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The Argus

Since 1954

The Unmourned Silence of May 18

The Fight to Expose the Truth in June 1987

The Gwangju Uprising Remembered in Defiance

Democracy Forged in the Fires of the June Democracy Movement

Democracy Built on Countless Sacrifices

The Argus

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Editorial

Steps Beyond the Past

True maturity does not end with simply remembering the past. A community truly grows when it uses that memory as a compass, navigating towards a better future. History is not just a recorded past; it is a living foundation that sustains the present and shapes the future. Therefore, how we set the direction and boundary of memory is also an answer to what kind of society we dream of today.

This June issue illuminates how memories of the past move the present and light up the future. The June Democracy Movement of 1987 grew from its roots in the Gwangju Uprising of May 18, 1980. The film *1987* vividly captures the courage and solidarity of citizens who cried out for truth against the state's violent oppression during the June Democracy Movement. And in the background lies the past tragedies of Gwangju depicted in *Human Acts*. This novel restores the voices of those who resisted the silence demanded by state violence through "memory." The memories they carry are not only emotional and personal but also civic and institutional, defending the right to self-governance, civil liberty, and national sovereignty. South Korean democracy was not an achievement made overnight, but a hard-won inheritance built through the courage of citizens who, even amidst oppression and pain, claimed their rightful place as the authors of their nation's future.

Remembering history in this way is not just about mourning the past. It's an act of establishing today's values and re-questioning the direction we should aim for. As we mark the 60th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between South Korea and Japan, the relationship between the two countries is reaching a new turning point. However, genuine reconciliation and peace are possible only when we face the past truthfully and stand in mutual recognition as sovereign nations. The same applies to Memorial Day. Remembering the fallen should go beyond solemn commemoration. It must also honor the full dignity of citizenship in a sovereign democracy—one that upholds peace and coexistence while recognizing the enduring values of duty, sacrifice, and national defense.

Memory can move towards the future when it becomes a "starting point for action," not just a passive recollection. It is at this very point that the question of the "direction of memory" gains power. Memory is a stepping stone for progress, not regression, and the blueprint for the future we must build upon. As we move forward from the past, what kind of tomorrow are we aiming for with our steps?

By Park Se-eun
Editor-in-Chief

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Cover Story

>> In June 1987, countless citizens who poured out onto the streets shouted, “Scrap the pro-constitution defense, overthrow the dictatorship,” creating a turning point for Korean democracy. The June Democracy Movement, sparked by the Park Jong-cheol torture death case and the death of Lee Han-yeol, led to the direct presidential election system through nationwide participation, engraving the power of citizens against long-standing military dictatorship in history. However, behind this movement was the Gwangju Uprising of May 18, 1980, seven years prior. The citizens of Gwangju held protests, calling for the lifting of martial law and freedom, but they suffered indiscriminate violence and massacre by the new military junta. The Argus aims to remind readers through the novel Human Acts and the film 1987 that democracy was not achieved in an instant but through the sacrifice of countless individuals.

HUFS CDC Aids Graduates' Employment

The HUFS Career Development Center (CDC) is providing a graduate-specific program "Grad-To-Job (GTJ)" for graduates until November 2025 to help them with job placement. Graduates who graduated in or after August 2023 and in or before February 2025 are free to apply through HUFS Ability, with a total of 400 applicants, 200 each per campus. Deferred graduates or those planning to graduate are not eligible to apply.

The program consists of several steps in order to help graduates find employment. First, a consultant is assigned to each graduate. Graduates are counseled on designated graduate counseling days by a dedicated consultant and are also available to schedule appointments and offered one to five times during the program period. This is followed by a survey, which is conducted so as to design a customer-centric program for each applicant. Next, in a one-on-one consultation, applicants will receive counseling on career, documents, and interviews, and will be matched with specialized programs according to their interests and job roles. Additionally, there are various extracurricular programs and also follow-up programs, such as workplace adaptation program.

©HUFS Career Development Center

▲ The HUFS CDC runs customized programs to help graduates find employment.

The program also connects to current mentors through global mentoring days, alumni mentor group consulting, etc., and provides a voucher for Google AI training, and other special participation privileges for graduates based on recruitment schedules and demand-driven programs. HUFS CDC mentioned, "The first phase of GTJ, which started in late April/early May, has 75 participants at the Seoul campus. Since it is still the first half of the year, the employment statistics are difficult to confirm. However, it is expected that the program will help the graduates find job in the second half of the year as they will be prioritized for intensive counseling and extracurricular programs."

By Kim Yi-eun
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Secondhand Smoke Sparks Debate over Smoking Zones

The issue of secondhand smoke on campus has been a long-standing concern among students. Many argue that the core problem lies in the location of designated smoking areas, which are often positioned too close to academic buildings, prompting ongoing debate about their placement.

Adjusting the locations of smoking areas could serve as a compromise—preserving the rights of smokers while minimizing the impact of secondhand smoke on non-smokers. In fact, the 58th General Student Council, YeoWoon, conducted a survey in June 2024 to gather opinions on the reorganization and maintenance of smoking zones. However, no tangible changes to the placement of the zones have been made to date. Son Yeon-woo, a freshman studying Indian shared his frustration, recounting frequent exposure to secondhand smoke while entering and exiting the Humanities Building due to large groups of smokers gathered nearby.

Sim Ye-eun, a junior studying in the EICC department, said, "While I question the effectiveness of installing extra facilities for smokers, like smoking booths, I personally think that the smoking zones could be moved farther away from academic buildings." A feasible solution could involve relocating the smoking zones farther from building entrances, perhaps toward the back, or clearly drawing the boundaries of the smoking zones—changes upon which both smoking and non-smoking students could likely agree.

By Yang Moon-young
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Classroom Shortages Disrupt Student Life at HUFS

Among the many universities in Seoul, HUFS Seoul Campus is one of the smaller institutions in the capital city of South Korea. Therefore, the number of the classrooms is more limited than at other universities in Seoul. This has caused inconveniences for the original students at the Seoul Campus.

HUFS is continuing to increase the number of students attending classes on the Seoul Campus. This year, the university introduced two new programs: the AI Major Implements Cross-Campus Course Enrollment and the Seoul Open Major Division. These initiatives have contributed to classroom shortages and disrupted existing courses. As a result, of classroom shortage on the Seoul Campus are now being scheduled at inconvenient times.

According to a survey of approximately 200 students from various majors, 65 percent reported having classes at inconvenient times, making it difficult to concentrate. In addition, 85 percent responded that HUFS has indiscriminately increased the number of majors, leading to further inconvenience. About 50 percent also said they do not understand the purpose of the cross-campus course enrollment system. As a result, it has increased the number of students without expanding the number of available lecture rooms.

A professor who requested anonymity said, "This year, our department increased class time from two hours to three. I asked the office why, and they said it was due to a classroom shortage. When I teach students from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m., they seem to be starving because many restaurants near HUFS are closed for a break from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. And since I am lecturing during that time, I am also hungry because I used to have lunch between 12 p.m. and 3 p.m. The classroom shortage is affecting not only the students but also my own motivation to teach during lunchtime." In conclusion, the classroom shortage is contributing to a sense of stagnation at HUFS.

By Lee Sang-hyub
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Aging School Facilities: Students' Inconvenience and School Response

Students at HUFS experience daily discomfort due to aging campus facilities. Among the various issues, the condition of classroom furniture used each day has emerged as a particular concern. Worn-out desks and chairs are now the most frequently cited problem in classrooms.

Park Ji-won, a sophomore studying Business Administration, commented, "The desk legs are so loose that my arms shake when I try to write, and the chair creaks loudly even with the slightest movement, making it hard to focus." He also pointed out that uneven desk heights add to the difficulty. To cope with the problem, many students resort to quick fixes like stuffing tissues or folded paper under wobbly furniture. A full inspection of all classrooms is conducted before each semester, followed by the purchase and repair of necessary furnishings. Approximately 220 million won (US$160,000) was allocated for furniture purchases and repairs in the 2024 academic year, resulting in the purchase of 660 desks and 850 chairs for student use.

The General Facilities Management Team stated, "We have received complaints regarding classroom desks and chairs. When damages or shortages are reported, we carry out on-site inspections and promptly replace the damaged desks with new items as needed." The team further explained that a full inspection of all classrooms is conducted before each semester, followed by the purchase and repair of necessary furnishings. Students who experience discomfort are encouraged to report it directly to the management team. Active student reports and interest can help bring about changes in school facilities.

By Song Eun-seo
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Congestion at HUFS Basement Elevator Space Raises Concerns


©Jo Haedeun / The Argus

▲ The basement elevator and staircase in the Social Science Building are located side by side in a narrow corridor on the HUFS Seoul Campus.

Students at HUFS are experiencing congestion in front of the basement elevator of the Social Science Building on the Seoul Campus. Due to limited space and intersecting foot traffic, students report frequent inconvenience, particularly during class transition periods.

The Social Science Building is one of the main lecture halls on campus, located adjacent to the Smart Library and International Hall. It hosts many classes from popular departments such as the Division of Economics and the Department of International Economics and Law, which are both commonly chosen as double majors. The basement entrance is a frequently used passage for students moving between buildings. However, the elevator and stairs are placed side by side in a narrow corridor, often forcing students to bump into each other or make way in cramped conditions. In a recent survey of students who have used the building, 50 percent reported frequent inconvenience, and 31.6 percent said they occasionally experienced discomfort, making a total of 81.6 percent who experienced some level of discomfort.

Ryu Da-yeon, a sophomore studying Portuguese who frequently uses the space between classes, said, "There were many times when I had to bump into people or go around others because elevator and stair users overlapped." HUFS' Facility Management Team stated that no formal complaints had been filed and that the department had not previously recognized the issue. They added that structural changes would be difficult due to the original design of the building and budgetary constraints. Regarding student suggestions such as installing floor markings for guided queuing, the team said the space is too limited and must remain clear for emergency evacuation, making such measures currently unfeasible.

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Sanitary Pad Sharing Project Returns to HUFS with Student-Focused Goals

The 59th General Student Council (GSC) of HUFS, Bakdong, is resuming its Honesty Sanitary Pad project in 2025. The initiative allows students to take sanitary pads in emergencies and return them voluntarily later, creating a cycle of mutual care among peers.

With strong support from the organic brand IT'S ME, Bakdong reintroduced the project by installing pad boxes in restrooms across seven academic buildings. The Human Rights and Solidarity Bureau oversees the operation,which includes sharing return rate updates on Bakdong's Instagram to encourage participation and planning additional offline promotional materials. Bakdong emphasized that the project loses its meaning if students simply restock the boxes without engaging in active participation such as monitoring usage, promoting awareness, and encouraging peer involvement. "Student involvement is essential," said the president of Bakdong. "Even when Bakdong steps away, we hope students can sustain this project on their own."

Through this initiative, female students can access sanitary products in unexpected situations without distress and continue their academic life with greater confidence. The availability of pads in multiple buildings improves accessibility and reduces personal burden, offering practical convenience. In addition, because the service is open to everyone regardless of financial situation, the project is expected to provide practical support for students and ease everyday challenges on campus.

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News Briefing

By Park Se-eun
Editor-in-Chief

The 2025 South Korean Presidential Election: A Political Turning Point

On June 3, 2025, South Korea held its 21st presidential election. This election was triggered by the impeachment and removal from office of former President Yoon Suk-yeol. The nation faced heightened demands for political stability and decisive leadership to fill the resulting vacuum. The election, occurring amidst a confluence of societal challenges including economic instability, youth unemployment, and security threats marked not merely a change in administration, but a pivotal moment to determine the future trajectory of South Korean society.

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▲ The presidential candidates prepare ahead of the second televised debate hosted by the National Election Broadcasting Debate Commission at the KBS headquarters studio in Yeongdeungpo-gu, Seoul, on the evening of May 23.

Leading candidates from each political party presented their distinct visions to the electorate. Democratic Party candidate Lee Jae-myung pledged to pursue constitutional reform, including the introduction of a four-year presidential term with the possibility of re-election and a runoff voting system. He also emphasized increased investment in AI and quantum computing to secure technological sovereignty. People Power Party candidate Kim Moon-soo advocated for corporate-driven economic growth through tax cuts, including reductions in corporate and inheritance taxes, and the abolition of heavy capital gains taxes. Reform Party candidate Lee Jun-seok prioritized efficient governance by reducing presidential authority and restructuring government organizations, along with housing tax reform focused on genuine demand. Democratic Labor Party candidate Kwon Young-guk aimed to address social inequality by expanding the public housing supply, reforming real estate taxes to ensure housing rights, and enhancing welfare programs. These candidates presented diverse solutions to South Korea's pressing issues, spanning political reform, economic growth, housing stability, and welfare enhancement, thereby soliciting the electorate's judgment.

This election transcended a simple win-loss scenario, posing a fundamental question about how South Korean society will address its multifaceted challenges. The voters' choice will shape not only the policy direction for the next five years but also the evolution of South Korean democracy itself. While the election has concluded, its ramifications are just beginning.

