

North Korea's nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula is one of the most critical challenges of today's global society. This is not only a Korean issue but also a global responsibility that requires us to comprehend the whole situation through the lens of postcolonial critiques. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered" ("Beyond Vietnam," 1967). Dr. King clearly insists that racism, materialism, and militarism are the root causes of all evils that are done by colonial powers. So I would like to begin our journey with one concept that will help framing our thought processing for today's talk, which is coming from a critique of postcolonial reason, that is, "sanctioned ignorance."

The term was coined from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, a leading postcolonial scholar from Columbia University to explain that the oppressive colonial power strategically damaged those colonized cultures and histories by their sanctioned ignorance and gradually dismantled their indigenous humanity. Edward Said's "Orientalism" is another example of westerner's sanctioned ignorance in which indigenous cultures have been distorted and underestimated and misinterpreted as inferior ones. Jacques Derrida, the main voice of post-structuralistic movement and Algerian postcolonial resistance, also insists that globalization is a dominant process of globalatinization (*mondia-latin-ization*) where Latin (western) languages and cultures are predominant around the globe and are considered as superior to other non-western countries in the western literary classics, school curricula, religions, science, and so on. That sanctions the colonist structure of oppressive ignorance.² Spivak writes that "it is correctly suggested that the sophisticated vocabulary of much contemporary historiography successfully shields this cognitive failure and that this success-in-failure, this sanctioned ignorance, is inseparable from colonial domination."³ It is the sanctioned ignorance in which the colonial west oppressively transplant their seemingly superior European cultures in a foreign land because their colonial oppression and cultural supremacy have been justified by the systemically sanctioned ignorance.

¹ The paper was presented to Methodist Federation for Social Action in Iowa in 2018, April 7.

² Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limit of Reason Alone" in Gil Anidjar, ed., *Acts of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

³ G.C. Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography" in Guha, R. & Spivak, G.C. eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 6.

We are living in a country that has been recognized as the wealthiest and the most powerful country in the world. The U.S., however, is also one of the most controversial “empires” after WW II in the postcolonial global community, which has been presenting an American version of “Global-militarization.” As Charmer Johnson said in his book, *The Sorrow of Empire*, “As militarism, the arrogance of power, and the euphemisms required to justify imperialism inevitably conflict with America’s democratic structure of government and distort its culture and basic values, I fear that we will lose our country.” While we are deeply concerned about the nuclear crisis of the Korean Peninsula, Noam Chomsky might ask, “Who is a rogue state at a global scale that ironically tends to aggressively police and secretly support militarizing the global community against those rogue states, such as “an axis of evil” of Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Syria, Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Indonesia, Cuba, Venezuela, and so on?”

In fact, in order to understand the North and South Korea and their postcolonial dilemmas, we have to understand the U.S.’s military occupation and its economic benefit as the root cause of the crisis since 1945-1953 at the dawn of the Cold War. My pessimistic sentiment on this topic comes from this: history might repeat again, as George Santayana famously said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” We may witness that the haunted history repeats itself again, unfortunately. My optimism and hope for a just world, however, is that a true story telling, a rigorous historical remembrance, a prophetic voice for justice and peace will trickle up a transforming power from the bottom that will change everything in history.

As you know, Moon Jae In, President of South Korea (Republic of Korea) and Kim Jung Un, Leader of North Korea (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) will have a summit at the Freedom House in the south side of Panmunjum on April 27, 2018. This will be the first time that the North Korean leader will land in the South Korean soil since the Korean War. They already initiated a conversation about a possibility of a regular summit between two governments. Last week on March 27, Kim Jung Un was invited to meet with Xi Jinping, President of China who has been a longtime ally. They both agreed with the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and peace and security in Northeast Asia. Donald Trump, President of the U.S., unprecedentedly agreed to meet with Kim Jung Un sometime in May. Although both of them have different expectations, the summit itself will be one of the greatest achievements in both governments for the world peace. During the week of April 2, 2018, Lee Young Ho, Secretary of Foreign Affairs went to Russia for improving relations, and now Vladimir Putin invited Kim Jung Un to Russia for a summit sometime soon. Even Japan wanted to meet with the North Korea leader soon. It indicates the complexity of the geopolitical situation has been grounded in the Korean peninsula since the late 19th century when Japan and the U.S. were rising up as super powers.

