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Why Dove? The Meaning of Peace in the Eyes of Koreans

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What is the meaning of peace in the eyes of Koreans? A word association test was conducted in research titled *Establishing Peace with the Public: Peace Psychology* with a target of 1,000 people, in which respondents are asked which three words come to their mind first upon looking at a word “peace.” The results suggest that people first think of “dove” the most. This indicates that people perceive peace not as a way of life or a condition for life but as something that carries an abstract symbolic meaning. In general, people recognize the meaning of peace in an order of symbol, individual positive sentiment, public rights, social order, peace of mind, relationship, violence, and an absence of violence. This public perception of peace is similar to that of those who suffer from prolonged conflict and violence. However, at the same time, it can be interpreted as contradictory results that people perceive the non-peaceful situation as peaceful since conflict and violence routinely take place in their daily life. This paper discusses the direction of evolution of peace perception in terms of reflection on life under the division, realization of legal and institutional peace, and education for peace.

Why Peace Recognition?

Amid the deep shadows of division and the Korean War, peace is a word that appears too frequent to be called “cliche” in the Korean Peninsular issues. The history of division was marked by history of efforts to promote peace on the Korean Peninsula. But the outcomes of various measures and agreements on peace for the two Koreas and the Korean society are not positive at the government and the civic level. The difficulties of the peace process are not only found on the issues of the Korean Peninsula. Globally, there are obstacles in: efforts to create a peaceful world; political, civic, and social efforts to transform a culture of hatred and distrust into a peaceful culture; and particularly efforts to share the spirit of peace with people.

Why have efforts for promoting peace failed so far then? Various prior studies explain that it is because people did not take into account the meaning of peace as they actually thought. In other words, there exists a discrepancy between the political, civic, and social efforts in pursuit of peace and peace perceived by people. In addition, the problem is found in approach to resolve such discrepancy. In particular, there exists a limit to a certain approach because the answer is often forced due to limited choices. What is a desirable approach is to recognize the validity of people’s perception of peace and to evolve into the peace perception as a state of goal, rather than setting a normative goal and trying to tow people’s perception of peace.

Based on such analysis, the Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU) is currently conducting research called *Establishing Peace with the Public: Peace Psychology* based on a survey of 1,000 people to explore people’s perception of peace. This paper analyzed the results and implications of word association tests conducted as part of the survey. In the word association tests, people are asked to come up with three words upon hearing a word “peace.” This test directly identifies the meaning of peace viewed by people. In [Figure 1], the words mentioned by people are displayed in the form of word cloud.



[Figure 1] Word Cloud of Peace-associated Words

The Word Mentioned the Most is Dove

A survey of the frequency of 3,000 words (No. 1, 2, and 3 combined) presented by respondents found that there were 35 words that were mentioned more than 15¹⁾ and 305 words that were mentioned more than one. Among them, dove (389 times, 13.0%) was the most mentioned words. The following were unification (297 times, 9.9%), freedom (210 times, 7.0%), and happiness (176 times, 5.9%). Dove, regardless of age, gender, and ideology, was mentioned the most except for those in their 20s, followed by unification, freedom, and happiness. Those in their 20s answered in the order of dove-unification-happiness-freedom ([Table 1], first and second column)

The words most strongly associated with peace were dove and unification, which was clearly illustrated in the first ranking words—the first of the three words to come to mind ([Table 1], third and fourth column). Of the 1,000 respondents,

1) Based on minimum analysis according to Zipf law. All words have been analyzed in this paper.

211 people (21.1%) responded that dove is the first to come to their mind when thinking about peace, while 175 people (17.5%) answered that unification is the first to come up. No differences depending on age, gender, and ideology were observed.