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To Remember Is to Resist

By Park Se-eun
Editor-in-Chief

"He hit the desk with a 'thump,' and he died with an 'ugh.'" The death of one young man instigated a massive ripple effect that shook South Korean society. In June 1987, citizens who poured out onto the streets no longer remained silent. Their voices, shouting "Scrap the pro-constitution defense, overthrow the dictatorship," as they stood against the military regime, ultimately created a historical turning point: the direct presidential election system. The film *1987* (2017) captures the courage and solidarity of the people who lived through this turbulent era, as well as the fierce resistance to reveal the truth. However, at the starting point of this struggle lay the pain and truth of Gwangju, silenced seven years prior under the bayonets of the martial law army. The novel *Human Acts* (2014) revives the horrors of that day through the voices of survivors, bearing witness to the naked face of state violence and the roots of democracy. As it portrays, freedom was not a quick victory but was achieved through the accumulation of countless people's cries and dedication and the courageous efforts of young people. Therefore, by comparing the film *1987* and the novel *Human Acts*, we aim to examine the continuity and significance of the 1980s democratization movement. How do people of today remember the past, and how will they honor that sacrifice in their lives today? The Argus quietly poses this question to the youth of this era who live in the democracy created by the youth of the past.

Summary

1987 (2017)

©Nocut News

▲ *1987* (2017)

In 1987, college freshman Lee Yeon-hee lives quietly under the protection of her uncle, a prison officer. She is inadvertently drawn into the reality of state violence when she encounters footage documenting the Gwangju Uprising of May 18th, led there by Lee Han-yeol, whom she meets at a protest. Yeon-hee is shocked by the truth of state violence she witnesses for the first time. Around the same time, Seoul National University student Park Jong-cheol dies under torture during police interrogation, and the authorities attempt to cover it up. However, prosecutor Choi Hwan, *Hankyoreh* reporter Yoon Sang-sam, and prison officer Han Byeong-yong, each in their own capacity, try to expose the truth of the incident. Yeon-hee becomes involved in relaying information related to the Park Jong-cheol case. Internal conflicts within the prosecution, journalistic investigations, and the resistance of pro-democracy activists intertwine, gradually revealing the attempted cover-up of Park Jong-cheol's death by torture. Amidst this, Lee Han-yeol falls into a coma after being struck by a tear gas canister during a protest due to police overreach and eventually dies. This incident ignites public outrage and escalates into the June Democracy Movement, a nationwide pro-democracy protest. Ultimately, the Chun Doo-hwan regime yields to the national resistance and announces the June 29 Declaration, accepting the direct presidential election system.

Human Acts (2014)

May 1980 in Gwangju was a period of intensity. The streets were filled with fervent cries for justice and democracy, and the scalding tears of those who had lost beloved family and friends never ceased. In the midst of this turmoil was fifteen-year-old Dong-ho. Dong-ho enters the Provincial Government Building to confirm the death of his friend Jeong-dae and, with volunteers, to help with the task of organizing the bodies of the citizen soldiers. For his friend and for the citizens of Gwangju, he faces the corpses with a vague but earnest sense of responsibility, calling out the names of the deceased. However, on the day the Provincial Government Building is taken over by martial law, Dong-ho is captured and dragged away by the martial law forces, eventually dying after enduring horrific torture. Jeong-hee had worked alongside Dong-ho, organizing bodies at the Provincial Government Building. Tormented by the guilt that Dong-ho died while she survived, she isolates herself from the world, living in hiding. Eun-sook tries to bury the memories of that time and continue her life, but even in her quiet existence working at a publishing house, she cannot forget the scenes and names of that day. Seon-ju lives in isolation, carrying the wounds of sexual violence inflicted by soldiers. Dong-ho's mother, unable to directly confirm her son's death, wanders in search of his whereabouts, living in deep loss. Dong-ho's short but fervent life left deep scars on the lives of the survivors in different ways.

©Google Books

▲ *Human Acts* (2014)

Commonalities

Individuals Transforming into Agents of Resistance


©CJ Entertainment

▲ Yeonhee's college life is nothing out of the ordinary.

"Do you really think the world will change by acting?" In the early part of the film *1987*, Yeon-hee is an ordinary college student more interested in social gatherings than politics. The moment she first confronted the truth was when she accidentally viewed the suppression footage from the Gwangju Uprising in the audio-visual room. The

screams of citizens, the sound of gunfire, and the sight of people collapsing brutally delivered a significant shock to her. However, Yeon-hee denies this horrific reality and pushes the memory away. The scenes in the video were too unfamiliar and frightening for her, and she still tries to distance herself, thinking, "This is not something I need to get involved in." Later, at the request of her uncle, a prison officer at Yeongdeungpo Prison, Yeon-hee does what seems like a simple errand—delivering a document to a monk at Jogyesa Temple—but this document is crucial evidence for revealing the truth to the outside world about Park Jong-cheol's death by torture. Yeon-hee delivers the document without knowing its significance but later realizes that it contains evidence of state violence that the government was trying to conceal. Subsequently, after her uncle is tortured and she witnesses the injury and death of Lee Han-yeol, a decisive transformation occurs within Yeon-hee. Amidst the sight of her friends bleeding in the protests and the sounds of military boots and suppression echoing in the streets, Yeon-hee now feels that this is no longer a minority issue of student activists and that the government is harming her people. Realizing that those who died were not distant people but her own friends, fellow youth, and members of the society to which she belongs, she recognizes that she is no longer someone who can remain ignorant. Ultimately, Yeon-hee steps into the ranks of the protesters. Amidst the shouts of "Long live Lee Han-yeol!" in the protest, Yeon-hee directly joins in chanting the slogans, fully transforming into an agent of resistance.

▲ Yeonhee forms a connection with Lee Han-yeol.

In the novel *Human Acts*, Dong-ho, a middle school student, is placed in the midst of vivid horror at a young age. He volunteers to help retrieve the bodies of the Gwangju citizen soldiers, directly confronting death. Witnessing the death of his friend Jeong-dae shocks Dong-ho and propels him beyond being a mere observer to becoming an acting subject. He confirms his friend Jeong-dae's body in the hospital basement and decides to stay by his side to prevent the body from decaying or being defiled by anyone. Afterward, Dong-ho relays the citizen army's radio messages, spends nights in the hospital basement cleaning bodies and identifying names, guarding the corpses of those who returned in horrific states, and dedicating himself to remembering the deceased. With the determination to protect the truth, he safeguards the freedom of his loved ones, and in doing so, the freedom of the loved ones of others as well. Dong-ho resists not because of any grand ideology but out of duty to his people. Until he is eventually captured, tortured, and killed by the martial law forces, his actions reflect his ethical stance that someone must protect the truth of what happened in Gwangju.

▲ Kim Gil-ja, mother of Moon Jae-hak, the real-life figure behind Dong-ho in Han Kang's *Human Acts*, holds her son's memorial photo and the novel as she shares his story.

Yeon-hee and Dong-ho share the commonality of not starting out as active activists. Despite the differences in their spaces, and generations, both Yeon-hee and Dong-ho transform into agents of resistance based on their own conscience after confronting the reality of state violence. Both characters demonstrate change through a confrontation with human emotions and inner conscience rather than a grand ideology. Yeon-hee moves from facing the truth she had ignored to taking on the role of conveying and acting on that truth, and Dong-ho, despite his young age, carries out his calling to record deaths and protect the truth. Dong-ho engages in psychological resistance, repeatedly reminding himself not to forget the noble sacrifices, while Yeon-hee resists through action after witnessing the sacrifices of her loved ones before her eyes. Both characters were non-activists and non-political individuals but transformed into people who simply could not stand still in the face of state violence. Their transformation shows that the democracy movement was not the work of

special heroes but was made up of the courage and choices of ordinary people when faced with the truth.

The Silence Imposed by the State

"Why do they sing the national anthem for the people the soldiers killed? Why do they cover the coffin with the national flag? It is as if the country was not the one who killed them." The coffins of those who died at the hands of state violence are draped with the national flag, as if the state was uninvolved, as if the state fulfilled its duty and should not be held responsible. The state silenced those who voiced resistance to prevent the further spread of anti-establishment sentiment and to block the movement of resistance. *Human Acts* portrays the deep trauma and silence experienced by survivors after the May 18th Gwangju Uprising massacre in 1980. Seon-ju is a survivor who had to flee the sexual violence of the martial law army when she was just a teenage girl. She survived, but the experience remains a deep trauma that dominates her entire life. She could not tell anyone about her pain, and society forced her into silence. The violence she experienced is not simply a personal tragedy but an aspect of a structural problem and at the same time, it reveals the further cruelty of a society that silences the victim even after the brutality. Seon-ju exists as one who cannot speak, unable to tell her story, unable to be heard by anyone, and remains, like Dong-ho.

"Because I could not hold your funeral after you died, my life became a funeral." This phrase shows how a reality where mourning is impossible can turn a person's entire life into continuous mourning. In May 1980, during the Gwangju Uprising, the martial law army indiscriminately suppressed citizens, and countless people lost their lives to gunfire, torture, and violence. However, the problem was what followed their deaths. The state did not acknowledge the deaths, and families had to wander in search of the missing, unable to even recover their bodies. There was a shortage of hearses and coffins due to the sheer number of deaths. In response, the new military junta packed bodies in kimchi vinyl bags and transported them in garbage trucks to be buried in Section 3 of the Mangwol Cemetery Park. In many cases, even funerals had to be held secretly under the surveillance of the military. Funerals were considered public mourning for riot participants, being thus interpreted as resistance against the state, leading to further threats. Jeong-dae, whom Jeong-mi loved, also met his demise. Because his death was not officially acknowledged and his body was never found, Jeong-mi never had closure over losing him. She remains a being who lives out her sorrow in the present, unable to send death into the past. This shows not on the massacre itself but on the scars and enduring pain it left behind. It symbolizes that the violence inflicted by the state is not a one-time event but a sorrow that continues through all the moments of life.

In *1987*, state violence is repeated in the forms of torture, surveillance, and intimidation. On January 14, 1987, the death of Seoul National University student Park Jong-cheol was reported. When he dies during police torture, the police try to cover it up and falsely report the investigation results, "He hit the desk with a 'thump,' and he died with an 'ugh.'" Even though Park Jong-cheol died from waterboarding, the police issue a false explanation, and the media reports it uncritically. This single line starkly reveals how state power manipulated the truth and deceived the public. Furthermore, it shows the reality of a society where the truth cannot be spoken, a system that forces silence. In particular, the authorities' attempt to cover up the Park Jong-cheol case clearly shows that concealing the truth itself is another form of violence. After Park Jong-cheol's death, his father did not even have the opportunity to grieve properly amidst a showy autopsy and a superficial funeral, swayed by the explanations of corrupt police and numerous inaccurate articles. After cremation, Park Jong-cheol's father scatters his ashes at sea but, seeing them unable to fly away with the wind, says, "Why can't you go?" Byeong-yong, is similarly forced into silence by the state. He is captured and tortured by the Agency for National Security

▲ The police cover up the truth about Park Jong-cheol's death by torture.

Planning for trying to reveal the truth about Park Jong-cheol's death by torture. When Yeon-hee tries to visit her uncle, she is instead abruptly put into a van without any explanation and dropped off at a remote location. This epitomizes how those who try to reveal the truth are silenced.

Both works expose that the violence perpetrated by the state is not limited to physical oppression at the time of the incident but also destroys the subsequent processes of memory, speaking, and mourning. *Human Acts* centers on a society where those who remember are punished, while *1987* focuses on a structure where those who try to reveal the truth are silenced. They view the essence of state violence not as temporary coercion but as a systematic imposition of concealment and oblivion. Under the condition that the truth cannot be spoken, victims endlessly suffer, and their silence rather signifies an extension of their pain. Those who remember are denied a voice, and at the same time, the memories themselves are painful, thus becoming another form of punishment. Ultimately, both works question the ethics of memory. They powerfully convey the message that not being forgotten is the way to survive, and that remembering is the first step to restoring human dignity.

Differences

Ways of Responding to the Absurdity of Power

©CJ Entertainment

▲ Journalists try to uncover the truth behind Park Jong-cheol's death by torture.

"If we do not speak up now, we will not be able to speak up later." The film *1987*, starting with the Park Jong-cheol torture death case, vividly depicts the real-life solidarity and actions of ordinary citizens and public officials fighting against the absurdity of state power. At the time, prosecutor Choi of the Seoul District Prosecutors' Office moved to uncover the truth, refusing to succumb to pressure from above to disguise Park Jong-cheol's death as a heart attack. This short but powerful line spoken by prosecutor Choi to Park Cheo-won of the Agency for National Security Planning, who was trying to cover up the incident, shows the spirit of resistance during the June Democracy Movement. When state power tramples on an individual's truth, the threat of speaking that truth is also the opening of a door to shatter everything. prosecutor Choi's decision soon intertwined with those who were moving in their respective positions. Reporter Yoon Sang-sam, prison officer Han Byeong-yong, activist Lee Han-yeol, and an ordinary college student Yeon-hee's movements created a large current of truth. Reporters dug into the case and published articles, the prison officer secretly conveyed the concealed truth to the outside world, and citizens took to the streets, forming a voice of resistance. These were not grand heroes fighting against immense violence but ordinary people who did their best in their own stations. The reason this "solidarity of resistance" was possible was not just due to the courage of the individuals but also because of the historical environment in which they were entrenched, namely the special historical context of the June Democracy Movement in 1987.

