

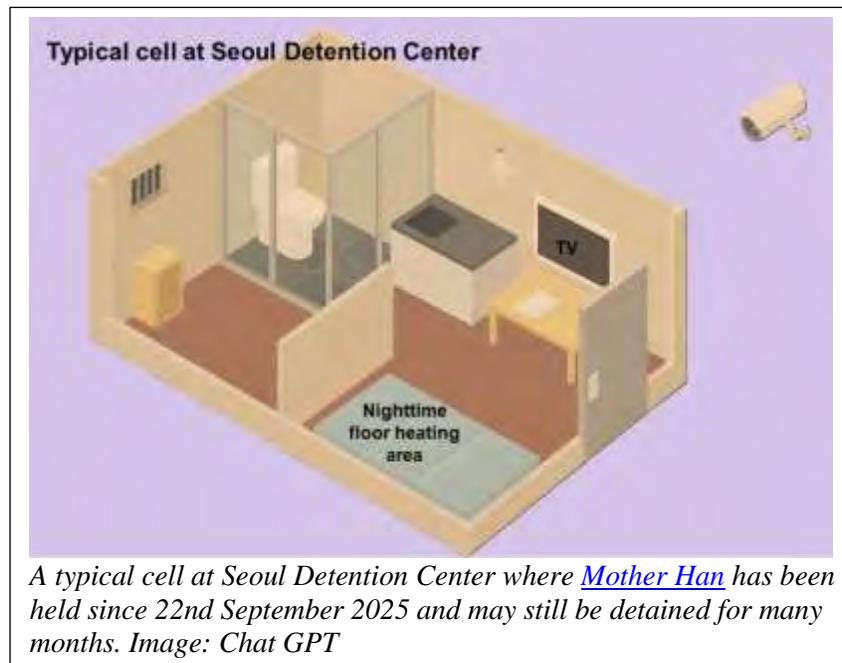


At the base of the steps was a hammock. I tried to imagine what kind of human being could lie back in a hammock to rest, while his fellow countrymen were being mutilated just a stone's throw away.

No matter what form it takes, we must acknowledge that evil exists. We must acknowledge that there is a central driving spirit with intent to bring ruin to humanity, especially by taking the freedoms of those who work for peace.

It was Dr. [Hak Ja Han](#) who sent me there, to Cambodia, so that I could learn and see with my own eyes. She had already visited herself, to pray for the liberation of those tormented souls, just as she has done in Africa to pray for the victims of the slave trade, and in Europe to pray over the lives lost at the hands of the Nazis.

These are merely drops in the ocean of a lifetime's work. Dr. [Hak Ja Han](#), loved by millions around the world as [Holy Mother Han](#), the Mother of Peace, has lived eight decades of her life dreaming of peace, living for peace, and sacrificing for the sake of humanity without regard for personal benefit.



And now, she sits in a [cement box](#) the size of a Mini Cooper.

Why? Because someone decided she doesn't believe the right way.

Though they hold her passport, she was considered a flight risk.

So now an 83-year-old great-grandmother, a world religious figure, barely able to see, barely able to walk, having already fallen down several times, has resorted to crawling on her hands and knees in near total isolation.

And yet she is asking about you. And how you are doing. Still, she is praying. Still, she is dreaming of a world of peace.



*Pushing for new anti-religious legislation, even dissolving entire religious organizations: President Lee Jae Myung of the Republic of Korea, here on 29th October 2025, at the Hilton Hotel in Gyeongju, South Korea. Official White House Photo*

On 18th July last year, 1000 agents and police officers in riot gear descended upon her sanctuary and her home in Gapyeong, South Korea.

Within weeks of opening an [international temple of peace](#) and prayer for all humankind, where even members of our own faith had not yet entered, hundreds of police boots trampled ignorantly across this threshold of heaven.

Prosecutors were seen taking great pleasure as they entered her bedroom, ripping out drawers and throwing all of her belongings onto the floor. This wasn't a search. It was humiliation.

Again we ask, how do people become this numb?

Presumption of guilt without evidence. Militarized raids. Failure to respect age and health concerns. Orchestrated exposure to mass media from prosecutors' offices. Failure to protect her from media mobs and chaotic crowds. Inadequate medical support. Psychological deprivation through isolation. Erasure of her humanitarian, interfaith, and peace-building record. The list goes

on and on.

And then, after months in detention, when it appeared the prosecutors could find no evidence, the head of state personally entered the arena and began to speak openly of [dissolving our church](#) by replicating the proceedings now unfolding in Japan.

I tell you plainly. We are an inconvenient faith. Because, like all of you here, our passion for goodness

cannot be controlled.

