

## UPF-Canada: Forum Examines North Korea's Perceptions and Priorities

Robert Duffy  
January 25, 2024

# Viewing The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) from Within

**Thursday, January 25, 2024**  
**10:00 AM ET( North America) 16:00 (CET Europe)**





**Dr. Franco Famularo**  
President, UPF Canada



**Glyn Ford**  
Director of Track2Asia

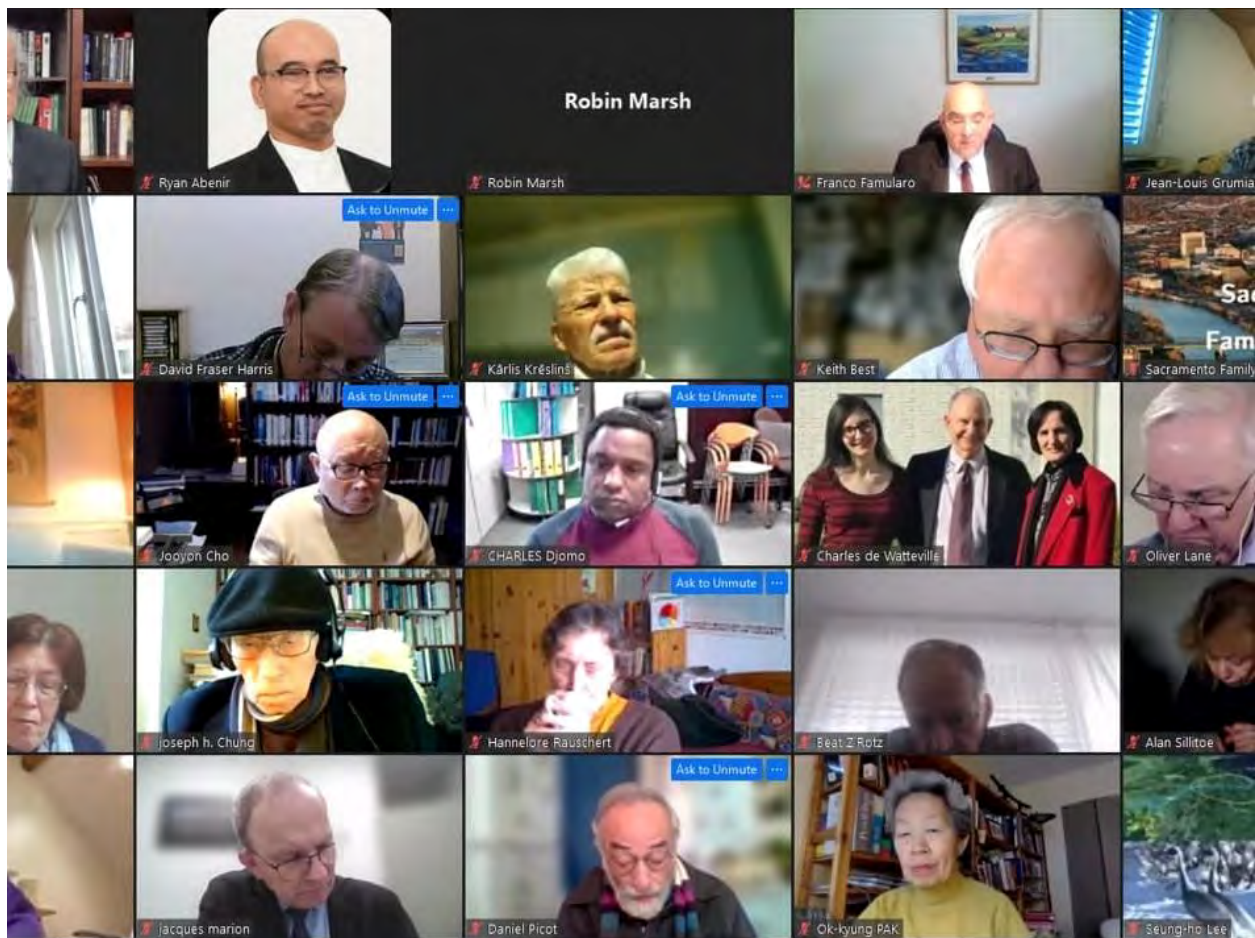


**Dr. Han S. Park**  
Professor Emeritus of  
International Affairs,  
University of Georgia,



**Mr. Jacques Marion**  
Co-Chair UPF Europe &  
Middle East

UPF-Canada - There is very limited understanding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or North Korea, in the West. Therefore there is an urgent need for dialogue at a time of crisis, when alternative views are often brushed off as propaganda, explained Dr. Franco Famularo in his introduction to the UPF webinar held on January 25, 2024, on the theme "Viewing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from Within." Dr. Famularo, president of UPF-Canada, served as the moderator for the program, which drew participants from around the world.