[Table 1] The Most Frequently Cited Words

1+2+3 ranking (3000words)		1 st ranking (1000words)		Linden, etc. (2011)(2408words)	
words	percentage (%)	words	percentage (%)	words	percentage (%)
dove	13.0(389)	dove	21.1(211)	freedom	7.9(192)
unification	9.9(297)	unification	17.5(175)	happiness	6.4(154)
freedom	7.0(210)	freedom	8.0(80)	harmony	5.8(141)
happiness	5.9(176)	happiness	4.9(49)	love	5.4(130)
stability	3.8(113)	stability	3.8(38)	prosperity	4.8(116)
love	2.5(76)	safety	2.8(29)	cooperation	3.1(76)
comfort	2.4(73)	war	2.7(27)	United Nations	3.0(73)
harmony	2.4(72)	love	2.6(26)	security	2.6(62)
safety	2.2(66)	comfort	2.3(23)	equality	2.4(59)
war	2.0(59)	harmony	2.1(21)	no-war	2.3(56)
denucleari- zation	1.7(51)	Moon Jae-in	1.3(13)	democracy	2.3(55)
tranquility	1.3(38)	North Korea	1.3(13)	stability	2.2(54)
sereneness	1.3(38)	Nobel Peace Prize	1.1(11)	war	1.9(46)

The most frequently cited words were grouped by category.²⁾ The result shows that Koreans see the meaning of peace in an order of symbol, individual positive sentiment, public rights, social order, peace of mind, relationship, violence, and an absence of violence. Words such as dove and unification—symbol of peace—take up the largest portion at 22.9%. The second most frequently used words belong to a group (8.4%) representing “individual positive sentiment,” which include

2) Prior studies that focus on how peace is projected classify answers of respondents into the following categories: 1) violence (structural and physical), or a lack of violence (structural and physical), 2) positive sentiment, 3) physical safety, 4) public rights, 5) harmony between groups (individuals), 6) economic benefits, 7) peace of mind, 8) justice, and 9) social order.

happiness (5.9%) and love (2.5%). Freedom (7.0%) was the only word in the “public rights” category that enables social transformation. The “physical safety” category, which includes stability (3.8%) and safety (2.2%), was 6.0%. The “peace of mind” category was 5.0% with tranquility (1.3%), serenity (1.3%), and comfort (2.4%). The only word for the “relationship” category—collective group or community—was harmony (2.4%). The “violence” category represented by war (2.0%) was 2.0%. And the word denuclearization (1.7%) belongs to the “absence of violence” category.

The categorization results of all words in the first, second, and third ranking, and all in the first ranking, were similar to those of the most frequently used words. Symbolic words (23.8%) and unification (9.9%) were still in the majority, with 14.7% of positive sentiment, 9.3% public rights, 7.8% relationship, 7.2% social order, 6.1% peace of mind, 3.7% absence of violence, 3.1% violence, and 2.3% negotiation ([Table 2]).

Is it common for Koreans to think of dove when they think of peace? Or is it an exceptional reaction only seen by Koreans? Is there a difference between Koreans’ perception of peace and those who have not experienced the division and war directly? In searching for answers to these questions, the results were compared with the those of survey on peace perception conducted on Danish and American people (word association test).

In a word association test³⁾ on 812 Danish and American people, there found no symbolic word among the frequently mentioned words for peace.⁴⁾ When considering peace, dove was mentioned 24 times—only 1%, which is in stark contrast to Koreans. When thinking about peace, the words that Americans and Denmark people mentioned the most were freedom (7.9%), happiness (6.4%), harmony (5.8%),

3) Van der Linden, Nicolas, Boris Bizumic, Rune Stubager, and Scott Mellon, "Social representational correlates of attitudes toward peace and war: A cross-cultural analysis in the United States and Denmark," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 17, No. 3, 2011, pp. 217~242. Out of 2,408 words, there were 33 words mentioned more than 14 times and 425 words mentioned more than once. The ratio was calculated based on a total of 2,408 words.

4) The United Nations could be regarded as a symbol. However, in this study, the UN was excluded from the symbol.

and prosperity (4.8%). According to the results of classification, the word “public rights” including freedom, equality, and democracy accounted for the largest portion at 12.6%. The “positive sentiment” was 11.8% with happiness (6.4%) and love (5.4%). “Prosperity” was 4.8% while “social order” was 8.9%, including security and stability. “Relationship” was 8.9% with harmony at 5.8% and cooperation at 3.1%. “War” was 1.9% and the “absence of war” was 2.3% ([Table 1] fifth and sixth column).

