

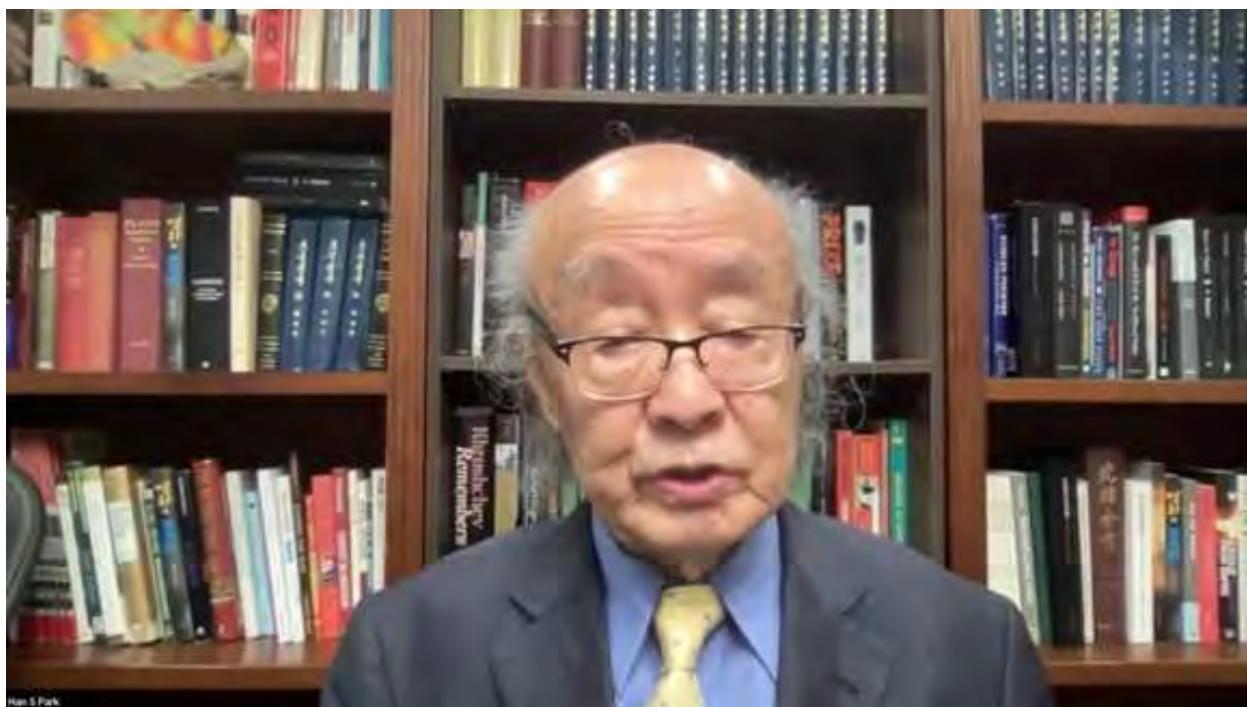
## UPF Canada and Europe and the Middle Webinar: Viewing the DPRK from Within

Franco Famularo  
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As part of an ongoing series of webinars on the theme "Viewing the DPRK (North Korea) from Within," the sixth session was held on September 7, 2023 with a panel from Europe, North America and Korea that attracted participants from around the world.

Jointly organized by Universal Peace Federation chapters of Canada and Europe-Middle East (EUME), the webinar began with an introduction by Dr. Franco Famularo, president of UPF-Canada, emphasizing that the gathering features speakers and commentators who have either lived in or visited North Korea.



Mr. Jacques Marion, co-chair of UPF-EUME, skillfully served as moderator and introduced the principal speaker, Professor Han Park, who shared his expert views on the DPRK, a country he has visited over fifty times.

Mr. Park is professor emeritus of International Affairs and founding director of the Center for the Study of Global Issues (GLOBIS) at the University of Georgia and was instrumental in aiding former presidents Jimmy Carter's and Bill Clinton's visits to the DPRK.

The audience then heard from the respondents to Professor Park's presentation, led by Mr. Paul Tjia, director of GPI Consultancy in The Netherlands, a businessman who has had extensive experience with the DPRK since 1997, engaging in various business efforts, and also organizing tours to the mysterious country. Mr. Tjia focused his presentation on the importance of developing a relationship with the North Koreans and explored, on the basis of his experiences, some of the assets to be considered in order to maintain communication.

As a starting point, the four years of restrictions on North Korea should end, the border reopened, the barriers of mistrust and misunderstanding broken down, and the challenge between political and philosophical visions overcome.



