is very low.

European citizens might find the situation interesting or even humorous, given the unusual event of a country sending garbage balloons. However, it does not hold substantial meaning or urgency for them. Currently, there are no European diplomats in North Korea as they left at the beginning of the COVID – 19 pandemic. Although North Korean diplomats remain in Europe, they do not play a significant role.

I would say the European Union cares more about China rather than North Korea. In various aspects, especially economically, China holds significant importance. Many European companies have production facilities in China, making it a crucial partner in terms of economic production. Additionally, issues related to values such as privacy and data protection are also significant when considering China.

As China grows more powerful, it presents a counterbalance to Western values with its own Chinese values. This geopolitical dynamic makes China very present and relevant in European discussions and policies. Thus, China's influence is felt strongly across multiple dimensions in Europe today, far more than that of North Korea.

In summary, while Europe should ideally engage more with North Korea, the reality is that most European countries do not see it as an urgent issue. They focus more on internal matters within the European Union and on major global players. Historically, Europe has not been significantly involved in conflicts with North Korea. However some Eastern European countries, including East Germany, have had good relations with North Korea in the past. But the European Union does not appear willing to assert substantial influence in this area.

Question 3

North Korea has shown significant distrust towards the US and South Korean governments, which continues to this day. What do you think are the reasons behind North Korea's general attitude?

Answer:

This is a very complex problem. The distrust that North Korea shows towards the US and South Korean governments has built up over time due to historical events. The Korean War significantly contributed to this sentiment, as North Korea initially had the upper hand until the US intervention at Inchon. This intervention left a lasting impact, fostering a natural sense of animosity. North Korea often feels provoked by US-South Korea military exercises in the region, which exacerbates their sense of threat.

'Sanctions' also play a significant role in build distrust. Although these sanctions are justified due to North Korea's stealthy development of nuclear weapons, they contribute to North Korea's narrative of needing to defend itself against aggression.



North Korea's propaganda portrays itself as a small, threatened nation facing aggressive US and South Korean forces, necessitating nuclear weapons for defense. The recent war in Ukraine likely reinforced this narrative, showing North Korea the perceived need for nuclear arms to avoid Ukraine's fate.

Rebuilding trust with the international community is challenging because North Korea seems to have little interest in such efforts. Recently North Korea further isolated themselves by refusing external assistance, indicating that showing integration and trust-building are not their priorities.

Question 4

What could the international community do to build trust with North Korea to prevent it from further isolating itself?

Answer:

To prevent North Korea from further isolating itself, it is crucial to develop a coherent and unified policy towards North Korea. Currently, each country has its own agenda or lacks one entirely. A coordinated strategy is essential for meaningful engagement and cooperation with North Korea.

The first step should be to find ways to communicate with North Korea and include them in international discussions without immediately bringing up sensitive topics like human rights, which could cause them to disengage. Ensuring North Korea feels integrated in non-controversial areas is a practical approach to foster dialogue and cooperation. For example, approaching with something North Korea is very interested in. We need to catch what they are giving signals to international communities.

Question 5

With the increasing influence of China and Russia on North Korea, what approach do you think international policy should take to address this situation?

Answer:

From my perspective, In the triangular relationship between China, Russia, and North Korea, China appears to be the weak link due to its limited interest in North Korea. While North Korea's growing ties with Russia are concerning, China can wary of this intensified cooperation. This triangular relationship with Russia and North Korea could make the US, Japan, and South Korea to intensify their cooperation, which will not what favor to China particularly because of the situation with Taiwan. Additionally, China is not too fond of North Korea's nuclear weapons. There can be a potential conflict between the two nations.

China has many Western economic partners, with the European Union being one of its largest. Therefore, China likely has little interest in sacrificing these significant economic ties for the sake of North Korea.

Given this context, one effective international policy approach could be to engage more with China. Strengthening cooperation and dialogue with China could be a strategic move to address this increasing influence situation.



Question 6

It seems North Korea rejects external assistance while continuing military provocations. What approach do you think the international community should take to maintain cooperation with North Korea?

Answer:

North Korea does not entirely reject external assistance. There used to be around six or seven NGOs, including the Red Cross and UN representatives, working in North Korea on human rights and agricultural assistance. North Korea accepts aid if it benefits them, such as machinery, money, or agricultural assistance, but they do not want it to be too prominent or official, as it might make them appear weak or highlight their human rights violations.

Currently, it is a significant question within the expert community that uncertain whether NGOs will return to North Korea after leaving due to COVID-19. For the international community, it would be beneficial to advocate for the return of these organizations to North Korea. Promoting the return of NGOs could help maintain cooperation with North Korea by providing essential support to its population.

What crucial is to find certain topics that North Korea is willing to cooperate and then also cooperating with them. For example, North Korea recently participated at a UN meeting in Kenya for environmental cooperation on Feb. 2024. We can relate this news to the situation in North Korea and think about what we need to do. In this case, we can notice that for the North Korean population especially those living outside Pyongyang, to give assistance in improving agriculture and obtaining necessary resources such as machinery and fertilizer can function as cooperation.

As I mentioned earlier, I believe that developing a clear strategy for engaging with North Korea would be beneficial. Currently, there seems to be a lack of a unified strategy from the international community, which is a broad term. However, breaking it down into specific entities such as the European Union or the United States and their partners could be more effective.

Question 7

If you have any additional thoughts or comments regarding North Korea policy, please feel free to share.

Answer:

The European Union (EU) is often perceived as a peacemaker and mediator, an image it actively promotes. Given its somewhat neutral stance and historical role, it would be logical for the EU to adopt a similar approach with North Korea. Despite being partners with the United States, the EU maintains some 'diplomatic' relations with North Korea.

While some may argue that the EU lacks significant geopolitical interests in North Korea, its interests in South Korea are undeniable. Although it may not be the top concern, addressing the North Korean issue could positively impact its relationship with South Korea. Furthermore, this aligns with the EU's narrative of being a mediator. The EU's own history, such as the reconciliation between Germany and France, serves as an example of how former adversaries can work together. Applying this spirit to their dealings with North Korea could be highly beneficial.



2. Interview: Jung, Seok-hun, Department of Political Science and Diplomacy, Hanyang University: “Just as a fish is unaware of the water around it, Koreans often forget how close Seoul is to the Demilitarized Zone.”

Question 1

South Korea's policies toward North Korea include defense policies to ensure national security, inter-Korean exchange policies for mutual cooperation between the south and north such as economic, communication, and cooperative program. And there are various other policies being carried out. Which of these policies are you most interested in?

Please explain why you are interested in and share your personal opinion.

