

DISCUSSION PAPER 22-001

US-North Korea-South Korea Youth Perspectives on Peace on the Korean Peninsula in 2050

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UNITED STATES
INSTITUTE OF PEACE
Making Peace Possible

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SUMMARY

In January 2021, USIP convened a three-day virtual workshop for youth from the United States, North Korea, and South Korea to share perspectives on envisioning peace on the Korean Peninsula. Twenty-five university students and recent graduates (ages 18 to 30; nine from the United States, eight each from North and South Korea) engaged in various activities that allowed them to share their perspectives regarding peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, explore the conflict dynamics involved, and generate ideas for potential solutions for each country. The interactive exercises encouraged participants to think creatively and critically about how to meet each country's needs and interests peacefully.

The participants' assessments of the historical events that shaped peace and security on the Korean Peninsula underscored the different societies and educational systems in which they were raised. At the same time, their perspectives, as a whole, generally revealed a bias toward the centrality of their own governments' actions, toward recent events rather than earlier ones, and toward the significance of high-level political engagements rather than cultural or civil society exchanges.

The participants' views diverged when addressing each country's needs and visions for peace. Participants exchanged different perspectives on the challenge of defining "peace" on the Korean Peninsula, the trade-offs between encouraging regime change in Pyongyang and maintaining regional security and stability, and the sequencing of promoting human rights, achieving denuclearization, and improving diplomatic relations. In addition, participants found it important to distinguish the needs and interests of a country's government from those of its people, and cautioned against viewing any group—whether "North Korea" or "young people"—as monolithic and unified. Recognizing the discrepancy between the perspectives of the youth participants and those of their governments regarding the core needs for achieving peace on the Korean Peninsula may be key to understanding this generation.

On the other hand, there was near-consensus from all three groups on a desire for better diplomatic relations between Washington, Seoul, and Pyongyang; more stable, consistent communication

and exchange among the officials and citizens of the three countries; and greater access to information and understanding of the conflict for the people.

Beyond these policy-level insights, this workshop also provided an example of engaging youth through virtual interactive peacebuilding workshops with an emphasis on trust building and storytelling. The workshop revealed that given the lack of opportunities for young people from the three countries to hear and learn directly from each other, there remains great potential to continue and expand this kind of programming, through both virtual and nonvirtual platforms.

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INTRODUCTION

As relations between the United States, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea), and the Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea) remain deadlocked and the unresolved conflict on the Korean Peninsula persists after seventy years of war, creative and more long-term approaches to fostering trust and building peace are more necessary than ever. Young people in particular, who often provide fresh energy and perspectives and will bear the long-term impact of today’s policy decisions, can play an important and positive role in promoting and sustaining the peacebuilding process. However, their voices and roles have often been missing at the negotiating table or in policy circles related to the Korean Peninsula.

To capture, underscore, and amplify the voices of youth on the future of peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) convened 25 US, South Korean, and North Korean–born young leaders for a three-day virtual workshop from January 11 to 13, 2021. Jointly designed and implemented by the USIP Youth Program and Northeast Asia Program, the workshop aimed to provide a space for youth to share their perspectives on the core needs for each country related to peacebuilding and facilitate their critical thinking on creative strategies to reduce tensions, foster trust, and reconcile seemingly incompatible differences among the three countries in achieving sustainable peace.

Rather than focusing on technical and policy matters related to security negotiations like denuclearization steps or sanctions relief measures, facilitators encouraged participants to explore more broadly the sources of conflict, each country’s interests and concerns, and a vision for harmonious US-DPRK and inter-Korean relations in 2050. This workshop not only sought to provide a forum for young leaders to discuss each country’s perspectives on peace and generate ideas to change the status quo on the Korean Peninsula, but also to set a foundation for capacity and relationship building that could continue in the long term.

This discussion paper summarizes the methodology and content of the three-day workshop and discusses key observations and takeaways from the workshop’s three sessions. The paper also describes major themes that emerged regarding peace on the Korean Peninsula that may be useful for

peacebuilding practitioners, Korea policy researchers, and governmental and international organizations seeking to understand the perspectives of US, North Korean, and South Korean youth. Finally, although this particular configuration of countries and participants has a unique set of conflict dynamics that are relevant to the Korean Peninsula, the frameworks, exercises, and takeaways from this workshop can be applied to youth engagement and intergroup peacebuilding workshops in other conflict settings, particularly through virtual platforms.

The primary goals of the workshop were to:

1. Recognize, understand, and elevate the perspectives of youth on peace and security issues on the Korean Peninsula;
2. Foster a deeper level of intergroup understanding between youth from the United States, South Korea, and North Korea; and
3. Strengthen the leadership and peacebuilding capacities of young people from the three countries.

BACKGROUND

UNSCR 2250: The Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda

Young people can play a key role as drivers of sustainable peace across the world.¹ Whereas the image of young people has often been that of vulnerable victims, potential perpetrators of violence, or activists in grassroots sociopolitical movements, the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 recognizes that “young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.”² A 2018 progress study from the resolution affirmed the positive contributions that youth can play in supporting peace processes and

¹ The United Nations defines “youth” as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. However, for the purposes of this workshop and paper, USIP defined youth as those persons between the ages of 18 and 30. United Nations, “Youth,” www.un.org/en/global-issues/youth.

² UN Security Council, Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) (on youth, peace, and security), March 18, 2016, S/RES/2250 (2015), available at: www.refworld.org/docid/56ebfd654.html (accessed March 17, 2022).

conflict resolution, such as monitoring the implementation of ceasefire agreements, mediating intra-ethnic disputes, supplying legal and logistical support for peace negotiations, providing psychosocial support for former combatants, and using mass media and online social platforms to promote peace messages to the broader public constituencies.³ The same study also described the widespread tendency of elders and policymakers to refer to youth as “the future” rather than as having a key role and stake in the present.⁴ Furthermore, a report commissioned by the United Nations Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth noted that the inclusion of young people during all phases of peace processes “likely increases the sustainability of the agreement,” and also that youth continue to be “politically marginalized, excluded, and undervalued” in peace processes.⁵

Young people have played active roles in shaping peace processes across the world, including recently in Colombia and South Sudan. In South Korea, youth engagement has played a significant part in peaceful political transformations, though often with a complicated and controversial history and in direct conflict with the government in power. Student activism helped lead the democracy movement against autocratic and military dictatorships from the country’s founding in 1948 until democratization in 1988 and, later, against remnants of militaristic governments. In many cases, student movements have intertwined with inter-Korean reconciliation and unification efforts, which some perceived as pro-North Korea and undermining South Korean national security as well as campaigns against US military forces in South Korea, with some viewing the US military as condoning or abetting violence against pro-democracy protesters.⁶ Youth support for peacebuilding with North Korea continues to this day, though it has been attenuated by a growing economic crisis

³ Graeme Simpson, “The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth and Peace and Security,” March 2018, www.unfpa.org/resources/missing-peace-independent-progress-study-youth-and-peace-and-security.

⁴ Simpson, “The Missing Peace.”

⁵ Ali Altiok and Irena Grizelj, “We Are Here: An Integrated Approach to Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes,” United Nations Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, April 2019, www.youth4peace.info/node/348.

⁶ For example, then-student activist and former National Assemblywoman Lim Su-kyung visited Pyongyang on behalf of South Korean student organizations in July 1989 to attend the 13th World Festival of Youth and Students in Pyongyang, despite not receiving permission from the Roh Tae-woo government. Upon her return across the border, she was arrested for violating South Korea’s National Security Act and ultimately served three years. Another student, Im Jong-seok, who as the head of the National Council of Student Representatives helped Lim travel to North Korea, was also arrested and served three and a half years. He later became a National Assemblyman for the Democratic Party of Korea and the chief of staff for Moon Jae-in during the 2017 presidential elections.

for younger generations and a related and increasing disinterest among youth for unification.⁷ Nevertheless, formal peacebuilding on the Korean Peninsula has largely been limited to senior government officials in traditional roles of leadership in Seoul, Pyongyang, and Washington.⁸

A contributing factor to the exclusion of youth on the Korean Peninsula may be what the March 2020 report from the United Nations Secretary-General on Youth, Peace, and Security describes as the “structural barriers limiting the participation of young people and their capacity to influence decision-making.”⁹ These impediments include not only limiting youth participation in official diplomacy and high-level decision-making but also hindering unofficial peacemaking channels that have lower barriers to entry (e.g., nongovernmental or grassroots engagement). The challenges are exacerbated by the sporadic and half-hearted attempts at pursuing an official and comprehensive peace.¹⁰

While direct youth participation in formal inter-Korean or US-DPRK negotiations is very limited, strengthening youth engagement on these issues can enhance peace and security in various ways. Young people serve as the backbone of important governmental and civil society institutions that impact and influence security on the Korean Peninsula, including US and ROK foreign policy and defense agencies, legislative offices, nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations, academia, businesses and corporations, and media and entertainment.¹¹ Even those youth who have left North Korea and are unable to directly influence North Korean government and society can still play a vital bridging and influential role on the Korean Peninsula through many of the aforementioned

James Fretwell, “The Flower of Unification: How a Girl from the South Became an Icon in the North,” *NK News*, January 29, 2020, www.nknews.org/2020/01/the-flower-of-unification-how-a-girl-from-the-south-became-an-icon-in-the-north/.

