

Comprehensive Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development on the Korean Peninsula

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East Asia is a region deeply affected by conflict, yet there is no collective security apparatus. Facing diverse challenges, successive governments in the region have adopted state-centric national security policies with an emphasis on national sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity. The most extreme manifestation of this state-centricity can be found on the Korean Peninsula where the two regimes, North and South, view each other as existential threats. Attempts to manage the conflict by coercing the “other” into acquiescence through threats and sanctions have proved ineffectual. Likewise, attempts to buy peace through incentivizing the other have failed to resolve the conflict. This panel, therefore, proposes a “comprehensive” approach to peacebuilding on the Korean Peninsula that simultaneously broadens the security discourse to encompass aspects of positive peace and sustainable development, while also looking to the long-term transformation of conflictual relations. The comprehensive construction of peace requires an understanding of the true interests and needs of all parties. This means that all parts of society must be included in the social construction and adoption of peaceful norms. Comprehensive perspectives on peacebuilding call for “positive, proactive programs that promote peace building, rather than negative, reactive programs intended to reduce violence” and a focus on promoting harmony, understanding, and effective problem solving.” In other words, comprehensive perspectives on peacebuilding concentrate on how to bring people constructively together to build a whole greater than the sum of the parts, rather than on how to keep them apart in order to mitigate against the worst manifestations of conflicts of interests. This panel will bring together scholars and students from the disciplines of international relations, development cooperation, and North Korean studies to assess the possibilities for building a comprehensive peace founded on the principles of sustainable and equitable development.

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