

# Legacy of President Moon Jae-in. He Came to Give the Country Back to the People.

By [Prof. Joseph H. Chung](#)

Global Research, October 22, 2022

Region: [Asia](#)  
Theme: [History](#)

All Global Research articles can be read in 51 languages by activating the Translate Website button below the author's name.

To receive Global Research's Daily Newsletter (selected articles), [click here](#).

Follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) and subscribe to our [Telegram Channel](#). Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

\*\*\*

## Introduction

*For centuries, Koreans have been asking the Almighty to bless them with a true leader who would provide daily necessities, hope for the future, courage to fight for the justice and self-respect and self confidence.*

*During the 500-year of Choseon dynasty, kings could not perform properly their duty as national leaders because of the corruption of the "Yang-ban" (aristocrats).*

*King Kojong, the last king of the Choseon dynasty was a failure, because he could not prevent Lee Wan-yong from selling Korea to Japan for his own political and financial greed.*

*During the 35-year Japanese colonial rule, Korea was governed by pro-Japan Korean bureaucrats who collaborated with Japanese for the oppression of Koreans.*

*After 1945, Korea was ruled, for 62 years, by former pro-Japan collaborators and their descendents who regarded the rest of the Korean people as enemies and who were more concerned with their own interests than with those of the rest of the Korean population.*

*There are also a great number of Japanese who remained in Korea, adopted Korean names to keep their wealth cumulated during the 35-year Japanese occupation. This group is one of the key elements of the pro-Japan corrupted conservative South Koreans. In other words, these Japanese have been an integral part of the pro-Japan conservative government.*



*Moon Jae-in came along and, for Koreans, he was the true national leader they had been waiting for so long. He came in order to give the country to back to the people, a country which was stolen by the corrupted pro-Japan conservative forces in South Korea.*

President Moon has left his office on May 9, 2022. I thought that it is right time to discuss what and how he has accomplished his historical tasks.

As the legacy of President Moon, I would point out the following achievements:

- Fight against the corruption culture
- Fight against the COVID-19 Virus

#### Social Reform

- New Economic System
- Crisis Management
- North-South Relations
- The Northern Policy and the Southern Policy
- Korea-Japan Relations
- Unfinished Task of President Moon Jae-in

#### Fight against the Corruption Culture

Before we discuss the corruption culture, we should remember its historical background.

In 1948, South Korea was deeply divided between the pro-Japan conservative South Koreans (PJCSK) and the pro-Korea liberal South Koreans (PKLSK).

The PJCSK was composed of those Koreans who had collaborated with the Japanese colonial government (the traitors), those Japanese who remained in Korea after WWII by adopting Koreans names, the descendents of these two core groups and other groups. I will elaborate the composition of the PJCSK later.

On the other hand, the PKLSK was composed of those Koreans who fought against the Japanese and the vast majority of Koreans who suffered from humiliation, oppression and exploitation by the Japanese. The leader of the PKLSK was Kim Gu who was president of the Korean Provisional Government fighting against the Japanese in China and Manchuria.

The PJCSK were able to win the election in 1948 by not only assassinating Kim Gu but also arresting most of the PKLSK leaders and rigging the election. Syngman Rhee became the first post-war Korean president and formed a government run by the traitors and the Japanese who remained in Korea

On the other hand, in North Korea, under the leadership of Kim Il-sung, the traitors were

executed and there were few Japanese remained by fear of execution. The core of the North Korean society was composed of those who fought with arms against Japan.

You may wonder how come the traitors could become members of the government.

To understand this, we have to go back to 1945, the year of the establishment of the American military government. Being ignorant of Korea and Korean history, the military government hired the traitors who were around and who had experience in running the government.

Thus, important positions of the government including the police were given to collaborators. This was how the collaborators (traitors) were not punished, while, in other countries including France, the traitors were severely punished.



The military government left in 1948 and the presidential election was coming. The PKLSK revolted and organized a committee to identify the traitors and succeeded in making a part of the list of traitors. But, the traitors, under the leadership Syngman Rhee, destroyed the list. Thus, the collaborators were not punished.

Coming back to the question of corruption culture, it is important to understand the psychic of the traitors. These traitors knew that they were enemies of most of the Koreans. They knew that, to survive, they had to keep power. They knew also that they would never be elected through normal democratic political process. Under these circumstances, it was necessary to grab power by force and eliminate those who opposed them.

This explains the police dictatorship of Syngman Rhee, the military dictatorship of Generals Park Chung-hee and Chun Doo-whan, rigged election of Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye.

There was another important means of survival for the PJCSK, the money and the corruption. To survive, the traitors have formed community which cumulated, through illegal or immoral ways, enormous wealth. To increase and protect their wealth, they have developed what I call "corruption community" and "corruption culture."

The corruption community is a very solid organization. At the core, we have the descendents of Lee Wan Yong and his friends, who were knighted by the Japanese emperor in 1929 for their efforts for the annexation of Korea to Japan in 1910. At the core, we find also large corporations, namely, the Chaebols.

The modus operandi of the corruption community is essentially based on the corrupted

relations between politicians and the business corporations. The role of the politicians is to provide privileges including all sorts of permits, policy loans, grants, tax allowances and illegal and immoral land ownership. On the other hands, the role of corporations is to provide bribes and other forms of illegal or immoral money to the politicians.

There are the secondary groups around the core group including bureaucrats, business dealers, families of the core group and a host of other groups including academics, NGOs and others.

There are two institutions which are vital for the survival and the expansion of the corruption community, namely the media and the judiciary system.

The role of media is to hide, justify and protect wrong doings of the corruption community in exchange of bribe money. In Korea, at present, perhaps 90% of mainstream media is an integral part of the corruption community.