⁷ Chung Min Lee, “A Peninsula of Paradoxes: South Korean Public Opinion on Unification and Outside Powers,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 13, 2020, carnegieendowment.org/2020/05/13/peninsula-of-paradoxes-south-korean-public-opinion-on-unification-and-outside-powers-pub-81737.

⁸ Alec Forss, “‘A People’s Peace’: Inclusive Peacebuilding and the Role of Civil Society in Korea,” Institute for Security and Development Policy, September 2020, isdpeu/publication/peoples-peace-inclusive-peacebuilding-role-civil-society-korea/; Jon Letman, “Taking the Long View: Why South Korea’s Peace Movement Refuses to Give Up,” *Truthout*, August 4, 2017, truthout.org/articles/taking-the-long-view-why-south-korea-s-peace-movement-refuses-to-give-up/.

⁹ United Nations, Security Council, “Youth and Peace and Security, Report of the Secretary-General,” S/2020/167 (March 2020), www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2020_167_e.pdf.

¹⁰ Frank Aum et al., “A Peace Regime for the Korean Peninsula,” United States Institute of Peace, February 3, 2020, www.usip.org/publications/2020/02/peace-regime-korean-peninsula.

¹¹ OECD iLibrary, “1. Youth Employment and Education in Korea,” 2019, www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/63797b4a-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/63797b4a-en.

channels in South Korea and the United States, including elected office (e.g., as elected members of the South Korean National Assembly) and nongovernmental and political advocacy organizations that support the North Korean escapee community in South Korea and the United States. Investing in, listening to, and encouraging mutual understanding among youth from the three countries today can help establish a foundation for sustainable peace in the long term, and pay dividends in numerous ways, whether the youth end up crafting deals at the negotiating table, setting narratives in the newsroom and media, or promoting new approaches in journal articles.¹²

Motivation for the Workshop

Even at the people-to-people level, there are few instances of sustained US-North Korea youth engagement. The lack of engagement is attributable to various reasons, including poor relations and limited engagement between the United States and North Korea in general, security concerns on both sides, and insufficient resources. When direct engagements with actual North Korean citizens did occur, such as the academic exchange on computer science between Syracuse University and Kim Chaek University of Technology and the Pyongyang Project, which aimed to provide foreigners with educational tours of North Korea, they have been strictly apolitical. However, there have been a number of exchange programs between North Korean-born students from South Korea and the United States, such as the Korean American Sharing Movement's (KASM) Washington Leadership Program.¹³ There are also spaces for US students to engage informally with North Korean-born students in South Korea, such as the US embassy in Seoul's Fulbright English teaching assistantship program for North Korean defectors.¹⁴

Perhaps the most relevant example of a US-North Korea-South Korea youth program is the "Unification of the Mind" workshop, which was hosted by the Chicago-based organization Empower North Koreans (ENoK) in 2013 and 2015 in the Washington, DC, area with participants from the United

¹² Simpson, "The Missing Peace"; United Nations and Folke Bernadotte Academy, "Youth, Peace and Security: A Programming Handbook," 2021, www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/YPS_Programming_Handbook.pdf.

¹³ "Korea-America Student Conference," International Student Conferences, iscdc.org/kasc/; "Korean American Sharing Movement," www.kasm.org/what-we-do#programs.

¹⁴ Alexandra Langford, "A Defector's Journey," *State Magazine*, September 2019, statemag.state.gov/2019/09/feat03/.

States, North Korea, and South Korea to help envision the future of unification of the Korean Peninsula.¹⁵ This in-person workshop included discussions on case studies from German and Vietnamese reunification, as well as scenario-based problem-solving activities on topics ranging from history education and the future of a unified Korea's constitution to women's rights and environmental issues.

Over the past decade, there have also been a number of youth peace education initiatives led by South Korea-based nongovernmental organizations such as the Korea Peacebuilding Institute's Northeast Asian Regional Peacebuilding Institute (NARPI) and Peacemomo's Youth Peacebuilders Social Dialogue Program that convene young people across the region for training on peace and conflict issues.¹⁶ On a regional level, the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UNDPPA) has convened in-person and virtual workshops for youth from Northeast Asia on disarmament and nonproliferation as well as envisioning future peace in the region to promote the UNSCR 2250 agenda on Youth, Peace, and Security.¹⁷

However, there has been a noticeable lack of programming that brings together youth from the United States, North Korea, and South Korea not only for dialogue to enable trust and relationship building, but also for strengthening peacebuilding capacity through discussions on the broader issues of peace and security.¹⁸ USIP sought to address the dearth of literature and programming involving youth and peace on the Korean Peninsula by organizing this workshop and amplifying the youth's perspectives and ideas.

¹⁵ "About Empower House," Empower North Korean Refugees, enok.org/about/empower-house/; www.facebook.com/events/200633263418173/; www.facebook.com/events/667229493422771/. The North Korean participants in this workshop were also those who were born in North Korea but had since left the country and resettled in South Korea or the United States.

¹⁶ "Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute," Mennonite Mission Network, Partners, www.mennonitemission.net/partners/Northeast%20Asia%20Regional%20Peacebuilding%20Institute; "Peacemomo," peacemomo.org/english.

¹⁷ United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, "Northeast Asia," dppa.un.org/en/northeast-asia; "Futuring Peace in Northeast Asia: Virtual Dialogue Series with Northeast Asian Youth," futuringpeace.org/NEA/.

¹⁸ One of the ways USIP's Introduction to Peacebuilding Online Course defines peacebuilding is "a set of specific efforts designed to address the root causes, the drivers of conflict, or the mitigators of conflict in a way that aims to reduce violence." The International Association for Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research defines capacity building in peacebuilding as "efforts to strengthen governments, institutions, systems and individuals to meet the challenges of sustainable peace." "Introduction to Peacebuilding," United States Institute of Peace, www.usip.org/academy/catalog/introduction-to-peacebuilding; "Capacity Building," International Association for Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research, www.peacebuildinginitiative.org/index5f21.html.

USIP served as an appropriate forum for convening young people from the three countries for a workshop on peace and conflict. In addition to its distinct convening power as a trusted intermediary and its staff’s regional and functional expertise on the Korean Peninsula, USIP was able to draw on its experience designing and implementing capacity-strengthening workshops for youth, including organizing similar programs in recent years. USIP has organized several Track 1.5 and Track 2 dialogues between government officials and policy analysts from the United States and South Korea.¹⁹ However, the present workshop was significant in that it was a “Track 3” grassroots-level workshop hosted by a US organization with a focus on strengthening the conflict analysis and peace-building skills of young people from the three countries.

WORKSHOP PREPARATION

This section describes the preparation leading up to the workshop, including the participant selection process, pre-workshop resources, and the framing of the workshop.

Participant Selection

USIP, in partnership with the Korea American Student Conference (KASC), a summer academic and cultural exchange between students from the United States and South Korea, and Liberty in North Korea (LiNK), a North Korean human rights advocacy and refugee resettlement organization, convened and facilitated a virtual three-day workshop.²⁰ Participants included 25 university students and recent graduates (ages 18–30) from the United States, South Korea, and North Korea (9 from the US, 8 each from North and South Korea).

¹⁹ “Track 1.5 dialogues are conversations that include a mix of government officials—who participate in an unofficial capacity—and non-governmental experts, all sitting around the same table. On the other hand, track 2 diplomacy brings together unofficial representatives on both sides, with no government participation.”

