

IAAP Europe and the Middle East: Neutral Korean Peninsula: A Solution for Peace

Jacques Marion
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[20230511 - IAAP Webinar on Korean Neutrality](#) from [UPF Europe and Middle East](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Biel/Bienne, Switzerland -- In an online discussion, two scholars and an activist gave their views on a neutral Korean Peninsula.

The webinar was held by the EUME branch of UPF's International Association of Academicians for Peace under the title "A Neutral Korean Peninsula: A Solution for Peace and Security in Northeast Asia?"

The Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia have faced the same security and geopolitical challenges for decades and even centuries. In recent years, they again have been the source of increasing military and political tensions, which are felt around the globe. More than ever, peace activism and research are needed to de-escalate the situation.



Understanding this, **Mélanie Komagata**, a Swiss-Japanese citizen holding a master's degree in East Asian studies from the University of Geneva, organized this webinar on May 11, 2023, on the foundation of a March 31 webinar in which she had presented her master's thesis, focusing on the application of the Swiss model of neutrality to Korea.

For this webinar, she invited two scholars whose books had provided her with the necessary expertise when doing research for her thesis and a Korean activist for a neutral Korea. Ms. Komagata moderated the webinar.

The panelists were presented with two questions:

- What steps are needed for neutrality to become a solution to the current stalemate and security issues on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia?
- How could it be formulated realistically and negotiated between concerned parties?

Dr. Sangpil Jin, a Korean citizen who is currently an assistant professor in Korean studies at the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen, Denmark, spoke on "Neutralization of Korea: Return of History?"

In answering the question of the failed attempts of Korean neutralization between 1882 and 1907, he mentioned different challenges: no major power consensus for Korean neutralization, unfavorable regional security dynamics of East Asia, lack of self-defense capability of Korea, no internal consensus for neutrality, and a poor decision-making process.

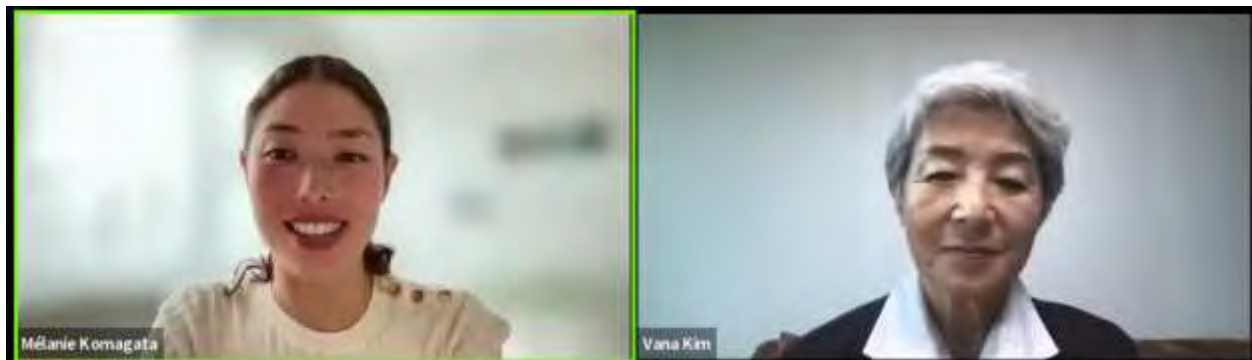
Although he was rather pessimistic, he quoted German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's statements concerning a new multipolar era and, placing Korea in the new Indo-Pacific geostrategic realignment, he didn't exclude the possibility of a second chance for neutralization.



Dr. Pascal Lottaz, a Swiss citizen who currently is an associate professor at Kyoto University, where he investigates neutrality in international relations and directs the research network, spoke on "Two Neutralities for the Koreas."

Emphasizing the very different realities of the two Koreas, he stated that North-South reunification without a revolution could only happen if it were based on neutralization, which represents some of the few policies that actors in both the North and the South can agree on. He mentioned the possibility of Pyongyang and/or Seoul starting it on their own.

Dr. Lottaz suggested a Finland-ization of the North, transforming the DPRK-PRC security treaty from mutual defense into unidirectional assistance, to keep China happy, and an Austria-ization for the South, transforming the ROK-USA security treaty from mutual defense to unilateral security guarantees, recently achieved by the ROK in the nuclear realm, to keep the United States satisfied.



Dr. Vana Kim Hansen, a US and Canadian citizen, co-chair of the Council for the Neutralization of the Korean Peninsula and coordinator of the International Network for Neutral Korea, spoke on "The Path to Peace on the Korean Peninsula: A New Wave of International Neutrality Activism."

She described her network as composed of activists in Korea and overseas as well as supporters of neutrality, and she explained how her heartfelt motivation for activism came from her maternal grandfather and her mother, who had to flee their country due to war, animosity and propaganda.

The South Korean neutrality movement has been blocked, she said, because of the misconception that Kim Il Sung originated the idea of neutrality, thus engendering the notion of neutrality as being too pro-North and potentially dangerous for the South's security.

She suggested that Swiss and Austrian experts and supporters can provide articles on Korean neutrality in Korean mainstream newspapers to aid the Korean predicament. This also would help the international neutral peace institute on Goyang Island, a neutral zone free of military and weapons at the western end of the Demilitarized Zone overlooking a North Korean village.

Ms. Komagata moderated a lively discussion among the three panelists, based on questions from the public.



Then **Dr. Katsumi Otsuka**, the UPF co-chair for Europe and the Middle East, gave closing remarks in which he mentioned the different historical steps that have been taken recently between the US and North and South Korea.



He concluded by suggesting steps to implement a rapprochement between the two Koreas. His suggestions included the establishment of a Peace Zone at the DMZ, where the United Nations could establish a fifth office for Asia, and also exchange programs for youth and students from North and South Korea, as well as from China, Russia and Japan.

Before closing the webinar, Ms. Komagata mentioned a tour of Switzerland that Dr. Vana Kim Hansen organized for mid-June, through which participants might better understand Swiss neutrality and its potential application to the Korean Peninsula.