©Nanummunhwa

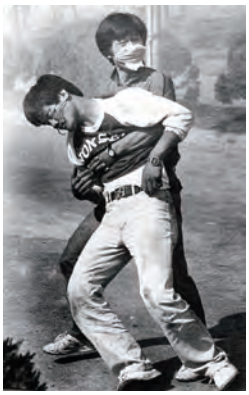
▲ On January 20, 1987, after it was revealed that Park Jong-cheol had died under torture, students from Seoul National University held a silent march, carrying a portrait of Park Jong-cheol.

On the other hand, the various characters depicted in *Human Acts* during the May 18th Gwangju Uprising of 1980 show a completely different aspect. At the time, Gwangju was a completely isolated city under martial law and media censorship. Citizens had no choice but to face the brutal suppression of the military without outside attention or help. Thus, the characters in Gwangju, placed in isolation from the outside world, were trapped in a "space of silence" where they

could not even communicate their suffering, and the survivors remained as witnesses and victims living with the memories of violence. The characters in Gwangju were trapped in a "closed space," oppressed not only physically but also mentally. The guilt, helplessness, and fear experienced by the survivors show how they eroded the momentum for resistance. In fact, none of the characters in the work actively continue making political statements or taking action; they are crushed by the memories of violence and trapped in the inner prisons of silence and memory. Gwangju was a completely sealed-off city. With phone lines, the press, and external access completely cut off, the citizens were trapped in a space where they could not communicate their suffering or request help from outsiders.

According to Professor Choi Seon-jae of Ewha Womans University's Department of Psychology, in her paper "The Relationship Between Meaning Reconstruction of Loss Experience and Psychological Adaptation" (2013), in such extreme isolation, a "loss of control" takes root, where no action can change the situation. When humans are placed in an extremely closed environment, they lose hope in their ability to change their situation, which soon leads to a state of psychological helplessness. In particular, in the absence of social others from which to ask for help or a group to share resistance with, the perception that it is pointless to speak up or do anything takes hold, leading to the cessation of action, silence, and avoidance. Especially in a space completely isolated from the outside, as in the Gwangju Uprising, the belief that no one responds no matter how much we shout, and nothing changes is imprinted on people. In such an environment, humans very quickly lose the will to resist. This is not simply a result of fear, but a state of helplessness formed by psychological conditions. This is the reason why the characters in *Human Acts* gradually become silent and helpless. Dong-ho's mother never confirms her son's death until the end, clinging to the hope that he might be alive somewhere, fervently searching for him. When she finally accepts her son's death, she loses her ability to speak. Faced with the fact that her son will not return, she collapses and lives with great guilt. For her, Dong-ho was not a son who had left but an aching presence who still remained with her.

Collective Outcry and Inner Resonance



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▲ In 1987, Lee Han-yeol collapses after being struck by a tear gas canister fired by the police during a protest at Yonsei University.

1987 focuses on the political turning points of truth concealment and exposure, systemic change, and the organized flow of the social movement. After Lee Han-yeol fell into a coma on June 9, 1987 during a protest after being struck by a tear gas canister fired by the police, he died at Severance Hospital on July 5th. His death ignited nationwide anger, bringing the June Democracy Movement to its climax. Outside the hospital where the critically injured Lee Han-yeol lay, students formed a security detail to protect him, and friends, citizens, reporters, and activists gathered, watching with bated breath. When the news of Lee Han-yeol's death was confirmed, a heavy silence filled the hospital. However, the voices mourning him soon turned into a resounding cry of "Long live Lee Han-yeol!" echoing through the hospital and beyond, transforming the quiet space into a massive wave of outcry. It shows a political turning point where the entire society, not just individuals' personal grief over death, becomes enraged by structural injustice and takes action. *1987* emphasizes the concealment and exposure of the truth, the flow of social upheaval it connects to, and the achievement of systemic change through democratization. Emotion acts as a catalyst for the events, and ultimately, the film shows from a structural and political perspective what historical changes the act of revealing the truth can bring about. Lee Han-yeol's death was not just the tragedy of one young man but a decisive moment when the suppressed anger of the masses exploded and triggered a crack in the regime.

Human Acts, rather than treating the history of the Gwangju Uprising as a structural narrative of state violence, focuses on the inner lives of individuals who suffered and disappeared within it, featuring the pain of those who bear their memories. Dong-ho was not just a victim but an entity whose very dignity as a human being was denied by state violence. Those who

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▲ After Lee Han-yeol's death, Yeon-hee actively resists the injustices of the state.

remember him each carry that pain in their own way, bearing an unspeakable but unforgettable agony. By cross-cutting between Dong-ho's life and death and the inner lives of those who remember him, the novel quietly but fiercely reveals the pain and scars left by state violence. Eun-sook, who works at a publishing house, recalls her memory of retrieving Dong-ho's body and blames herself for not living properly since that day. Later, during a censorship process, she is slapped seven times by a soldier but cannot say a word. She becomes trapped in the memories of that day. Afterward, Eun-sook tries to remember Dong-ho by leaving behind a quiet record in her own language amidst the world's imposed silence. For her, memory is not a matter of simple recollection but an imperative that the survivor must bear, and a practice to protect the unspoken truth.

Professor Lee Young-mi of Hannam University's Department of Social Welfare said, "In *Human* Acts, the act of recording memory is not merely recalling the past but an ethical act of socially sharing the experience of violence and loss and trying to break the silence of memory. When an individual's pain is conveyed to others through writing, it expands into the community's 'shared memory' and is an attempt to restore the truth within a severed history." This literary memory allows one to re-experience the pain of others, providing an opportunity for ethical reflection that resists silence and oblivion. Furthermore, Professor Lee said, it "sheds light on the historical trauma of state violence through the inner lives of individual characters, and by recording and sharing that memory, it goes beyond simply reproducing the past to illuminate how we, who live in the present, relate to and respond to that history." By not responding to the painful memories with silence but recording them in their own language, it becomes an ethical space where the community, not just isolated individuals, remembers and reflects on the experience of pain. Thus, *Human Acts* depicts the quiet but fierce inner lives of characters placed on the periphery, not at the center of the events—the memories, trauma, guilt, and unspoken truths of those left behind after violence and death. Through their being consumed by oppression and remembering unspeakable pain, and through their silence, they persist. *Human Acts* portrays through literature the refusal to forget those who disappeared and raises questions about the moral conscience of memory that survivors must bear.

The sacrifice of Gwangju in 1980 and the resistance of 1987 are not disconnected events. Through silenced pain and collective outcry, respectively, *Human Acts* and *1987* remind us that democracy does not end with mere institutional achievement but that the blood, memories, pain, and ethics of countless individuals permeate its very foundation. The unspoken truth of Gwangju was resurrected in the voices of citizens who poured onto the streets seven years later. The freedom and rights we enjoy today were created through the accumulated courage and choices of those who did not remain silent in the face of truth and those who did not abandon painful memories. How should we remember them, and how should we carry on that memory in our lives today? We must continue to remember that democracy is not a complete system but a value that can be maintained only when we constantly remember, speak out, and act.

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Korea and Japan: 60 Years of Ties, Tested by History, Driven by Hope

By Kim Si-yon
Associate Editor of Social Section

June 22, 1965 marked a pivotal moment in Cold War-era diplomacy, as South Korea (hereafter Korea) and Japan normalized relations and embarked on a new path of cooperation. Over the decades, Korea-Japan relations have oscillated between promising collaboration and painful historical disputes, shaped by both diplomatic strategy and shifting public sentiment. A joint public opinion survey conducted in 2024 by *The Yomiuri Shimbun* and *Korea Economic Daily* revealed a notable shift in tone: for the first time since 2011, half of Japanese respondents described current relations as "good," while Korean respondents reported a second consecutive year of favorable views in the 40 percent range. To ensure this renewed optimism does not prove fleeting, it is essential to examine the key turning points that have defined the bilateral relationship over the past six decades. The Argus, through this lens, seeks to explore practical foundations for a more sustainable future and to look ahead to the next sixty years of cooperation.

1965: Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and Korea, Diplomatic Ties Finally Restored

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▲ At the Japanese Prime Minister's residence, Korea and Japan sign the Treaty on Basic Relations and four accompanying agreements to normalize diplomatic ties in 1965.

On June 22, 1965, Korea and Japan signed the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and Korea. This agreement formally restored diplomatic ties between the two countries, which had been severed since Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule on August 15, 1945. Under Article III of the Basic Treaty, Japan recognized "the Government of the Republic of Korea as the only lawful government in Korea." This clause marked a normalization of relations between the victim of colonial oppression, Korea, and its former colonizer, Japan, and signaled the beginning of a new postwar chapter in Korea-Japan relations. The four accompanying agreements signed alongside the Basic Treaty included the Korea-Japan Fisheries Agreement, the Agreement on the Legal Status and Treatment of Korean Residents in Japan, the Cultural Property Agreement, and the Agreement on Economic Cooperation. Among these, the Agreement on Economic Cooperation—often referred to as the "Claims Agreement"—was central. Through this agreement, Japan provided Korea with $800 million over ten years, from 1966 to 1975, in the name of "economic cooperation," ostensibly to settle all compensation claims stemming from Japan's colonial rule and wartime actions. However, the Korean government at that time prioritized

national economic development over direct compensation or official apologies for victims. As a result, unresolved historical grievances continue to fuel tensions between the two countries to this day.

Background: Cold War Politics and Economic Aspirations Behind the Treaty

The Basic Treaty is closely tied to the Treaty of San Francisco, which was signed in the post–World War II process of reorganizing the international order. Signed by Japan and 49 Allied nations, the peace treaty restored Japan's sovereignty within the global community. From the end of the war, both Korea and Japan actively engaged in diplomatic efforts to secure favorable standing in the evolving international landscape, with the San Francisco Treaty in mind. However, the United States, intent on quickly reintegrating Japan into the anti-communist bloc amid Cold War tensions, excluded Korea—then embroiled in the Korean War—from the list of signatory states. The peace treaty also recommended that Korea and Japan resolve normalization issues separately, prompting the Korean government to invoke reparation claims as a legal basis in negotiations with Japan.

Yet those claims soon became a major obstacle. Under a fiercely anti-Japanese administration, Korea demanded approximately $2.4 billion in compensation, while Japan refused to acknowledge any obligation, arguing that Korea had not been a signatory to the San Francisco Treaty and therefore had no legal basis to demand reparations. Japan further asserted that the treaty contained no clause obligating it to compensate former colonies, maintaining that Korea's claims were invalid. In fact, Japan countered with its own claim to property once owned by Japanese nationals in colonial Korea, intensifying the diplomatic deadlock. As a result, normalization talks stretched over 14 years, from February 1952 to June 1965, through seven rounds of negotiations before an agreement was finally reached. In the early 1960s, Korea faced a sharp decline in U.S. economic aid, while Japan's economy surged ahead, deepening the gap between the two nations. Against this backdrop, the Park Chung-hee regime prioritized economic development and accelerated efforts to normalize relations with Japan. During the sixth round of negotiations in 1961, President Park made a pivotal offer: if Japan provided compensation for the property losses suffered by Koreans during the colonial period, Korea would not demand political reparations or official acknowledgment of historical responsibility. This shifted the momentum of the talks.

Nevertheless, progress soon stalled again. From 1962 onward, nationwide opposition arose in Korea, delaying the ratification process for nearly three more years. Student groups and opposition parties condemned the treaty, pointing to the lack of any apology or reflection from Japan regarding its colonial rule and accusing the Park administration of using the agreement to legitimize its regime. In Japan, though less widespread, resistance also emerged—particularly from resident Koreans and civic activists—who argued that the treaty failed to repudiate Japanese imperialism in Korea. Ultimately, the Treaty on Basic Relations marked a first step toward bilateral exchange between Korea and Japan. However, it left many fundamental issues unresolved—most notably, Japan's sincere acknowledgment of its colonial past and the rights of individual victims. These unanswered questions continue to cast a long shadow over Korea-Japan relations today.

1998: Joint Declaration on a New Korea-Japan Partnership for the 21st Century, Charting a New Partnership

©Hankyoreh

▲ Korea's then President Kim Dae-jung (R) shakes hands with Japan's then Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi (L) ahead of a summit at the State Guest House in Tokyo, in 1998.

On October 8, 1998, Korea's President Kim Dae-jung and Japan's Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi held a summit at the State Guest House in Tokyo and signed the Joint

Declaration on a New Korea–Japan Partnership for the 21st Century. The declaration consisted of 11 articles outlining principles of cooperation across five key areas: politics, security, economy, people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and global issues. Alongside the declaration, the two leaders released an Action Plan which included 43 specific measures such as holding annual summits and coordinating policies toward North Korea. One of the most significant aspects of the Joint Declaration was that, for the first time in diplomatic history between Japan and Korea, it formally included Japan's acknowledgment of and apology for its colonial rule over Korea. The Joint Declaration and its Action Plan covered nearly all possible areas for collaboration, and it has been widely regarded as a model framework. For this reason, the declaration is frequently cited as the most exemplary case when discussing desirable Korea–Japan relations.