On the other hand, the role of the judiciary system is to identify the dissidents, fabricate all sorts of crimes to imprison them on the one hand; on the other, overlook the crimes of the members of the corruption community.

Most of the key positions in the police, the court and the office of prosecutors are occupied by the member of the corruption community or supporters of the corruption community.

The source of the power of the corruption community is, of course, the money. The core members of the community cumulated their wealth during the Japanese occupation and continue to do so for last 70 years since WWII through bribes and embezzlement of public money.

There is a well known investigative media, Newstapa, which has investigated the living conditions of known traitors. No less than 43% live in Gangnam area which is the richest district in Seoul. The most scandalous finding is that they own land of 400,000 km<sup>2</sup> which is 30.8 time the area of Seoul city of 13,000 km<sup>2</sup>. This gives some idea of how rich they are. By law, this land must be returned to the state, but only 3% has been returned.

The investigation has also revealed some interesting sides of 1,117 descendents of these traitors. As many as 33% went to the Korean Ivy league universities, the SKY universities (Seoul National University, Yonsei University and Koryo University).

No less than 27% have studies abroad. The interesting aspect is that they prefer career in business. In fact, 32% are in businesses. This is understandable, for they are eager to hide their identity, which is difficult to do in civil service.

Nobody knows how much wealth the corruption community of the PJCSK has cumulated for 70 years. Some estimates claim hundreds of billions of USD. In fact, it could be trillions of dollars. This immense wealth has allowed the corruption community to keep power and continue to stack up more wealth. In a way, the fight against corruption is the war against money, which is quasi impossible to win.

One of the most challenging tasks faced by President Moon Jae-in was the fight against the deep rooted corruption culture in South Korea. The corruption culture has been developed, refined and strengthened by the PJCSK who ruled South Korea for 62 years since 1948.

But, the PKLSK did not remain idle. They fought back risking death against the leaders of PJCSK and they were successful in making the end of PJCSK presidency shameful.

President Syngman Rhee (1948-1960) was kicked out of his presidential office by students for corruption and police dictatorship.

President General Park Chung-hee (1962-1979) took power through coup d'état. He was the worst kind of human right violator, military dictator, immoral sexual aggressor and abuser of power. He was assassinated in 1979 by his CIA director. But, he played important role for Korea's economic take-off.

President General Chun Doo-han (1980-1987) was sentenced to death, later commuted but imprisoned for coup d'état, corruption, human right violation and embezzlement of public funds.

President Rho Tae-woo (1987-1992) was imprisoned for corruption embezzlement of public money.

President Lee Myung-bak (2008-2013) was in prison for corruption, embezzlement of public money and abuse of power.

President Park Geun-hye (2013-2017) was impeached and sentenced to imprisonment for 25 years for corruption, abuse of power and her incapacity to govern. But, in 2022 she was freed due to her health condition.

All these presidents were pro-Japan conservative presidents. This shows how deep and wide the corruption culture developed by the pro-Japan conservatives.

As soon as President Moon Jae-in took power, he declared the war against the corruption culture and applied the following measures.

First, the key positions of the Moon government were filled by those individuals who fought against the corrupted conservative government and spent years in prison.

President Moon has spent much of his life to defend, as human right lawyer, those who were oppressed and abused by the conservative government. He himself was imprisoned for having defended the victims of the conservative government.

The amazing thing is that, in the progressive government of Moon, there has been no single case of corruption among the cabinet members and presidential advisors. This is amazing; this shows how clean the government of Moon was.

Second, he modified the law on CIA (now National Intelligence Services-NIS) so that it will limit itself to the management of foreign intelligence and that it should not gather information on citizens.

Third, as pointed above, the Moon's government imprisoned the two conservative presidents (Lee Myong-bak and Park Geun-hye) for their abuse of power and corruption.

Fourth, he imprisoned a great number of high ranking civil servants for abuse of power and corruption.

Fifth, he modified the laws on government's subsidies so that the subsidy- recipients cannot embezzle the subsidy funds.

Sixth, he has fought for the reform of the judiciary system with some success. For instance, he was able to establish a mechanism allowing the investigation of high ranking public servants (Corruption Investigation Office for the High-Ranking Officials-고위공직범죄수사처). But, it was just beginning of the long and hard process of cleaning the corrupted lake of bureaucracy.

However, President Moon has provided a strong moral and political support of the people devoted to the reform of the judiciary system.

## Fight against the COVID-19 Virus

The world has admired Korea's remarkable success in its fight against the COVID-19 virus. Such success is attributable to the following factors: rapid government reaction to the outburst of the virus, the government reliance on science and technology, inspiring leadership of President Moon Jae-in, citizens' deep trust in the president Moon and his government and voluntary cooperation of the people.

On January 20, 2020, a woman affected by COVID-19 virus from China was discovered.

On January 27, 2020, the government reacted immediately. A special meeting was held in Seoul Train Station to discuss the proper measure.

On January 30, 2020, the inter-ministry task force was formed. On February 4, 2020, the first test kit appeared and by the end of February, as many as 10,000 test kits became available. This shows the rapidity with which the government acted.

One episode shows to what extent President Moon respected science and experts in public health. By the end of February 2020, most of the countries blocked the entry of people. President suggested to the director of the Korean Disease Control Prevention Agency (KDCA-한국건강관리협회) to let the people to come in. But the KDCA director said "no" and President agreed.

President Moon was one of the very few national leaders who really loved and cared for the people. I am one of those who believe that the most important qualification of a national leader is the love of people.

On February 2, 2020, President Moon visited Daegu, the city which was the most infected city due to the deliberate refusal of test by a politically motivated religious entity, Shincheonji. Daegu city needed 1,000,000 masks. President Moon mobilized the whole government including the military to get the masks. He got these masks for the citizens of Daegu city.

