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### An alternative peace plan for the Koreas: A youth-centered approach

 Douglas Wain · 4 mins ago

The Koreas are in dire need of a plan for peace. Fortunately, plans exist. One of these is “youth peace” first. This plan makes sense for several reasons.

Let’s start with some facts. First of all, half of the world’s population is under thirty years old. Globally, there are 1.8 billion young people age 10-24, 1.2 billion of which are age 15 to 24. The inclusion of these voices regarding the conflict in the Koreas is essential to completing a balanced peace process.

Furthermore, youth are always at the frontlines of the armed forces. Any armed conflict would essentially be a youth vs. youth conflict. Given this, no matter who wins the war, youth always stand to lose the most.

The following key figures put this into perspective. The average age of the American men killed in the Vietnam War was 23. The average age of a US soldier in the Korean War was between 19 and 24. Even today, U.S. nuclear weapons operators, known as “Missileers,” are typically 22 to 27 years old.

There are approximately seven million youth in North Korea and fifteen million in South Korea, making a total of 22 million Korean youth who are at high risk of violence. The ubiquitous threats to their well-being are real, immediate, and glaring. To make matters worse, young people in nearby countries could also be a risk due to the ongoing Korean conflict. If there were to be a spillover of a potential conflict on the Korean Peninsula, youth from, not just neighboring countries, but around the world could be adversely affected as well.

This begs the question, who commands the youth? Young people today are aware they possess the great human gift of free will. For that very reason, youth command themselves. They are only responsible for their own actions and not those of their adult counterparts.

A “youth peace” plan for the Korean Peninsula would remove the threat of violence hanging over the heads of all Korean youth. It would be a momentous event and a great example of peace to the rest of the world. Keeping in mind the implications such a new approach could have, we must remember that no one young person’s life is expendable.

Once a youth-peace-first approach is enacted, more viable, long-term strategies for peace will ensue. If there is no youth to fight wars, there would not be wars to fight. Without the youth, the adult war machine would be gutted. North Korea’s million-man army might also closely

resemble a million-youth army. Those older members of the military were most likely indoctrinated when they were impressionable youth. That said, it is questionable whether any nation or government could function if not for the young populace propping them up. No one who fights for their country dies in vain, but many die unnecessarily. Leaders need to ensure that when youth fight, they fight for the good principles of humankind and not just for authority figures. Youth are not pawns to be used in a global board game.

Parental figures should help youth survive, not sacrifice their safety unnecessarily. It seems whenever there is a dispute among world leaders that youth pay the price at every step. The Koreas can help change that paradigm by reducing or removing the threat to their youth, which includes verbal and written threats of violence.

I have met with the United Nations Ambassadors of North Korea, the U.S.A., and South Korea and spoken to them about our organizations' ideas for peace on the Peninsula. "Youth peace" was the only point that I spoke of where there was a positive consensus among all three parties. This is a clear indicator that "youth peace" might be a successful strategy for the Koreas. Of all the peace strategies our organization has tried, "youth peace" is the one that has resonated with people the most.

Another important issue we advocate for is that of equality for youth. As stated before, young people are often used as pawns in a bigger political game and are rarely asked their opinions or concerns on important matters. It's time for society to get behind this call for youth equality and advocate for equal treatment of the youth by the patriarchy. Although it may be hard for men to see youth as equal in a man-made world, young people deserve the same rights regardless.

Although there have been many advancements in care for people of all ages, it seems that improvement in youth lives have lagged behind other demographics. Perhaps that is why

terrorist groups often try to connect with young people. They take advantage of not just their unique capabilities they possess but because of their neglect.

The Korean conflict gives all the parties an opportunity not only to settle this seventy-plus year dispute but create a working peace model for other nations to follow. If there can be peace on the Korean Peninsula, there can be peace anywhere. Maybe the Koreas can show that their hidden secret of success, youth, is other nations' success secret too.

*Douglas Wain is the CEO of YouthAlert! (YA!), a U.S.A. Youth Advocacy and Education is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization in the U.S. It was awarded Special Consultative Status with the United Nation's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on July 25, 2017, and is a Better Business Bureau (BBB) Accredited Charity since 2014.*