Background: Dynamic Journey of Korea-Japan Relations Through Conflict and Cooperation in the 1980s and 1990s

Breaking the Ice in the 1980s Amidst Historical Conflicts

©ohmynews

▲ A 1982 government review finds that 16 Japanese high school textbooks distort or inadequately describe Japan's wartime aggression against Korea, China and other countries.

Discussions over the legality of Japan's colonial rule over Korea concluded without a definitive resolution, prompting both governments to suppress politicization of the issue as much as possible. Amid this delicate backdrop, public opinion in Korea sharply deteriorated in the early 1980s following a controversy over distortions in Japanese history textbooks. The controversy erupted after Japan's government approved history textbooks in April 1983, which were subsequently used across Japan's elementary, middle, and high schools. These textbooks were found to remove the term "invasion" when describing the period from 1910 to 1945, when the Japanese Empire forcibly occupied the Korean Peninsula. According to these textbooks, Japan's "advance into Korea" began in earnest following the Treaty of Portsmouth in which Russia conceded influence over Korea to Japan. The 1910 annexation, which stripped the Korean Empire of its sovereignty, was euphemistically described as "bringing Korea under its rule." Additionally, the suppression of Korea's independence movement was characterized as a measure to "maintain public order," and the March 1st Independence Movement was labeled "demonstrations and riots." Further distortions included portraying Japan's expropriation of Korean land as "transfer," while policies such as the enforced use of Japanese language alongside Korean and the promotion of shrine worship were downplayed as the use of Japanese being encouraged "as a co-official language" and shrine visits being "promoted." These distortions sparked widespread anti-Japanese protests throughout Korea.

In this context, the Chun Doo-hwan government, which seized power in a 1980 coup, was wary that anti-Japanese demonstrations could escalate into broader anti-government protests. Meanwhile, the diplomatic corps saw an influx of postwar generations who had been educated exclusively in the Korean language, unlike their predecessors who experienced colonial-era schooling. Choi Hee-sik, Associate Professor of Japanese Studies at Kookmin University, explains in his paper "Historical Issues under the Chun Doo-hwan Regime: New Developments in Korea-Japan Historical Issues in the 1980s" (2019) that these younger diplomats exhibited a stronger inclination to actively address historical issues in Korea-Japan relations. Consequently, the Chun administration needed to respond more assertively to historical disputes with Japan. Yet, following Korea's economic crisis triggered by the second oil shock in 1979, the Chun administration urgently sought economic assistance from Japan. In August 1981, citing Korea's role as a military forward base against North Korea, the Chun administration requested a $10 billion economic cooperation aid. Although initial negotiations stalled in 1982 over the textbook controversy, Japan

also aimed to restore Korea-Japan relations to bolster its own influence in U.S.-Japan diplomacy. On January 11, 1983, Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone became the first Japanese Prime Minister to visit Korea, holding the inaugural Korea-Japan summit, where a $4 billion agreement was reached. Later, on September 6, 1984, Emperor Hirohito and Prime Minister Nakasone formally apologized to President Chun during his visit to Japan—a historic first invitation of a Korean president by Japan's prime minister. This marked a mutual recognition of the necessity for cooperation between the two countries.

Persevering in Cooperation During the 1990s Despite Historical Disputes

The previously amicable relationship between Korea and Japan did not endure. Entering the 1990s, with the Cold War's end and the collapse of the anti-communist rationale that had anchored bilateral ties, historical grievances resurfaced prominently. Through the early 1990s, efforts persisted to solidify cooperation between the two nations. Until the early years of the Kim Young-sam administration, beginning in 1993, the two nations witnessed relatively warm bilateral ties. Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa expressed apologies for Japan's colonial rule over Korea, and during the second Korea-Japan summit held on March 25, 1993, both leaders committed to expanding bilateral cooperation. In 1995, there was momentum within Japan, led by the reformist faction under Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama, to push for a parliamentary resolution expressing official remorse on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the war's end.

©The Kyunghyang Shinmun

▲ Kim Hak-sun (3rd from L), speaks out for the first time about Japan's wartime sexual slavery during a press conference on Japan's postwar responsibility in Osaka, on December 6, 1991.

However, this initiative encountered fierce resistance from conservative elements, primarily the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), escalating ideological clashes between Japan's right and left over historical interpretation. Awareness of this domestic turmoil in Japan further cooled Korea-Japan relations. By 1996, bilateral ties had deteriorated amid disputes over the "comfort women*" issue, and territorial sovereignty over Dokdo. In August 1991, Kim Hak-sun became the first Korean "comfort woman" to publicly disclose her experience of sexual enslavement by the Japanese military. This revelation prompted a generational reckoning in Japan, with elder cohorts showing remorse toward Korean victims. Following a year-and-eight-month investigation beginning in 1992, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono issued the 1993 Kono Statement acknowledging the coercion and involvement of the Japanese military in the recruitment of comfort women. On August 15, 1995, marking the 50th anniversary of Japan's defeat in World War II, Japan's Prime Minister Murayama issued a historic statement expressing deep remorse and heartfelt apology for Japan's aggression and colonial rule over Korea. Yet, this apology was undercut later that year and in 1996 by inflammatory remarks from LDP members such as Ichiro Itagaki, who dismissed the comfort women issue as "fabricated," and former Minister of Justice Shigeto Okuno, who characterized the women's involvement as "voluntary commerce," igniting renewed outrage across Korean society. Earlier discontent over Japanese leaders' refusal to acknowledge the illegality of the 1910 annexation treaty further fueled public anger in Korea.

Simultaneously, Korea and Japan clashed over the sovereignty of Dokdo. The 1994 enforcement of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea redefined Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) to extend 200 nautical miles, prompting Japan to seek a new agreement on fisheries agreement based on this framework. During bilateral negotiations on EEZ boundaries, Korea announced construction of facilities on Dokdo to ensure safe docking of vessels. This move drew sharp criticism from Japan. Then-Foreign Minister Yohei Ikeda declared Dokdo to be "historically and legally an inherent territory of Japan," a statement followed by other Japanese politicians denying Japan's colonial past, which triggered a surge of anti-Japanese sentiment within Korea. To ease tensions, in May 1996, Korea decided not to use Dokdo as a baseline for its

EEZ, instead delineating the maritime boundary midway between Ulleungdo and Japan's Oki Islands. This approach included Dokdo within Korea's EEZ while attempting to mitigate friction. However, Japan's refusal to recognize Korea's claim led to its unilateral notification in January 1998 of terminating the Korea-Japan Fisheries Agreement, pushing bilateral relations toward crisis.

Despite these challenges, the late 1997 Asian financial crisis shifted Korea's priorities toward swift economic recovery, making cooperation with Japan indispensable. Additionally, President Kim Dae-jung, who took office with a focus on resolving the North Korean nuclear issue and encouraging reform and openness, recognized the strategic necessity of partnership with Japan. Prior to his inauguration, President Kim had underscored the need for Japan's voluntary reckoning with its colonial past. Japan responded by affirming no intention to avoid historical issues and insisted its historical perspective remained consistent with the Murayama Statement. The eventual signing of the 1998 Korea-Japan Joint Declaration was made possible by the shared resolve of both nations' leaders to confront sensitive historical challenges while opening the door to future cooperation. This milestone reflected a convergence of visionary leadership and an era demanding change.

*Comfort Women: During Japan's imperial expansion from 1931 until its defeat in 1945, the Japanese military established "comfort stations" purportedly to provide sexual services exclusively for soldiers and military personnel. Women, primarily from Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, were forcibly recruited and subjected to sexual slavery under brutal conditions.

2023: Two Korea-Japan Summits Open the Door to Reconciliation, Yet Divides Remain

On March 16, 2023, Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida held a summit in Tokyo During the meeting, Japan agreed to lift export restrictions on three key semiconductor materials previously imposed on Korea. Additionally, the Korea-Japan General Security of Military Information Agreement was restored, signaling a renewal of military cooperation. A central outcome of the summit was the agreement on a third-party compensation proposal regarding forced labor

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▲ Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (C) pays tribute at the Seoul National Cemetery after offering incense on May 7, 2023.

reparations. Under this plan, a third-party foundation, funded by Korean companies that benefited from reparations under the Korea-Japan Basic Treaty, would provide compensation to the victims of forced labor during Japan's colonial rule. The second Korea-Japan summit of the year took place on May 7 in Korea, marking the resumption of so-called "shuttle diplomacy" after a 12-year hiatus. This term refers to reciprocal visits by the heads of state to each other's countries. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's visit to Korea included a historic first for a sitting Japanese Prime Minister in over a decade: a visit to the National Cemetery in Seoul to pay respects to Korean independence activists.

Background: At the Crossroads of History and Economy, Seeking New Cooperation Amid Global Upheaval

Conservative Historical Views Spread amid Political Rightward Shift in Japan

Starting with the 1998 Joint Declaration, cultural exchanges between Korea and Japan began to flourish, ushering in the "Korean Wave" in Japan during the 2000s. This cultural momentum was underpinned by a period of cautious progress in historical reconciliation, marked by formal apologies from Japanese prime ministers and official recognition of Japan's colonial past. However, the election of Junichiro Koizumi as prime minister in 2001 marked a decisive shift. As a prominent member of the LDP's Seiwa Policy Research Council faction—known for its hardline conservative diplomatic stance—Koizumi's rise accelerated the political rightward drift within Japan,

which in turn strained the previously cordial Korea-Japan relationship. This deterioration was epitomized by Koizumi's repeated visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, a site honoring Japan's war dead, including Class A war criminals* from World War II since 1978. Koizumi's visits provoked sharp responses from both Korea and China. For Japan's conservative right, however, Yasukuni Shrine is regarded as a sacred pilgrimage site honoring those who sacrificed their lives defending the nation, and a crucial stage for reaffirming the conservative credentials of LDP politicians. Lee Jeong-hwan, Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science and International Relations of Seoul National University in his 2014 study "Political Conservative Shifts in Modern Japan and East Asian International Relations," explains that the 1990s saw a backlash against Japan's apologetic policies toward its wartime past, with right-wing historical views increasingly absorbed into mainstream politics. By the 2000s, distortions of historical memory gained broader institutional support within Japan's conservative political camp also surfaced.

In 2006, Shinzo Abe's administration sought to normalize Korea-Japan relations by eschewing the notion of Japan as a perpetrator in colonial rule, instead emphasizing a "normal" bilateral relationship. The Abe government maintained that historical disputes such as the "comfort women" and "forced labor" issues had been settled through prior agreements, notably the 1965 Korea-Japan Basic Treaty, and insisted that Korea should respect those accords. The Abe administration approach became explicit on the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in 2015. On August 14, Abe declared in a commemorative statement that Japan would no longer issue state apologies for its wartime past as official policy. The administration argued that all issues related to the illegality of colonial rule and victim compensation had been conclusively resolved by the 1965 claims settlement, thereby framing Japan as a "normal" nation rather than an aggressor state. The 2015 December 28 agreement on the "comfort women" issue encapsulated The Abe administration diplomatic stance toward Korea. Under the deal, the Japanese government took "final and irreversible" responsibility, with the Japanese government offering an apology and allocating 1 billion yen from the government budget for projects aimed at restoring dignity and healing wounds among survivors. Following the deal, Japanese government repeatedly refused to entertain further demands for renewed apologies or additional measures. This posture generated deep skepticism in Korea regarding the sincerity of Japan's intentions.

*A-Class war criminals: It refers to Japan military's top-level leaders who were responsible for planning and initiating the World War II.

Historical Disputes Escalate into Economic Tensions: The Rapid Deterioration of Korea-Japan Relations

The differing perspectives between Korea and Japan regarding historical issues under the Abe administration escalated into bilateral conflict, particularly concerning the issue of forced labor mobilization. During the Japanese colonial period, the Japanese Empire implemented a policy of forced labor conscription to secure supplies and manpower for its military efforts. Koreans were forcibly mobilized and subjected to harsh working conditions. However, neither compensation nor the wages promised by the Japanese government at the time were provided. The fact of Korean forced labor has since been acknowledged by the Japanese government and in Japanese court rulings. In a November 1, 2007 ruling by the Supreme Court of Japan on a lawsuit filed by Koreans, the court recognized the forced mobilization, stating that the plaintiffs "were forcibly taken from the Korean Peninsula to Hiroshima during World War II."

However, the Japanese government's official denial of the historical fact of Korean forced labor at a governmental level began on July 5, 2015, coinciding with the inscription of Japan's Sites of Meiji Industrial Revolution onto the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage list. At the UNESCO World Heritage Committee session, the chief Japanese delegate stated, "There were a large number of Koreans and others who were brought against their will and forced to work under harsh conditions at some of the sites during the 1940s." Immediately following this, however, then-Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida stated in a press conference that the expression "forced to work" in the Japanese representative's remarks did not imply "forced

labor," thus beginning the denial of Korean forced labor, which later escalated into a sharp confrontation over the claims of forced labor victims.