Mr. Tjia's recommendations for establishing communication beyond suspicions and misunderstandings that spontaneously emerge on first approach are as follows:

- Take the time to find out about and understand North Korean ideology and its impact on modes of communication

- Look beyond ideological differences and study theories related to North Korean culture (e.g., understanding the difference in communication between an egalitarian society and a hierarchical society)

- Develop personal relationships, such as sharing meals or going on excursions

- Develop business cooperation and trade, collaboration in the field of education or health

- Develop multiple communication links (which enabled Mr. Tjia to invite journalists to North Korea)



Mr. Tjia expressed hope that long-term communications can be developed. He believes that, following Reverend Moon's visit to North Korea, UPF is well placed to develop such projects. He explained that Europe is in a privileged position to communicate with North Korea. He suggested that UPF, through its branches in Europe, invite a North Korean delegation, and take advantage of the opportunity to open informal communication with South Koreans.

Dr. Thomas Ward, provost and professor of Peace and Development Studies at HJI Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership, then noted that Dialectical Materialism does not seem to have the primacy in Juche Thought that it has in other adaptations of Marxism-Leninism.



He noted that Kim Il Sung very rarely used the term and that his son Kim Jong Il on several occasions expressed the view that Dialectical Materialism and the correlative of the Unity and Struggle of Opposites was an inadequate way to approach problems in a socialist society, emphasizing Juche Thought's prioritizing of man-centered (human-centered) outlook over dialectical materialism.

Dr. Ward felt that this "human-centered" outlook could be a starting point for fruitful dialogue between academics from the DPRK and other societies. He, along with other participants, expressed the view that in today's geopolitical climate, Canada and Europe might be the best venues for Korean Peninsula-related Track II initiatives.



Dr. Chang Shik Yang, the international chairman of UPF, spoke about the international efforts of UPF and its Founders to bring the two Koreas into a healthy and constructive dialogue in the move toward peace. He suggested that the United States should be more generous toward the DPRK and ease up on the sanctions based on his conversations with diplomats of the six party talks over the destiny of the Korean peninsula.

Dr. Yang used concrete examples from the global efforts of the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Co-Founder Dr. Hak Jan Han Moon ranging from meetings with Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il and other leaders of the DPRK. He suggested that cultural exchanges and dialogue among academics and other civil society leaders will help to establish a better environment for rapprochement on the Korean peninsula.

The meeting continued with a discussion among the panelists and the speakers responding to questions provided by the audience.

To summarize Professor Park's talk, he began with the problem of Perception (or Misperception) of reality. There are two contrasting realities of North Korea: One viewed from Outside and another viewed from Inside.



The purpose of his presentation was to present both perspectives in the hope that an objective and reliable set of characteristics of the DPRK might be discerned.

**The DPRK viewed from the outside (South Korea included):**

- Totalitarian dictatorship with militant control of the people by the government
- Charismatic leadership of one person
- Three-generation hereditary succession system
- Poor human rights, especially freedom
- Closed system with restrictions on movement and travel within and without
- Economic poverty with mass starvation
- Indoctrination is the goal of education and in all levels of socialization
- Party dictatorship with inequality throughout the system

**Sources of the negative information in Professor Park's view are:**

- ROK government (KCIA)
- Education promoting the Red Scare syndrome
- Defectors from North Korea with good reasons to criticize the system they defected from
- Incentives made available by the South Korean establishment
- Christian missionaries



The above sources are designed to demonize the DPRK.

**Values of North Korea to South Korea and the United States:**

- American security alliance with South Korea

South Korean legitimacy  
S. hegemonic power in the Cold War and Post-Cold War world order

**The DPRK viewed from within:**

Socialism with DPRK characteristics: collectivism, public ownership  
North Korea is a developing system with security, ideological legitimacy, and welfare  
North Korea is a socialist system with North Korean characteristics  
Peoples' basic needs are secured by the government  
Highly egalitarian society with distributive justice  
North Korea is a paternalist political system  
The national community has become a theocracy with Kimilsungism  
A highly nationalistic system  
Legitimacy of the Korea Labor Party

**The sources of the affirmative conceptions:**

People and groups who have first-hand information about the system who have lived in or travelled to North Korea multiple times, and are familiar with the political system  
Some defectors who chose to maintain alternative perspectives different from the above demonizing perspectives  
Most of this category of people are peace lovers and peacemakers in South Korea and abroad.

Professor Park concluded his remarks by suggesting the following: A peacemaker must know all parties, especially North Korea, the way they are without any preconceived prejudice. The knowledge must be explanatory rather than merely descriptive.

The session continued for longer than the allotted seventy minutes with an engaging question and answer session and further commentary from the principal speaker and panelists. The series will continue, and the ultimate objective is to eventually have dialogue with academics and policymakers from the DPRK.

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