The nuclear crisis, however, will not be resolved, unless the U.S. and North Korea really come to a peace talk. It requires a diplomatic cooperation and multilateral dialogues among

those powers. A war is not an option. Even a preemptive war or a bloody nose strike cannot bring peace. While the U.S. and its hawkish government are still considering a preemptive war against North Korea, both Korean leaders have agreed three leading principles for the summit in April:

1. Denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula (not only the disarmament of North Korea but also the nonproliferation of South Korean Nuclear status under the U.S. nuclear umbrella)
2. Peace Treaty for safety and security for the DPRK regime (ending the war)
3. Normalization of U.S.-DPRK bilateral ties and economic development

It is noted that North Korea has developed full-fledged nuclear arsenals and advanced ICBM (Intercontinental Ballistic Missile). It is most likely that they already have 60 nuclear weapons. North Korea has arguably completed their nuclear and missile program in November, 2017, when they successfully tested an ICBM (Intercontinental Ballistic Missile), Hwasung-15, that could reach the entire United States continent, and they successfully tested its sixth nuclear weapon, which was a hydrogen bomb test. North Korea would become a nuclear power in the world community. However, the United States and other surrounding powers may not be ready to endorse North Korea's nuclear status and capacity yet. In the 2018 New Year address Kim Jung Un made a clear statement that he had a nuclear button at his table now. Since then in the last three months North and South Korea have been in a series of peace dialogues and relaunched a hotline between them. North Korea even joined the 2018 Pyungchang Winter Olympic in South Korea. While three weeks ago the Trump government replaced National Security Adviser HR McMaster with John Bolton one of the most hawkish persons who has been warmongering and bellicose against North Korea, Iran, and Iraq, Kim Jung Un has secretly visited President Xi Jinping to bring China back to the peace talk, and in spite of their respective calculations on the regional complexity, China is now part of the political game. Russia is already welcoming a peace talk among surrounding powers for North Korea's nuclear crisis.

No matter who may be sitting at the table for a peace talk, however, it is no doubt that the U.S. is the most powerful voice to only move us forward. That means the U.S. is both the super power among the global communities and the root cause of the military tension of the region. So it is critical to understand how the U.S. has been involved in the complexity of the region. Historically there are four major stages of the U.S. intervention and invasion on the Korean Peninsula since the late 19th Century.

1) In 1882 while Korea was not prepared to welcome foreign countries, they were forced to sign an unequal trade agreement with the U.S. as the most favored nation with unlimited commerce and extraterritoriality (Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce and Navigation) for the promise of the Korean security from Japan. But the promise was never kept, and it

creates a template for other western countries (Germany, Russia, England, France, etc.). The colonization of Korea in the late 19th century was the exchanges of the colonies for the benefits of economy, military and political powers for those European countries, America, and Japan.

2) In 1905, the U.S. agreed a secret diplomatic memorandum called “the Taft-Katzura Agreement” with Japan, in which the U.S. recognized Japan’s control over Korea in exchange for Japan’s recognition of the U.S.’s control over the Philippines. During the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905), Japan and Russia agreed in the Portsmouth Treaty (mediated by Theodore Roosevelt, President of the U.S.) to evacuate Manchuria and return its sovereignty to China, but Japan was allowed to lease from China the Liaodong Peninsula and the Russian rail system in addition to occupying the southern half of Sakhalin from Russia. By solidifying the U.S. and Japan’s diplomatic and strategic relations in those exchanges, both Japan and the U.S. could expand their influence and control over the Korean Peninsula.

3) Right after the end of the Japanese Occupation, the U.S. established its military intervention and governance from 1945 to 1948 in the post-colonial Korea, because they strategically continued the Japanese system and its collaborators to stabilize premeditated political turmoils in Korea, although the Korean people and their elite leaders were longing for their independent government. According to Bruce Cummings, historian of East Asia from University of Chicago, the U.S. strategically prepared their occupation of Korea after Pearl Harbor in 1941 that particularly justified the U.S.’s official entry into the World War.