What surprised the world was the fact that Korea had the general election in April, 2020 despite the persistent spread of the virus. Some other countries tried the same with no success. This was possible in Korea, because the people loved the president and they had trust in the president.

Moreover, President Moon was much concerned for the infected people of the world. By March, 2020, President Moon had 50 calls from the heads of states for help. For instance, the President of France, Emmanuel Macron called for help on March 24, 2020. President



Donald Trump called President Moon to ask for masks which Korea could not provide. Instead, Korea sent 300,000 test kits for which President Trump was very grateful.

Under President Moon's leadership, Korea sent masks and test kits to 170 countries free of charge in case of developing countries. He sent masks to veterans of the Korea war and their families.

Another achievement of President Moon was the non-confinement of business firms allowing the continuation of business activities, although limited. As a result, the economic performance of Korea was the best in the world.

The growth rate of GDP of developed countries in 2020 was as follows: the U.S. (-3.4%), UK (-6.3%), France (-8.1%), Germany (-0.4%), Japan (-6.0%), Korea (-0.3%).

The superior performance of Korea in the anti-Coronavirus war was reflected in the casualties of the Pandemic.

As of June 2020, the death rate (number of death per number of infected): The U.S. (1.2%), UK (0.8%), France (0.5%), Germany (0.5%), Canada (1.1%), Japan (0.3%) and Korea (0.1%).

On the other hand, the number of death per 100,000 people was as follows: the U.S. (306.35), UK (264.66), France (229.32), Germany (167.80), Canada (108.0) and South Korea (47.41).

These data show how the government of Moon Jae-in had such a surprising success both in the anti-virus war and the promotion of economic growth.

## Social Reform

For President Moon, social reform was very important for two reasons.

First, it is the sacred responsibility of the state to assure the economic, social and cultural rights recognized by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 1948. These rights are the access to a decent life and the state should provide such decent life to all citizens, at least, provide conditions conducive to these rights. The best way to achieve social reform is fair income distribution.

Second, the fair distribution of income is difficult to assure under the present neoliberal economic system. Under this system, the power of large corporations is greater than that of the government and therefore, the income distribution is more determined by the large corporation than by the government.

Now, in neoliberal economic system, the corporation has to make profit. To make profit, the corporation must reduce the labour cost. To reduce labour cost, the corporations rely on labour cost-saving technology including robots and artificial intelligence on the one hand and, on the other, restrict the role of labour unions. This has led to the concentration of income and wealth in the hands of business leaders.

Moreover, the income and the wealth tend to be concentrated in the hands of decreasing number of business leaders. This is due to intense competition. As competition continues, the number of winners decreases. As a result, the income and the wealth tend to be concentrated in the hands of further decreasing number of winners.

This trend is dramatically observed in Korea. For instance, in the period between 2107 and 2021, the asset share of the top 1% of households had rose from 23.2% to 25.4%.

In the same period, the wealth of the top 20% rose from USD 7.04 million to USD 9.6million, while the wealth of the bottom 20% de decreased from USD 54,000 to USD 39.200.

In other words, the wealth of the top 20 rose by 37.1%, while the wealth of the bottom 20% fell by 21.8%.

However, as far as income distribution is concerned, due to President Moon’s social reform, it has shown some improvement.

One of the popular indictors of the inequality of income distribution is the Gini coefficient. It varies from 0 to 100. The higher the Gini, the more unequal income distribution becomes in favour of the rich. Conversely, the lower the Gini, the more equal income distribution becomes in favour of the poor.

In Korea, between 2017 and 2021, the Gini coefficient of income distribution fell from 35 to 33. This is a sharp contrast to the Gini for asset distribution; it remained at 57. In short, President Moon was not able to affect the lopsided asset distribution, although he did better for the distribution of income.

Table 1 shows some of the measures taken by President Moon for the promotion of welfare of workers. In this table, we see two objectives of these measures, namely the increase of worker income and the improvement of the workers’ life quality.

The minimum wage increased from USD 5.26 in 2016 to USD 5.90 in 2021, a modest increase of 12.2%. The original idea was to increase it to USD 9.0 but it appeared to be too early to do so.

The farm household annual income rose in the same period from USD 29,900 to 35,100, an increase of 17.4%.

Table 1. Welfare of Workers, 2016 and 2021

Items	2016	2021	Var %
Annual number of work hours (hours)	2,031	1,925	-5.2
Minimum wage (USD)	5.26	5.90	12.2
Per capita hours of leisure per day(hours)	3.6	4.2	16.7
Labour Income ratio: SME to Large Co. (%)	61.9	74.4	20.2
Poverty Ratio of workers (%)	23.5	16.0	-31.9
Adherence to Employment Insurance (million persons)	12.7	14.5	14.2
Allowance for Workers Children national (USD billion)	2.4	3.9	62.5
Farm household Annual income (USD 1,000)	29.9	35.1	17.4

The annual amount of allowance for workers’ children increased from USD 2.4 billion to 3.9 billion, a rise of 62.5%.

One thing which attracts our attention is the narrowing gap between the wage of workers who work for small and medium companies (SMEs) and the wage of large company workers.



In 2016, the wage at the SMEs was as low as 61.9% of wages paid by large companies. But, in 2021, wage paid by SMEs became 74.4% of wage paid by large companies. So, the gap narrowed by 20.2%

One interesting aspect is the decreasing poverty rate of workers which fell from 23.5% to 16.0%. This is indeed a great surprise.

In the same Table 1, we see also a number of measures which have improved the quality of life or lessened the cost of living.

For instance, the annual number of work hours fell from 2,031 hours to 1,925 hours or a fall of 5.2%. As a result, the leisure hours available per day was made to rise from 3.6 hours to 4.2 hours, an increase of 16.7%.The number of employment insurance adherence rose by 14.2%.

