

Research Questions

Conference Objectives

- To understand how history (and interpretations thereof) influences/shapes policy.
- To understand how lack of historical awareness and varied interpretations of historical issues hinders good policymaking; conversely, when is history an impediment to good policymaking?
- To understand how policy decisions affect the interpretation and politicization of history.
- What kind of policy-relevant research, that might be helpful to U.S. relations with the Koreans, do we lack/need?
- To engage in comparative analysis of Korea-related issues (and the role of the U.S.) through other country cases.

Roundtable I – History and Policy: Issues, Process, Implementation

When it comes down to policymaking, is domestic politics the real driver? For example, regardless of historical legacies and the geopolitical importance of resolving conflict (with e.g., the DPRK), does political polarization among political elites and interest groups determine what's possible or not?

Among the various factors that go into policymaking, is the personality/personal relationship between leaders and negotiators a primary driver in policy decisions?

Sue Mi Terry (Moderator) – What's the most egregious example of lack of historical understanding by policy makers on both sides in the U.S.-Korea relationship?

Charles K. Armstrong – What have we learned from 25 years of failed predictions of North Korea's collapse? How does this historical fact affect policymaking?

Victor Cha – Scholars overestimate two things about policy: 1) “ignorance” and “non-specialist” credentials of policymakers; and 2) perspective – that is, the degree to which policy operates in a vacuum.

Johna Ohtagaki – Looking to the future, under unification, what happens [to Korean politics and U.S.-ROK relations] when the North Koreans can vote?

Tae Gyun Park – How do misperception and miscommunication between the ROK and the U.S. affect policy? For example, Koreans don't know the reality/truth about the Global Posture Review (GPR) under Pres. George W. Bush and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld which led to the restructuring and reduction of U.S. troops in South Korea. Was it due to U.S. strategic interests, budget problems, or South Korean anti-American demonstrations in 2002-03?

Second, many Koreans, even from the days of President Syngman Rhee, perceive the U.S. government as 'pro-Japanese' and more favorable to Japan's positions in Korea's relationship with Japan. Is there some truth to this perception?

Roundtable II – Alliance Management: Bases, Weapons, and Command

How do the following factors affect alliance politics, management, and transformation (includes burden-sharing, operational control and coordination, troop composition and movement within Korea and deployment outside Korea)?

- *Legacy of the Korean War, the Cold War, and contemporary regional changes?*
- *Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA)*
- *Transnational criticism and activism of U.S. bases abroad*

Katharine H.S. Moon (Moderator) – How should policymakers address the issues concerning SOFA? Specifically, the increased complexity of actors in alliance politics, institutionalization of procedures and protocols over time, and politicization of U.S. bases (sovereignty, unequal relations, troop conduct, civilian rights).

Van Jackson – The alliance was born out of convergent threat perceptions in 1950, but how does threat perception affect alliance management today? Are there differences in how South Korea and the U.S. see the threat posed by North Korea, and threats in the region more broadly? Does threat perception convergence/divergence "trickle down" to alliance strategy, weapon investments, and basing arrangements? Or is it all just politics?

Michael Shulman – 2014 was a very successful year for the alliance, with the completion of a new Special Measures Agreement and the adoption of a conditions-based approach to the transition of wartime operational control (OPCON). What is in store for the alliance in 2015?

Andrew Yeo – Over the course of 60 years, military leaders and policymakers in Seoul and Washington have internalized the U.S.-ROK alliance such that its importance is taken at face value. To what extent has institutional inertia and the internalization of the alliance affected the ability of leaders to critically assess the rationales behind current alliance policies, including the size and deployment of USFK troops, OPCON, burden-share distribution, and weapons sales?

Roundtable III – Division, Reconciliation, Peace-Making: Lessons from other Lands

Goal is to expand the landscape and scope of analysis so that people who work on Korea can learn about different types of division, reconciliation attempts and ensuing problems in different parts of the world. Also, for the Korean case to be of help for research and policy among other divided lands and peoples.

Khaled Elgindy (Moderator) – How essential is reconciliation (as distinct from peacemaking) to the process of overcoming long-standing conflicts? How do processes of peacemaking and/or reconciliation differ in inter-ethnic/trans-national conflicts (Cyprus, Israel/Palestine, N. Ireland, etc.) versus in intra-national conflicts (Koreas, Germanys, etc.)? How essential is "justice" for past wrongs to the process of reconciliation/peacemaking?

Henri Barkey – Why do we always assume that that the resolution lies in uniting a divided society and that the separated communities actually do want to build a common future?

Stacie Goddard – On the general topic of history, truth, and reconciliation *after* a peace process: Is it right for policymakers to suppress or ignore historical “truth” about a conflict in order to ensure peace —if that truth might reignite an ethnic or religious conflict?