For a primer on multitrack diplomacy, see Jennifer Staats, Johnny Walsh, and Rosarie Tucci, “A Primer on Multi-Track Diplomacy: How Does It Work?,” United States Institute of Peace, July 31, 2019, www.usip.org/publications/2019/07/primer-multi-track-diplomacy-how-does-it-work.

²⁰ In addition to USIP staff, Dr. Jieun Baek from the Harvard Kennedy School’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs served as co-facilitator of the workshop.

Given the limited time and resources available to launch a formal application process, USIP selected workshop participants based primarily on recommendations from KASC and LiNK for candidates who would feel comfortable sharing in English their perspectives regarding peace on the Korean Peninsula. Most of the US and South Korean students participated through their affiliation with KASC, suggesting that they shared at minimum an interest in peace and security issues related to the Korean Peninsula. Nevertheless, participants had different levels of familiarity with the Korean Peninsula. Some were very knowledgeable and already invested in the topic, whether through their jobs or family connections, while others had learned about Korean history and culture primarily through their participation in KASC.

The limited scope of the participant selection process may have influenced the views of some of the participants. The North Korean participants, as defectors who have become South Korean or US citizens, acknowledged the difficulty of representing North Korean views, particularly given the opaque flow of information in and out of the country.²¹ As one North Korean participant noted, “You don’t even know what is happening elsewhere in North Korea [when you’re in the country], so how can you know what is happening from the outside?” It is also important to note that the North Korean participants all maintained a strong aversion to the Kim Jong Un regime and a predisposition toward regime change, which likely reflects a selection bias from having to choose “representatives” of North Korea from among a group of individuals who chose or had to leave the country due to negative circumstances.

Pre-Workshop Resources

To help establish a degree of shared baseline understanding about the Korean Peninsula, facilitators provided pre-workshop resources to the participants that presented concise overviews of the conflict dynamics, including an excerpt of USIP’s report “A Peace Regime for the Korean Peninsula.”²² In addition to the reading materials, USIP provided participants with short prerecorded video remarks

²¹ Most North Korean citizens are not able to travel outside the country, access the Internet, or legally access information that may not be aligned with the government’s ideology.

²² Frank Aum, Jacob Stokes, Patricia M. Kim, Atman M. Trivedi, Rachel Vandenbrink, Jennifer Staats, and Joseph Yun, “A Peace Regime for the Korean Peninsula,” United States Institute of Peace, February 3, 2020, usip.org/publications/2020/02/peace-regime-korean-peninsula.

from three policy experts who offered their thoughts on the North Korean, US, and South Korean perspectives on peace.²³ The three experts also joined the first session of the workshop to provide their takeaways from an exercise with youth participants on identifying each side’s perceptions of history (elaborated later in the report).

Setting the Stage

For the Day 3 exercise, the workshop organizers chose 2050 as the target year for envisioning future peace given its significance as the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War. The date was also far enough into the future that participants could think beyond the current roadblocks to peace and toward a future in which some of them may be in a position to impact peace and security on the Korean Peninsula.

The COVID-19 pandemic required the workshop activities to be adapted to virtual platforms that would still allow participants to engage deeply around sensitive, and sometimes personal, topics. The facilitators used Zoom as the main online platform to conduct the workshop, and other virtual platforms, including Google Jamboard and Mentimeter, to facilitate exercises and discussions. Google Jamboard served as an interactive “whiteboard” to brainstorm and articulate ideas in the second and third sessions, and Mentimeter captured participant thinking through creative visual presentations.

SUMMARY AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

A description of the methodology of each of the three sessions is followed by the key takeaways that emerged from the workshop discussions between the youth participants. These takeaways may be most relevant and applicable for peacebuilding practitioners and scholars who are working on issues related to Youth, Peace, and Security on the Korean Peninsula.

²³ The guest speakers were Jean Lee (Wilson Center), Jessica Lee (Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft), and Yonho Kim (George Washington University).

Day 1: Building Relationships and Mutual Understanding of the Past

Methodology: Self-Introductions and Trust-Building Through Creative Envisioning

The workshop began with self-introductions by participants and a creative thinking and envisioning exercise. The facilitator asked the participants to share a symbol, image, or object that represents their vision for peace on the Korean Peninsula in 2050. Examples included the Statue of Liberty, the popular South Korean drama *Crash Landing on You* (a romantic comedy about a relationship between a South Korean woman and a North Korean soldier), and the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). This framing was intended to allow participants to express their thoughts more creatively and in personal terms to help establish a degree of trust and shared humanity beyond policy positions as well as set a foundation for relationships that participants could build upon later in the workshop. Additionally, this exercise provided an opportunity for participants to see how their visions were similar to and different from each other.

Methodology: Walk Through History Exercise

After introductions, the participants began an exercise called the “Walk Through History” that sought to highlight differences and similarities in the participants’ perceptions of history.²⁴ The facilitators prompted participants ahead of time to reflect individually on what they believe to be the seven most significant and defining events in history that shaped peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. Then, during the session, participants worked in breakout rooms divided by the three countries to discuss and find consensus on one seven-event time line for each country that represented each group’s perspective on the history of peace and conflict on the Korean Peninsula.²⁵ By the end of the breakout room discussions, there were three time lines for each of the three countries that were juxtaposed in a table on a shared document (see Table 1).

²⁴ The exercise was pioneered by former US diplomat Joseph Montville and adapted by Dr. Tatsushi Arai for a civil society workshop for Taiwanese, Chinese, and US youth held annually at Brown University since 2005. Joseph V. Montville, “The Healing Function in Political Conflict Resolution,” in *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice Integration and Application*, edited by Dennis J. D. Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe, 112–27 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.458.5378&rep=rep1&type=pdf; Tatsushi Arai, “Conflict History: An Integrated Method of Dialogue and Training,” *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 32 (3) (Spring 2015), doi: 10.1002/crq.21113.

USIP had organized the activity in January 2020 for an in-person workshop on historical reconciliation with Japanese, South Korean, and US students in collaboration with International Student Conferences.

²⁵ For example, Breakout Room 1: North Korea; Breakout Room 2: South Korea; Breakout Room 3: USA.

Table 1. “Walk Through History” Time Lines

Date/Year	North Korea Team	South Korea Team	US Team
1950	Start and end of Korean War	Start of the Korean War	
1953	Armistice Treaty		US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty
1985		North/South cultural exchange and start of inter-Korean family reunions	
1994	Kim Il Sung death		US-DPRK Agreed Framework deal
1998			ROK Sunshine Policy
1999		Perry Peace Process	
2000	NK-SK Summit		First inter-Korean summit
2003			Six Party Talks—multilateral engagement
2005		North Korea’s first nuclear test	
2006	NK first nuclear test		
2011	Kim Jong Il death/rise of Kim Jong Un		
2017	NK long-range missiles tests		
2018		Pyeongchang Olympics	Pyeongchang Winter Olympics—ROK-DPRK engagement
2018			US-DPRK Singapore Summit and Statement
2019 June 30	KJU—Trump meeting at Panmunjom		
2020		Anti-leaflet law	
2020		2020 SK official killed and burned by NK via “shoot-to-kill” policy to prevent COVID-19	

The primary objectives of the exercise were to (1) clarify each country's views (as represented by the participants) about defining historical events, reveal how these views were instilled by the societies in which the participants were raised, and identify the sources of tensions; (2) build mutual understanding and empathy through understanding each other's historical narratives; and (3) reflect on how social identities are formed and influence our view of conflict.

Following the breakout rooms and compilation of the three time lines, the participants, facilitators, and expert speakers shared observations from the activity, including clarifying any events that were unfamiliar or unclear. Rather than encouraging positive or negative normative judgments on events, the activity was meant to foster critical reflection on the nature of events that have influenced the history of peace on the Korean Peninsula and give participants an opportunity to articulate their own understanding of history to a broader audience.

The debrief discussion also encouraged the sharing of any events that resonated with participants on a personal level and reflection on systems and structures that contributed to the construction of these time lines, including narratives espoused by governments, the media, school textbooks, and family members. One of the expert speakers shared a personal story of "Tongil [unification] kimchi," which her mother in South Korea had made for her to take on a work trip to North Korea via China.

In the closing reflection for the first session, the facilitators invited each participant to share words to describe peace on the Korean Peninsula based on the three history time lines, which were then generated into a word cloud on Mentimeter. "Humility," "confidence," "complicated," and "principles" appeared the most frequently, while other responses included "fragile," "harmonization," "achievable," "dream," "impossible," "fantasy," and "long-term."