[Table 2] Categorization Results for All Words

	1+2+3 ranking (300)	1 ranking (1000)
Symbol		
– dove, DMZ, Moon Jae-in, Kim Jong-un, Nobel Peace Prize, olives, the Olympics, Panmunjom, nature, etc.	23.8(713)	29.4(294)
Positive Sentiment		
– joy, warmth, smile, tenderness, love, beauty, comfort, relaxation, pleasure, happiness, etc.	14.7(440)	10.4(104)
Unification	9.9(297)	17.5(175)
Public Rights		
– efforts, democracy, human rights, freedom, justice, equality, etc.	9.3(279)	9.4(94)
Word Related to Relationship		
– family, coexistence, conversation, trust, communication, understanding, respect, one nation, cooperation, harmony, reconciliation, etc.	7.8(234)	5.2(52)
Social Order		
– security, relief, safety, stability, etc.	7.2(217)	7.1(71)
Peace of Mind		
– tranquility, serenity, comfort, serenity, etc.	6.1(183)	4.4(44)
Absence of Violence		
– absence of conflict, absence of worry, denuclearization, absence of war, truce, etc.	3.7(112)	2.6(26)
Violence		
– Korean War, separated families, nuclear weapons, etc.	3.1(94)	3.6(36)
Negotiations		
– Inter-Korean dialogue, peace treaty, negotiations, summits, talks, etc.	2.3(70)	2.3(23)

It is difficult to directly compare this research result to that of Linden given that: the number and composition of samples differ; the timing of the study differs;

and Linden only revealed the frequently used words that mentioned 14 or more (the 70% level of the total words). However, overall tendency can be analyzed. First of all, the biggest difference is that Koreans understand peace as a symbol than Americans and Danish people. The second difference is that Koreans do not think of peace in terms of economic benefits or prosperity. In a survey on Americans and Danish people, prosperity was the fifth most mentioned word. However, in this study, only 36 (1.2%) of the 3,000 words (economy, money, prosperity, abundance, well-being, etc.) were grouped into a category of economic prosperity. Lastly, more Koreans perceive peace of mind as peace than Americans and Danish people.

There are also similarities between Koreans' and Westerners' perception of peace. Although the weight of words expressing positive sentiment that Koreans refer to is somewhat large, both groups consider public rights and positive sentiments to be important in terms of peace. It is also common that words for social order and relationships follow next, and that words corresponding to the absence of violence and violence make up the lowest percentage. Linden's analysis of the differences in the perception of peace between the Danish and the American people suggests that except for the aforementioned differences, Korean's perception on peace is closer to that of American people than the Danish.

Contradictory Perception of Peace of People Living in the State of Peaceful Conflict

Korean people's perception of peace as dove is typical tendency of those, whose society has routinely witnessed chronic conflicts and confrontations. A chronic conflict refers to a conflict that has lasted for at least one generation (over 25 years), during which either one of the warring factions was not able to win or involved parties continuously failed to actively cooperate for a peaceful settlement. The generation, born and raised in the midst of these chronic conflicts, knows nothing about a life without a conflict, because they experienced animosity and anger toward the hostile group in their daily life.

Countries and groups undergoing chronic conflicts set peace as a community

goal. In the dark tunnel of conflicts, peace acts as a goal and symbol that implies the end of the tunnel. It serves as a momentum to give society members a sense of optimism and hope that disputes can end. However, peace set as a goal without the middle process in the chronic disputes has no substance and only has utopian characteristics. Such goal is not rooted in reality and lacks a discussion about how to achieve goals. That is why peace is dove to Koreans.

The results can be somewhat striking that “violence” and “absence of violence” make up a small portion of peace perception in a community that has experienced war and has been divided for more than 70 years in the face of small and large military conflicts. It can be interpreted as circumstantial evidence that people no longer feel uncomfortable when faced with the social and structural contradictions caused by the division—so-called violence caused by division. The prolonged non-peace state has become a normal and routine life, not an abnormal life. A sense of helplessness and non-peace learned become the status quo.