And this is happening to Christian organizations across South Korea today. How does a democratic nation become like this?

Each of us is here with a story of oppression, suppression, or abuse. But the root of all of this is evil. And it has been rightly described as a global war on [God](#).

I would like to leave you with a simple concept, a fundamental framework through which all of this can be understood. In the pamphlet, it says:

"The freedom to believe and worship, is one of the most fundamental human rights."

This is true. And yet I would go further. It is not simply one of the most fundamental human rights, it is the central, most essential human right given to us by [God](#), our Creator.

So what is the proper relationship between church and state? The religious sphere acts as the conscience of a nation. The government serves as the body.

We all know the way an individual becomes evil is by stepping on one's conscience. And the way a state becomes evil is by stepping on the religious sphere which represents the conscience of the nation.

Anytime persons trample on their conscience, or a leader tramples on the conscience of a nation, the ability to discern goodness becomes numb, and the window to evil is opened wide.

However, we cannot push back against evil forces simply by demanding rights from our governments. We must strike at the root of evil by standing in our dignified roles as [God](#)'s sons and daughters, knowing that our rights come from our Creator.

Because there is no democracy without freedom. And there is no freedom without [God](#).

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# Unificationism, Industry, And Cold War Survival

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- February 7, 2026
- Knut Holdhus



## Rethinking Unificationism's place in modern Korean history: When faith met industry during a time of war anxiety during the 1960s and 1970s

### 세계일보

The logo of the *Segye Ilbo*

In an [article](#) 6<sup>th</sup> February in the South Korean daily *Segye Ilbo*, religion correspondent Jeong Seong-su (정성수) writes,

"In a reality where they are not easily protected by anyone in our society, this winter is likely to feel especially cold for believers of **Unificationism** (통일교). The political sphere and the media continue their harsh offensive against the faith. Though the issue has temporarily sunk below the surface, extreme expressions such as 'church-state collusion', 'antisocial group', and even 'dissolution of the religion' are still openly circulated."



Religious affairs reporter Jeong Seong-su (정성수). Photo (2025): *Segye Ilbo*

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For many observers – especially those outside Korea – this raises an obvious question: *How did a religious movement come to be so controversial, and what role did it actually play in Korea's modern history?*

Headlined "[A Forgotten History Laid by Unificationism: The Cornerstone of Self-Reliant National Defense](#)", the *Segye Ilbo* column by Jeong seeks to answer part of that question by revisiting a largely forgotten chapter of the past of **Unificationism**. Rather than focusing on theology, internal practices, or recent media coverage, the [article](#) asks readers to step back into the 1960s and 1970s, when South Korea was a fragile, war-scarred state facing an existential threat from North Korea. According to

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the author, any fair evaluation of **Unificationism** must take into account what it did during this period of national vulnerability – particularly its involvement in building the foundations of South Korea's self-reliant defense capability.

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### South Korea in the Shadow of War



End of the Korean War in 1953: UN delegate Lieut. Gen. William K. Harrison, Jr. (seated left), and Korean People's Army and Chinese People's Volunteers delegate Gen. Nam Il (seated right) signing the Korean War armistice agreement at Panmunjom, Korea, 27th July 1953. Photo: U.S. Department of Defense (F. Kazukaitis. U.S. Navy) / Wikimedia Commons. **Public domain** image

To understand the **article's** argument, it is essential to understand the historical context. The **Korean War** (1950–1953) ended not with a peace treaty but with an armistice. Technically, North and South Korea remain at war to this day. During the decades that followed, the possibility of renewed conflict was not theoretical; it was an ever-present reality. North Korea maintained a large standing army, openly threatened invasion, and engaged in provocations ranging from border clashes to assassination attempts.

In the 1960s and 1970s, South Korea was still economically underdeveloped and militarily dependent on the United States and other allies. Most of its weapons, ammunition, and critical components were imported. This dependency created a dangerous vulnerability: in a crisis, foreign supply lines could be delayed, restricted, or cut off altogether. As a result, South Korea's leadership increasingly emphasized *self-reliant national defense* – the ability to produce essential military equipment domestically.

It is within this environment, the **article** argues, that the activities of **Unificationism** must be assessed.

### Heavy Industry

**Unificationism** can trace its roots back to the time before the **Korean War**, but first became a registered organization in 1954, after the war had ended. Reverend **Sun Myung Moon** (문선명) and a handful of followers then **founded the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity**, that became known as the **Unification Church**.

What distinguishes **Moon** from many other religious figures, according to the **article**, is that he did not limit his activities to spiritual or charitable work. Instead, during a period of acute national danger, he directed initiatives into one of the most technically demanding and politically sensitive fields imaginable: precision machinery and the defense industry.