Following the October 30, 2018 ruling by the Supreme Court of Korea in favor of the plaintiffs in a lawsuit seeking compensation for forced labor victims, relations between Korea and Japan began to deteriorate not only diplomatically but also in security and economic spheres. The Korean Supreme Court's decision recognized the victims' right to claim compensation, asserting that Japan's colonial rule was an illegal occupation under the Korean Constitution and that the right to claim damages for inhumane illegal acts during the colonial period was not included in the 1965 Korea-Japan Claims Agreement. However, the Abe administration characterized the Supreme Court's decision as not only overturning the legal basis of Korea-Japan relations but also posing a grave challenge to the post-war international order, including the San Francisco Peace Treaty. The Japanese government further stated that if the seizure of assets of Japanese companies liable for compensation under the Korean Supreme Court's ruling and the monetization of those seized assets were to occur, resulting in actual economic damage, it would not hesitate to take corresponding economic retaliatory measures. Neither side yielded, and consequently, on July 1, 2019, the Japanese government implemented tightened export controls against Korea and, on August 2, 2019, removed Korea from its "white list*." In response, Koreans launched a boycott of Japanese goods starting on July 2, 2019.

Concurrently with this deterioration of Korea-Japan relations, the international landscape was undergoing significant changes in the late 2010s, including North Korea's advancing nuclear capabilities, instability in the global supply chain due to the pandemic, and the Biden administration's emphasis on Korea-U.S.-Japan cooperation. In his report, *Achievements and Tasks of Korea's Diplomacy towards Japan in 2023*, Professor Cho Yang-hyun of the Institute for Indo-Pacific Studies at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy explains that Korea and Japan have historically strengthened mutual cooperation in security and economic fields when facing increased uncertainty in the international political economy, sharing a sense of crisis. The sense of crisis shared by both nations due to changes in the international situation reduced the prominence of historical conflicts in their foreign policy priorities, providing greater room for concessions and compromises for both governments. Thus, these shifts in the international environment acted as a catalyst for Korea-Japan cooperation. Furthermore, both the Kishida cabinet in Japan, which succeeded the Abe administration, and the Yoon Suk-yeol government in Korea aimed to restore future-oriented Korea-Japan relations by rebuilding trust and normalizing diplomatic ties. The realization of the 2023 Korea-Japan summit was a result of the confluence of factors: a shared sense of crisis due to changes in the international situation, a consensus between both governments to restore future-oriented relations, and the proactive diplomatic decisions of the Korean government, which led to a change in Japan's attitude.

*White List: Countries on the list are exempt from individual government approvals for the export of certain goods and technologies in Japan

Prospects: Where Should Korea-Japan Relations Go After the 60th Anniversary?

Korea-Japan relations today stand at a critical juncture, marked by two significant shifts. The first pertains to the fluctuating political landscape. The Korean presidential election held on June 3, 2025, is projected to influence the trajectory of bilateral ties, depending on the diplomatic approach towards Japan adopted by the incoming Korean president. While governmental reconciliation has been pursued through twelve meetings between the leaders of both nations in 2023, a divergence in perceptions persists between the government and the public, as well as between civil societies in both countries. Choi Eun-mi, a research fellow at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies and a professor of North-East Asian Foreign Affairs and Commerce at HUFS, observes, "Given that Korea-Japan relations are particularly sensitive to the image each country holds of the other, and that public opinion in both nations significantly impacts and is easily swayed by even minor issues in this diplomatic relationship, it is imperative

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▲ On February 15, 2025, to mark the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Korea and Japan, Namsan Seoul Tower (L) is lit in alternating blue and red to represent the two nations' flags, while Tokyo Tower (R) displays the words "JAPAN KOREA" in lights.

to continually foster a virtuous cycle through expanded exchanges." Concerning unresolved historical issues, professor Choi states "when conflicts arise due to past grievances, discussions should focus on managing these conflicts rather than making statements that could inflame national sentiments." She further notes, "It is crucial how we educate the current younger generation about Korea-Japan relations. How the future generations remember Korea-Japan history will be significant in resolving these issues going forward."

The second shift involves evolving perceptions. A report released on April 24, 2025, by Choi Eun-mi and Ham Geon-hui, senior research fellows at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, titled *Koreans' Perceptions of Japan (2014-2024): Can We Transcend 'Generation and Ideology'?,* analyzed the findings of major public opinion surveys conducted by organizations such as Korea Gallup, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and Genron NPO between November 2014 and April 2024, which examined Korean perceptions of Japan. The analysis reveals that while negative perceptions of Japan in Korea still outweigh positive ones, there has been a general upward trend in Koreans' overall perception of Japan. This aligns with the theories of Karl Mannheim, a prominent sociologist of generations, who posited that generations born in the same period share similar social memories and experiences by encountering the same historical events at the same stage of their life cycle, potentially leading to similar ways of thinking.

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▲ *Attack on Titan: The Final Chapter – The Last Attack*, released on March 13, 2025, surpasses 830,000 cumulative viewers as of May 5, setting a box office record for a Megabox-exclusive release amid the growing popularity of Japanese animation in Korea.

As of 2024, the majority of Koreans in their twenties belong to a generation that began experiencing Japanese popular culture after the opening of cultural exchanges in 1998. By the time they began engaging with popular culture, the resistance toward Japanese culture in Korea had already diminished, and the Japanese culture they encountered was not a version adapted under various restrictions for Korea but rather Japanese culture in its original form. Despite the nadir in Korea-Japan relations in 2019, subsequent improvements have led to a vibrant resumption of cultural and people-to-people exchanges. According to the Japan National Tourism Organization and the travel industry, Koreans have consistently ranked first among foreign visitors to Japan since 2022. This positive trend is mirrored in Japan. According to a *Kyongin Ilbo* report on December 26, 2024, the number of Japanese tourists visiting Korea in 2023 reached 2.12 million, ranking first among all foreign visitors to Korea. Furthermore, the *11th Korea-Japan Joint Public Opinion Survey* conducted in 2023 by the East Asia Institute and Genron NPO, involving approximately 1,000 adults from each country, indicated that the number of Japanese expressing favorable views toward Korea had increased to its highest level in 11 years. To steer this relationship positively, a concerted effort involving historical education, intergenerational communication, and prudent diplomacy is essential.

Over the past 60 years of exchange, Korea and Japan have navigated numerous diplomatic hurdles and sensitive emotions, with periods in which the chasm of conflict overshadowed the voices of cooperation. However, a transformative moment has arrived where the citizens of both nations are increasingly viewing each other positively. What is now required is the foundation for sustainable trust. To achieve this, the lessons of the past must not be evaded but confronted directly, while simultaneously envisioning a future-oriented bilateral relationship. The driving force behind this must be not only diplomacy between states but also mutual understanding among citizens, responsible reporting by the media, and consistent exchanges in academic, cultural, and economic spheres. The time has come not merely to restore relations, but to design a shared future.

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Tracing Their Footsteps of Peace

By Park Se-eun
Editor-in-Chief

Whose sacrifice underlies today's peace? June 6th, Memorial Day in South Korea, is a day to commemorate the dedication and sacrifice of countless individuals who gave their all for the existence of South Korea. In the recurring moments of silent tribute, one wonders what people truly reflect upon. It is undeniable that today's peace could only be achieved through the sacrifice of those who laid down their lives for their country, especially during the horrific moments of the Korean War. The Korean War began in the early hours of June 25th, 1950, with a surprise invasion by North Korea. This tragic conflict, where the people of same ethnicity turned their guns against each other, resulted in millions of casualties and became a devastating turning point upon whose ruins the present-day Korean Peninsula was built. However, these memories are fading. Memorial Day is increasingly seen as just another holiday, the war remains a mere scene in textbooks, and national security is often reduced to abstract slogans.

Therefore, it is crucial to move beyond simply looking back at the past. We need to understand the historical environment as it connects to our present lives and truly feel the weight of peace within that context. By reflecting on the noble sacrifices of those who dedicated themselves to the nation, we aim to contemplate the historical framework encasing their acts and to reaffirm the value of today's peace. Furthermore, by uncovering the hidden histories within familiar places, we seek to help readers move beyond superficial security discourse and connect history and peace to their own lives. The Argus intends to continue its journey to learn the meaning of peace by visiting the DMZ Peace Tour, Peace Culture Bunker, and the Seoul National Cemetery—places where the history of peace in South Korea and the lives of its citizens intersect.

1. DMZ Peace Tour: The Frontline of Division, the Forefront of Preserving Peace

The DMZ Peace Tour offers a space to simultaneously experience the reality of division and the possibility of peace since the armistice. The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), established after the 1953 Armistice Agreement, is a 2km-wide buffer zone north and south of the ceasefire line, starkly illustrating the situation of Korea. Contrary to its name, the DMZ Peace Tour is not merely a tourist attraction, but a place imbued with the scars and tensions of war that the DMZ holds within. Here, where North and South Korea laid down their weapons and retreated 2 kilometers each in opposite directions after the armistice, is the tense frontline that most vividly displays the reality of the world's only divided nation. Just a few steps beyond the barbed wire lies North Korean territory, a space where the hostile past of pointing guns at each other still dominates the present. However, this place is called peace. The quiet and desolate scenery may make it appear as if all conflict has ended, but in fact, it is a place where tensions run higher than anywhere else. The DMZ Peace Tour is a place that clearly shows that the Korean Peninsula is a divided nation and simultaneously a place where the peace that society upholds exists.

(1) The 3rd Tunnel: Scars of War

©Paju City

▲ While photography is prohibited inside the 3rd Tunnel, visitors are allowed to walk through it near the DMZ.

Deep underground near the DMZ, within a dark and narrow tunnel, the tragedy of the Korean Peninsula's division is starkly revealed. The 3rd Tunnel was discovered in October 1978, approximately 4 kilometers south of the Military Demarcation Line in Paju, Gyeonggi Province. It is an underground infiltration tunnel built by North Korea for the purpose of invading the South. This space, reinforced with concrete walls and featuring a low ceiling, is 1.95 meters wide and 2.1 meters high, ingeniously designed to allow thousands of troops to pass through within an hour. When tensions between the North and South were extreme, North Korea excavated numerous infiltration tunnels to secretly move troops toward major South Korean cities, including Seoul. Vivid traces of explosives remain on the tunnel walls, and at the end of the passage, a double iron gate installed by the South stands firm to prevent crossing the Military Demarcation Line.

To enter the 3rd Tunnel, one must continuously walk down an endless slope. Upon reaching the tunnel, darkness and cold envelop you, and the low ceiling of the tunnel stretches overhead. As you stoop and hunch your way through the seemingly endless passage, the dampness and cold within the tunnel convey the tension of war as if it were still ongoing. This seems to imply that the war of the past has not ceased but is merely paused in the present. Designed to rapidly move approximately 30,000 troops and hundreds of weapons per hour, and located only 52 kilometers from Seoul, the discovery of the 3rd Tunnel sent shockwaves through South Korean society at the time. It strongly reminded people that the war did not end with the 1953 Armistice Agreement but was merely put on hold. The 3rd Tunnel is a symbolic place that directly illustrates this reality. Today, this tunnel is not just a relic of past military operations but a place that simultaneously awakens the scars of war and the urgency of peace.

(2) Dora Observatory: Beyond the Barbed Wire, an Unfinished Division that Remains Out of Reach

©Park Se-eun / The Argus

▲ From Dora Observatory, visitors can see residents of both North and South Korea near the DMZ.

Located on a high point just 1.2 kilometers from the Military Demarcation Line, the Dora Observatory is one of the few places where, on a clear day, one can directly observe the cityscape of Kaesong and Mount Songak in North Korea through binoculars, as well as the daily lives of residents in North Korean villages. It offers a view of people who once lived together but are now rendered unable to even reach each other due to the war, starkly illustrating that the shadow of war still lingers. Surrounded by concrete walls and wire fences, the observatory presents a scene of the barbed wire separating North and South, guard posts, and desolate plains, where a palpable tension hangs in the stillness. Inside the observatory, exhibits comparing the military preparedness

and daily lives of North and South Koreans serve as a reminder that the landscape before them is not merely a tourist resource. Established in 1987 and opened to civilians on a limited basis, this place is a symbolic site where one can directly witness the reality of the Korean Peninsula's division.

The Dora Observatory does not merely evoke past memories but rather reminds us of the ongoing state of division that continues into the present. This space, from which one gazes upon North Korean territory, prompts reflection on the lives of our fellow countrymen who continue to live beyond the barbed wire, even as we imagine a future where division is overcome. Although the North Korean land is clearly visible, this proximity ironically reveals the distance that true peace and reunification have yet to bridge. To speak of peace simply because the sound of gunfire has ceased is to ignore the still-severed lives and the existing border. The Dora Observatory allows to imagine a future where division is overcome while simultaneously making us viscerally aware of how incomplete today's peace is.

(3) Tongil Village: A Foundation of Everyday Life Rooted in Division

Located within the DMZ in Paju, Gyeonggi Province, Tongil Village is a civilian settlement established in 1973 by President Park Chung-hee with the hope for reunification. Tongil Village is a unique space where people farm and continue their daily lives, having settled down just a few kilometers from the Military Demarcation Line. It is one of the only civilian residential areas within the Civilian Control Zone, where entry and exit are strictly controlled, and residents must obtain permission from the military every day to move around. Although surrounded by military facilities and barbed wire fences, about 100 households currently live together in the village, making a living through agriculture, and the familiar rural scenery of rice paddies, greenhouses, and a village hall remains intact.

