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**2nd Webinar on Prospects for Peace on the Korean Peninsula**

Written by Maria Nazarova, president, UPF-Russia Chapter: Russia  
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**Introduction:**

The year 2020 marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War. Countless people, under the banner of the United Nations or the banner of the Communist world, sacrificed their lives. Today the Korean nation is still divided. The future of the Korean Peninsula, surrounded by four of the world's most powerful nations, will not affect only North-East Asia, but also peaceful sustainable development in many countries worldwide. 2020 has been dominated by the pandemic. Geopolitics and the world economy are going through great changes. Has the prospect of peace on the Korean Peninsula come closer or not?



The **moderator** was Maria Nazarova, UPF – Russia President.


**Panelists:**

Barthélemy Courmont, Professor of modern history and international relations at the Catholic University of Lille.

- Alexander Vorontsov, Head of Department for Korean and Mongolian Studies,

Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

- Mr Jacques Marion, Co-chairman of UPF Europe, Eurasia & the Middle East

  
Maria Nazarova, UPF –  
Russia President ([click for bio](#))

Each panelist gave a 7-minute presentation, followed by a Question & Answer session.

### Main report:



Dr. Barthélemy Courmont,  
Professor of modern  
history and international  
relations at the Catholic  
University of Lille ([click for bio](#))

Dr Bartélemy Courmont first spoke about the new dialogue between Pyongyang, South Korea and the USA since the election of president Moon Jae-in in 2017. Meetings have been held about the lifting of sanctions and the future development of the North Korean economy.

There has also been a very interesting move by the Trump administration. Initially, the American president was very tough on North Korea regarding the non-proliferation treaty. Subsequently, he took the South Korean policy vis a vis North Korea in his stride and met the North Korean leader three times. Dr. Courmont thinks the Biden administration should consider this legacy. It would avoid high tension between Washington and Pyongyang, provided the latter refrains from testing new missiles.

As to the relation between the two Koreas, one has to wait for the presidential elections in 2022. The younger generation in South Korea is not interested in unification and is aware that it would come with a price tag. So far, President Moon Jae-in has not advocated unification, but rather the implementation of peace. The dialogue should be continued and lead to some concrete achievements.

The presence of major economic actors in the region may help to find a more coherent approach to North Korea.

[Click here for a transcription of the intervention of Dr. Courmont](#)



Dr Alexander Vorontsov,  
Head of the Department  
for Korean and  
Mongolian Studies at the  
Institute of Oriental  
Studies of the Russia  
Academy of Sciences ([click for bio](#))

The next speaker was **Dr. Alexander Vorontsov**, who first explained that president Trump succeeded to meet the North Korean president Kim Jong-un in person three times. This is very important, because the “Korean problem” is much due to the mutual mistrust between Washington and Pyongyang, as well as between Pyongyang and Seoul. Dr Vorontsov is not very optimistic about the future, as he thinks the Biden administration will try other ways to deal with North Korea.

Confucian ethics, and not only the authoritarian regime, enabled North Koreans to accept the extreme measures taken by the authorities to fight COVID 19.

Also, in South Korea, the almost forgotten Confucius values, and the importance paid to collective behavior, helped them to fight the pandemic crisis very effectively. Moreover, thanks to special laws South Korea adopted five years ago in the struggle with MERS and SARS pandemics, a very efficient app was used to fight COVID 19.

The present crisis has shown that common values are still deeply rooted in the conscience of the people in both the North and the South, even though some believe that the two countries have grown too much apart to allow reunification.

[Click here for a transcription of Dr. Alexander Vorontsov's Intervention](#)



In conclusion **Mr Jacques Marion** shed some light on the vision of UPF co-founders Dr. and Mrs. Moon. He said that in his memoirs, Dr Moon describes



Mr Jacques Marion, Co-chairman of UPF Europe, Eurasia & the Middle East ([click for bio](#))

the central role his nation can play in the coming Asia-Pacific era. As a small nation, surrounded by the world's major powers - China, Russia, Japan and the United States - Korea can be compared to a machine's ball-bearing, i.e. the small part made of metallic balls around which other parts of the machine can move smoothly in all directions.

Practically speaking, Dr Moon envisioned that the unified Korean Peninsula would be the central link of an International Highway or Railway System, connecting with Japan on one side by an undersea tunnel, and to Russia, China and the rest of the world on the other side. Further North, this highway system would meet the transcontinental link that will connect Russia and the Eurasian continent to the United States and Canada, through a tunnel under the Bering Strait. This will create a transport infrastructure with an immense potential for economic development and cultural exchange at the heart of the Asia Pacific Region.

UPF's co-founder, Dr Hak Ja Han Moon, is proposing the idea to establish a 5<sup>th</sup> UN headquarter at the DMZ. The UN currently has four headquarters throughout the world. In Asia, there is only one regional office in Bangkok, but no UN headquarter.

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## Question-and-answer session

**Dr. Courmont** was asked how relevant is and will be the Korean question for Europe, or for France more specifically, as he is French, and also what is needed to raise the European attention and engagement for this issue.

He said there is no cohesion among the Europeans regarding the situation on the Korean Peninsula. Some countries are more interested or involved than others for economic or strategic reasons. Several initiatives were supported in the past, such as the sunshine policy between the two Koreas. However, for the moment there is no clear vision.

France is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and a nuclear power. It is therefore one of the major actors alongside the US. And yet, it has no diplomatic relations with North Korea, while almost all the other EU member states do. Hopefully, France will establish diplomatic relations as soon as an opportunity arises.

The degree to which Europe can contribute to peace on the Korean Peninsula largely depends on the margin the US will leave for other actors to participate in the dialogue, and also on how this will be received by North Korea.

**Dr. Vorontsov** was asked what Russia can contribute to enhance the chance for peace, given the fact that it has an interest in seeing a stable peninsula.

He said that the major players are the DPRK and the USA. From the Russian understanding, deep mistrust is the key reason for the situation. Because North Korean leadership is still convinced that the main goal of Washington is the liquidation of DPRK.

When in 2003 North Korea decided to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the country was included in the Axis of Evil by the Bush administration. Dr. Vorontsov at that time pointed out the consequences to a Korean senior North Korean diplomat. The latter told that whether the country adhered to the NPT or not, nobody would come to the rescue of North Korea in case the US decided to attack it. For that reason, North Korea is determined to improve its defense system.

Russia supports the NPT and all other initiatives worldwide to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons. At the same time it says that dialogue with North Korea, as an equal partner, is indispensable. North Korea's legitimate and major concern about security must be considered. North Korea realizes that it may have to live with the economic sanctions for a long time. The people have learned to adapt their economy and to survive.

**Mr. Jacques Marion** was asked what NGOs can do to unify Korea.



He thinks that NGOs should focus on the human dimension behind all conflicts, as there is a lot of misunderstanding, especially about North Korea.



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