Roundtable IV – Reunification and Regional Powers: Historical Approaches towards the Koreas

Who's responsible for the division of the peninsula?

How does the way we think about division influence the way we think about unification and the actors that should and should not be involved?

What kind of Korean unification process would be most desirable for the country of your expertise and why? Evolution of policy regarding Korean unification over time and why?

What role/s might your country of expertise play in the process of Korean unification? What would the country NOT be willing to do? How has this changed over time and why?

Evolution of U.S. position on reunification?

John Merrill (Moderator) – Why is South Korea lacking self-confidence and still hyper-concerned about U.S. reaction to its approach on unification?

Alexis Dudden – The Cold War nature of Korea’s ongoing division premises a U.S./Russian framework as historical context to the creation of South and North Korea. Under-analyzed is Japan’s colonization of Korea during the first half of the 20th century and its legacy of political polarization of Korean society from the colonial period to today, which affects S. Korean views of unification; U.S. exculpation of Japanese war crimes under the 1952 San Francisco Treaty; a 1965 normalization treaty with only one of the Koreas, the ROK.

Hints of reigniting the 6 party talks as 4 party talks make many in Japan uneasy. Might excluding Japan be of greater benefit than including it? Given the historical backstory to division, perhaps Japanese and Russian involvement are not elemental to the Korean unification process?

Steven M. Goldstein – What is the relationship between identity and reunification?

Steven H. Lee – From the point of view of the United States, one of the big obstacles to a peaceful settlement on the Korean peninsula is the DPRK’s nuclear weapons program. North Korea, meanwhile, opposes the American military presence in and joint military exercises with South Korea. Might Korean reunification include the DPRK giving up its nuclear weapons program and United States removing its troops from South Korea? How would Japan, Taiwan, and China view this scenario?

Jonathan D. Pollack – Among the Koreas’ neighboring powers and the United States, which country is most intent on retaining a divided peninsula and why? (China, Japan, the U.S., and Russia.) Contrarily, which are most prepared to support/facilitate Korean unification and why? How might the particular process of unification (i.e., gradual vs. abrupt) affect these assessments?

Roundtable V – U.S. Policy on Human Rights toward the Koreans

Brief summary of history regarding human rights problems in the country/region of your expertise and their relevance to the human rights problems of the Koreans, past and present.

Comparisons/contrasts in domestic and international contexts of human rights problems and policy approaches (e.g., similar or different types of violations past/present, evolution and changes in human rights norms, institutional capacity to focus on human rights, advocacy networks, monitoring mechanisms, government sensitivities and receptivity for the country of your expertise, etc.).

In comparative context within East Asia, what are the particularities of the North Korean case?

Greg Scarlatoiu (Moderator) - What is it going to take to persuade the government of North Korea to abide by its international obligations and its own constitution, and take steps toward improving its human rights situation, first and foremost by dismantling its political prison camp system?

Richard C. Bush III - We observed the transition in China in the late 1970s from the very repressive system that Mao Zedong established to a less harsh, but still repressive period thereafter. We also observed the transition in Taiwan from a repressive system to a free-wheeling democracy. What are the lessons from those two transitions for human rights in North Korea?

Namhee Lee - How to engage with the concerns expressed by progressives in South Korea and the U.S. that much of the criticism of North Korean human rights is politically harnessed to a regime-change agenda? Why do human rights activists overlook the violence that international sanctions generates on North Korean people as humanitarian and developmental aid are withheld?

Mark Schneider - Do security interests always trump human rights objectives--what does history tell us? What does it take to insure that human rights objectives are more than an afterthought in U.S. bilateral relations?

Jiyoung Song - Even if Kim Jong Un is brought before the ICC, which is highly unlikely due to China's and Russia's veto power at the UNSC, there is no alternative human rights-friendly candidate in the North Korean leadership candidate to replace him. If Pyongyang is taken to the ICC, what would be the human rights gains for North Koreans? South Korea today faces some roll-back in democracy and human rights, and the U.S. is not a fan of the ICC and has lost moral leadership on human rights issues in general in the post-9/11 period. What would be the U.S. and ROK roles in stopping human rights violations and/or crimes against humanity in the Korean peninsula as a whole?

China and North Korea have developed their own politics of human rights to counterattack Western criticism against their grave systematic violations. They criticize double standards, selectivity, and the politicization of human rights in the U.S. foreign policy while prioritizing rights to survival, subsistence and development. Many developing, non-aligned-movement and human rights-unfriendly countries in Asia and Africa join and welcome this move. Can this right to survival and development be considered as permissible limitations on the exercise of individual human rights?

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