Mired in war and division, Tongil Village is not merely a village that has endured through hardship but a space that reaffirms life and hope in its midst. The residents, who built new foundations on land where gunfire and shelling ceased, are people who make a living on the front lines of national defense while simultaneously demonstrating the message of peaceful coexistence through their very lives. This village vividly conveys the lives of civilians who continue to exist in a reality where North and South remain separated even after the Korean War, reminding us of the impact of division on individual daily life. It shows how deeply war and division have permeated individual lives while also illustrating the reality that even within this context, life goes on. This village shows that the DMZ is not simply a forbidden land but a land where people live and where the seeds of peace grow. True peace is possible only when we continue our efforts for coexistence, going beyond just the absence of war.

©Park Se-eun / The Argus

▲ Despite living within the DMZ area, residents of Tongil Village maintain their unique lifestyle.

2. Peace Culture Bunker: Art Blooming from the Cold War

Located at the foot of Mount Bukhan in Dobong-gu, Seoul, the Peace Culture Bunker is a former military air-raid shelter built in the late 1970s in preparation for a North Korean invasion. In 2018, it was repurposed as a multi-use cultural space for citizens. Dobong-gu, where the Peace Culture Bunker is situated, was a gateway for North Korean troops attempting to enter Seoul during the Korean War. In the past, this site served as a key stronghold for the defense of northwestern Seoul, a subterranean bunker that symbolized the anxiety and tension of the Cold War era. While its concrete walls, narrow passages, and thick iron doors vividly demonstrate its former military purpose, it has now been transformed into a complex space where art and civic activities coexist, housing exhibition halls, performance venues, and education rooms. Inside, exhibitions, lectures, and participatory experiential activities centered on the themes of peace, division, and war are held, while cultural performances


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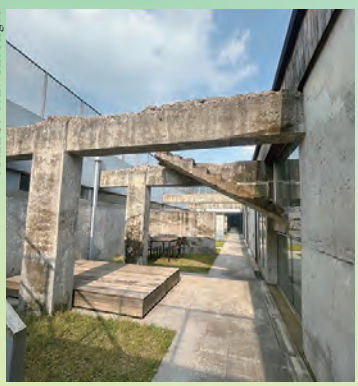
▲ Citizens enjoy leisure and cultural activities at the Peace Culture Bunker.

and film screenings take place in the outdoor spaces.

(1) Anti-Tank Obstacle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▲ The cultural space blends seamlessly with the preserved concrete walls of the former bunker.

Upon entering the Peace Culture Bunker, the sounds of children's laughter are the first that greet people. Children running across the green lawn and the peaceful atmosphere of a park set back from the city's noise make it hard to believe that this place was once a military facility prepared for war. However, the thick, rough concrete walls lining the edge of the park and the narrow passages leading underground silently testify that this space is more than just a cultural venue. The anti-tank obstacle was built in the 1970s in preparation for a potential North Korean invasion. To block North Korean troops from entering Seoul in the event of a war, this site served as a key stronghold for the defense of northwestern Seoul and was a shadow of the Cold War, when war was deeply embedded in everyday life. The anti-tank obstacle was designed with a structure that could physically sever roads to prevent the movement of vehicles or troops.

Now, however, everyday life has blossomed amidst the traces of that war. In 2018, this military air-raid shelter was reopened to citizens under the name "Peace Culture Bunker." The interior was remodeled into a multi-use cultural space that houses exhibition halls, lecture spaces, performance venues, and peace education programs. The bunker's concrete remains intact, and upon it, citizens are building art and peace. To showcase its historical significance as a strategic military point, the former military facilities remain standing. This space does not sever the past from the present but rather reinterprets it, drawing it up again through the language of current life and creation. The closed-off bunker, once filled with tension, has now become an open cultural space for practicing peace, and a place where darkness and fear once lingered has transformed into a public space for coexisting and dreaming together.

(2) The Berlin Wall

Walking along the park path of the Peace Culture Bunker, amidst the green grass, one's gaze is caught by pieces of gray concrete adorned with colorful graffiti. This distinctly foreign-looking wall is a section of the actual Berlin Wall. Once a symbol of the Cold War and a physical boundary of division, it now stands in the middle of Dobong-gu, Seoul, carrying a message of peace and unification. The Berlin Wall was a symbol of the division between East and West Germany after World War II, its construction initiated in 1961 by the East German government to prevent its citizens from escaping to the West. However, in November 1989, with the allowance of free passage, it was torn down by the hands of citizens and remains a monument symbolizing German reunification. Dobong-gu received three actual segments of the wall as a donation from the city of Berlin, Germany, and installed them at the Peace Culture Bunker in 2019.


©Park Se-eun / The Argus

▲ A section of the Berlin Wall stands at the Peace Culture Bunker.

The Berlin Wall was the epitome of the Cold War and clear evidence of division, but simultaneously, it denoted the end of that division, brought about by the hands of citizens. Now that this symbol of the Cold War has become a testament to peace in Korea, it signifies a spatial transformation that transcends a divided era, symbolizing reconciliation and mutual prosperity. Currently, the Korean Peninsula still faces an invisible wall of military tension and political disconnection. Barbed wire fences and guard posts still stand as lines of separation, political and social antagonism, and psychological distance, continue to divide North and South. In the face of this reality, the Berlin Wall sends a message urging society not to dwell on the illusion that no war equals peace, but to question what continuous and reciprocal peace truly entails. This wall is no longer just a scar of division but physical evidence that speaks of a history that moved beyond those scars. The wall quietly reminds us that peace is an ongoing process, and anyone can be a part of that process.

3. Seoul National Cemetery: The Land of Peace Where Noble Sacrifices Rest

©Park Se-eun / The Argus

▲ The National Seoul Memorial Cemetery exudes a solemn yet peaceful atmosphere.

"We will not forget your devotion." This sentence greets visitors immediately upon entering the Seoul National Cemetery. This short, unassuming phrase is a tribute to those who rest here and a pledge not to forget that the peace enjoyed by people today is by no means a given. The Seoul National Cemetery was established in 1956, shortly after the Korean War, as South Korea's first national cemetery to honor those who dedicated themselves to the nation. Located on a hill overlooking the Han River in Dongjak-dong, Dongjak-gu, Seoul, this site spans approximately 1.43 million square meters and houses the burial grounds of fallen soldiers, patriotic martyrs, patriots, police officers, firefighters, and military personnel. In addition to the burial grounds, various memorial facilities such as the Memorial Gate, the Memorial Tower, the Memorial Hall, and the Relics Exhibition Hall are available to tour. Walking among the tranquil trees and neatly maintained burial grounds, one naturally contemplates how ordinary people became heroes during the times of war and division, and how their deaths made life today possible. It is a space of remembrance that prompts us to question upon whose sacrifice Korean society built its freedom and peace.

(1) Memorial Tower

After passing through the solemn and quiet Memorial Gate, a few more steps lead to the Memorial Tower, which rises majestically towards the sky. Standing as if time has stopped, this tower symbolizes the loyalty and distinguished service of those who dedicated themselves to the freedom and peace of South Korea. Every year on Memorial Day, a commemorative ceremony is held here, where survivors and descendants pause and bow their heads before the names of the fallen. To the left and right of the tower stand sculptures honoring the sacrifices of different eras. The Five Patriotic Martyrs on the left symbolize the ancestors who devoted their bodies and minds to the independence of the nation during the Japanese colonial period, while the Five Heroes of National Defense on the right depict soldiers and police officers who dedicated themselves to defending the homeland and safeguarding freedom. These sculptures represent a history of sacrifice that, despite stemming from different eras and different enemies, ultimately flow as one stream. In the center front of the tower stands an altar for tributes.

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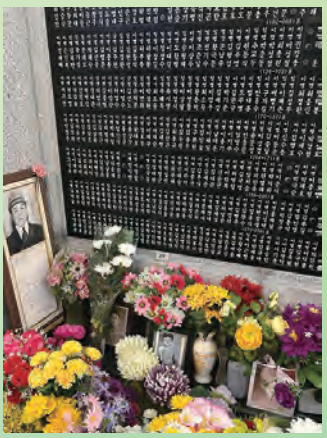
▲ A space in front of the Memorial Tower honors the sacrifices of those who died for the country.

Stepping inside the tower, one is confronted by walls covered with engraved names, bouquets of flowers placed before them, and handwritten letters and old black-and-white photographs left by bereaved families. There are memorial tablets of over 104,000 fallen heroes who died in the Korean War but whose remains were never recovered, and in the underground ossuary, the spirits of over 7,000 unidentified remains are enshrined. The people who left the battlefield without a name, those who never returned, and the endless waiting of their surviving families make one realize how much was sacrificed for the current peace we enjoy. The stone walls on the left and right of the tower are structured to resemble a screen placed behind the altar during ancestral rites, with the tradition



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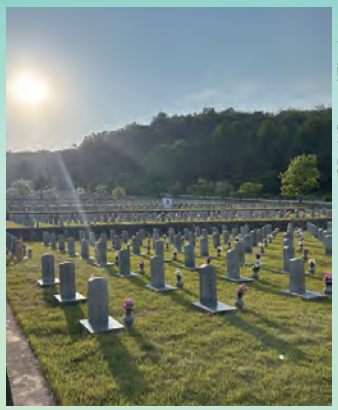
▲ Inside the Memorial Tower, families of national veterans honor their loved ones' sacrifices.

of respectfully welcoming the spirits of the deceased. In the center of the tower, the Ascension of the Martyred Spirits is sculpted, literally denoting that the noble sacrifices ascend to the heavens and protect the sky of freedom. This image symbolizes that death is not the end and that these heroes live on in our memories.

(2) Ten Humans Bombs Memorial

"Here, where the ardor of the nation dwells, where those who sacrificed for the fatherland lie, may the sun and moon protect this hill." Leaving the Memorial Gate and heading to the right, an endless line of tombstones comes into view. Among them, at the very front of Section 6 of the Seoul National Cemetery, stands a large stele in quiet dignity: Ten Humans Bombs Memorial. The inscription carved there speaks of the era's reverence for the young soldiers who willingly gave their lives, and the weight of memory that those left behind must bear. This memorial monument was erected to commemorate 10 soldiers of the 11th Regiment of the 1st Infantry Division who, on May 4, 1949, before the outbreak of the Korean War, risked their lives and charged into enemy lines to retake Mount Songak in Kaesong, which had been suddenly occupied by North Korean forces. Carrying bombs strapped to their bodies, they ran toward the enemy's defense positions and all died heroic deaths. The five-tiered tower, which narrows from bottom to top to a height of 6 meters, symbolizes their spirit of advancing toward hope for the fatherland to the very end, even amidst increasingly narrowing choices, like climbing a steep path. At the bottom of the monument, the names and ranks of the ten heroes are inscribed, along with the words "Ten Humans Bombs Memorial." Each name is vivid, as if alive and breathing within the stone.

Walking past the memorial monument and along the burial grounds, countless tombstones stretch endlessly of individuals not born heroes but someone's sons, friends, and fathers. The fact that it was the "extraordinary courage of ordinary people" who willingly chose sacrifice for the sake of the community, even in the face of fear, makes the heart even heavier. During the Korean War, only some remains were recovered, and in the Korean War Veterans' Cemetery, there are still those who have not returned to their families and national heroes whose identities remain unknown. It was only later, through DNA comparison, that some finally regained their names. This cemetery, beyond being a place of mourning, is where the painful and bloody history of Korea's journey to peace and freedom, and the "names that must be remembered" within that history, lie in rest. The stories of independence activists from the Japanese colonial era, Korean War veterans, and Vietnam War veterans—individuals from different times but united by the single thread of "those who gave their lives for the nation" —make us realize that the present of this land was achieved through the accumulation of numerous divisions and sacrifices. It is a place that reminds us not only of sorrow but also of the weight of gratitude and what must be protected. The peace we enjoy now was not easily attained. It lies upon the nameless deaths of many and the footprints left by the youth who made the ultimate sacrifice.



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▲ The 10th burial site displays countless gravestones of national veterans.

Today's peace began in the place where someone's life stopped. On the land where the gunfire ceased, some were buried nameless, and others had to live without even being granted the time to mourn their loved ones. Beyond the barbed wire of the DMZ, in the cracks of the bunker's concrete walls, and among the silent burial grounds of the Seoul National Cemetery, small traces remain that speak volumes. This peace of today marks a season that some never got to experience, and this freedom was a future that someone could never reach. The people of the present, living in peace today, must begin anew by not forgetting that past sacrifice, those names.

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Exploring World History in London: The British Museum

By Kim Su-yeon
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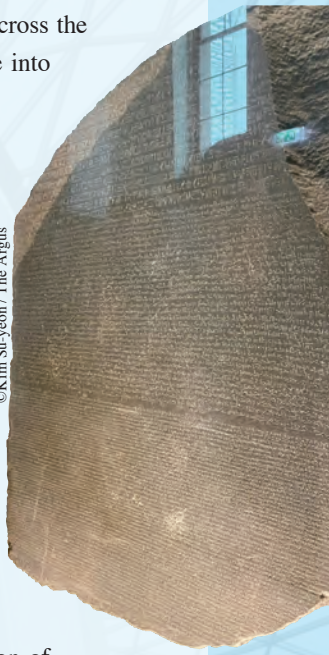
The British Museum, located in London, opened in 1759. Its collection includes approximately eight million artifacts from six continents including Ancient Egypt, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, the Americas and East and South Asia. Here, visitors have the unique opportunity to explore artifacts gathered from across the globe in a single location. The Argus recently visited the British Museum and invites readers to delve into world history through its remarkable collections.