Mr. Jacques Marion, co-chair of UPF-Europe and the Middle East, reminded the audience that UPF's

founders have gone to great lengths to establish trust with the leadership of the DPRK, beginning with a meeting with the late President Kim Il Sung in 1991. Most recently, the 2022 Seoul World Summit issued the Seoul Declaration, focusing on Korean reunification and promoting the initiative of "Two States Toward One Nation: One Peninsula, One People, One Culture." Referring to recent declarations by North Korean President Kim Jeong Un regarding South Korea, Mr. Marion asked the two speakers about the prospects for rapprochement between the North and South.



Based on their decades of experience researching and visiting the country, the two keynote speakers provided exceptional insights into the realities of the DPRK, its political and social life, and its perceptions of itself and of the neighbors with whom it is engaged or at odds.

Mr. Glyn Ford, who served 25 years as a member of the European Parliament, is a board member of the Northeast Asia Economic Forum and the Pacific Century Institute, as well as one of the European co-organizers of several Korean Global Forum events. Having taught science and technology policy at Tokyo University in the 1980s, Ford was an early member of the EU's delegation for relations with Japan. As his interest in East Asia expanded to South Korea and China, he was given increasing responsibility for the EU's relations with Korea, China, and the ASEAN nations. He is considered one of the pre-eminent European experts on the Korean peninsula in particular, and East Asia in general. He has authored three books on North Korea, one of which has been translated into Japanese and Korean.

Among many points of interest, Ford noted that the recent public announcement by President Kim Jeong Un, that unification of the two Koreas is not possible since the two have diverged to such a degree that they no longer can be meaningfully called one people, is not new. Rather, he added, this announcement merely formalizes a policy that has existed since the 1990s, when it became clear to the North that the two Koreas had reached a point of no return in terms of reunification.

Dr. Han S. Park is a professor emeritus of international affairs and founding director of the Center for the Study of Global Issues at the University of Georgia in the United States. Born in northeast China to immigrant Korean parents, Dr. Park received his education in China, Korea and the United States, with degrees in political science from Seoul National University (B.A.), American University (M.A.) and the University of Minnesota (Ph.D.). For his commitment to finding peaceful solutions to challenges on the Korean peninsula, Dr. Park received the Gandhi-King-Ikeda Community Builder's Prize in 2010, an honor he shares with previous recipients Nelson Mandela, Mikhail Gorbachev, John Hume, Desmond Tutu and Yitzhak Rabin.

Author of many books on globalization and North Korea, Park has been honored by the University of Georgia with a professorship in his name: the Han S. Park Professor of Peace Studies.

Dr. Park made several interesting comments. He pointed out that in politics perception is reality: the self-perception of a country will differ from how it is perceived by other countries. Perception does not necessarily conform to reality; nevertheless, it must be acknowledged as reality in political relations between countries. He applied this maxim to the countries that surround and engage with North Korea to highlight just how different is each country's view of itself from that of the others. In this regard, the

internal logic of each country's foreign policy reflects its perceptions.

Dr. Park also observed that military and industrial interests often drive a country's foreign policy. These include, for example, giving aid to friendly nations so that those nations can buy arms from the donor nation. Economic benefits from these arrangements, coupled with the financial benefits to owners and shareholders of related businesses, provide incentive to maintain an active or potential military presence in areas of high risk. In this context, military exercises by the United States, Japan and South Korea off the coast of North Korea will be perceived differently by North Korea and China than by South Korea and the United States. One side sees them as an exercise in deterrence, the other as a provocation. Once again, perception is reality.

In the Q and A portion of the program, the question arose as to what would be a meaningful and realistic resolution to the problem of the two Koreas. The speakers suggested that a permanent two-state solution was one possibility, and another was the idea of a confederation of the two states, with each maintaining its political and ideological systems but cooperating to a greater degree, including culturally and economically.

---

Original recording of this webinar: [www.facebook.com/watch/?v=932262284988571 and ref=sharing](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=932262284988571&ref=sharing)

Recording with French interpretation:  
[www.facebook.com/share/v/yB28oSSmFr2jhBJv/?mibextid=ZbWKwL](https://www.facebook.com/share/v/yB28oSSmFr2jhBJv/?mibextid=ZbWKwL)