Answer:

Policies concerning military responses interests me the most. Just as a fish is unaware of the water around it, Koreans often forget how close Seoul is to the Demilitarized Zone.

South Korea's current grand strategy against North Korea's nuclear threat relies on the U.S. Nuclear umbrella¹ and strategic concepts like 'Kill Chain²'. Recently, President Yoon and U.S. President Joe Biden adopted a joint statement on the 'U.S.-ROK Alliance Nuclear Operations Guidelines' to strengthen the nuclear umbrella capabilities in July 2024.

However, we should consider seriously about the Nuclear Umbrella, whether the U.S. would really sacrifice Washington for Seoul. This does not that mean we should develop our own nuclear weapons. Rather, by facing reality, we can have a proper discussion.

Robert Kagan, author of 《The Jungle Grows Back》, reminds us of the dialogue³ between Henry Kissinger(1923~2023)⁴ and Zhou Enlai(1893~1976)⁵. It is said that Kissinger told Zhou,

¹ Nuclear umbrella is the concept of a non-nuclear nation relying on the nuclear capabilities of a nuclear-armed nation for its national security. It often metaphorically described as being under a "nuclear umbrella."

² The Kill Chain is a U.S.-ROK combined preemptive strike system that South Korea plans to establish by 2023, alongside the Korea Air and Missile Defense (KAMD), to counter North Korea's nuclear threat. The concept involves striking targets within 30 minutes. KAMD is a missile defense system designed to intercept enemy ballistic missiles or aircraft (fighters, bombers) at low altitudes of 10 to 30 km. To build the Kill Chain, South Korea has secured five military reconnaissance satellites and introduced four Global Hawks. Additionally, South Korea is developing the Hyunmoo-2C ground-to-ground ballistic missile with an 800 km range, purchasing the U.S. Patriot PAC-3, and pursuing domestic development of the M-SAM and L-SAM systems.

³ This dialog took place from July 9 to July 11, 1971, between U.S. National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger and Zhou Enlai, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. The U.S. and China had been at enmity since the Korean War, but the meeting set the tone for soften in relations that would lead to the establishment of the U.S.-China Bridge in 1979.

⁴ German-born American political scientist and nuclear strategy expert. He naturalized in the United States in 1943, graduated from Harvard University, and served as a professor at Harvard University. In 1971, he launched the "Kissinger Diplomacy" and secretly visited China, and led the summit between U.S. President Richard Nixon and Chinese President Mao Zedong in 1972, laying the foundation for U.S.-China diplomatic relations. He also served as assistant to the president, secretary of the U.S. National Security Council, and secretary of state. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1973 for his efforts to promote world peace.

⁵ He is a Chinese prime minister who shared politics with Mao Zedong. In 1917, he moved to Japan and studied at Hosei University and Meiji University, and was imprisoned and expelled from Tianjin Nankai University for participating in the May Fourth Movement. In 1920, he moved to France to study political science at the University of Paris. He became an active member of the CCP from the 1920s and founded the Paris Section of the CCP in 1922. He served as the first Premier of the State Council from the establishment



“Stationing troops in Korea is not a permanent feature of American foreign policy.” Robert Kagan also advocated for a “U.S.-China grand bargain” in the 2010s. From Kissinger's realist perspective, the Korean Peninsula is merely a pawn among great powers. We must recognize this clearly. International relations are profoundly realistic.

Question 2

What recent North Korean policy or news has particularly impressed you? Please explain why that made an impression and discuss the issues involved.

Answer:

The recent news that caught my attention is the cooperation between North Korea and Russia. President Putin seems to be receiving urgently needed supplies from North Korea, while North Korea appears to be seizing an opportunity to extend its regime's life by escaping China's influence. In response, the South Korean government has raised the possibility of providing weapons to Ukraine, but this seems more like a gesture rather than a step towards deteriorating South Korea-Russia relations.

Question 3

Which area of South Korea's policies towards North Korea should receive more attention? What positive effects on social and international relations could arise if more attention were paid to this area?

Answer:

I would like to say that we should not be confined to the [inter-Korean relations] framework. So far, we have overly focused on inter-Korean relations. The Korean Peninsula issue is not solely between the South and the North. By viewing it from a broader geopolitical context, we can better understand inter-Korean relations. For example, the formal president of Korea Park Chung-hee's initiation of nuclear development can be better understood within the larger framework of the Nixon Doctrine⁶ and the Kissinger-Zhou Enlai meeting. The reduction of U.S. troops in Korea posed a significant threat to the South Korean government, leading to the initiation of nuclear development.

of the People's Republic of China in 1949 until his death, and was active in diplomatic, political, and economic affairs. Henry Kissinger considered him as one of the most impressed person in his life.

⁶ The Nixon Doctrine is an Asian policy announced by U.S. President Richard Nixon (1913-1994) on July 25, 1969, during a press conference with the White House press corps in Guam. President Nixon further proclaimed the Nixon Doctrine to the world through a foreign policy message sent to Congress in February 1970. The doctrine stated that U.S. intervention to defend allied nations would occur only when it was in the national interest of the United States. The content of the policy is as follows: 1.The United States will honor its treaty commitments to allies and partners. 2.The United States will provide a nuclear shield against threats from nuclear powers to the security of allies, the United States, or the collective security of the free world. 3.For non-nuclear threats, the primary responsibility for defense lies with the nation under attack, with the U.S. providing military and economic assistance. 4.The U.S. will reduce its military intervention. - Richard M. Nixon, Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam, November 3,1969.



Question 4

If you have further comments or opinions on South Korea's policies towards North Korea beyond the questions above, feel free to express them.

Answer:

South Korea's foreign policy itself has been predominantly focused on North Korea, and this remains largely true today. However, there are signs of change in this policies biased toward North-South relations. South Korea is now an advanced country with significant economic, military, and cultural influence, and there is a growing recognition that it should play a more active and contributive role on the global stage. The term "Korean Peninsula geocentrism" criticizes South Korea's foreign policy for being overly focused on inter-Korean relations. Just as viewing the Korean Peninsula from a geopolitical context provides a clearer perspective, it is time to reconsider South Korea's role in the redefined global context. This might be the way for South Korea to survive amidst China's growing power and the escalating military tensions in East Asia.



3. Interview: Bae Se-wan. Majored in Business, Kwangwoon University: “The war in Ukraine and Russia is rapidly changing the situation between North and South Korea.”

Question 1

South Korea's policies toward North Korea include defense policies to ensure national security, inter-Korean exchange policies for mutual cooperation between the south and north such as economic, communication, and cooperative program. And there are various other policies being carried out. Which of these policies are you most interested in?

Please explain why you are interested in and share your personal opinion.