During the U.S. military government period on the Korean peninsula, the U.S. and the Soviet Union formally agreed to dividing Korea at the 38th Parallel at the Potsdam conference (1945). While Russia and China supported pro-communist Korean leaders in the northern region, the U.S. military government supported pro-American and pro-Japanese collaborators through the puppet leadership of Rhee Syngman in the southern region. The U.S. military government in 1948 supported the South’s propagation (anti-communist and pro-Japanese/American) that Jeju Island’s uprising against pro-Japanese police officers’ violence against civilians was strategically organized by a communist group in the south, which was not true at all, and because of their fear of the speculated communist dominance in the south (from their sanctioned ignorance), they (Korean para-military force endorsed by the US military government) ended up killing 30,000 people and 95% of houses and buildings on the island two times bigger than Seoul area were destroyed. Last Tuesday Moon Jae In finally promised to restore the true history of the Jeju 4.3 tragedy in 1948 seventy years later.

4) The Korea War (1950-1953), a forgotten war, was one of the most tragic genocides in the modern history at the dawn of the Cold War. During the war the U.S. bombed the entire Korean Peninsula for 3 years, and almost 4-5 million lives were killed, and 20% of the Korean population were sacrificed, 10 million families are still separated between the North and the South. Every city, village, and vital infrastructure were destroyed. It left Korea as one of the poorest countries in the world. Michel Chossudovsky, professor of economics at the University

of Ottawa, said that “The Korean War had set the stage for subsequent US military interventions. It was an initial phase of a post-World War II ‘Military Roadmap’ of US led wars, special operations, coups d’etat, covert operations, US sponsored insurgences and regime change spanning over of more than half a century. The project of global warfare [since the Truman Doctrine] has been carried out in all major regions of the world, through the US military’s geographic command structure, not to mention the CIA’s covert operations geared toward toppling sovereign governments.”⁴

Here is another story from my personal experience on the U.S. military intervention in 1980 as the aftermath of the Korean War. I grew up in Kwangju in the Southern Jolla Province, South Korea. Kwangju is the fifth largest city populated with 1.5 million. In May 18, 1980, when I was 10 years old, there was a huge uprising for a democritization movement that high school and college students, factory workers, street vendors, housewives, grandmothers, and businessmen organized. It was a peaceful demonstration of tens of thousands of civilians against the illegitimate military dictatorship supported by the U.S. government. Until the military forces were deployed to instigate the peace protest and start massive gun fires against those civilians, there was a simply peaceful march in the main square of the city. When the military forces came to town and occupied the capitol, every communication line was shut down surrounding the city and all the roads were blocked. Kwangju was completely closed out from the rest of South Korea, enclosed by the military forces.

Since the Korean War broke out in 1950, Wartime Operational Control was transferred from Japan to the U.N. and later on to the U.S. military government. Even after the armistice at the end of the Korean War, the ROK-US CFC (combined forces command) agreement places ROK military forces under US command. During the Kwangju rebellion/democritization movement which was peaceful at the beginning, they ordered the DEFCON level 3 (Defense Condition) (the same level as the attacks of September 11, 2001) to deploy the military forces with the strategic endorsement of the U.S. to take control over the peaceful demonstration in Kwangju. But the military intervention had instigated and provoked the protesting group to be armed since the special forces had fired at civilians at first, using the same rhetoric of the Cold War and the Anti-communist sentiment (McCarthyism). They propagated that the North Korean communist military force came to Kwangju and took over the whole city, which was not true at all. So literally the ROK-US CFC declared the war against those civilians, brothers and sisters of ours. The government officially declared 165 were killed, but almost 3,000 people were missing.

The Kwangju Massacre was the turning point that more and more South Koreans began to realize that the U.S. military occupation on the Korean Peninsula has disturbed peace rather than fostered national and international security. We may have to ask ourselves why the U.S.

⁴ Michel Chossudovsky, “America’s War Against the People of Korea: The Historical Record of US War Crimes,” in *Global Research* (September 13, 2013).

military still resides in South Korea and has wartime operational control over the sovereign country until today and constantly intervenes or instigates South Korean political struggles and strategically divide us in a highly contentious ideological chasm. This is the key question to understand the current nuclear crisis in the two Koreas.