Thus, President Moon has made important contribution to the welfare of the workers and farmers.

Table 2 below gives us an idea on the improvement of the welfare of minority groups.

First of all, what strikes us is the sharp fall in the poverty rate of children and the elderly. The poverty rate of children decreased by 35.5% in the period, 2016-2021, while that of the elderly fell by 10.8%. The amount of the basic pension rose from USD 159.3 to USD 237.5 per month, an increase of 49.2%. This is indeed a surprise for all.

Table 2. Welfare of Minority Groups, 2016 and 2021

Items	2016	2021	Var%
Child Poverty Ratio %	15.2	9.8	-35.5
Elderly Poverty Ratio %	43.6	38.9	-10.8
Basic Pension/month USD	159.3	237.5	49.2
Cancer Patient Cost Share%	14.5	11.2	-22.8
Medic. Insur. Coverage of Medical Cost%	62.5	65.3	4.5
Number of Beneficiary of Nursing Homes (000)	799	1,207	51.1
Allowance for War Veterans/Month USD	171.8	275.8	60.5
Monthly salary of Soldiers in Active Duty USD	168.8	528.1	212.9
Deaths by Traffic Accidents (persons)	4,292	2,900	-32.4
Persons Looked after by one Emergency Personnel	5,637	3,957	-29.8

The medical cost coverage paid by cancer patients fell by 22.8%. The overall medical coverage ratio increase from 62.5% to 65.3%, an increase of 4.5%.

On the other hand, the number of beneficiary of nursing homes increased dramatically from 799,000 to 1,207,000 a jump of 51.1%.

The monthly allowance for war veterans rose from USD 171.8 to USD 275.8, an improvement of as much as 60.5%. What is more impressive is the increase in monthly payment for soldiers in active duty from USD 168.8 to USD 528.1, an increase of 212.9%.

All these measures have certainly led to more money to spend and strengthen the domestic demand for goods and services thus contributing to the growth of the economy.

President Moon was much concerned with the safety of the people. For instance, the annual

number of death by traffic accidents came down from 4,292 cases to 2,900 cases, a decrease of 32.4%.

Moreover, the number of persons whom a safety-related civil servant has to look after fell from 5,637 to 3,957, a fall of 29.8%.

## New Economic System

For last four decades, the Korean economic system has been the regime of neo-liberal economic system.

Korea needed a new economic system based on the development of SMEs, better integration of the SMEs into the Chaebol-led production chain, diversification of products to be exported and the expansion of export market including the ASEAN countries and the Northern countries.

In Korea, there are 6.6 million SMEs in 2018. They account for as much as 99% of the number of enterprises, create more than 80% of jobs, account for 20% of GDP and 18% of exports.

President Moon promoted the Bureau of SMEs to the status of Ministry of Small and Medium Venture Enterprises (SMVEs) with a competent minister Park Young-sun to run it.

Table 3 shows President's strategy of structural change in exports as well as the promotion of SMEs' exports.

In the period, 2016-2021, the overall exports rose by 6.6%, but, SMES' exports increased by 9.3%.

The exports of weapons had an increase of 133.3%. Korea is becoming a significant weapon exporter.

Table 3. Exports, 2016 and 2021

Items	2016	2021	Var %
Total Trade (USD Billion)	901	1,259	39.7
Total Exports (USD Billion)	604	644	6.6
Exports by SMEs (USD Billion)	107	117	9.3
Exports of Weapons (USD Billion)	3.0	7.0	133.3
Exports of Contents (USD Billion)	8.8	11.9	35.2
Exports of Chips (USD Billion)	205	398	94.1
Exports de Bio (USD Billion)	2.6	15.2	7.2times
Exports of Future cars (Number)	11,000	155,000	14 times
Exports to India (USD Billion)	15.8	23.7	50.0
Exports to ASEAN (USD Billion)	134.6	206.3	53.2
Exports to North Countries (USD Billion)	7.2	14.1	95.8

It is to note that the exports of bio and future cars including electric cars rose by 7.6 times and 14 times, respectively. I may add that the exports of cultural products (contents) increased by 35.2%.

As we will see below, another interesting aspect is the success of President Moon's Southern policy and Northern policy. The exports to the ASEAN countries rose by 53%, while the

exports to Northern countries including Central Asian countries increased by as much as 95.8%.

## Crisis Management

President Moon showed also his remarkable leadership in his handling of the crisis of the shipping industry and the trade war with Japan.

The 2010s were bad decade for Korean shipping industry which creates 20,000 jobs. But, the shipping industry was losing its global market due to bad management and increasing competition.

The bankruptcy of Hanzin Shipping in February 2017 created panic in the ocean going shipping industry, which was a vital element for the Korean manufacturing industry. This was a crisis.

The shipping industry was not able to cope with the crisis. Under such circumstance, strong government leadership was needed. President Moon provided this leadership. He created the Korean Ocean Business Corporation which was a financial corporation funded by three state banks including the Korea Development Bank, the Export and Import Bank and the Korea Asset management Corporation. These banks provided USD 5.3 billion in accordance with 5-year planning.

This fund was invested in three shipbuilders, namely, the Hyundai Heavy Industries, the Daewoo Shipbuilding & Maritime Engineering and the Samsung Heavy Industries. The success of this planning was symbolized by the construction of the largest NLG shipping ship, HMM Hanul of 16,000 TEU.(Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit).

To be frank, President Moon took a gamble but this gamble was the winner. This shows his courage and wisdom of handling a major crisis.

The plan was a big success. The amount of shipping capacity rose from 500,000 TEU in 2019 to 1,500,000 TEU by 2030.