Answer:

I'm interested in national defense policy. This is partly due to the fact that I have to do my compulsory military service as South Korean, and also due to the fact that South Korea actually does not have full military sovereignty. South Korea's military policies and responses are considered within the context of its interests with the United States. North Korea's military provocations and South Korea's responses to them always take place against this backdrop.

It is striking that North Korea picks up on this situation and calls South Korea as "Goryeo (傀儡)" which means "puppet" in North Korean dialect. Detailed meaning is this: 'A national traitorous group that sells out its country and people to imperialism and other foreign invaders, acting as their puppets.' This is the way of emphasizing that the South Korea is under the influence of the U.S. It reflects North Korea's perception that the South Korea's actions are not independent.

Moving on to the first issue of national defense policy, North Korea's frequent nuclear weapons provocations, I believe it is unlikely that North Korea will not actually launch a nuclear weapon. North Korea wants to develop themselves as an independent nation. The nuclear weapons are used as a means of securing their regime. I believe that they intends to use nuclear weapons as a bargaining chip until it is able to exist as a single, intact nation.

In the meantime, the war in Ukraine and Russia is rapidly changing the situation between North and South Korea. In June 2024, President Putin visited North Korea and signed an alliance agreement between Russia and North Korea. North Korea calls it as 'Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership' and announced the full text of agreement at the North Korea-Russia summit. Article 4 of the 'Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership' states that if either nation is invaded, they will provide military and other aid without delay. These changes are likely to have a major impact on military policy on the South Korea. I believe it is important to carefully monitor the situation going forward and prepare necessary countermeasures.

Question 2

What recent North Korean policy or news has particularly impressed you?
Please explain why that made an impression and discuss the issues involved.

Answer:

One of the most striking news was the partnership between North Korea and Russia.



I'd like to discuss this from the war between Ukraine and Russia. So, since the start of the war, online newspapers in the South Korea have been full of extreme reports about Russian troop recruitment and the war situation. The reports wrote that Russian troops were charging in with shovels, or President Putin was suffering from health problems. It was shockin because most of them were biased and untrue reports. These reports continued to convey the message that Ukraine was winning the war, when in reality, things were not going well.

After the war, North Korea and Russia signed an agreement. In this international situation, South Korea is having a diplomatic dilemma. Specifically, it is at a diplomatic crossroads involving the North Korea-China-Russia triad. So I guess South Korea is in a complex situation where it must manage tensions with North Korea.

Question 3

Which area of South Korea's policies towards North Korea should receive more attention? What positive effects on social and international relations could arise if more attention were paid to this area?

Answer:

I think the first step would be to move away the communist-liberal dichotomy of red team-blue team that South Korean politics has been built on. In a mixed economy like these days, such dichotomous ideological thinking causes only conflict.

Above all, we should not treat North Korea as an enemy, but as a neutral country. Given a stable situation for dialogue, the military conflict will be mediated. In this was citizens of North and South Korea will be able to find psychological stability.

However, 'how to resolve international interests' will be a point of concern. South Korea is a strategic area where China, the United States, and Japan can influence each other. If the conflict between North and South Korea disappears, the scope for the three countries to influence East Asia will be reduced, which may cause diplomatic chaos.

Question 4

What impact do you think the current government policy towards North Korea has on daily life? And how does this affect the consumption of news, travel and the economic situation, especially on the everyday levels of life and perception?

Answer:

The current administration's policy toward North Korea can impact citizen's daily lives in negative aspects.

First, Military issues related to North Korea can be used as a tool to increase anxiety. The constant emphasis on military issues in North Korea leads citizens to receive repeated or biased information from the media. If the media keeps reporting that "South Korea is in danger," most people will actually feels that danger. This is similar to how we consume selective information. For example, the clothes and fashions we wear may seem like we choose them, but in reality, we consume what



the designers choose. Policies towards North Korea can similarly acts as designers of our daily lives. They can increase anxiety, shake up policy priorities, and even cause generational conflict.

And strict policies towards North Korea can reinforce protests and anti-communism. As misperceptions spread, unconditional opposition to North Korea can become widespread. Furthermore, the spread of unverified fake online news can further confuse people and lead them to make poor decisions. It is closely linked to the economic and political situation. Therefore it is important to critically accept relevant information.

Question 5

What internal (e.g. political issues, citizens' opinions) and external factors (e.g. international situation, pressure from other countries) do you think are important in decision-making on South Korea's policies towards North Korea? How do you think these factors are linked to policymaking and citizens' political participation?

Answer:

The most important internal factor is probably the public opinion of the people at the time. Public opinion is difficult to judge objectively, but I believe it has a strong influence on policy decisions. The thoughts and feelings of the people are expressed through rallies, protests, and direct actions by civil society organizations. Although the exact number of people taking action is very small, these actions have a significant impact on policymakers.

For example, sustained large-scale rallies or protests can pressure government to reconsider or modify policies. Sometimes, small protest movements can lead to the political engagement of large numbers of citizens. The Korean candlelight vigils that criticized governments are some of the most influential examples of protests.

In terms of external factors, it's a combination of international politics and diplomacy in general. There are global economic issues, trade deals, but most of all, policy-making factors are driven by South Korea's neighboring powers. South Korea is a relatively weak country and its diplomatic options are limited. So when North Korea refers to the South as a "Goryeo (傀儡)" it's also a reflection of the South Korea's diplomatic situation, which is ironic because the South Korea is heavily influenced by the United States.



**4. Interview: Park, Geon-hyeong. Majored in Bio-Mechatronics, Sungkyunkwan University:
“As South Korean culture has become widely popular in North Korea, the regime sees the sweet portrayal of South Korea as a threat to its regime.”**

Question 1

South Korea's policies toward North Korea include defense policies to ensure national security, inter-Korean exchange policies for mutual cooperation between the south and north such as economic, communication, and cooperative program. And there are various other policies being carried out. Which of these policies are you most interested in?

Please explain why you are interested in and share your personal opinion.

Answer:

I would say ‘Inter-Korean Exchange policy’. I became interested in this policy mainly through the news and stories of North Korean defectors crossing into South Korea. The notable recent point is the identity of North Korean defectors. The number of high-ranking government officials defecting has increased. For example, Cho Sung-gil, the acting ambassador to Italy, and Ryu Hyun-woo, the acting ambassador to Kuwait, who defected in 2019, held the positions of first secretary and counselor. Also, after the COVID-19 lockdown was ended in 2023, Ri Ill-kyu and dozens of diplomats from the North Korean Embassy in Cuba has defected. Specially Ri Ill-kyu, who defected to South Korea in November 2023 is the highest-ranking North Korean diplomat to come to South Korea since Tae Young-ho, the North Korean minister to the United Kingdom, defected in 2016. This shows that situation in North Korea is very unstable. As North Korea’s internal situation becomes more unstable, I think it is necessary to think how we can be harmonized with North Korea. We can learn from German history. When East and West Germany were unified, there were many internal conflicts due to cultural differences. Regarding that, I think the essential point is to reduce cultural differences by promoting inter-Korean exchanges.