Key Takeaways from Day 1

The participants' perspectives generally revealed a bias toward the centrality of their own governments' actions, toward recent events rather than earlier ones, and toward the significance of high-level political engagements rather than cultural or civil society exchanges.

Selection Bias of Each Delegation Toward Their Own Governments' Roles in History.

Unsurprisingly, the delegations tended to highlight events that reflected their respective country's

perspectives and narrative on history. One US student added that each country's time line tended to include events in which "the respective country played a large role." The North Korean group selected events that emphasized the importance of its leaders and the role of leader-driven efforts, including the deaths of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il as well as the 2000 inter-Korean summit and the 2018 US-DPRK Singapore Summit. The other events included major weapons tests conducted by North Korea, including its first nuclear test in 2006 and its successful intercontinental ballistic missile tests in 2017.

North Korean Participants' Skepticism of Events That Genuinely Contributed to "Peace."

Several North Korean participants asked for clarification about the definition of peace, including whether it meant the absence of war or nuclear weapons or actual peaceful coexistence among the countries. One North Korean questioned whether any of the events on their time line actually contributed toward building "real" peace.²⁶ Another North Korean participant, commenting on the US time line, stated that "I don't view any of these events as creating real peace except the US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty because I strongly believe that the presence of US troops in South Korea prevents North Korea from invading South Korea." The facilitators explained that they did not want to define peace too narrowly since the participants may hold different interpretations, but noted that peace could involve, among other things, the absence of conflict, harmonious relations between countries, an environment in which people feel there is justice and respect for human rights, or some combination of these conditions.

South Korean Participants' Inclination for Inter-Korean, People-to-People Events. The South Korean group focused their time line mostly on inter-Korean events rather than regional, international, or US-North Korea events. This emphasis could reflect a view that underscores South Korean agency in influencing peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. Several events, such as

²⁶ "Glossary of Terms for Conflict Management and Peacebuilding," 2nd ed., United States Institute of Peace, www.usip.org/publications/usip-peace-terms-glossary. The USIP "Glossary of Terms for Conflict Management and Peacebuilding" recognizes that there are multiple definitions of peace, but distinguishes "negative peace" (the absence of violence) from "positive peace," which addresses the root causes and drivers of conflict, including structural, political, sociocultural, and social well-being, as well as economic and environmental factors.

Johan Galtung, a pioneering scholar of peace and conflict studies, has referred to peace as the "capacity to transform conflicts with empathy and creativity, without violence; a never-ending process." www.galtung-institut.de/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Peace-Practice-Professionalizing-Peace-Practice.pdf.

the start of inter-Korean family reunions in 1985, the Pyeongchang Olympics in 2018, and the anti-leaflet law in 2020, highlight actions initiated by the South Korean government to advance peace and stronger inter-Korean relations. These events were notable because they are not security-related in the traditional sense but instead demonstrate the role of people-to-people engagement and non-security-related efforts in enhancing stability and relations. It is also noteworthy that the one event on the South Korean time line that did not originate from the Korean Peninsula—the process led by former US secretary of defense William Perry in the late 1990s to review US policy toward North Korea²⁷—was well received at the time, specifically because it deliberately sought to solicit and incorporate the views of relevant parties, including the ROK and DPRK. One South Korean participant described the “Perry Process” as significant because “it represent[ed] the first time that the United States recognized North Korea as a partner, not [as] an enemy.”

US Participants’ Tendency for Cooperation, Multilateralism, and Peacebuilding. Unlike the DPRK and ROK groups, the US group crafted a time line that seemed to give equal weight to the roles of the United States, South Korea, and North Korea. The group selected both US-DPRK and multilateral efforts (i.e., 1994 Agreed Framework, 2003–08 Six Party Talks, and 2018 Singapore Summit and Statement) as well as inter-Korean engagements (i.e., 1998 Sunshine Policy, 2000 inter-Korean summit, and 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics). In addition, the US participants seemed to prioritize only peacebuilding efforts rather than events associated with security threats or risks (e.g., nuclear tests) and even focused on the 1953 US-ROK mutual defense treaty as an event from that period rather than the start of the Korean War, which the other groups chose. The US students appeared to have a perspective that emphasized cooperation, multilateralism, and peacebuilding more than the policies of pressure and isolation that US administrations have tended to use over the past decade.

Common Themes Across Time Lines. There were several themes that extended across the three time lines.

²⁷ “Review of United States Policy Toward North Korea: Findings and Recommendations,” Unclassified Report by Dr. William J. Perry, US North Korea Policy Coordinator and Special Adviser to the President and the Secretary of State, Washington, DC, October 12, 1999, 1997-2001.state.gov/regions/eap/991012_northkorea_rpt.html.

First, none of the groups selected events prior to 1950, such as Japanese colonization in 1910 or the division of the Korean Peninsula in 1945, or between 1953 and 1985, such as the 1954 Geneva Conference or the 1972 inter-Korean joint communique. These omissions may reflect a recency bias by the young participants that attributes greater importance to more recent events or a lack of awareness of the earlier events and their roles in shaping peace on the Korean Peninsula, both of which could also be ascribed to the historical narratives taught by the respective countries' societies and educational systems. The absence of any time line events between 1953 and 1994 (except for the inter-Korean reunions in 1985) could also reflect the fact that serious peacebuilding efforts and significant US-DPRK engagement were sparse during this four-decade period. It is also noteworthy that no groups identified a relatively recent US-ROK effort that explicitly focused on peace—the April 1996 proposal by Presidents Bill Clinton and Kim Young-sam for peace talks with North Korea.

Second, the three time lines exhibited a prevalence of high-level summitry and political events rather than cultural or civil society exchanges. Only the South Korean group listed an event related to people-to-people ties (i.e., North-South cultural exchanges and the start of family reunions) in its time line. This pattern reveals the perception among most youth, correct or not, that peace and security are typically advanced through high-level Track 1 (official government) engagements rather than Track 2 (nongovernmental) or Track 3 (people-to-people) exchanges. One opportunity for continued discussion from this observation may have been to delve deeper into the perspectives of participants on the potential for non-Track 1 diplomacy to impact peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Third, although there were a few events that two groups had in common, such as the Pyeongchang Olympics or the 2000 inter-Korean summit, there were no events that all three groups had in common. The three time lines did all begin with events during the 1950–53 Korean War, suggesting the conflict's perceived significance in determining the course of the Korean Peninsula, but they diverged in which aspects were emphasized (“Start and end of the Korean War/Armistice Agreement” vs. “Start of the Korean War” vs. “US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty”). Explaining that a mutual understanding of the past is necessary to resolve the conflicts of the present, facilitators

prompted participants to consider factors that shaped the construction of their time lines on a personal level, from history textbooks to social media and family stories. The facilitators also encouraged the group to think of these events as part of a process of shaping peace on the Korean Peninsula, rather than one treaty or summit single-handedly determining the presence or absence of peace.

Day 2: Discussing Present Challenges to Peace on the Korean Peninsula

Methodology: Caucus and “Fishbowl” Discussions

The workshop emphasized the principle that conflict stems from unmet needs and that it is necessary to identify these needs and assess whether they are reconcilable before taking steps to resolve the conflict. Accordingly, the second session focused on a discussion of each country’s core “needs” that should be addressed to overcome challenges to peace on the Korean Peninsula, rather than strategies or policies for fulfilling these needs. In a thirty-minute “caucus session” of breakout rooms by country, participants addressed the question, “What do you believe are the main needs for your country regarding peace and security on the Korean Peninsula?” while distinguishing levels of priority.²⁸

Each breakout room had a facilitator and used a Google Jamboard (i.e., virtual whiteboard) to allow participants to brainstorm ideas and prioritize a list of needs for their country. Facilitators encouraged participants to consider a wide variety of areas in formulating this list, including education, health care/welfare, transportation, foreign affairs, culture, energy/environment, security, economy, society, and government.