There is another legacy of President Moon. During the Pacific War (1941-1945), several hundred thousand Koreans were taken by force to be sent to work like slaves in Japanese mines and factories in Japan under less than sub-human living conditions. The victims have appealed to the Japanese court for compensation with no success.

But, on October 30, 2018, the Supreme Court of Korea ordered the responsible Japanese companies, the Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, the Sumimoto Metal & Steel and the Nippon Steel to make compensation payment to the victims.. But they refused.



Shinzo Abe, the Japanese Prime Minister, then, declared

trade war against Korea in July 1, 2019 by ordering the restriction of exports chemical products vital to the production of smart phones, TV sets and especially semiconductors which were the key items of Korea' exports. To make matter worse, on August 2, 2021, Abe put Korea out of the "White List" which provided special advantage to the exports of the listed countries.

This was a crisis and Abe knew it. The pro-Japan conservative media and politicians argued that Korea should give in and forget about the compensation payment to the victims of labour slavery.

But, President Moon declared August 7, 2021: "We will never surrender to Japan".

Korea retaliated by putting Japan out of Korean white list on September 18, 2019. The position taken by President Moon inspired the Korean population by boycotting the purchase of Japanese goods. For instance, the sales of Japanese cars dropped by 57% in 2021; the sale of Japanese beer had free fall of 97%; the volume of Korean tourists going to Japan fell by 90%. In short, in Korea, the government and the people fought together against Japan.

Moreover, President Moon encouraged SMEs to innovate and produce the controversial chemical products. No less than USD 5 billion was injected and, as a result, Korea's trade dependency on Japan for intermediary goods fell from 33.5% in 2017 to 24.9% in 2021.

Korea won in its trade war against Japan. This was the beginning of the end of Japanese neo-colonialism of which Korean has been victim ever since 1945 I will come back to this issue later in this paper.

## North-South Relations

One of the important legacies of President Moon is what he accomplished for the North-South relations.

Actually, his role in the promotion of friendly relations with the North began on May 28, 2017 in his Berlin declaration for inter-Korea economic cooperation.

However, his North Korea diplomacy began with his invitation of Kim Jung-un to the Pyongchang Winter Olympics; this invitation took place on August 15, 2017.

In fact, early that month, North Korea expressed its interests in participating in the Winter Olympics. After the delicate diplomacy of Kim Yo-jung, sister of Kim Jung-un, the athletics of both Koreas entered into the opening ceremony by waving a flag of the Korea peninsula.

Moreover, the world had the opportunity to see the joint ice-hockey game which was beautiful to watch, because it demonstrated the potential of peace on the Korean peninsula.

The game looked like a prelude to reunification of one people who had been united for 5,000 years but separated for 70 years.

Right after the Winter Olympics, President Moon sent on March 3, 2018, a strong delegation led by the NSC advisor to Pyongyang where North Korea expressed its readiness to negotiate for the denuclearization.

Right after this, Mr. Chung Eui-yong, National Security Director and Suh Hoon, Chief of the



National Information Service (NIS) went to Washington to communicate Pyongyang's intention. This was the opening of the series of summits which gave the world the hope of peace on the Korean peninsula.



North Korean Leader Kim Jong-un and Moon shake hands inside the Peace House. (Photo by Cheongwadae / Blue House, licensed under KOGL Type 1)

President Moon met Kim Jung-un met twice in Panmunjom (April 27, 2018 and May 26, 2018) and once in Pyongyang on September 18-20, 2018. These three summits have led to the demilitarization of the Western coast, the Eastern coast along with the Joint Security Area (JSA) in DMZ. It was agreed that as far as the two Koreans were concerned, the Korean War was over.

In both Koreas, the hope of the reunification was rising. In Pyongyang, president Moon was greeted on September 19, 2018 by 150,000 North Koreans at the historical Mass games. President Moon declared "We have been united for 5,000 years but separated for 70 years. Let us reunite!"

It was a highly emotionally-charged declaration. Most of North Koreans who were there cried with hope of ending the nightmare of the separation imposed by foreign powers.



This hope was followed by the unexpected reaction of President Donald Trump of the U.S. who met Kim Jung-un three times: Singapore (June 12, 2018), Hanoi (February 27-28, 2019) and Panmunjom (DMZ) (June 30, 2019).

There were four items agreed upon at the Singapore summit which attract our attention, namely, new Pyongyang-Washington relations, lasting peace on the Korean peninsula, complete denuclearization and the recovery of POW/MIA remains.

None of these agreements was practical enough; they were mere statement of possibilities. But, the recovery and the repatriation of POW/MIA remains were done. Moreover, the joint military exercises were made less extensive and less threatening.

For the Hanoi summit, Kim Jung-un travelled six thousand kilo meters to show his sincerity of effectuating denuclearization. But, President Trump broke the Summit after having consulted a piece of paper presented by John Bolton who was known to be the most anti-peace in the Korean peninsula.

We do not know if President Trump was really interested in creating peace in the Korean peninsula. But, he came to Panmunjom on June 30, 2019 to shake hand with Kim Jung-un.

It is true that the Kim-Moon summits and the Kim-Trump summits have not been able to assure denuclearization despite the sincere wish of North Korea to exchange denuclearization with peace and economic development.

However, President Moon has left the following legacies.

First, through the mediation of President Moon, the world realized that Kim Jung-un was bona fide leader to whom one can talk and that North Koreans were normal people like any other people.

Second, the world saw that the blood and cultural bond of North-South was above ideology and politics.

Third, the North-South peace process and economic cooperation are feasible, if there were no outside interference.

Fourth, despite the failure of the denuclearization and persistence of sanctions, for three years, there were no nuclear tests or major missile launching until the Yoon Suk-yeol took over the power in May 2022.