President Moon Jae-in stated that “Anxiety and terror over security is now interwoven not only in areas of economy and diplomacy but also in every fabric of people’s life.”⁵⁾ The President’s remarks indicate that distortions caused by division and conflict are now commonly found in our everyday life. A characteristic of everyday life is that there is neither discomfort or the need for a change. Paradoxically, if anyone talks about the need for a change of non-peaceful state, he or she becomes someone who harms peaceful life. Furthermore, if we feel uncomfortable in the process of evolving into a life of peace, we tend to go back to the life of the distorted past—perceived as peaceful state. A hindrance to progress toward peace is peaceful non-peace state and the non-peace state becoming part of everyday life.

In summary, Korean perception of peace revealed in this study reflects a life of contradictory nature, in which people live peacefully in the midst of conflicts

5) The second inter-Korean summit announcement (May 27, 2018), <http://www1.president.go.kr/articles/3440>

that prevent the very existence of peace. Finally, the result that there is not much difference in the perception of peace by major variables, such as age and ideology, shows that Koreans' contradictory views are not problems of a specific group but of Korean society as a whole.

How to Make Peace in Daily Life?

We need to overcome a situation where peaceful non-peace state has become part of everyday life. To do so, social awareness is required that the life of South Korean people seems peaceful but not technically peaceful. The ROK needs to seriously reflect and study social and personal life distorted by division.

The argument that “we should reflect on life of division for the sake of a peaceful life” means that the starting point for a peaceful community and a culture of peace should be present life. Set a goal of building a peaceful community that will be realized in the future, list the personal and social virtues that the community of peace should have, and educate and force those virtues upon the people: then people's perception on peace as dove is not likely to be changed—only peace distant from reality will come. A life of peace must be life of today, not tomorrow. We must start thinking about the meaning of peace, conditions of peace, and how to achieve peace in the life of division and in the historic transitional period for peace on the Korean Peninsula.

However, concerns over the non-peace state becoming part of everyday life should not lead to blind criticism and self-reflection on the distortion of life caused by division. It cannot be denied that distorted life of division—hostility and distrust toward North Korea, demonization, blind priority placed on security, collectivism, military culture, and intolerance for multilateralism—was adjustment mechanism in dealing with the survival of groups, the fulfillment of individual basic needs, and intense stress from violence. It is necessary to recognize that distortion of life due to division was inevitable and to seek for direction of change from the long-term perspective. If the peace community begins with a black and white

approach, it will lead to another conflict, not peace. Peace is a process.

In the same vein, it is important to realize political, institutional, and legal peace. First, officially ending a conflict means eliminating the cause of such conflict. In other words, the root cause of the conflict is removed. It is a necessary condition to evaluate the life of conflict and division. Of course, there are many historical examples of countries in conflict starting a war again after agreeing on political and institutional peace. In other words, political and institutional peace is not a sufficient condition to form a peace community. Nevertheless, the realization of political and institutional peace has important implications as a starting point for the change in peace perception.

Second, in the process of realizing political and institutional peace, people have the opportunity to think about peace in their daily life. Political and institutional peace is generally realized through negotiations. What is negotiation? It is to discuss my needs and the needs of my counterpart. To succeed in negotiations, you must recognize your counterpart. The perception of peace evolves through experience of recognizing hostile groups and having to recognize them during the negotiation process. The 10th highest number of negotiation-related meanings in the perception of peace among Koreans are representative of how current experiences change peace perception.

Lastly, we need to ponder about peace education. The definition of peace education varies as much as the definition of peace. Depending on the context and content of conflicts, the content of education for peace will also vary. For example, before and after the peace regime, peace education can and should be different. In a certain context, a peace education should be based on universal values and the human rights. In other context, a peace education should deal directly with the problems of conflict. As mentioned above, the utopian goal and the justification for peace should not be forced upon people. We need to contemplate the reality-based peace education that encompasses the daily lives of Koreans in the state of division and the dynamics of transition period. ©KINU 2018



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