**Sun Myung Moon** in the 1950s. Photo: FFWPU

His industrial venture began modestly. **Tongil Industries** (통일산업), the predecessor to **Tongil Heavy Industries** (통일중공업), reportedly started with little more than a secondhand lathe imported from Japan and a makeshift workshop in a repurposed building. Over time, however, this small operation evolved into a major industrial enterprise. By 1976, **Tongil Heavy Industries** had been officially designated a defense contractor by the South Korean government.

The company went on to manufacture and localize key components of South Korea's weapons systems. At a time when South Korea lacked both the technology and skilled workforce to produce such equipment independently, this contribution was strategically significant.

### Beyond "Collusion": An Argument for Historical Reinterpretation



Part of **Sun Myung Moon's** industrial projects: Korea Titanium Co. Here, in 1972. Photo: FFWPU

Critics of the movement that **Sun Myung Moon** founded often frame his industrial activities as evidence of improper closeness between religion and state power. The **Segye Ilbo** **column** challenges this interpretation.

Rather than seeing the involvement in defense manufacturing as "collusion", the author frames it as a response to historical necessity.

From this perspective, **Tongil Heavy Industries** was not merely a factory producing parts for weapons. It functioned as a training ground for engineers, machinists, and technicians, many of whom later dispersed throughout South Korea's broader industrial sector. The skills, production methods, and organizational know-how developed there contributed to the overall advancement of the country's machinery

and manufacturing capabilities.

Although *Tongil Heavy Industries* eventually declined – due to labor disputes, political pressure, and the economic shock of the late-1990s IMF crisis – its technological legacy did not disappear.

In his [article](#), Jeong points out,

“Nevertheless, its technological legacy and human capital live on today through the SNT Group, one of Korea’s leading precision machinery and defense companies, which continues to shoulder a key part of the nation’s self-reliant defense.”

While SNT is no longer affiliated with the movement of [Sun Myung Moon](#) (문선명) and [Hak Ja Han](#) (한학자) – also called [Father Moon](#) and [Mother Han](#) – the author argues that SNT’s capabilities remain rooted in the earlier push for defense self-reliance.

### Faith, Fear, and National Survival



**Wanted to celebrate his 60th birthday in 1972 in Seoul: Kim Il-sung.** Here, official portrait from 1966. Photo: GreatLeader1945 / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 4.0 Int.](#) Cropped

The [article](#) also emphasizes that the sense of national responsibility found within [Unificationism](#) extended beyond industry into its religious life. In the early 1970s, North Korean leader Kim Il-sung (김일성) publicly intensified threats of invasion, reportedly declaring that he would celebrate his 60th birthday – in 1972 – in Seoul. Fear of war gripped South Korean society.

Within what was then called the [Unification Church](#), members reportedly responded with intense collective prayer and fasting. One striking anecdote describes overnight prayer vigils aimed at preventing the Imjin River from freezing – a symbolic and strategic concern, as a frozen river could facilitate the movement of North Korean tanks. While modern readers may question the literal efficacy of such prayers, the author urges readers to see them as expressions of a deeper sense of responsibility: the belief that the survival of the nation and the survival of the faith community were inseparable.

Interestingly, the [article](#) notes that official records from the [Korea Meteorological Administration](#) show that the Han River did not freeze in 1972. Whether coincidence or not, the episode is presented as a reminder of the psychological and emotional climate of the time.

### A Call for Historical Balance

The [column](#) concludes with a broader reflection on how societies judge religious organizations in moments of crisis. The principle of separation between church and state, the author acknowledges, is essential. However, he argues that this principle should not be used to erase or ignore historical contributions that have already been absorbed into the national system.

From the author’s standpoint, the [Unification Church](#) did not retreat into isolation when South Korea faced potential collapse. Instead, it assumed risks – economic, political, and reputational – in pursuit of what it saw as national survival. Whether one views the [religious movement](#) favorably or critically, the [article](#) contends that this record deserves sober consideration.

Ultimately, the [piece](#) is less a defense of the present activities of [Unificationism](#) than a plea for historical nuance. Before invoking terms like “antisocial group” or “dissolution”, the author argues, Korean society should confront the full complexity of the past. How a society treats a contested religion in times of controversy, he concludes, is a measure of that society’s maturity – and of its willingness to judge history with both clarity and restraint.

See also [When Conscience Dies: Global War on God](#)

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**Text:** Knut Holdhus, editor

**Featured image** above: When faith met industry during a time of war anxiety during the 1960s and 1970s. Illustration: ChatGPT, 7th February 2026, edited

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