After the caucus breakout session, the participants returned to the main plenary room and each facilitator led a “fishbowl” debriefing discussion with their breakout group. Fishbowl participants formed an “inner circle” of the Zoom room, leaving their cameras on. During this time, the other two groups in the “outer circle” were instructed to turn their videos off, mute themselves, and focus

²⁸ While there were cases in which a participant identified with multiple countries (for example, with both North and South Korea), the facilitators encouraged participants to represent their delegation for the sake of clearly distinguishing each country’s time line.

on listening actively to the voices in the inner circle. Each of the three groups alternated, taking fifteen minutes to be in the fishbowl or inner circle with the facilitator from their caucus breakout room.

The fishbowl conversation began with a reflection about the format itself, including sharing any feelings and concerns about being in the inner circle, then continued the discussion of needs from the caucus breakout room. The activity ended with a 20-minute debrief that allowed for an open and personal exchange of questions, particularly regarding how the lived experiences of the North Korean participants shaped their perspectives on regime change and information access to the country.

Needs Analysis

The following section describes and analyzes each group's discussion of their country's needs. While there was no limit on the number of needs that participants could generate, facilitators encouraged each group to sort them by priority for their country.

South Korea

The South Korean participants immediately identified security as the most important need, especially with regard to provocations from North Korea. Two participants noted that North Korean aggression had caused many South Koreans to “lose their willingness to think about reconciliation” and reunification. Some South Korean participants also raised human rights as essential to an inclusive and sustainable peace. One participant explained that “without fully acknowledging human rights violations in North Korea, we are creating peace and security for the privileged” rather than the victims of human rights abuses. A third need that South Korean participants identified was civic engagement in a peace process for the Korean Peninsula, agreeing that youth have largely been excluded from mainstream discussions on this issue. Participants argued that the South Korean people “should be directly involved in building and shaping peace on the Korean Peninsula because it directly impacts us” and need to “start having honest discussions about what the future is for us.” Related to civic engagement was the need for more accurate information. One South Korean student

noted that “growing up in South Korea, I didn’t really hear as much about North Korea, only historical events like the Korean War, the separation of families.”

North Korea

The North Korean participants’ needs diverged strongly from the needs of the North Korean government. Although most North Korea analysts believe the regime’s needs focus on its own security and the value of nuclear weapons to deter foreign interference, the North Korean youth identified their primary need to be the de-escalation of geopolitical tensions, which would be fostered by denuclearization. To meet this need, participants identified three key factors: incentivizing Beijing to pressure the North Korean regime, reciprocity from Pyongyang in negotiations (i.e., North Korea should follow through on its commitments), and trust-building mechanisms between Seoul, Pyongyang, and Washington.

There was also consensus that regime change in North Korea is absolutely necessary for peace on the Korean Peninsula, a recurring topic across all three sessions. The most vocal proponent of regime change insisted that “I don’t think [peace] is possible as long as Kim Jong Un stays in power” and “I don’t think it’s possible to live with [the North Korean] regime,” while others preferred to focus on piecemeal reforms, suggesting a range of opinions on the feasibility of regime change. However, given the current North Korean government’s track record on human rights violations and provocations, many in the group expressed their hope for bringing liberal democracy to North Korea in the future.

The North Korean participants also identified improvement of the human rights situation in North Korea as an important need. Several participants argued that human rights could be improved by increasing access to information to all citizens in the country and opening North Korea’s economy to foreign markets, though they recognized its feasibility hinged on sanctions relief.

United States

US participants agreed that the top US priority was North Korean denuclearization, but also suggested that other needs should be prioritized. One student clarified that the group listed

denuclearization as a priority only because “it is difficult to imagine a point where the US policymakers would put denuclearization on the back burner and wouldn’t see it as a primary point of negotiation.” Several participants noted that while the US government prioritizes denuclearization due to legitimate security concerns and threat perceptions, this single-minded focus has not been successful. They offered that the United States should instead prioritize improving its relationship with North Korea through cultural exchanges and engagements that provide insight into understanding economic, political, and ideological differences.

Several participants added that having more stable, consistent communications with North Korea could help improve relations and mitigate our fear of the unknown. One participant noticed that “when there is a change in administration [in the United States] or when problems arise, communication suffers . . . [so] we need to institutionalize and stabilize means of communication between the United States and North Korea.” Another participant reflected how the United States “views North Korea as this unpredictable, rogue regime that we don’t understand, so we need better relations and communication to alleviate the fear of the unknown . . . this way conversation can move forward and we can have a foundation for the continuation of dialogue.”

Similarly, many US participants also expressed a need for stronger transparency about US policy toward North Korea as well as the situation in North Korea and the strategic calculus of the regime. To this end, participants acknowledged the need for more education in the United States about the Korean Peninsula and the Korean War, which could dispel caricatures of the regime, encourage more civilian engagement, and put pressure on the US government to prioritize the North Korea issue. One participant stated that it is important for the US government and people to “stop thinking about North Korea as a monolith.”

Key Takeaways from Day 2

Stark Difference in Perspectives Between Participants and Their Governments. Both the North Korean and US delegations recognized that their groups’ views on the requirements for peace differed from their respective governments’ views. The North Korean participants recognized that the Kim government prioritizes regime survival, but they still chose to emphasize their perception of

what was in the best interests of their country (i.e., regime change). The fact that all members of the North Korean delegation had defected from the country and resettled in either South Korea or the United States may have contributed to their collective antipathy toward the Kim regime.

The US participants' views also appeared to diverge from their government. One US student explained that "US citizens and the US government have very different opinions on approaches to peace on the peninsula," noting that the "US government has hard-line policies" and portrays North Korea as an adversarial government rather than a people. Likewise, the US delegation noted that while its government has prioritized denuclearization as a prerequisite for peace and security, real progress would require improving relations with North Korea, having a better understanding of ideological and cultural differences, strengthening communications, and having greater education and transparency concerning North Korea and related policy. The question of how to bridge the gap between the US government's position, for example, and the more optimistic views of youth participants, however, remained unresolved. However, participants suggested that more transparency, education, and clarity on policy could be a first step toward addressing this issue.

Utility of Session Format in Facilitating Mutual Learning and Expression of Perspectives. Several participants mentioned that the "fishbowl" format was conducive to deep listening and understanding of the various perspectives within a delegation without the pressure of reacting or responding to a speaker. In addition to assisting the learning experience of the observers, the setup of the discussion also provided each delegation in the "spotlight" the space to share their views freely without interjection from members of other delegations.

Day 3: Generating Solutions for the Future

Methodology: Mixed Breakout Rooms

The third and final session of the workshop focused on generating solutions for the future in mixed-country breakout rooms of US, South Korean, and North Korean participants.²⁹ Each group

²⁹ Each of the breakout rooms of eight people had two or three US, South Korean, and North Korean participants.

discussed the following questions: Are the three countries' respective needs compatible? If not, what needs to be done to resolve them? What does peace on the Korean Peninsula look like in 2050?

In the final plenary session, spokespeople from each breakout room summarized the key points from the discussion, including the incompatible needs, ideas for reconciling them, and broader visions for peace on the Korean Peninsula in 2050. Participants discussed the possibility of achieving a consensus on common principles that could guide a peace process on the Korean Peninsula, as well as issues that the current governments from the three countries are overlooking or not addressing in their policies. The mixed breakout rooms also served as an opportunity for intergroup discussion, particularly regarding portrayals of peace and unification in the media and the environment for North Korean defectors in South Korea.

Key Takeaways from Day 3

The following two sections describe common themes that emerged regarding a vision for peace on the Korean Peninsula in 2050, as well as major challenges and opportunities that participants identified as essential to peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Common Themes Regarding Youth Participants' Vision for Peace on the Korean Peninsula in 2050

Desire for Better Relations and a Change in the Status Quo. Despite the challenges apparent in the status quo, participants did not recognize that the three countries' core needs—namely, security and denuclearization—were fundamentally incompatible in the long term. Rather, participants seemed forward-looking on the need for trust building, communication, and exchange, not just on a diplomatic level, but also on a people-to-people level. Though not stated by participants explicitly, their visions and suggestions for reconciling the three countries' various needs seemed to point to the appropriateness of the three countries negotiating their interests in an incremental, reciprocal, and proportional manner.

Overall, participants shared a mutual desire for a change in the status quo and better relations with Pyongyang. In particular, participants noted their desire for a Korean Peninsula that is free and democratic, and in which freedom of movement and flow of communication is possible in and out of

North Korea. One of the North Korean participants shared a very personal hope that “North Korea can be a place where I and other North Koreans can freely visit our home” and that “in 2050, North Korean identity is not something to be embarrassed of on the Korean Peninsula.”