Fifth, the only feasible way to assure peace on the Korean peninsula, promote North-South economic cooperation and eventual reunification of Koreas is to carry out the North-South peace process by Koreans without being unduly influenced by foreign powers.

## Innovative Foreign Policy

Before President Moon took over the power in 2017, Korean foreign policy had been confined to relations with countries which were directly related to the issues of the Korean peninsula. It was the first time that Korea began to undertake diplomacy with countries which were far from the Korean peninsula and Korean affairs.

To be more precise, President Moon undertook actively his Northern policy and Southern Policy. For his Southern policy, he visited with a large delegation of business community to each of the ASEAN countries which were becoming more and more visible in international affairs. The objective was not only the trade promotion but also Korea's active political leadership in South East Asian region.



Owing to President Moon's productive diplomacy, as pointed above, Korea's exports to the Asian countries rose from USD 134.6 billion in 2016 to USD 206.3 billion in 2021, an increase by 53.2%.

Moreover, President Moon was not only respected but also liked by the leaders of ASEAN countries. During the ASEAN Summit held in Busan on November 25, 2021, the Indonesian President, Joko Widodo, called President Moon as "hyung-nim" which is the affectionate way calling a respected person; it means "my elder brother". This shows the warm leadership and the personal charm of President Moon.

For the first time in modern Korean history of foreign relations, President Moon actively pursued diplomatic relations with the Northern countries which are the center of the Eurasian Economic Community. President Moon visited each of the northern countries including Russia, Belarus, Mongol, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Rumania, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan. These countries will be at the centre of the largest economic bloc.

President Moon being aware of importance of these countries visited them and he was successful in promoting trade. As shown above, Korean exports to these countries rose from USD 7.2 billion in 2016 to USD 14.1 billion in 2021, an increase of 95.8%.

With President Moon, Korean diplomacy has become more autonomous and avoided being a mere cheer leader of the diplomacy of the U.S. or Japan.

The leadership of President Moon has allowed Korea to play significant leadership in international affairs.

In 2019, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) promoted Korea from the status of "developing country" to the status of "developed country".

It was the first time that UNCTAD promoted developing country to the status of developed country since it was established in 1963. Moreover, for last three years, Korea was invited as observer to G7 summit meetings.

There is no doubt that President Moon has shown us the courage and the wisdom of pursuing sovereign diplomacy without unduly hurting the interests of major powers which are involved in Korean affairs

## Korea-Japan Relations

The history of Korea-Japan is long and bumpy at times. But, until the annexation of Korea to Japan in 1910, it had been relatively peaceful with exception of the 1590s marked by the invasion of Toyotomi Hideyoshis in Korea.

But, since the annexation of Korea in 1910, the Korea-Japan relations have been unstable, insecure and even hostile.

This paper is interested in discussing the two periods of Korea-Japan relations, the period of colonialism (1910-1945) and the period of neo-colonialism (1946-2022). To be more specific, my chief concern is with the impact of Japanese colonialism and its neo-colonialism on the collective life in Korea.

There can be multitude impacts of the Japanese colonialism in Korea. But, the horrible impact was the danger of losing completely the identity of Korea and Koreans. The Japanese were trying to force Koreans to forget about Dan-gun (founder of Korea five thousand years ago), Korean names, Korean culture. They even wanted to replace the Korean trees with the Japanese trees. The Japanese wanted to become the master in the Korean peninsula well served by Korean slaves.

However, the impact which hurt Korea most was the fatal division of Koreans into two hostile camps, namely, pro-Japan camp who collaborated with the Japanese invaders and sold Korea for their personal wealth and might on the one hand and on the other, the anti-Japan camp including those who fought against the Japanese risking their lives.

The pro-Japan group camp led by Lee Wan-yong and high ranking politicians, military officers, newspaper owners and bureaucrats worked for the Japanese interests. By the way, Lee Wan-yong and 39 others were knighted in 1929 by the Japanese Emperor for giving Korea as a gift to the Emperor-God.

I call them “traitors” who collaborated with the Japanese in stealing houses, lands other precious assets belonging to Koreans, capturing teen age girls to be sent to the hellish military camp of “comfort women”, conscripting young Korean men to be sent to kill Korean patriots, forcing hundreds of thousands of Korean worker to die in Japanese mines and factories due to over work, hunger, disease and torture carried out by the Japanese masters.

This is the tragic legacy of the 35-year Japanese occupation in Korea.

The nightmare of Japanese brutal beastly aggression was over in 1945. At least, it was what Koreans thought. The Koreans were dancing and singing in the street to celebrate the freedom. Yes, Koreans were happy. But, soon, they had to face the dark clouds of fear and despair covering the peninsula and saddening their hearts.

Right from the beginning of the post-war era, the two groups had to fight to the end. Their hostile feelings were too strong and too deep to find conciliation.

The pro-Japan conservative South Koreans (PJCSK) being a minority group and hated by the pro-Korea liberal South Koreans (PKLSK) knew that, to survive, they had to take power.

Now, to take power, the PJCSK needed money. So, Park Chung-hee asked the help of Kishi Nobuske who was the most brutal racist and merciless ruler in Manchuria in the 1930s. He was maternal-side grandfather of former assassinated prime minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe. He was a A-Class war criminal but escaped hanging due to his utility to serve the U.S. interests.

Kishi Nobuske gave, in 1963, to Park Chun-hee as much as USD 66 million to create the first major political party in Korea, the Democratic Republican Party (DRP), which was given the role of making South Korea a neo-colony of Japan.

By neo-colonialism, I mean the state of colonialism without the coloniser country being present in the colonized country.

Since 1963, the political parties of the PJCSK changed many times the party name, probably, to hide their connection with Japan.