1. Rosetta Stone: Ancient Egypt

Upon entering the museum, one of the first things visitors might notice is a crowd gathered in front of a massive glass case. Inside stands the *Rosetta Stone*, nearly the height of an adult. The *Rosetta Stone* is one of the museum's top ten artifacts. It served as a key for European scholars to decipher ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs for the first time. The stele is densely covered in small inscriptions, and upon closer inspection, visitors can see that it is divided into three sections, each containing the same inscription written in different scripts.

The top section contains what we know as hieroglyphs, featuring drawings of birds and various animals. The middle section is written in Demotic script, the everyday language used in ancient Egypt and a cursive form of hieroglyphs. The bottom section is inscribed with the ancient Greek alphabet. French scholar Jean-Francois Champollion successfully deciphered the hieroglyphs by comparing them with the Greek text. This stele was discovered near the town of Rosetta by Napoleon's army during their invasion of Egypt. After his army's defeat, it was transferred to England and has been on display at the British Museum since 1802.



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▲ *Rosetta Stone*

2. Hoa Hakananai'a: Easter Island

Towering above the passing museum crowds, a striking black statue immediately draws the eye. This basalt figure, *Hoa Hakananai*'a, meaning "lost or hidden friend," is a Moai from the remote Easter Island in the vast Pacific. It exhibits the classic features of Easter Island sculptures: prominent, arched eyebrows, long, drooping ears, and distinctive oval nostrils. Likely carved around a millennium ago in the village of Orongo to honor ancestors, the statue offers a glimpse into the beliefs of the islanders. Carvings on its back show human hands and feet alongside a bird-headed creature, suggesting the importance of the birdman cult at the time of its creation. This particular Moai was brought to England about 150 years ago by sailors on a British surveying ship that visited Easter Island.

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◀ *Hoa Hakananai'a*

3. Tree of Life: Africa

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▲ *Tree of Life* (2004)

Upon stepping into the Gallery of Africa, a large tree immediately captures visitors' attention. *Tree of Life* (2004), made of metal, was created by four artists from Mozambique. They created this artwork by recycling seven million abandoned firearms from the Mozambican Civil War as part of a project called "Transforming Arms into Tools," which aimed to dispose of the weapons. Upon closer inspection of the tree, visitors can see that the metal making up the tree consists entirely of firearm components.

After Mozambique gained independence in 1977, South Africa funneled a large quantity of weapons into the country in an effort to destabilize the peace. Consequently, Mozambique endured another 15 years of war. Witnessing this, a bishopo in Mozambique launched the "Transforming Arms into Tools" project, encouraging citizens to exchange their weapons for other items like farming tools. The *Tree of Life* stands as a work that commemorates the courage of those who overcame and rejected a culture of violence.

4. Shadow Puppet of Gandhi: South Asia

As visitors enter the Gallery of South Asia and pass several statues, they will discover a brightly illuminated painting on one side of the exhibition hall. This artwork is a shadow puppet depicting Mohandas Gandhi. Considering that shadow puppetry is an ancient Indian form of storytelling, it is likely that this puppet was used in a play about Gandhi's life. Gandhi was a prominent activist who led India's independence movement against British colonial rule. Believing in the power of nonviolent civil disobedience, he led a social movement for Indian self-rule.

The white garment Gandhi wears in the picture is a dhoti, a traditional Indian attire made from hand-spun cloth. Gandhi urged people to spin their own yarn and weave their own clothes, advocating a boycott of machine-made British textiles that were damaging India's textile industry. By spinning thread on a spinning wheel, Gandhi demonstrated that resistance could be achieved without violence. His example inspired political activists such as Martin Luther King Jr. in the United States and Nelson Mandela in South Africa.

From the wisdom of the *Rosetta Stone* that unlocked ancient civilizations, to the sublimity of *Hoa Hakananai'a* connecting ancestors and the people of Easter Island, the *Tree of Life* that emphasizes the preciousness of life, and the shadow puppet of Gandhi that brought hope to India through non-violence—the artworks displayed in the British Museum reflect the journey of humankind and embody timeless human values. The Argus suggests that readers visit the museum to witness history come alive.

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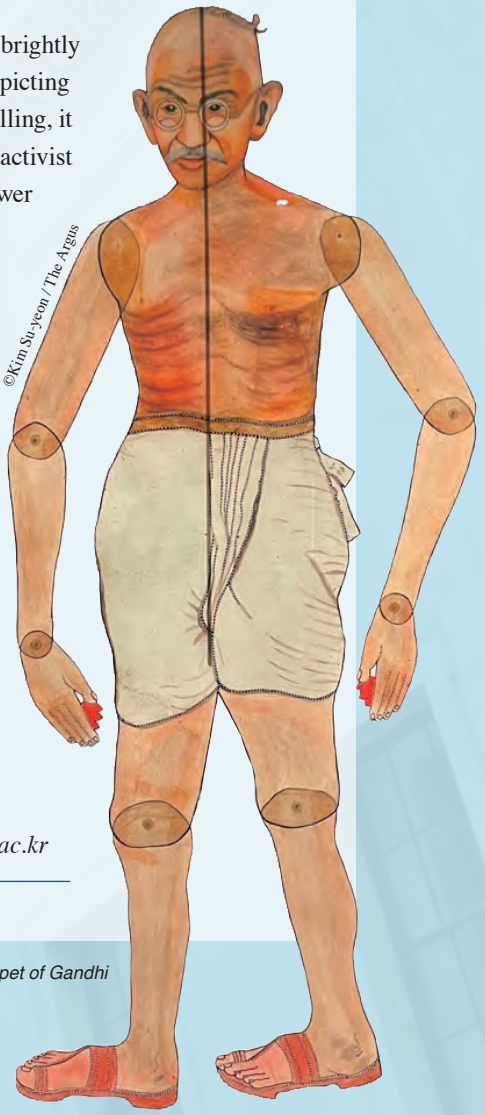

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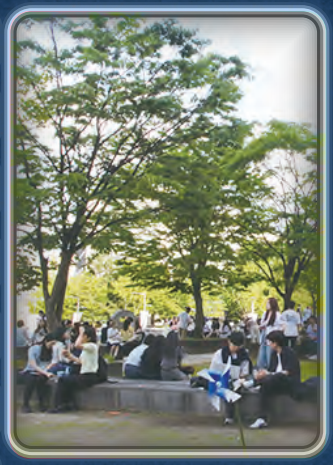
▶ *Shadow Puppet of Gandhi*

Echoes of Euphoria

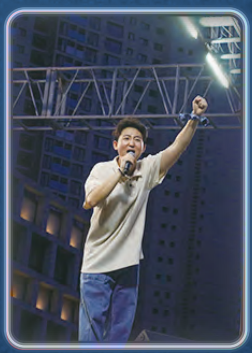
By Kim Yi-eun & Kim Si-yon
Editorial Consultant and Associate Editor of Social Section



From May 19 to 20, the HUFS annual spring festival "2025 QUINQUATRIA: Euphoria" was held, transforming the campus into a dynamic and colorful celebration for everyone. From food booths and food trucks serving delicious food to event booths with various games and activities, and content promotions to themed photo booths, the entire campus was filled with vibrant energy and a festive spirit.

Departments and colleges ran unique and intriguing booths that sparked students' curiosity and encouraged them to join in the fun. The festival offered a variety of engaging programs that kept the excitement alive across campus. For example, "Light Euphoria," a picnic where students could relax on beanbags and mats throughout the campus; "Share your Euphoria," a small gallery where students could draw their feelings of the day; "Hidden Euphoria," a treasure hunt content where participants searched for notes written "EUPHORIA" hidden in desk drawers, benches, and other familiar spots that students just pass by; "Collective Euphoria," a graffiti content collaboratively created by students; "Playful Euphoria," an arcade game content featuring basketball hoops, Whac-a-Mole, and more; and "Journey to Euphoria," a stamp tour where students collected stamps by joining the above contents. Photo zones featuring HUFS mascot BOO also gave students the chance to capture fun and lasting memories.

Photos above are taken by Kim Yi-eun and Kim Si-yon



What made this year's festival more special and energetic was the return of student-run pubs after 14 years, since alcohol was banned on campus in 2012. Although it was allowed only for one day in a restricted area and only limited to HUFSans, it drew so much attention that more than 300 teams were placed on the waiting list.

The stage consisted of student performances: CHAEUDA, FBS Song Festival: MULDULDA, cheering festival: SAEGIDA, and artist performances that are a staple of university festivals. The student performances were filled with a variety of genres, including band, cheerleading, dance, and pungmul nori, a traditional Korean percussion music and dance, while the FBS song festival featured five contestants showing their hidden talents, with the winner determined by 100 percent on-site voting by HUFSans.

The festival atmosphere peaked with artists including SUNMI, BTOB, YB Band, Younha, Trans Fixion, and Baek Yerin, lighting up the stage with their performances. The crowd of not only HUFS students but also many visitors filled the field and the surrounding areas, and in that moment, everyone came together as one, jumping, cheering, and celebrating, which added a youthful and lively spirit to the university festival. Neither the pouring rain nor the heavy, humid air could dampen the heat of excitement and the roar of cheers. Leaving behind yet another memory of celebration, connection, and school spirit, QUINQUATRIA: Euphoria will continue to echo in the hearts of HUFSans.

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Photos above are taken by Kim Yi-eun, Kim Si-yon and HUFS HANA

The Argus Prize

Beyond Echo Chambers: Healing South Korea's Fractured Society

★ 1st ★

Noh Eul
Department of Malay-Indonesian Studies

In recent years, political polarization has emerged as a potent force reshaping South Korean society, subtly yet distinctly echoing broader global trends. This polarization is characterized not merely by ideological divergence but by an intense emotional and moral division, influencing nearly every facet of public and private life. Reflecting on South Korea's contemporary political landscape provides crucial insights into how polarization transcends the political arena to permeate social relationships, media environments, and national identity itself.

Historically, South Korea (hereafter Korea) has experienced profound ideological divides, rooted deeply in its turbulent political past—from authoritarian regimes to democratization movements. However, the recent intensity of polarization differs markedly from earlier periods. The political discourse surrounding the current administration reflects a significant shift, as partisan divisions are now defined not merely by policy disagreements but by deeper social cleavages. Issues such as judicial reform, foreign policy alignment, economic strategy, and gender politics have transformed routine political debates into fierce battles over national values and identity.

Central to understanding Korea's polarization is the role of digital media environments. Platforms such as YouTube, KakaoTalk, and Naver have significantly reshaped political engagement, often reinforcing echo chambers and deepening ideological divides. Algorithmically driven content curation prioritizes emotional engagement and controversy, amplifying voices that intensify partisan sentiment. The recent controversies surrounding fake news, online smear campaigns, and misinformation vividly illustrate how digital spaces have become battlegrounds for ideological dominance rather than forums for constructive dialogue.

Moreover, the fragmentation of media sources along ideological lines exacerbates polarization by promoting selective exposure to information that reinforces pre-existing biases. Traditional media outlets, increasingly aligned with particular political orientations, reinforce divisive narratives, reducing opportunities for balanced or nuanced perspectives. Public debates over prosecutorial power, economic inequality, and diplomatic relations with major powers such as the United States, China, and Japan have become proxies for broader cultural and ideological confrontations, with each side entrenched in morally charged positions. Additionally, identity politics has intensified polarization in Korea, particularly through generational and gender divides. Young Koreans, facing unprecedented economic pressures, housing instability, and job market uncertainties, have developed distinct political identities shaped by their experiences and socio-economic realities. Gender-related tensions, epitomized by fierce debates over feminism and mandatory military service, further illustrate how identity-based divisions have become politically weaponized, reinforcing polarized perspectives and undermining societal cohesion.

Political polarization's impact on governance and public policy in Korea has been profound. Legislative paralysis, confrontational politics, and repeated policy reversals have weakened governmental effectiveness and eroded public trust. The persistent difficulty in advancing coherent economic reforms or sustaining consistent foreign policy initiatives underscores the debilitating influence of polarization. Rather than fostering compromise or consensus, polarization encourages rigid adherence to ideological positions, often at the expense of pragmatic governance. Furthermore, Korea's polarization mirrors broader global phenomena observed in democracies such as the United States and Western Europe where identity politics and media echo chambers similarly fuel division. Psychological studies show that polarization thrives by exploiting emotional vulnerabilities, with political rhetoric strategically evoking fear or anger to consolidate partisan loyalties. In this context, political leaders hold a critical responsibility in tempering divisive discourse through measured, inclusive communication that prioritizes national unity over short-term political gains.

At the same time, promising grassroots movements within Korea demonstrate the potential for citizens themselves to lead depolarization efforts. Civic initiatives emphasizing intergenerational dialogue, community-based conflict resolution, and collaborative local governance offer tangible pathways toward societal healing. These efforts underscore that depolarization ultimately depends on national, citizen-driven action.