Caution Against Conflating the Views of a Government and Its People. Participants from all three countries underscored the need to separate the views and interests of the government from the people. They noted that the US government and its people should stop thinking about North Korea as a monolith and consider how decisions would affect the North Korean government and its people differently. Similarly, although the US government seems to focus more on broader and transactional interactions with the North Korean government, the participants emphasized more micro-level issues. North and South Korean participants agreed that opportunities for dialogue, like the workshop, are necessary to parse out the differences between the needs of the people and the government for any of the three countries.

Unification as an Interest, Rather Than a Priority. Most participants believed that unification is not necessary for peace, nor is it a priority compared to better relations.³⁰ A North Korean participant described the need to redefine and shift the understanding of reunification, reflecting that “Many people think that reunification is what makes peace, because we are one nation and one people, but I think this is wrong.” Another North Korean also questioned the idea of equating unification with peace, suggesting that “we have been brainwashed in North Korea and South Korea to think that unification is our goal, but this should be changed or replaced with [an] alternative.” “Peace in 2050,” he added, “could be two independent countries but with normalized relations.” Even the South Korean participants who described unification as “essential” seemed to prefer a “phased” approach of a federal system, with one country under two political models, moving gradually toward a “one country, one model” system.

Minimal Role for China. Notably, China, which has been at the forefront of the foreign policy calculus of Washington, Seoul, and Pyongyang, remained at the margins of the discussion in the

³⁰ “Over 60% of S. Korean Youth Say Unification with NK Necessary: Survey,” *Korea Herald*, February 9, 2021, www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210209000799; Chung Min Lee, “A Peninsula of Paradoxes: South Korean Public Opinion on Unification and Outside Powers,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 13, 2020, carnegieendowment.org/2020/05/13/peninsula-of-paradoxes-south-korean-public-opinion-on-unification-and-outside-powers-pub-81737.

workshop. Only one US participant pointed out Washington’s “balancing act” with Beijing and how this impacts US efforts on the Korean Peninsula. Rather, participants from all three countries clarified that the Korean people should drive peace on the Korean Peninsula, not foreign actors.

Key Challenges and Opportunities Identified by Youth Regarding Envisioning Peace on the Korean Peninsula

How to Define Peace and for Whom? (For the People vs. the Government). Participants expressed their clear desire for “positive” peace in which there is free and open communication and human rights for people on the Korean Peninsula, as opposed to a “negative” peace, or simply an absence of active violent conflict. One South Korean participant noted that the “absence of war and hostilities is not genuine peace.” However, multiple participants noted the difficulty of reconciling the various definitions of peace. For example, US participants seemed to describe peace as “diplomatic, top-level, and academic,” while for South Koreans, peace was viewed primarily through the lens of nationalism and inter-Korean relations. Corresponding with their perspectives from the Walk Through History exercise in Session 1, North Korean participants were skeptical of “peace” if it meant that North Koreans had to live under the current regime. One North Korean participant questioned the sincerity of peace under the current North Korean government, asking “why, if [the North Korean government] agreed to make peace, [do] they not provide freedom to the North Korean people? Why don’t they allow them to speak to people from South Korea?”

How to Reconcile the Desire for Regime Change with the Desire to Strengthen Security and Relations Between the Three Countries? While the facilitators clarified that replacing the current government in Pyongyang is unlikely to be an explicit policy goal for Washington or Seoul, and questioned whether regime change could happen peacefully, the North Korean group strongly agreed that a change in the North Korean regime was necessary to achieve peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. One North Korean participant said that “we should talk about regime change first, and [only] then we can talk about permanent peace and coexistence on the Korean Peninsula.” However, some South Korean and US participants pushed back, saying that information access and opening North Korea’s economy would be more effective, realistic, and conducive to peace than pushing for direct regime change. One South Korean participant expressed surprise at the North

Korean group's consensus on the need for regime change. He noted that South Koreans generally believe that either "the North Korean people don't know that their country is different," or that "they want to change their regime [but] are too afraid to do anything," and asked the North Korean group whether they developed this sentiment while in North Korea or after escaping the country. A US participant emphasized the impracticality of regime change, stating that though human rights should be a priority issue (for the United States) and ideal for all parties, regime change is highly unlikely and a variable over which we have little control.

In general, participants did not address the lingering issue of how regime change could be achieved peacefully. However, both US and North Korean participants suggested that information access, including through opening up markets, enhancing economic exchange, and increasing international integration, could be an indirect way to change the regime's provocative behavior and human rights practices in the long term without harming the immediate security of the Korean Peninsula. Multiple North Korean participants shared their personal stories of how foreign media motivated their decision to escape the country. A North Korean participant explained that:

One of the reasons why the North Korean regime can control its population is not just that it implements fear as a control mechanism, but also uses the art of persuasion, whether through propaganda or other means. By providing outside information you can provoke curiosity, and once you have curiosity you can't really get rid of it. . . . Providing information therefore not only provides better information to North Korean citizens, but also weakens the North Korean regime's control mechanism.

How to Improve and Ensure Human Rights (Including Transitional Justice) in North Korea While Strengthening Relations with Pyongyang? Participants from all three countries affirmed the importance of human rights for "true" peace on the Korean Peninsula. One South Korean participant called for a more active and inclusive approach to human rights, stating that "we also need to create peace and security for the North Korean population who are experiencing these human rights violations." Another South Korean participant sought clarification on the exact interpretation

of human rights in North Korea, asking, “Are human rights material and financial, or do we want to change North Korea into a democracy?” However, some South Korean and US participants noted that raising human rights could threaten progress in building relationships with the North Korean government. One concrete example that demonstrated the tension related to human rights was between transitional justice and security. Multiple South Korean participants noted that transitional justice in North Korea is necessary for there to be a sustainable peace in 2050, “even if there is a conflict of interest with security issues.”³¹

How to Achieve North Korean Denuclearization While Forging Peaceful Relations? The prioritization of the goal of denuclearization emerged as a fundamental point of incompatibility among the needs voiced by the South Korean, North Korean, and US groups. There was broad recognition that denuclearization was a core element of achieving peace, but also that Pyongyang would not pursue this path without acceptable trust-building mechanisms and security guarantees. One North Korean participant described North Korea as a “hedgehog,” saying that “unless it pulls off its quills, it is hard to have any conversation. Our task is to convince the regime to open North Korea up to the global community. This is the dilemma we are confronting, how to make the regime open itself up to the international community.”

Recognizing the sequencing dilemma that perpetuates the status quo—for Pyongyang, peace leads to denuclearization, but for Washington, only denuclearization can lead to peace—most participants were doubtful of North Korea’s denuclearization in the short term. Instead, they focused on short-term alternatives to improving the security situation, including a need for regular and stable communications between all three countries, as well as transparency from all sides to reduce mistrust and avoid escalation during crises. A US participant reflected how “immediate steps toward denuclearization are not feasible, especially if there is still distrust between the parties,” instead

³¹ The International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) defines transitional justice as referring to “the ways countries emerging from periods of conflict and repression address large-scale or systematic human rights violations so numerous and so serious that the normal justice system will not be able to provide an adequate response.” Transitional justice typically refers to postconflict processes of truth seeking, criminal prosecutions, and reparations for human rights violations. “What Is Transitional Justice?” International Center for Transitional Justice, www.ictj.org/what-transitional-justice.

calling for regular government and civilian dialogues so that “when conflict arises . . . all three states will be able to work more productively toward solutions.”

Regarding trust- and relationship-building mechanisms, one US participant noted, “once we become more secure and know that the Kim regime can be allies, or at least not adversaries, then we can work toward denuclearization. The Kim regime won’t denuclearize if they feel threatened by the US or see us as their adversary.” The same participant also argued that “to improve our efforts for peace on the peninsula, we need to prioritize improving our relationship with North Korea through other methods such as cultural exchange or understanding political, economic, and ideological differences.” Ultimately, participants recognized denuclearization as a common need to which all three countries should aspire, but did not come up with any suggestions on how to resolve the current deadlock.

How to Encourage Greater Information, Education, Transparency, and Communication Among People Given the North Korean Government’s Need for Regime Security and the Collective Desire for Better Diplomatic Relations? Nearly all participants agreed on the need for better access to information, education, and a more conducive environment for discussing and understanding these issues in all three countries, including greater transparency about US policy toward North Korea. In particular, despite differences in perspectives on the feasibility of regime change, all of the participants consistently raised the importance of increasing access to information for North Koreans as a critical and nonviolent way to strengthen peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. Many North Korean participants emphasized that better integration between North Korea–born and South Korea–born people in South Korean society needs to happen first before any broader peace can be possible across the 38th parallel.