Question 2

What recent North Korean policy or news has particularly impressed you?

Please explain why that made an impression and discuss the issues involved.

Answer:

The first is a report on the change. Recently, North Korea called South Korea as “the Republic of Korea” instead of “Nam Choson”. The second is a report that North Korea is actively censoring South Korean culture. The third is a report on Kim Jong-un’s successor, Kim Ju-ae.

In the past, North Korea used to refer South Korea as “Nam Choson” and portray it as an enemy state that needed to be reunified, but recently there has been a shift - North Korean media have begun using the two term “Nam Choson” and “the Republic of Korea”. Historically they used the



phrases “Nam Choson⁷” or “Goryeo (傀儡)⁸” to condemn the South.

However in July 10-11, 2023, at the discourse condemning U.S. military reconnaissance activities, North Korea’s Workers Party Vice Chairwoman Kim Yo-jong used the word “the Republic of Korea” using double curly brackets << >> for emphasis. The word “the Republic of Korea” is rarely used in North Korean mainstream media or official documents.

The name change could be interpreted as a sign of North Korea’s growing sense of instability and crisis. In 2023, Kim Jong-un announced at the Worker’s Party Plenum that “North and South Korea are completely stuck in the relationship of two hostile nations, belligerents at war.” This seems to be a strategy to abandon the idea of reunification and establish South Korea as a separate entity, thereby reducing the risk of North Korean citizens defecting and destabilizing the regime.

Second, North Korea is actively censoring South Korean culture. Currently, South Korean dramas are being shown in North Korea more than past. The North Korean government sees this as a kind of cultural invasion and is reacting strongly, unlike in the past. South Korean dramas convey a positive and sweet image of South Korea. And they are having a huge impact on North Korean female viewers in particular. The North Korean government is taking this influence very seriously and is punishing people for watching these dramas.

Following the enactment of the ‘Anti-Democratic Thought and Culture Law of the DPRK’ (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) on December 4, 2020, the ‘Rodong Sinmun’ (North Korea’s news paper) proclaimed, “The adoption of the Anti-Democratic Thought and Culture Law, which can thoroughly prevent the influx and dissemination of anti-socialist thought and culture and firmly defend our ideas, spirit, and culture, has enabled us to further strengthen our political thought and class advancement” (December 27, 2021). Specifically, the penalties for having South Korean culture/media are listed in Law Article 27 under the heading of ‘Crime of Propagation of Goryeo (傀儡) Thought and Culture’. – Anyone who watches, listens to, or keeps South Korean (South Korean) movies, rock records (recordings), compilations, books, songs, paintings, photographs, etc. shall be punished by Rodong Kyohwa (labor indoctrination, imprisonment) from 5 to 15 years.

In addition, The North Korea’s video from June 2021 denounces the popularity of South Korean-style wedding photography in North Korea. As South Korean culture has become widely popular in North Korea, the regime sees the sweet portrayal of South Korea as a threat to its regime.

Lastly, I was impressed by the recent news that North Korea is moving to appoint Kim Jong-un’s daughter, Kim Ju-ae, as a successor. Kim Jong-un has exposed his daughter Kim Ju-ae to public appearances five times including a feverish ceremony to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Korean People’s Army (North Korean notation: Choson Inmin-goon). In December 2023, South Korea’s Ministry of Unification released an analysis suggesting that the newly created “first secretary” of the Workers’ Party, created at the 8th Party Congress in 2021, had Kim Ju-ae, the daughter of Workers’ Party General Secretary Kim Jong-un, in mind. In January 2, 2024, South Korea’s National Intelligence Service analyzed, “Based on a comprehensive analysis of Kim Ju-ae’s public activities and the level of respect she has received since her emergence, she appears to be the likely successor at this time.”

⁷ Nam refers to South in Korean and Chosun refers to Chosun dynasty (1392~1897).

⁸ It means puppet. Each of the letter 傀 and 儡 means puppet. For contextual understanding see Bae sae-wan’s Interview in this paper answer for question 1.



Kim Jong-un's wife Ri Suk-ju and her sister Kim Yo-jong also share power, and it's notable that women are playing a growing role in North Korea. In particular, the large Mother's Day celebration shows that there is a growing demand for women's rights in the country. This suggests that despite North Korea being an authoritarian regime, social change is occurring to the point where women's voices cannot be ignored.

Question 3

Which area of South Korea's policies towards North Korea should receive more attention? What positive effects on social and international relations could arise if more attention were paid to this area?

Answer:

South Korea should consider inter-Korean exchange policies in a way that accommodates cultural differences in a moderate way. The government should act as a mediator in the cultural exchange process. Specially given the consumption of cultural content such as dramas and movies in North Korea.

Lots of the South Korean culture is transmitted to North Korea. The most recent South Korean production that directly glorifies inter-Korean exchanges is the drama 《Love Crash Landing》 (2024). However, this drama is way too fantastical and far removed from reality. Excessive fantasy in South Korean dramas and movies not only hinders cultural exchanges with the North, but can also cause conflict within the South. It can distort the real situation between the two Nation and make it difficult for them to understand each other.

Therefore, a more realistic approach is needed for cultural exchanges between North and South Korea to be successful. It is important for the government to let go of the middle ground of recognizing and understanding differences in preparation for when the North and South come together in cultural events, including the creation of cultural content.

Question 4

What impact do you think the current government policy towards North Korea has on daily life? And how does this affect the consumption of news, travel and the economic situation, especially on the everyday levels of life and perception?