To address the corrosive effects of polarization, innovative and comprehensive strategies must be pursued. Structural reforms aimed at enhancing media transparency and accountability are essential. Encouraging platforms to promote diverse viewpoints and implement fact-checking mechanisms can mitigate misinformation's harmful influence. Furthermore, educational reform emphasizing critical thinking, digital literacy, and civic education is paramount. Equipping younger generations with the tools to critically evaluate information and respectfully engage in democratic debate offers a path toward rebuilding fractured societal relationships.

Korea's experiences highlight polarization not merely as a political issue but as a profound societal challenge requiring urgent and strategic interventions. The path to depolarization involves cultivating empathy, encouraging open dialogue, and fostering genuine civic engagement. Historical precedents within Korea—such as the peaceful transition to democracy—offer powerful examples of national resilience and reconciliation that can inform contemporary efforts to bridge divides.

Ultimately, recognizing polarization as a broad societal threat rather than a partisan phenomenon is critical. Korea stands at a pivotal crossroads, facing both serious challenges and historic opportunities. By decisively confronting polarization with clarity, courage, and innovation, the nation can not only repair fractured relationships but emerge stronger, more united, and better equipped to shape a prosperous and democratic future for all its citizens.

Free to Speak, Not Free to Harm: The Ethics of Contextual Speech

★ 2nd ★

Jeong Yoo-won
Department of Arabic

From the Charlie Hebdo shooting of France, and Quran Burningsb in Sweden, controversies have reignited debates over the boundaries of freedom of expression. Some may argue about the importance of autonomy, but they are forgetting a crucial factor: the world is not culturally homogeneous. In today's globalized world, where various ideas and beliefs can be spread across the border in mere seconds, expression is not only restricted to a single audience. In a globalized world with diverse beliefs, the right to express oneself freely must be balanced with how expression is perceived in various cultural backgrounds. Free speech is essential and should be valued, but it must be balanced with an awareness of how such expression reverberates across contexts.

Freedom of expression is the right to say whatever you want to, without being controlled or limited. As a concept that came to light since World War II, it is part of the constitution of most countries. In 1948, the United Nations proclaimed in Article 19 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* that "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

While freedom of speech is protected as a fundamental right, its expression often collides with cultural and religious values. One example is the 2015 Charlie Hedbo attack in Paris. The magazine published several cartoons containing satire of Islam, even involving the Prophet Muhammad. Though these acts were protected by free speech under French Secularism, Muslims viewed these acts as blasphemy. According to the *BBC News* in 2015, this situation quickly escalated into violence, leading to the death of several members of the staff. While nothing can justify violence of any sort, this incident illustrates how deeply cultural context influences interpretation of expression. These tensions accelerate due to globalization, where expression travels around borders. Thus, it is now unstoppable how a certain meaning will shift based on the lens through which it is received. For example, in East Asian media such as Korea or Japan, blackface is used to imitate people whose ethnicity is black, without any malicious intent of mockery. However, in Western countries, it is viewed as deeply offensive, due to its association with slavery and racial discrimination. Because of the lack of understanding of historical context, both sides are facing conflict.

Some might argue that context-aware expression is oppression in itself and may act as a barrier in communication. However, it's crucial for everyone to understand that ethical speech does not mean immediate censorship. While responsible expression bridges different cultures and provides an understanding with respect, reckless speech without consideration of others fractures the bond. Speech that ignores the impact it contains has high risks of conflict. With the foundation of mutual respect and strategic communication, individuals can voice their beliefs in a global society.

Furthermore, the ethical responsibility regarding the respect of other cultures when speaking one's mind is pivotal nowadays, and it must be part of education as well. Digital platforms such as Facebook and Instagram contribute to making ideas and beliefs global instantly. Those who have not formed their values, especially young students, sway easily according to the surroundings around them. With their principles not yet concrete, being exposed to unbalanced views around them, especially through social media, may make them normalize disrespect or prejudice. According to Douglas Guilbeault, professor of Haas School of Business, UC Berkeley, social media facilitates groupthink, where ideas-regardless of their validity-gain traction through repeated exposure. For instance, Andrew Tate, a social media creator, quickly gained followers on promoting misogynistic views he thought were justified. Due to these actions, young students,

especially male students, showed greater signs of sexist attitudes inside the classroom. To prevent polarization, schools can introduce classes related to ethics and expression, giving students the chance to navigate and explore various cultures. Along with this, media literacy education to help them critically evaluate content would also be useful.

In addition to the changes of the system, we as individuals should cultivate a mindset with cultural empathy and restraint when we express our views. This includes recognizing that one's words might unintentionally disrespect other cultures and trying to avoid saying such matters, especially in a globalized world like today. Actively learning and educating ourselves on diversified viewpoints is crucial as well. Those who create content on social media should also consider the power they hold on their audience in the internet world.

Free speech isn't just about the right to speak what's on everyone's mind. It is also the responsibility to consider how speech is perceived in diverse cultural and religious contexts. True freedom exists in relationships with others. Respecting the diverse boundaries of expression does not weaken freedom, it strengthens it. Contextual awareness is crucial in a diverse world like today, and it is a responsibility given to all of us. As future leaders of this generation, we should embrace this approach of communication and act accordingly.

In Pursuit of Justice Beyond the Bounds of Equality

★ 3rd ★

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For centuries, equality has stood as the cornerstone of justice, enshrined in revolutionary manifestos and constitutions. Yet when reduced to uniform treatment or resource distribution, this ideal reveals shortcomings in addressing the complexities of human existence. Justice, in its fullest sense, demands more than arithmetic parity—it requires nuanced engagement with individual circumstances, historical legacies, and the transformative power of opportunity. As societies confront persistent disparities, the limits of egalitarian frameworks become clear, necessitating a shift toward justice that embraces difference rather than suppressing it.

I believe the pursuit of justice must involve more than the mechanical application of equality. While I recognize the moral force behind equal rights and resources, a just society must be attentive to the realities of its members. Justice, to me, is not a static formula but a dynamic process that requires self-examination and a willingness to adapt to changing conditions. The appeal of equality lies in its simplicity: equal rights, equal resources, equal treatment. Yet this simplicity unravels when confronted with real inequality. Consider two students—one nurtured in an affluent household with private tutors, the other facing poverty and instability. Providing identical textbooks to both, while seemingly fair, fails to account for the gap in their ability to benefit from this resource. Such scenarios expose the fallacy of conflating equal distribution with equitable outcomes. According to the paper "What Is the Point of Equality?" (1999) by Elizabeth Anderson, professor of Philosophy at the University of Michigan, warns that "formal equality often perpetuates the very hierarchies it claims to dismantle" by ignoring context.

From my own observations, I have seen how equal treatment can reinforce existing inequalities. When institutions ignore the unique barriers faced by disadvantaged groups, they risk legitimizing the status quo under the guise of fairness. Justice requires us to look beyond surface-level parity and ask whether our actions truly enable all individuals to thrive. Historical injustices—colonial exploitation, racism, and intergenerational poverty—compound these inequities, creating barriers that uniform treatment cannot remedy. For example, according to a paper "Democracy Compromised: Chiefs and the Politics of Land in South Africa" (2005) by Lungisile Ntsebeza, professor of Sociology at the University of Cape Town, post-apartheid South Africa's land policies were criticized for prioritizing procedural fairness over restorative justice, inadvertently preserving economic hierarchies rooted in colonial theft. These examples underscore a truth: justice cannot be achievedthrough equal treatment in unequal conditions.

John Rawls's difference principle marked a departure from rigid egalitarianism by legitimizing inequalities that uplift the most disadvantaged. His framework acknowledges that justice requires compensating for morally arbitrary disadvantages through structural interventions. Progressive taxation in Nordic countries, which funds universal healthcare and education, operationalizes Rawls's theory by prioritizing societal benefit over individual accumulation.

However, Rawls's focus on "primary goods" overlooks the diversity of human needs. Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's capability approach addresses this by shifting the metric of justice from resources to freedoms—the ability to live a life one values. According to the book *Development as Freedom* (1999) by Amartya Sen, Nobel Prize-winning economist and professor at Harvard University, justice should be measured by individuals' actual opportunities to pursue valued lives. In the book *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (2011) by Martha Nussbaum, professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago, Nussbaum expands on this approach by emphasizing the importance of dignity and choice in achieving justice. For instance, a diabetic and a healthy individual may receive equal

healthcare funding, but true justice demands tailored support for the former's needs. This principle informs India's Right to Education Act, mandating inclusive classrooms for disabled students and recognizing that equality of opportunity sometimes requires unequal resource allocation. I find the capability approach especially resonant with my convictions. The aim of justice, I believe, should be to expand real freedoms and opportunities for every individual, not just ensure everyone receives the same share. This perspective compels me to support policies sensitive to difference and responsive to need, even when such measures are criticized for departing from strict equality.

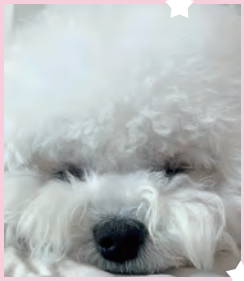
The pursuit of justice must also contend with the weight of history. Affirmative action policies in the United States, though controversial, exemplify attempts to rectify centuries of racial exclusion. According to the book *Responsibility for Justice* (2011) by Iris Marion Young, professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, critics argue such measures violate equality, but proponents counter that they redress historical debts. Similarly, Germany's reparations to Holocaust survivors and Namibia's negotiations with former colonizers reflect a global reckoning with past atrocities, illustrating justice's temporal dimension.

To me, justice is not merely about correcting present imbalances, but also about acknowledging and remedying the enduring effects of past wrongs. Societies must confront uncomfortable histories and design institutions able to evolve in response to new forms of injustice. Chile's recent constitutional reform process in 2022, incorporating indigenous Mapuche communities, demonstrates how justice can evolve through participatory democracy. Rather than imposing static definitions, it embraces dialogue, recognizing that justice in a pluralistic world is iterative and context-dependent.

Ultimately, justice aspires to cultivate conditions for human flourishing. Bhutan's *Gross National Happiness Index* (2012), valuing well-being over GDP, embodies this ethos by prioritizing environmental stewardship and cultural preservation. Such models reject the commodification of justice, instead fostering environments where individuals thrive according to diverse potentials. I am persuaded that the highest calling of justice is to create a society in which everyone can realize their unique potential. This vision demands courage to confront uncomfortable truths: that equal treatment can mask indifference, and that true equity sometimes requires privileging the marginalized. Brazil's Bolsa Família program, targeting cash transfers to impoverished families, reduced inequality not through universal aid but by intentionally addressing poverty's concentration. In my estimation, the pursuit of justice beyond equality is not a rejection of egalitarian ideals, but an affirmation that justice is ultimately about human dignity, agency, and flourishing. As I reflect on the challenges facing our global community—from widening divides to climate change—I am convinced that only a justice that reaches beyond equality can secure a truly inclusive and compassionate future.

As globalization intensifies inequalities and climate change exacerbates vulnerabilities, reimagining justice becomes imperative. Moving beyond equality does not discard its principles but subsumes them within a broader ethical landscape—one that honors difference, rectifies historical wrongs, and prioritizes human dignity over procedural uniformity. The path forward lies not in abandoning equality but in transcending its limitations, forging a justice as multifaceted as humanity itself. In this ongoing endeavor, I believe our greatest strength lies in our willingness to listen, adapt, and act with empathy and resolve.

My Hidden Superpower

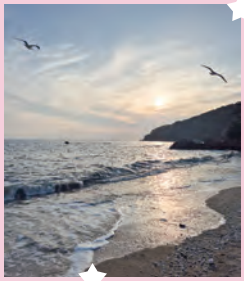


Park Se-eun

This semester, taking on the significant responsibility of editor-in-chief for the first time felt daunting and unfamiliar. Faced with sudden problems, I often felt lost and unsure how to respond, and there were many moments when the weight felt overwhelming. However, as I navigated and resolved each situation, little by little, I transformed into someone capable of making independent judgments and decisions. I, who had always followed behind the others, now found myself guiding and directing. I discovered the superpower of initiative through this semester.

Kim Si-yeon

Up until now, I've always harbored a fear of the unknown. The fear of failure has constantly held me back. However, this semester, delving into new major courses and participating with The Argus, each day felt like a new challenge. Through this process, I've come to realize that perhaps I am inherently drawn to challenges and that I shine the brightest when I embrace them. "It's a waste to let things end without knowing what could have been." This is a line I cherish, and one I want to meditate on as this semester draws to a close.



Kim Yi-eun

This semester I took an absence from school, and it was the first time I had not attended school since kindergarten, so I was worried about how I should spend my time or what I should do. However, now I am just enjoying my relaxing daily life and working part-time jobs. Before I took a leave of absence, I would have thought I just wanted to sit around and do nothing, but I realized that I would rather keep meeting different people or doing something, rather than doing nothing. I promised myself that next semester I will be better equipped and do more activities.

Kim Su-yeon

I spent this spring semester abroad. To be honest, I have always been a bit shy when it comes to meeting new people. I have always thought of myself as an introvert and have not usually pushed myself out of my comfort zone, but here in Germany, I have been meeting new people every single day and having conversations with them—not just Koreans, but people from all sorts of different cultural backgrounds. At first, it was quite a burden, but over time, I actually started enjoying connecting with them. It was pretty surprising to realize I was actually looking forward to making new friends.

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