



Facts & figures: Korean Peninsula

Participants of MCC's Korea Peninsula Legacy of War Learning Tour in 2023 walk a trail near the 38th parallel. Photo courtesy of Tim Huber/AW

70+

Years of division and unresolved war between North and South Korea

1945 Korean Peninsula divided

1950 Korean War began

1953 Armistice agreement signed (not a peace agreement)

7+

Years of travel ban for most U.S. citizens

2017 Ban on U.S. passports for travel to North Korea (very limited exceptions)

2020 North Korea closed its borders to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (still closed as of March 2024)



2.5 miles WIDTH OF DEMILITARIZED ZONE (DMZ) BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA

Below: South Korea's Cemetery for North Korean and Chinese Soldiers, known informally as the "enemy cemetery" (2023). Photo courtesy of Hwan Cheol Yoon Right: Ssuk, or Korean mugwort, grow in a greenhouse in North Korea with plastic sheeting provided by MCC (2017). MCC photo/Jennifer Deibert



28,000
Number of U.S. military personnel in South Korea (2023)



39,300
Persons living in South Korea separated from family members in North Korea (Jan. 2024)
(By some estimates, about 100,000 Korean Americans have relatives in North Korea)

Policy Principles

U.S. policy on the Korean Peninsula should . . .

Resources for learning more

MCC Peace & Justice Journal,
Fall/Winter 2023: First be reconciled:
U.S. policy on sanctions
washingtonmemo.org/newsletter

Belonging in peace by Yujin Kim
(article)
mcc.org/our-stories/belonging-peace

ReconciliAsian
reconciliasian.org

Women Cross DMZ
womencrossdmz.org

American Friends Service Committee
afsc.org/program/north-korea

Letters to My Hometown project
koreanamericanstory.org/letters-to-my-hometown



Cabbages grow in a greenhouse in North Korea with plastic sheeting provided by MCC (2017).

MCC photo/Jennifer Deibert

Support a peace treaty

In 1953, the U.S., North Korea, and China declared a ceasefire in the Korean War but, after more than 70 years, there has never been a formal peace treaty. **The Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act (H.R. 1369) would work toward an official end to the war.** The “forever war” status leads to increased militarism in the region, risks a wider military conflict, and stifles opportunities for humanitarian assistance.

Prioritize diplomacy and dialogue

While there have been attempts to engage North Korea in multi-party talks over the years, the government of DPRK has stated it is willing to engage with the U.S. directly. However, since 2019 these efforts have stalled. **The U.S. government should continue to pursue respectful dialogue, particularly on humanitarian assistance, people-to-people exchanges, and divided families, laying the groundwork for dialogue** around more contentious issues—such as denuclearization—down the road.

Encourage exchanges

The U.S. should **utilize current State Department exchange programs and allow private organizations to facilitate academic, artistic, educational and cultural exchanges.** The U.S. has an extensive history of using such exchanges to lay the groundwork for larger diplomatic breakthroughs in countries during times of hostility. Examples include the former USSR, China, and Vietnam. This crucial component is missing from current U.S.-DPRK policy.

Reunite families

The Korean War not only divided the peninsula geographically but also separated families. While recognizing recent efforts to help reunite families, more needs to be done. **The Divided Families Registration Act (H.R. 7152/S. 3876) would enhance these efforts.** Further, the State Department should engage in diplomacy with DPRK to open more avenues for North Koreans, South Koreans, and Korean Americans to reunite with their loved ones.

Evaluate sanctions

Consider the negative impacts of broad-based U.S. economic sanctions on ordinary people in North Korea and on global financial systems. When sanctions are used, ensure they are narrow, targeted, and have appropriate humanitarian exemptions. Evaluate whether the use of sanctions is achieving the desired policy goals.