Answer:

I think the current government's policy toward North Korea affects cultural production and consumption. Not only the current government's policy, but also the past has indirectly affected culture. Our parents' generations, the 586th and 486th generations⁹, lived in poverty, both

⁹ The 486th and 586th generations are derived from the number "386". The term "Generation 386," which first appeared in the 1990s, comes from the 386 computers in use at the time: computers with an 80386 CPU, hence the 386. The 386 generation refers to people who were born in the 1960s, attended college in the 1980s, and were in their 30s in the 1990s. The "3" refers to people who were in their 30s in the 1990s, the "8" refers to people who attended college in the 1980s, and the "6" refers to people born in the 1960s. They succeeded the 4-19 generation, often referred to as the first generation of the Korean student movement, and have been pillars of Korean society for the past two decades.



financially and politically. They experienced the chaotic struggle between North and South Korea and the political upheaval that followed, and developed a kind of 'poverty' complex. Dramas and movies were produced to overcome and comfort them. Even after the situation in the South stabilized over time, films were produced according to the changing times. I think this is a result of both the policies toward North Korea and the North's reaction to them. Some examples include the following films:

《Hourglass》 (1995), 《Shiri》 (1999), 《Man, Woman, and Child》 (2003), 《Joint Security Area (JSA)》 (2000), 《Typhoon》 (2005), 《Fluttering the Flag》 (2004), 《Brothers in Law》 (2010), 《The King of Hearts》 (2012), 《Boys Meet Girls》 (2016), 《Gongjo》 (2017), 《Steel Rain》 (2017), 《The Duke》 (2018), 《The Knight's Teacher》 (2018), 《Baekdu Mountain》 (2019), 《Love Crash Landing》 (2019), etc. Most of these films are about men from the North and South who meet while representing their countries, point guns at each other, and tearfully affirm their brotherhood. Among these films, 《Shiri》 (1999), 《North and South》 (2003), 《Boy Meets Girl》 (2016), 《The Knight Teacher》 (2018), 《The King of Hearts》 (2012), and 《The Unexpected Arrival of Love》 (2019) are all about romance between the two Koreas. There are also a number of films about espionage.

If we compare the most recent and oldest works, we can see that the content has changed dramatically. The oldest film, 《Hourglass》 is set in South Korea in 1990s, capturing a period of political upheaval and economic growth, emphasizing the history of individual sacrifice and national development. Meanwhile, the recent, 《Love Crash Landing》 (2019) tells the story of an absolutely top-secret romance between Yoon Se-ri - a second-generation fashion industry president who crash-lands in North Korea after a paragliding accident - and Ri Jung-hyuk - a special officer who hides and protects her from North Korean government. He falls in love with her.

In other words, South Korean dramas and movies are currently giving a bit too much fantasy rather than comforting its complexes. If this atmosphere persists, it will not only hinder cultural exchanges with the North, but it will also cause conflict within the South. Internally, there is a conflict of national sentiment that arises from the gap between reality and media. This is a sense of relative deprivation or confusion between reality and media. In the long run, the production of works that are disconnected from reality can distort the actual situation between North and South Korea and make it difficult for them to understand each other.

Therefore, I believe that a more realistic and authentic approach should be taken to positively influence in cultural exchanges between North and South Korea. In this way, It will also affect internal situation positively.

Question 5

What internal (e.g. political issues, citizens' opinions) and external factors (e.g. international situation, pressure from other countries) do you think are important in decision-making on South Korea's policies towards North Korea? How do you think these factors are linked to policymaking and citizens' political participation?

Answer:

Of course, lots of internal-external factors are considered when making policy decisions on North Korea. However external factors are the most considered in making South Korea's policies towards



North Korea.

The world is currently experiencing war-induced supply shortages and overall inflation. Neo-protectionism is becoming more prominent, especially in the U.S., as countries around the world seek to protect their industries. While the free trade order is basically intact, North Korea's economic situation is getting worse due to neo-protectionism.

North Korea's deteriorating economic situation is largely due to external factors, such as international sanctions, COVID-19, and global logistics and supply issues with energy, food, etc. In response to these external factors, North Korea is strengthening its internal response. This includes strengthening its military and blocking external information. The external situation is a major factor in determining North Korea's internal situation, which in turn affects South Korea's policy decisions on North Korea.

As for internal factors, “conflict factors” are the key - First, the gender conflict is very serious. Second, the conflict with other cultures as the proportion of foreigners is increasing. Third, urban-rural conflict, as economic imbalances between regions are deepening. These internal conflicts prevent people from making rational judgments among themselves. I believe that if we do not resolve this issue, it will hinder the formation of public opinion and make it difficult for future dialog with North Korea.

In my perspective, Harmonization with North Korea requires active internal debate and dialogue on many issues that have been silent or undiscussed. At a time when the role of the individual has become stronger than that of the nation, how well we resolve internal conflicts between individuals has become an internal factor to consider policies. It is necessary to design policies so that citizens can actively participate and share their opinions without conflict.



**5. Interview Lee Su-hyeon. Majored in Design, Kyung Hee University:
“It will take a long time to achieve the peaceful reunification and open
inter-Korean relations that South Korea aims for.”**

Question 1

South Korea's policies toward North Korea include defense policies to ensure national security, inter-Korean exchange policies for mutual cooperation between the south and north such as economic, communication, and cooperative program. And there are various other policies being carried out. Which of these policies are you most interested in?

Please explain why you are interested in and share your personal opinion.

Answer:

I am interested in the impact of changes of in North Korea and communication methods following government changes in the South Korea on improving inter-Korean relations. I sometimes consider about various communicative strategies, such as the "Peace and Prosperity Policy," "Korean Peninsula Peace and Trust Policy," and "Korean Peninsula Peace Process Policy", which held by former South Korean government, and question how far these policies have contributed improving North-South relations. In other perspective, I also concern about how the North Korea will perceive and respond to the South Korea's frequent policy changes.

South Korea's frequent policy changes are nothing new. Even just comparing on the recent policies toward North Korea of the Moon Jae-in (2017-2022) and Yoon Suk-yol (2022-) administrations reveals a divergence in approach. The Moon administration managed a "Korean Peninsula Peace Process" policy based on the 2017 Berlin Initiative, an approach that sought to reduce tensions and increase cooperation through dialogue. In 2020, during his keynote speech at the UN General Assembly, he declared the end of the Korean War, the centerpiece of the peace process. Meanwhile, the government adopted a passive strategy in the area of human rights, including not participating as a co-sponsor of the UN's North Korea Human Rights Resolution, given the special relationship between North and South Korea.

On the other hand, Yoon's government has emphasized tough responses to military provocations and human rights issues of North Korea. This can be seen specifically in President Yoon's remarks. In a report on the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and National Defense in 2023, President Yoon stated, "Peace based on the goodwill of the other side is a fake peace that is not sustainable". In March 2023, he formed the 'North Korean Human Rights Promotion Committee' to implement the North Korean Human Rights Act and published the North Korean Human Rights Report for the first time. In a speech on March 1, 2024, he stated that 'expanding freedom and human rights is unification'.

In my perspective these contrasting approaches may raise concerns and questions among citizens. Because inconsistent approaches directly affect the dynamics of the Korean Peninsula and have a significant impact on domestic public opinion as well as international relations I know that it is Striking a balance between cooperation and sanctions is a very complex and delicate task. The outcome of the policy towards on North Korea will be determined by how we keep the balance maintained and adjusted. Above all, I think it is important that we continue to make an effort to communicate.