Participants were split, however, on whether increased information access would actually provide the North Korean people greater agency. While a US participant noted that “providing information and establishing exchange can be a way to . . . make self-determination in North Korea more possible,” a North Korean participant concluded that “self-determination can only be possible if the North Korean regime is gone.” Some participants also mentioned that, because outside information posed a threat to the North Korean government, efforts to increase information access could undermine better relations between Pyongyang and Washington or Seoul.

This tactic was particularly salient in the wake of the South Korean National Assembly’s passage of a controversial law in December 2020 that criminalized the flying of leaflets attached to balloons into North Korea.³² One US participant noted how “some argue that [the law] makes South Korea an unsafe space for North Korean defectors to advocate for human rights in North Korea” and expressed interest in learning about how to navigate this new political landscape. Facilitators elaborated on the conundrum that the law poses, from the apparent risk of South Korean civil society clamping down on human rights advocacy in South Korea, to an observation that these information dissemination activities conflict with the North Korean government’s need for security and legitimacy. Conversely, South Korean citizens still face a legal barrier to understanding North Korea directly through primary sources, given that Article 7 of South Korea’s 1948 National Security Law still restricts citizens from distributing or possessing documents, media, or other information from North Korea on the grounds of subversion.³³ Nevertheless, most participants viewed greater information access as part of a viable long-term strategy for peace and security rather than as a potential immediate threat to the security of the Korean Peninsula.

CONCLUSION

Given the relatively small sample size and the condensed length of the workshop, the workshop aimed to reflect some of the range of perspectives on peace and security among young people on the Korean Peninsula and capture some of their broad principles for peace.

1. The Need to Understand the Perspectives of Youth for Peace on the Korean Peninsula

The first session provided a snapshot of how some youth view the history of peace and conflict on the Korean Peninsula, with tendencies distinct to each delegation. While the differences between

³² “Full Text: South Korea’s New ‘Anti-Leaflet’ Law, in English,” *NK Pro*, December 13, 2020, www.nknews.org/pro/full-text-south-koreas-new-anti-leaflet-law-in-english; Jieun Baek, “Don’t Leave North Koreans in the Dark,” *Foreign Affairs*, December 21, 2020, www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2020-12-21/dont-leave-north-koreans-dark.

³³ “National Security Act,” Republic of Korea, Act No. 11042, September 15, 2011, elaw.klri.re.kr/eng_service/lawView.do?hseq=26692&lang=ENG.

delegations were somewhat expected, the needs analysis in the second session revealed major discrepancies between the youth participants and their governments (namely, in Pyongyang and Washington). This tension between the perspectives of the youth delegations, as well as between the positions of the delegations and their governments, became apparent in the final session, as several components of the mixed groups' visions for peace clashed with each other. Recognizing, understanding, and eventually resolving this dissonance will be crucial for successful government engagement with this generation of youth on the Korean Peninsula, as well as for peacebuilding practitioners seeking to design and implement interactive conflict management workshops for young people from different countries, particularly through virtual platforms.

2. The Need for Greater Education and People-to-People Exchange in All Three Countries Regarding Peace on the Korean Peninsula

The three sessions revealed that there is not only limited education about the perspectives and histories of other countries on the Korean Peninsula, but also a lack of opportunities for young people from the three countries to hear and learn directly from each other. The feedback from participants demonstrated how workshops like this one can help clarify the perspectives of youth on the Korean Peninsula, improve intergroup understanding, and strengthen their peacebuilding capacity. A US participant reflected that the workshop “provided an excellent platform for participants to not only learn about other, often contrasting, perspectives, but it allowed us to deepen our understanding of our own perspectives. With the experts and other participants, we were gently challenged to consider things from a different angle, and to think about the human element that should be at the core of this issue, but is not. The diversity of the participants allowed interdisciplinary discussion and a platform to continue to engage with like-minded individuals after the conclusion of the workshop.”

Another US participant noted how the workshop “was such an interesting and unique opportunity and way to experience new perspectives. Even in three days, I feel that I have become so much more aware of the issues discussed, which was my general goal in participating in the workshop. It was very refreshing and touching how candid the discussions were. I can't exactly explain, but I feel

much more grounded having participated. I think these types of discussion are really imperative to shaping the future ways individuals think about and approach issues of North Korea.” A South Korean participant closed with a reflection that he feels the need to fight stereotypes about North Korea in South Korea, “even if I just make a little difference,” and his hope for having these kinds of workshops in Korean. Finally, a North Korean participant expressed his appreciation for all participants for their interest and passion on the issue of peace on the Korean Peninsula, and reflected his hope to avoid “getting used to not making any progress,” despite the fact that these problems are very difficult.

Most of the participants gave a positive assessment about the workshop experience. In a post-workshop survey, 84.7 percent of participants reported that they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their experience in the workshop, and 84.6 percent reported that they would be willing to recommend the workshop to other youth participants.³⁴ Despite initial concerns regarding “Zoom burn-out,” most participants expressed a desire to extend the duration of the workshop and include more time for relationship building, particularly with those from different delegations. Participants noted that the variety of virtual tools, including Zoom, Jamboard, and Mentimeter, allowed them to stay engaged, collaborate more effectively, and visualize their ideas.

3. Areas for Improvement/Potential Next Steps for Future Programming

There remains great potential to continue and expand this kind of programming, through both virtual and nonvirtual platforms, including public webinars to amplify the perspectives and experiences of youth, working groups to draft memos from the themes that emerged, and a wider net of participants, even those from other countries.

One key area that USIP can address in future online programming is to be aware of the potential asymmetrical power dynamics in virtual spaces, from cultural differences in communication styles to a focus on topics concerning the host country (in this case, the United States). Language is

³⁴ The remaining respondents indicated a “neutral” assessment of 3 (out of 5), perhaps due to the length of the sessions or the room for improvement in intergroup conversations.

another major area that should be considered for any future iterations of the program; though all participants were able to engage in English, allowing accessibility for Korean, such as through simultaneous interpretation, could allow some South Korean and North Korean participants to express themselves more freely.

In a similar vein, the participant selection process could include a formal application process to attract a wider pool of participants with diverse perspectives and backgrounds. The application process for future programs could include essay questions that prompt candidates to reflect on and identify their own biases, as well as an interview process to assess language skills and willingness to engage actively in discussions on the workshop topics.

Furthermore, future workshops could invest more time in building trust and cohesion to nurture sustained relationships, rather than a one-off workshop. For example, the workshop could take place over multiple weeks instead of a few days. Spreading out the sessions could also help provide more time for facilitators to analyze the discussions and plan accordingly, while allowing participants more time to collect their thoughts, such as through written journal reflections or oral presentations. USIP could also increase the scope and impact of the program by providing platforms, whether private roundtables with policy practitioners or public forums, for the youth to present their perspectives and ideas from the workshop.

Finally, USIP could build on the asynchronous resources that it provided, such as an offline channel of communication that could serve as a discussion forum between sessions. One observer noted that for potential future workshops, it would be helpful to measure the participants' views before and after the workshop to determine the impact of the workshop on intergroup understanding and perspectives on peace.

USIP was able to design and implement this workshop effectively at minimal cost due to the virtual format and the support of partner organizations. However, the limitation to two hours a day in a virtual setting impeded the ability of the workshop organizers and participants to develop deeper relationships and trust, engage in in-depth discussions about various subject matter, and benefit from the nuanced interactions that only an in-person setting can provide.³⁵ In the debrief discussion and

³⁵ Five (out of 13) participants who completed the post-workshop survey stated that they wished it were longer.

in a post-workshop survey on areas for improvement, several participants from the pilot expressed interest in participating in an in-person workshop that allows for deeper engagement. In addition to improved quality of engagement, an in-person program could also allow for organic relationship and trust building outside the workshop that are less feasible in virtual platforms.

