
Legacy of Korean War We Observe Today

In 1953, Korea's sudden division tore families apart. The absence of viable solutions for reunification means the pain and plight of separated families remain the most emotional legacies of the Korean War. For 66 years, communication services between the Koreas remain banned so families have no information about relatives. Although 20 brief, temporary reunions happened since 2000 for less than half of separated families, this is the last time many see each other, thus bringing more distress than peace for families. Additionally, thousands of ageing Koreans were heartbroken after failing the tough selection process, many denouncing reunions as a "cruel" political show, causing more pain for divided families.

"Emotional, psychological, social and economic toll of involuntary separation persists to this day, as people continue to search for the truth and for contact with their loved ones," said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. Highly valued family ties in Korea means forceful separation from one's family results in everlasting, devastating emotional trauma, difficult to relieve despite the passed time. Hence, sufferings and unresolved grief of separated families are mounted high, with a pressing need for a solution before the generation of divided families, disappears, and infringement of their fundamental human rights endured becomes irreversible. Korean War worsened DPRK and US's relationship, increasing military tensions, prompting DPRK to level the playing field by establishing large arsenals of nuclear warheads and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) to protect itself from (and attack) their enemies, especially US. Since a peace treaty wasn't signed, DPRK has been living under the threat of nuclear annihilation since Korean War, paranoid about potential attacks. Nuclear weapons' ability to keep its enemies at bay is an assurance to DPRK's survival. Kim Jong-Un claimed, '[DPRK] can tip new-type intercontinental ballistic rockets with more powerful nuclear warheads and keep any cesspool of evils on earth, including U.S. mainland, within our striking range. With each country constantly on edge, both sides are ready to strike.

However, an attack on US would lead to US's retaliation, based on mutually-assured destruction, resulting in both countries in ruin and civilians killed. Besides the US, Hwasong-15, DPRK's farthest-reaching ICBM can travel 13000km, putting the whole world within range. Seeing how dangerous weapons are in DPRK's unstable hands, and could be used to wage destructive battle when political tension escalates, these weapons of mass destruction are humanity's greatest threat. Once the fragile peace in Korea is broken, humanity would be facing catastrophic consequences. In conclusion, Korean War's impacts are largely felt amongst modern society, and cannot be ignored. It will be a bitter memory etched in people's mind, 'I applied for the family reunion more than 30 years ago. Since then, my father mother and sister died. I'm so sad about all I've lost,' said Hwang who left his family behind. Additionally, the spillover impact of separated families onto succeeding generations - absence of intergenerational linkage and grandparents' role of cultural continuity, as role models and emotional buffers - largely affects later generations too, but is often forgotten.

Unfortunately, since politics is intertwined with a sensitive humanitarian issue (US-South Korea military exercises, DPRK's nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches suspended reunion events and talks for future reunions previously), chances of a feasible solution for family reunification materialising in the foreseeable future are reduced, deepening families' emotional

anguish. Finally, DPRK's nuclear capability continues to threaten humanity - request for DPRK's immediate denuclearization is insensible due to DPRK's distrust of US, evidence of Hanoi Summit. Hence, it is with crossed fingers we anticipate the future with DPRK's increasingly unstable nuclear threat, with a single wrong move endangering humanity.

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