Question 2

What recent North Korean policy or news has particularly impressed you?
Please explain why that made an impression and discuss the issues involved.

Answer:

Recently, I saw a news that South Koreans were banned from attending an exhibition of North Korean goods in Russia. Even at the entrance of the exhibition, the identity and nationality of visitors were checked to prevent South Koreans from entering. Meanwhile a promotional video was played in the lobby of a hotel operated by Lotte to attract foreign tourists. After hearing this news, I personally felt that although North and South Korea have been engaged in a steady dialogue and policies to develop mutually beneficial relations, it will take a long time to achieve the peaceful reunification and open inter-Korean relations that South Korea aims for.

Question 3

Which area of South Korea's policies towards North Korea should receive more attention? What positive effects on social and international relations could arise if more attention were paid to this area?

Answer:

The current administration's inter-Korean policy emphasizes a tough response to North Korea's missile launches and tests. However, about half of South Koreans believe this policy is inappropriate. According to a survey by the Public Media Research Center of South Korea's public broadcaster KBS on national unification consciousness, the number of people who "disagree" with Yoon's policy strategies towards North Korea has steadily increased over the past three years (53.1% in 2021, 55.8% in 2022, and 57.3% in 2023).

By considering on public point of view, reducing tensions in inter-Korean relations is the most urgent area for improvement. It is South Koreans who are most anxious about North Korea's continued provocations and hardline responses. I think main point is to break the cycle of tension and confusion that has been going on for a long time. If the issue of North Korea's military provocations is resolved, social and psychological insecurity will be alleviated and the conditions for dialog aimed at easing international sanctions will be created.

Question 4

What impact do you think the current government policy towards North Korea has on daily life? And how does this affect the consumption of news, travel and the economic situation, especially on the everyday levels of life and perception?

Answer:

From the past to the current government, I think the perception of North Korea in everyday life is still negative. But there have been positive signs of improving relations, such as the reduction of tensions through the inter-Korean summit and the exchange of letters under the Moon Jae-in government. The current government's strict response may cause psychological problems in our lives, military exercises and tensions, trade, and the economy. Due to these problems opinions



around me are divided. It may cause controversy and conflict in society.

Question 5

What internal (e.g. political issues, citizens' opinions) and external factors (e.g. international situation, pressure from other countries) do you think are important in decision-making on South Korea's policies towards North Korea? How do you think these factors are linked to policymaking and citizens' political participation?

Answer:

For South Koreans, the word "reunification" has been repeated and emphasized so often that it has become ingrained in their minds, almost as if they have been brainwashed. For this reason, I believe that peace and reunification between North and South Korea is a top priority for many South Koreans.

The different policies and responses to North Korea by different governments, North Korean provocations, and public perceptions are interrelated. Citizen's perceptions of peace and unity can change at any time with those factors. The most important thing is to encourage citizens to freely discuss and express their political opinions. By doing so, we can reflect the opinions of the people and promote a consistent and sustainable North Korea policy.



**6. Interview Kim Woo-hyeon, Discharged from Special Forces of the Korean Military:
“The peace we live in and take for granted can be taken away at any time.”**

Question 1

South Korea's policies toward North Korea include defense policies to ensure national security, inter-Korean exchange policies for mutual cooperation between the south and north such as economic, communication, and cooperative program. And there are various other policies being carried out. Which of these policies are you most interested in?

Please explain why you are interested in and share your personal opinion.

Answer:

National defense policy interests me a lot. But I haven't paid much attention to politics or policy until I join the Army. This is because I did not experience the consequences of policies directly during my university days, and also I was not economically active either. However, when I was in the Army, I felt the direct impact of policy for the first time. After being a member of an organization that is directly affected by the consequences of national defense policy, I was able to exchange ideas with people. Since then, my interest in the policy generally increased.

There are countless factors in defense policy. For example we need to consider questions like: ‘Should we respond to North Korea's missile provocations, and if so, how?’, ‘How much should we increase our defense capabilities to prepare for war?’. When confronted with the many factors embedded in the policy, I branch out from the fundamental premise that South Korea is a ‘cease-fire country’. The peace we live in and take for granted can be taken away at any time. I often contemplate different aspects of military response policy, considering that anything can be done and anything can be lost, in the name of war whether it is right or wrong, human or inhuman.

Question 2

What recent North Korean policy or news has particularly impressed you?

Please explain why that made an impression and discuss the issues involved.

Answer:

One of the most shocking news about North Korea lately was the ‘Kim Il-sung monument ink terror’. A dissident group in North Korea has been carrying out ink attacks. In a video uploaded to YouTube titled ‘Video from Pyongyang’, a man throws ink on a monument of Kim Il-sung in North Korea. The group calls itself as ‘New Korea’ and operates under the name of the ‘Secret Liberal Democratic Government of Pyongyang’.

North Koreans had been indoctrinated with the ideas of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-un through the media, and it was assumed that this strong policy of indoctrination was how the North Korean government was able to maintain power at the top.

However, after seeing the actions of dissident organizations in North Korea, I realized that the



North Korea of today may not be the North Korea of the past. If this is indeed true, it is possible that the general thoughts of the North Korean people are changing. A critical view on Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il may be formed among North Koreans. I think it's significant that there are people inside North Korea who want change, and they are expressing it through their actions, which is a sign of change in a very closed society, regardless of whether their actions are right or wrong.

Question 3

Which area of South Korea's policies towards North Korea should receive more attention? What positive effects on social and international relations could arise if more attention were paid to this area?

Answer:

Before designing policy, it is necessary to design an environment where people can discuss and debate North Korea seriously. For those who are not interested in the policy and do not directly feel the impact of the policy, an environment where the 'why' question can be answered frequently is needed.

The concept of 'Policy towards North Korea' itself feels even more faraway from our daily lives. We need opportunities to think about North Korea. We need more than what we hear from our parents or what someone else says on the internet. We need to create a social atmosphere where we can ask the fundamental question of 'why' to policies and issues related to North Korea.

Everyday life is full of simple, unrefined ideas that we unconsciously hear and learn. "We need to unify because we are one people," or "Why should we help North Korea, which only shoots missiles?". We need to be more proactive in fostering this environment at the civil society or national level, meaning we need to find ways to increase interest and engagement in policy towards North Korea. This means encouraging people to think and debate about a particular agenda, rather than simply accepting what they are told. If these measures are considered together, they could have a positive impact and reduce the polarization of the North Korean issue.

Question 4

What impact do you think the current government policy towards North Korea has on daily life? And how does this affect the consumption of news, travel and the economic situation, especially on the everyday levels of life and perception?