Depending on the level of engagement from participants in an initial in-person workshop and the ability to secure necessary funding, USIP may build out this initiative to expand the scope and impact of the project. Despite the many areas for improvement and optimization of the agenda, from providing more space for intergroup conversations to more in-depth discussions on specific thematic areas, the workshop set a precedent for bringing together young people from North Korea, South Korea, and the United States to discuss a vision for peace on the Korean Peninsula. Furthermore, the workshop demonstrated that doing so can help articulate the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for this generation, who are already taking steps toward building peace on the Korean Peninsula.

APPENDIX: WORKSHOP AGENDA

**US-North Korea-South Korea Youth Workshop:
Envisioning Peace on the Korean Peninsula in 2050 January 11–13, 2021
US Institute of Peace Virtual Workshop**

Draft Agenda

Session 1: Building Relationships and Mutual Understanding of the Past
Monday, January 11 from 8:00–10:00pm EST
(Tuesday, January 12 from 10:00am–12:00pm KST)

Time	Activity	Notes
8:05–8:10pm (10 min)	Opening and welcome	<p>Frank introduces USIP and North Korea program</p> <p>Paul introduces youth team, Zoom guidelines (mute as default, videos on if possible, names, how to raise hand) (make it clear that it’s Chatham House rules, recording), and goals of workshop (deepen intergroup understanding, capacity building for peacebuilding for you, leaders of Korean Peninsula in next 30 years)</p> <p>“Ground rules”/Guidelines to help foster learning environment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek to be open minded; challenge assumptions—accept and understand others; use active listening skills 2. Speak from the “I” and ask others to speak for themselves (self and lived experiences vs. government and reality) 3. Make space/take space (equity of voices): acknowledge age/experience/power dynamics—note that some senior people may want to teach, younger people may be afraid to speak out and pay attention to different levels of English skills 4. Full participation and focus 5. Bodily autonomy (bathroom, water breaks ok) 6. Respectful language—dialogue vs. debate, right vs. wrong 7. Maintain Chatham House rules—reminder about recording
8:10–8:30pm (~20 min)	Introductions	<p>Each person will have ~1 minute to introduce themselves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name • Country representing • Current school/institution • Share symbol/image/object to describe a vision for peace the Korean Peninsula in 2050

(continued)

Session 1: Building Relationships and Mutual Understanding of the Past (continued)

Monday, January 11 from 8:00–10:00pm EST
(Tuesday, January 12 from 10:00am–12:00pm KST)

Time	Activity	Notes
8:30–8:50pm (~20 minutes)	Walk Through History exercise	<p>Each country group will be invited to discuss and select what they believe to be the seven most significant/defining events in history for shaping peace and security on the Korean Peninsula</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify the sources of tensions and each country’s views, and how these views were instilled by the society in which you were raised • Build mutual understanding/empathy through understanding each other’s historical narratives • Reflect on how our social identities are formed and influence our view of conflict
8:55–9:00pm (5 min)	Break	
9:00–9:20pm (~20 min)	Debrief in main room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First, clarify any events/history that is unfamiliar/unclear • How did it feel compiling your time line? Would anyone like to share any immediate observations? • What factors shaped your construction of your time line/ historical narrative? (family, school, media, government, etc.) • What led you to choose certain events over others? • How do the events resonate/connect with you on a personal level? Were you directly part of/alive in any of these? <p>Encourage sharing of personal stories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What trends/differences do you notice between time lines? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Recognize alternative perspectives, which of these are antagonistic/conflict-based vs. cooperative/mediative? Political vs. cultural/regional/economic—how do you personally relate to North/South Korea or US-Korea relations? ◦ What do you think is missing that you think should be included? • How is this different from (or similar to) how your families or peers would respond? • What would a future time line look like? (ideally)
9:30–9:50pm	Discussion with guests	<p>3 guests to comment on time lines and engage in Q&A</p> <p>Yonho Kim (South Korea); Jessica Lee (United States); Jean Lee (North Korea)</p>

(continued)

Session 1: Building Relationships and Mutual Understanding of the Past (continued)

Monday, January 11 from 8:00–10:00pm EST
(Tuesday, January 12 from 10:00am–12:00pm KST)

Time	Activity	Notes
9:50–10:00pm (~10 min)	Closing activity	Closing reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share 1 word to describe peace on the Korean Peninsula based on these time lines<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Paul to put in word cloud in Mentimeter• Preview agenda for Day 2

Session 2: Discussing Present Challenges to Peace on the Korean Peninsula

Tuesday, January 12 from 8:00–10:00pm EST
(Wednesday, January 13 from 10:00am–12:00pm KST)

Time	Activity	Notes
8:00–8:10pm	Opening and check-in	Paul recap of last session/takeaways from Walk Through History, invite any questions/comments
8:10–8:40pm (30 min)	Discussion in breakout rooms (caucus by country)	Questions for each caucus to discuss in breakout room: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you believe are the main needs for your country vis-à-vis peace and security on the Korean Peninsula?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ (as opposed to just “interests” or “policies,” negotiable vs. nonnegotiable, means vs. ends)◦ give examples• Consider various issues, including education, health care/welfare, transportation, foreign affairs, culture, energy/environment, security, economy, society, government• Try to prioritize needs to some extent• Emphasize that participants are primarily representing themselves, not necessarily the government

(continued)

Session 2: Discussing Present Challenges to Peace on the Korean Peninsula (continued)

Tuesday, January 12 from 8:00–10:00pm EST
(Wednesday, January 13 from 10:00am–12:00pm KST)

Time	Activity	Notes
8:40–8:55pm (15 min)	<p>Fishbowl discussion in main room</p> <p>The fishbowl dialogue format consists of two concentric circles: 1 group comprises the inner circle, and the other two groups will make up the outer circle. There is a facilitator in the inner circle. For 10 minutes (time flexible), only the participants in the inner circle can speak, while the participants in the outer circle listen.</p>	<p>15 min in Fishbowl South Korea (US and NK have cameras off)</p> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As we are sitting here in concentric circles with the other group observing, how do you feel right now? What concerns do you have? • Would anyone like to share what we brought forward in the caucus? • What is one thing you would like to know more about the other groups? • What is one thing you wish the other group would understand or “hear” about us?
8:55–9:00pm	Break	
9:00–9:15pm (15 min)	<p>Fishbowl discussion in main room</p>	<p>15 min in Fishbowl North Korea (SK and US have cameras off)</p> <p>Discussion questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As we are sitting here in concentric circles with the other group observing, how do you feel right now? What concerns do you have? • Would anyone like to share what we brought forward in the caucus? • What is one thing you would like to know more about the other groups? • What is one thing you wish the other group would understand or “hear” about us?

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Session 2: Discussing Present Challenges to Peace on the Korean Peninsula (continued)

Tuesday, January 12 from 8:00–10:00pm EST
 (Wednesday, January 13 from 10:00am–12:00pm KST)

Time	Activity	Notes
9:15–9:30pm (15 min)	Fishbowl discussion in main room	15 min in Fishbowl US (NK and SK have cameras off) Discussion questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As we are sitting here in concentric circles with the other group observing, how do you feel right now? What concerns do you have? • Would anyone like to share what we brought forward in the caucus? • What is one thing you would like to know more about the other groups? • What is one thing you wish the other group would understand or “hear” about us?
9:30–9:50pm (20 min)	Group debrief	Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does it feel to be back in a single group? • How was this kind of communication different from other dialogues? • What did you learn that you hadn’t expected to? • What question do you have for other group? What is one “takeaway” for you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Allow Q&A between groups
9:55–10:00pm (5 min)	Closing check-in + preview of Day 3	One word to describe how you are feeling in the chat

Session 3: Generating Solutions for the Future
 Wednesday, January 13 from 8:00–10:00pm EST
 (Thursday, January 14 from 10:00am–12:00pm KST)

Time	Activity	Notes
8:00–8:10pm (10 min)	Opening	Recap of Day 2—what are some takeaways/remaining questions for today?
8:10–8:50pm (40 min)	Brainstorming in 3 mixed breakout rooms about a collective vision and strategies for peace on the Korean Peninsula	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are these needs compatible? If not, what needs to be done to resolve them? 2. What does peace on the Korean Peninsula look like in 2050?
8:55–9:00pm	Break	
9:00–9:50pm (50 min)	Group discussion in main room	<p>Possible to achieve consensus or common principles that everyone shares?</p> <p>Any issues that three governments are not addressing?</p>
9:50–10:00pm (10 min)	Closing/next steps	Group photo

If interested in the Jamboard and/or Mentimeter artwork from the workshop, contact Frank Aum (faum@usip.org).