The post-war Korea-Japan relations were peaceful under the PJCSK government and rather frictional under the government of the PKLSK.

Since 1945, the PJCSK ruled South Korea for 62 years while the PKLSK governed South Korea for 15 years.

Under the rule of the PJCSK, the Korea-Japan relations have been the maintenance of the Japanese neo-colonialism, while the Korea-Japan relations under the PKLSK have been the fight against the Japanese neo-colonialism.

There are three kinds of neo-colonial relations between Korea and Japan: economic, political and security neo-colonial relations.

The economic neo-colonialism: From the beginning, Japan established the Korea-Japan production chain which made Korea economy dependent on the Japanese economy. In this arrangement, Korea imports high value-added input goods (intermediary goods) from Japan and exports final products produced by assembling the inputs to produce finished products.

Now, in the case of high tech product such as portable telephone, the value added of the assembling work is about 5% of the sale price.

For example, let us assume that Korea imports input goods from Japan by paying \$95 and that it exports to Japan the finished product for \$ 100.

Korea's net gain is only \$5, while the Japan's surplus is \$90. So, Korea's trade deficit with Japan is \$ 90.

Under this situation, it is impossible to have trade surplus with Japan. In fact, Korea has never had trade surplus with Japan since 1945.

It is true that despite the chronic trade deficit, the Japanese neo-colonialism has nevertheless contributed to the Han River Miracle.

But, to assure sustained and healthy economy, Korean economy should become more autonomous.

In fact, Korean economy has been becoming more and more independent from the Japanese economy. This trend has been enforced by President Moon Jae-in.

Under President Moon, Korea's dependence on Japanese input goods fell from 30% to 23%. Korea's dependence on Japan for total exports fell from 7.0% in 2012 to 4.8% in 2018. Japan's trade surplus (Korea's deficit) fell from 2.49 trillion yen in 2017 to 1.33 trillion yen in 2020.

The political neo-colonialism: The Japanese political neo-colonialism refers to a situation in which Japanese political interests are promoted by the PJCSK. The political interests of Japan is the denial of war crime committed by Japan against Korea, especially the beastly collective rape of 200,000 Korean girls at the Japanese military camp of comfort women.

Shinzo Abe is notorious for his denial of Japanese war crimes.. What is difficult to swallow is the fact that Shinzo Abe denies the war crime of comfort women despite five prominent Japanese politicians' admission of the crime and their apologies for the crime.

In 1992, Koichi Kato, the, chief cabinet secretary, stated this,

“Government has been involved in the establishment of comfort stations, the control of those who recruited comfort women, the construction and enforcement of comfort facilities, the management of comfort stations... and that the government wanted to express its sincere apology and remorse to all those who have suffered indescribable hardship, so called wartime comfort women.”

In 1993, Yohei Kono, former chief secretary of the prime minister office, made the following statement,

“The Japanese military was directly or indirectly involved in the establishment and management of comfort women. The recruitment of comfort women was entrusted mainly by private recruiters of the comfort women. In many cases, they were recruited against their will coercing. At times, administrative/military personnel took part in the recruitment. They lived in misery at comfort station under a coercive atmosphere.”

Thus, Kato and Kono made it crystal clear that the sub-human treatment of 200,000 young girls mostly from Korea was imposed not only by the military but also administration of Japan. What these two former chiefs of cabinet secretaries did was the proof of the hellish atrocity committed to the poor girls by Japan. Kato even offered an apology.

In 1995, Tomichi Murayama, former prime minister, said this,

“In the hope that no such mistakes made be in the future, I regret in spirit of humility these un-refutable facts of history and here once again my feeling of deep remorse and state my heartfelt apologies.”

In 2005, Junichiro Koizumi, former prime minister, made an apology,

“Sincerely facing these facts of history, I once again express my feeling of deep remorse and heartfelt apology.”

Both Murayama and Koizumi were highly respected prime ministers. In fact, Koizumi was Shinzo Abe's boss.

Let us see what Shinzo Abe had to say about the crime. In 2015, Shizo Abe said this,

“I bow my head deeply before the souls of all those who perished both at home and abroad. I express my feeling of profound grief and sincere condolence.”

This was not an apology for the war crime for the surviving victims of the beastly collective rapes.

Although Abe has never explained his rational reasons for such irrational behaviour, I argue that, for him, the admission of such crime is not compatible with the integrity of the Yamato race, the race of the Emperor-God. Therefore, he has taken out from the school history text book the crime against the comfort women so that the future generation can rule Asia again with no guilty feeling.

Now, to conquer Korea again, it is important to beautify Japan's colonialism. Sinzo Abe wanted to tell Koreans that the annexation of Korea was beneficial for Koreans and the

Japanese military cannot do commit such crime as the sex slavery of Korean girls.

Since Japan cannot convince the Koreans by itself, Japan has asked the PJCSK to do it for Japan. This is the political neo-colonialism.

Japan has been funding a lot of money to far-right research centers, academics, religious group and NGOs in Korea. These groups are a part of the PJCSK and they established a pro-Japan force in Korea called "New-Right".

This pro-Japan group has made the PJCSK government of Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye to take out from the school history text books the crime story of comfort women and put emphasis on the goodness of the Japanese colonialism in Korea.

Fortunately, President Moon Jae-in has put back in the School history text books the story of comfort women and the atrocity of the Japanese colonial power.

The security neo-colonialism: Finally, there is the security neo-colonialism. Japan is fearful of the reunification of Koreas for unified Korea mean a serious threat to Japan's security and its regional influence. The best way of preventing the reunification is the prevention of the North-South peace process.. In other words, the way of preventing the peace process is to sustain North-South tension.