Answer:

Until I join the Army, I was not interested in policy in general, including policy over North Korea. As I was not economically active, I did not earn money, pay taxes, or have an immediate need for housing, so I did not directly experience the decisions and consequences of policy in general. The same is probably true for most students in their early 20s. Military service is like the first chance to recognize the existence of policy towards North Korea and think about how it really affects them. However, I personally do not recognize the impact of policy on my daily life. I did not have time to reflect on it because I was not aware of it.

Moreover, the difference between foreigners' and South Koreans' reactions to North Korea's military provocations clearly shows that South Koreans have become desensitized to the situation.



While foreigners in South Korea view North Korean provocations with relative interest, many South Koreans have become accustomed to them and no longer react strongly.

One of the reasons for this desensitization may be that policies towards North Korea have relatively little impact on daily life compared to other policies. Everyday life often makes it hard for people to notice the impact of policies. This can lead to a lack of interest and engagement in issues related to North Korea.

Question 5

What internal (e.g. political issues, citizens' opinions) and external factors (e.g. international situation, pressure from other countries) do you think are important in decision-making on South Korea's policies towards North Korea? How do you think these factors are linked to policymaking and citizens' political participation?

Answer:

I haven't really thought about this before, but I can talk about it at a basic level. From a macroscopic perspective, there are three external and internal factors that are important to policy making.

The most important external factors are diplomatic and economic. Diplomatic factors include relations between countries, international agreements, and global political trends. I think that international sanctions and diplomatic pressure on North Korea have a great influence on South Korea's policy decisions toward North Korea. And the deterioration of the global economic situation and international economic sanctions against North Korea greatly worsen North Korea's internal economic situation. Therefore, I believe that South Korea's policy towards North Korea changes the most depending on diplomatic and economic factors.

As for internal factors, the opinions and demands of the people have the influence. The public's stance on announced policies on North Korea and opinions on reunification will influence policy decisions. Ongoing public opinion polls reflect this.



**7. Interview: Moon Su-bin. Majored in Korean Literature & Digital Humanities, Sogang University:
“I feel like I'm far away from North Korea, even though we share a border.”**

Question 1

South Korea's policies toward North Korea include defense policies to ensure national security, inter-Korean exchange policies for mutual cooperation between the south and north such as economic, communication, and cooperative program. And there are various other policies being carried out. Which of these policies are you most interested in?

Please explain why you are interested in and share your personal opinion.

Answer:

I am interested in inter-Korean exchange policies for cultural integration between North and South Korea. I believe that we need a mid- to long-term plan that actually narrows the cultural heterogeneity between the North and South Korea and preserves their common heritage, rather than cultural exchanges as an adjunct to political events. An example of this is the now-discontinued project ‘Gyeoremal-keunsajeon’ (The Great Dictionary of National Language). It is a collaborative dictionary project between South Korea and North Korea. This dictionary aims to compile and standardize the Korean language, reflecting the linguistic usage and variations from both North and South Korea. It is a significant cultural and linguistic endeavor, promoting understanding and unity between the two Koreas through the preservation and development of the Korean language.

Normally the younger generation in South Korea is uninterested to the North Korean issue. They have moved away from the Cold War perspective, but there is no desire for reunification. This is because they lack the opportunity to learn about North Korea with genuine interest other than the image of North Korea that has been objectified in political and military issues. However, The North Korean children’s song ‘Daekhongdan Potato¹⁰’ has been trending on South Korean YouTube recently, and many people have paid attention to the friendly life of North Korea. Recognizing the cultural similarities of Korea in this way could lead to a qualitative change in inter-Korean relations.

Question 2

What recent North Korean policy or news has particularly impressed you?

Please explain why that made an impression and discuss the issues involved.

Answer:

For the past month, North Korea has been releasing balloons containing cigarette butts and other garbages to South Korea in response to North Korean leaflets. Most of media have either pointed to the poor standard of living in North Korea, as evidenced by the contents of the balloons, which include waste paper and old clothes. And have interpreted the strategy as a sign of the regime's

¹⁰ "Daehongdan Gamja" refers to a variety of potato cultivated in North Korea. The name "Daehongdan" comes from the region in North Korea where these potatoes are grown, and "Gamja" means potato in Korean.



vulnerability because, unlike the North Korean leaflets, the balloons do not propagandize Juche ideology (Self-reliance ideology).

I first noticed about these balloons from a national disaster alarming message. Several disaster messages were sent to citizens across the country to prevent them from being harmed. But disaster messages should only be sent in the case of natural disasters or urgent military situations. The disaster messages were way too much, given that the balloons never caused disaster-level damage. They were meant to foment anxiety about North Korea. As the media report suggests, it is impressive that our society has ambivalent stances toward North Korea. We mock the poverty of North Korea compared to South Korea, but at the same time we fear them.

Question 3

Which area of South Korea's policies towards North Korea should receive more attention? What positive effects on social and international relations could arise if more attention were paid to this area?

Answer:

We need to focus more on international cooperation since the dialog with North Korea is broken. As seen in the case of German reunification, which involved East and West Germany and the four nations, it will be necessary to strengthen diplomatic capabilities to convince neighboring countries that the development of inter-Korean relations and reunification can contribute to peace and stability in Northeast Asia.

Meanwhile, it is important to involve different groups such as governments, local authorities, businesses, and private organizations in carrying out policy, instead of letting one group control the entire process. In East and West Germany, 62 cities were twinned before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Like this, the direct involvement of North and South Korean citizens can help build social consensus from the bottom up.

Question 4

What impact do you think the current government policy towards North Korea has on daily life? And how does this affect the consumption of news, travel and the economic situation, especially on the everyday levels of life and perception?

Answer:

Tensions between North and South Korea have increased since the current government took office. Security conflicts have continued, with the South responding to North Korea's military provocations with immediate demonstrations of force and the North responding in kind. We, South Koreans watched the inter-Korean military agreement was abandoned. And people started posting the possibilities of war in the internet community.

However, war with North Korea is rarely a topic of conversation in real life. It's just tension without substance, and it doesn't affect our daily lives in any particular way. Financial assets may be subject to geopolitical risk, but overall economic life seems to be affected more by US policy in the Middle East than by North Korea. I feel like I'm far away from North Korea, even though we share a border.



Question 5

What internal (e.g. political issues, citizens' opinions) and external factors (e.g. international situation, pressure from other countries) do you think are important in decision-making on South Korea's policies towards North Korea? How do you think these factors are linked to policymaking and citizens' political participation?