Dr. Cummings said in his book, *The Korean War: A History*, that the Korean War has transformed the U.S. forever. He explains, as follows:

The Korean conflict was the occasion for transforming the United States into a very different country than it had ever been before: one with hundreds of permanent military bases abroad, a large standing army and a permanent national security state at home ... Korean, however, had an enormous refractory effect back upon the United States. It didn't brand a generation, and it may be forgotten or unknown to the general public, but it was the occasion for transforming the United States into a country that the founding fathers would barely recognize. The Korean War was fought for mutually unknown and incommensurable (if not incomprehensible) goals by the two most important sides, North Korea and the United States. The North Koreans attacked the South because of fear that Japan's industrial economy and its former position in Korea were being revived by recent changes in American policy, because native Koreans in the South who had long collaborated with Japanese colonizers were the Korean midwives of this strategy (and now would finally get what they deserved), and because the North's position relative to the South would likely weaken over time. Kim Il Sung weighed the possibility that the United States might intervene in defense of the South, but probably downplayed its significance because he felt he had gotten joint backing for his invasion from both Stalin and Mao. What he could not have known was that his invasion solved a number of critical problems for the Truman administration, and did wonders in building the American Cold War position on a world scale.⁵

We Americans have to remember the true story from two Koreas. Korea desired to become an independent nation after the end of the World War II. They already established a provisional independent government of Korea in China during the Japanese occupation to build their own independent sovereign country. The U.S., however, has maintained the Japanese influence upon the peninsula. In fact, the US was the continuation of the colonial power to intervene Korea's internal politics, to split the country, to install a puppet regime in the south (Rhee Syngman, Park Junghee, Jeon Doothan, Roh Tae Woo, etc.) and to refuse the peace treaty with the North Korea in order to depend US commercial interests, and to take control of a strategically-located Northeast Asia against Russia and China.

After the armistice of the Korean War in 1953, North Korea and the U.S. are technically

⁵ Bruce Cummings, *The Korean War: A History*, p.207-8

at war. Since the U.S. military force remains in South Korea, North Korea has been threatened by the U.S.'s preemptive military operation. This is the primary reason why North Korea has developed nuclear weapons and missiles for decades. Since North Korea has learned what the U.S. has done to Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi, they have believed that nuclear weapons could deter a U.S. invasion. So I would like to ask this question for all of you: Is North Korea really a threat to the U.S. or *vice versa*? Since World War II North Korea has not invaded anybody except the Korean War, which was not really NK's sole invasion. The US, however, has attacked at least 32 countries since WW2. Furthermore, NK has a defense budget of only \$7.5 billion, and the US, \$1 Trillion. The US has been able to militarize the entire globe with 750 to 1,000 military bases on the foreign lands. The US keeps practicing regime change decapitation invasions and nuclear attacks against North Korea. They heavily weigh on a preemptive strike or a preventive war against NK. North Korea most likely has an estimated arsenal of 50-60 nuke bombs that are not a threat to the US's 15,000 nuclear arsenal. Instead the US is an asymmetrical and existential threat to North Korea and every other non-compliant small country.

I still believe that two Koreas can be peacefully united as one nation, as they agree to meet together as often as possible without any foreign interventions under the Moon Jae In administration and Kim Jung Un's leadership. As China and Russia are welcoming a peace talk, I hope that the U.S. and Japan should not ruin the long-awaited spring of peace on the Korean Peninsula. Early this week a team of musicians from South Korea were inspired by the welcoming responses from North Korea in Pyeongyang, when they were performing with a group of musicians from the North. They both acknowledged that they were one nation and that they were sisters and brothers, singing together "Our dream is to become one nation again."

Wars, crimes, and any kinds of discriminations should not be justified for any reasons. And we don't make peace by sending military forces to other sovereign countries. We cannot afford another war and human sacrifices for any reasons. We are global citizens beyond borders. Everyone around the globe is now our sisters and brothers. We cannot wage wars for our own pride and greed.

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I have a dream" is not an American fantasy of the neo-liberal conservative hawkish government that has been militarizing and commercializing and systemically discriminating the whole world for the benefit of America, but rather it is a dream for peace and justice making at a global scale beyond borders for the sake of true humanity. Race is a modern invention and European/American fantasy. Global-militarization is another example of American fantasy. Neo-liberal free market plutocracy is an irresponsible "American exceptionalism" that damages human dignity around the globe. We cannot afford this any longer. If we stop this, we can come to a peace talk with North Korea.

Friends, transformation comes from us, not from others nor from North or South Korea

or any other nations. Revolution comes from our individual humility and global hospitality and cosmopolitan spirit and universal peace. I believe that is the dream Dr. King still cries out. Jim Wallis would say that we have to repent our America's original sin so that King's true American dream may come true for the sake of the world peace. Now we United Methodists, John Wesley's children and Followers of Jesus Christ, rise up and stand up not only for peace on the Korean Peninsula, but for the world peace. Thank you.

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