Since the North-South relations are Korean internal problems, Japan has asked the PJCSK to demonize North Korea so that the North-South tension is kept. In fact, the PJCSK has been doing their best to maintain the North-South tension.

But, the governments of Kim Dae-jung (1998-2003) and Rho Moon-hyun (2003-2008) were able to begin the peace process.

President Moon Jae-in went even farther in the promotion of the peace process with North Korea. Thus, President Moon was able to stop security neo-colonialism from going any further.

## Unfinished Tasks of President Moon Jae-in

Five years are an extremely short period of time to make major national reforms, but President Moon Jae-in has made game-changing reforms.

He has challenged the corruption culture which has been developed, refined and fortified over the past 70 years by the PJCSK.

He has shown to the world how a country can combat successfully the pandemic through science, people's trust in the government, the president's love of people and people's mutual supports.

He has made decent social reform which is necessary not only for the justice, equality but also for prosperity.

He has established a new economic regime allowing the creation of jobs, the generation of income of the ordinary people through the development of SMEs and productive production chain in which the SMEs are well integrated with Chaebols.



He has shown his remarkable ability to handle crisis, namely, the shipping industry crisis and the crisis of trade war with Japan.

He has been able to establish the basis for the permanent peace on the Korean peninsula.

He has opened a new chapter of Korean foreign relations making it possible not only to promote trade but also enhance Korea's international leadership.

He has liberated Korea from Japan's economic, political and security neo-colonialism.

Thus, President Moon has done a lot for Korea and Koreans. He has done something no other presidents have done.

He has made major contribution to the transformation of Korea into a country deserving to be a country (nara-da-oon-nara-나라다운나라).

Korea has been owned by the powerful and wealthy pro-Japan conservatives. The vast majority of South Koreans have been bystanders watching the fruit of their hard work and sacrifice flowing into the hand of the pro-Japan conservatives and they had to endure the "gap-jil" (harsh mistreatment of the weak by the strong).

President Moon has been successful in giving Korea back to its owners, the Korean people.

President Moon wanted to do more, much more for Korea and the Korean people whom he respected and loved. But, the deep rooted problems did not allow him to go further in given time of five years.



Former President Moon shakes hands with his successor Yoon Suk-yeol after Yoon's inauguration, 10 May 2022. (Photo by [Republic of Korea](#), licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0)

President Moon has shown that with proper policy and strong political will power, it is possible to make Korea a country for all, not just for the pro-Japan conservatives.

President Moon has shown that it is possible to make Korea a country of justice, equality and



prosperity for all. But, there are problems which he could not solve. They are the problems of the judiciary system and the media.

It must be pointed out that the Korean prosecutor office is the most powerful and the most corrupted in the world. The prosecutor has the monopoly of criminal investigation right and indictment right. Recently, a law was adopted to limit the abuse of power by the prosecutors. But, under the new PJCSK government of Yoon Suk-yeol, the law is likely to ignored.

In most countries, the criminal investigation is performed by the police. Being powerful, the prosecutor is the best ally of the corruption community.

The prosecutor is mighty, because there is no operational mechanism to supervise them and bring them to the court. To make matter even worse, many of the court judges are also member of the corruption community.

The prosecutor is the best profession for becoming millionaires in a few years.. The bribe money for not indicting the accused is very high. The amount of bribe money increases in function of the reduction of culpability recommended by the prosecutor.

In fact, the abuse of power by the prosecutor has been debated for long and by every government. Even some of the conservative lawmakers have tried to institute a legal mechanism to investigate and punish the prosecutors along with other high ranking bureaucrats and politician who are corrupted. This has been a reform which the people have been asking for decades.

Moon's government has made the National Assembly to establish by law, on November 10, 2020, the Corruption Investigation Office for High- Ranking Officials (CIOHRO). This is one of many historical achievements of President Moon.

There is one reform which is even more difficult to reform. It is the reform of the media. We all expect from the media the production and the diffusion of information which is professional, objective, critical, unbiased useful for public policies designed to promote the welfare for all citizens.

Unfortunately, the Korean media do not have these virtues for the simple reason that for last 70 years they have been managed by the conservative governments. The conservative government's media policy is to glorify the conservatives and demonize the progressives.

The core of the conservative media policy may be summarized.

First, it encourages the creation of small media outlets so that they depend on the conservative corruption community for their income.

Second, it sets up a mechanism of information coordination. The Chosen Ilbo, the Jung-ang Ilbo and the Tong-ah Ilbo (Cho-Jung-Tong) have the function of coordinating the production and the diffusion of information favourable to the corruption community and demonizing the opposition force.

Third, the main source of media income is the conservative corruption community, especially, the major Chaebols.

Fourth, illegal and immoral activities of the media are seldom punished because of the collusion between the conservative camp and the penal and judiciary system.

In fact, the media has been the most formidable enemy of the anti-corruption war of Moon-Jae-in. The reform of media has not yet begun. The government, if it is the progressive one, will have the colossal task of reforming the corrupted media.

To sum up, President Moon Jae-in has done a lot for Korea and Koreans to keep his promise of giving Korea back to its owners, the Korean people. He has been successful in doing just that.

He has given Korea back to Koreans. But, the new PJCSK government of Yoon Suk-yeol is trying hard to steal it again. That is what makes me worried and sad.

\*

Note to readers: Please click the share buttons above or below. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter and subscribe to our Telegram Channel. Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

*Dr. Joseph H. Chung is professor of economics at Quebec University in Montreal (UQAM) and member of the Center of Research on Integration and Globalization (CEIM) of UQAM. He is Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG).*

The original source of this article is Global Research  
Copyright © [Prof. Joseph H. Chung](#), Global Research, 2022

---

**[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)**

**[Become a Member of Global Research](#)**

Articles by: [Prof. Joseph H. Chung](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)  
[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)