Answer:

South Korea's policy towards North Korea is heavily influenced by international events. For example, during the Park Geun-hye administration (2013-2017), inter-Korean relations cooled dramatically after North Korea's fourth nuclear test. Also the U.S.-China conflict and China's economic retaliation due to the deployment of the U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system were shocking. The approach to policy toward North Korea varies greatly depending on whether the ruling party is conservative or progressive.

It can also be a means of political retaliation for criticizing the previous government. Rather than being driven by the opinions of civil society, policy towards North Korea is more dependent on the international situation and the government's tendency.



8. Interview Kim Ji-hye, Artist.

“The idea that there are people who secretly admire the culture that we consume so readily, and that the slightest imitation of it will get you killed, is no longer a big deal to many people.”

Question 1

South Korea's policies toward North Korea include defense policies to ensure national security, inter-Korean exchange policies for mutual cooperation between the south and north such as economic, communication, and cooperative program. And there are various other policies being carried out. Which of these policies are you most interested in?

Please explain why you are interested in and share your personal opinion.

Answer:

I often think about the inter-Korean exchange policy. I used to think that exchange policies were only for peaceful dialog itself. But it is also a good way to indirectly understand the North Korea's situation and prepare for the inevitable conflict. It's so easy to misunderstand and misinterpret, even between individuals, and regardless of the outcome, two countries are so close and speak the same language that they will never be able to ignore each other.

One of the biggest problem in general miscommunication is that the sharply divided views on how to interact and respond are not being actively discussed and conclusions are not being drawn. Specially in Korea is the polarization of opinions on policy towards North Korea. Especially in South Korea, policy towards North Korea changes rapidly as the government changes. It will be important to maintain a consistent attitude by building a unified view on North Korea that is based on the diverse opinions of the entire population, not on the policies of the particular party in power.

Of course, it will be very difficult to gather the opinions of the entire population. But the new government should stop abandoning its previous policies on North Korea when they take the office. The South Korean government's constantly changing attitude toward North Korea has made North Korea impossible to trust South Korea. Of course, the previous policies that have been carried out can be understood as part of good trial and error. However, it is time for a coherent North Korea policy.

Question 2

What recent North Korean policy or news has particularly impressed you?

Please explain why that made an impression and discuss the issues involved.

Answer:

I read that the punishment for consuming South Korean cultural content has recently become very severe and even public executions have been happened. I knew that this was the similar before, but the punishment has been drastically increased in recent years, and there are more and more cases of execute by firing squads. The "Law of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea Against Reactionary Thought and Culture," which was reenacted on December 4, 2020, is a direct



reflection of this situation.

I'm not sure if there is a connection with this, but the number of North Korean defectors has also decreased. According to data from the Ministry of Unification in South Korea, the number of defectors has steadily increased since the 2000s, with 2,000 to 3,000 entering the country annually between 2003 and 2011, but since 2012, the number has dropped to an average of 1,300 per year, with 63 entering in 2021 and 67 in 2022.

What struck me was that as North Korea's strong antipathy toward South Korea became more visible, South Koreans were less and less shocked by North Korea's strict response. The idea that there are people who secretly admire the culture that we consume so readily, and that the slightest imitation of it will get you killed, is no longer a big deal to many people. We've become way too tolerant. When a balloon falls from the sky and bursts on our doorstep, then it might become a big news. Even international news are more interested and detail about our situation.

Question 3

Which area of South Korea's policies towards North Korea should receive more attention? What positive effects on social and international relations could arise if more attention were paid to this area?

Answer:

As ideological conflicts increase, we will need to focus on what we can actually engage in and reduce the offending propaganda responses.

There are wars going on around the world, large and small. Right now, the war between Ukraine and Russia in particular has a huge international impact. There are aspects of that war that both North and South Korea should be wary of. These include international sanctions imposed on Russia, the economic aftermath of the war - higher energy prices and supply chain disruptions, and humanitarian crises such as civilian casualties and refugee displacement.

There are also parallels that should be noted. The United States receives artillery shells from the South to supply Ukraine, and North Korea provides weapons to Russia. For more than 40 years, from the division of the Korean Peninsula and the establishment of a government in the 1940s to the end of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1989, South Korea received military aid from the United States and North Korea from the Soviet Union. Now, in 2024, the shadows of North and South Korea are once again visible on the distant Eurasian continent.

Just because our neighbor country is having a violent dispute doesn't mean we have to fight the same way. Showing that North and South Korea can come to a different outcome in similar situations without clashing could be an inspiration for other countries to reconcile.

Question 4

What impact do you think the current government policy towards North Korea has on daily life? And how does this affect the consumption of news, travel and the economic situation, especially on the everyday levels of life and perception?

Answer:



I don't know exactly how other people's perceptions change, but as I mentioned above, there is a lot of fatigue that has built up and people's reactions have become blunted. The news often reports that the relationship between North and South Korea is very tense on the defense level, but I don't think it affects our daily lives.

The current government's policy towards North Korea itself is a set of staged conditions for North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons. In short, economic exchanges are determined by who wins the war of power. That is why more and more people who are interested in the inter-Korean situation are saying that the South should not show weakness to the North. These opinions are expressed and shared on the Internet, and it seems that the hatred for North Korea is growing.

Question 5

What internal (e.g. political issues, citizens' opinions) and external factors (e.g. international situation, pressure from other countries) do you think are important in decision-making on South Korea's policies towards North Korea? How do you think these factors are linked to policymaking and citizens' political participation?

Answer:

Policy towards North Korea is largely determined by external factors - the economic and diplomatic situation in the international arena. On the other hand, South Korea's internal perception of North Korea also plays a significant role. If we consider the internal factors in connection with the answers to the previous four questions, it seems that the first step is to resolve internal conflicts. There are very different information and emotional attitudes towards North Korea depending on generation, gender, region, etc. within South Korea, so it will be difficult to come up with a policy that can be inclusive of all of them.

No matter what the government do, there will be a lot of backlash. Currently, South Koreans are pretty tired not only about the Korean War but also about domestic politics. It is even more difficult to set policies in this situation. Ministers and other politicians discuss and set policies, but it keeps fall apart again and again.

In order to change things better, we need to address the internal factors within the country. There are generational conflicts, gender differences in perception, regional imbalances, political apathy, and a lack of consistency and credibility in policy etc. Moreover, the difference in perceptions of North Korea between young and old generations stems from a lack of education and communication.

Furthermore, There are gender differences in attitudes toward North Korea, and regional disparities in access to information and attitudes. The public's political apathy affects policy towards North Korea and domestic politics at the same time. Frequent policy change have led to a lack of consistency and credibility. South Korea needs to embrace change in a variety of ways in interner factors, by both progressive or conservative. I believe that this will allow healthy political participation and policy formation.

