

**The Korean Peninsula and the Middle East at 60:  
History, Economy, and Culture**

International Conference

22-23 May 2022

Rabin building, Room 3001

Mt. Scopus Campus, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**22 May 2022, Sunday**

**9:30-10:00: Conference registration**

**10:00-10:30: Greetings**

H.E. Suh Dong Gu, the Ambassador of The Republic of Korea in Israel

H.E. Akiva Tor, the Ambassador of The State of Israel in Korea (online)

Prof. Nissim Otmazgin, The Dean of Humanities, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**10:30-12:00 Panel I: Political ties, tensions, and possibilities in the Korea-Israel-the Middle East triangle**

**Chair:** Benjamin Katzeff Silberstein, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**Satoru Miyamoto, Seigakuin University**

**Satoru Miyamoto** is a professor at Seigakuin University. His expertise is North Korean studies, security in Northeast Asia, civil-military relations, and nuclear deterrence. He is the author of many research papers about North Korean politics, foreign policy, and military. He is a famous researcher in Japan in the politics and international relations of North Korea. He also attempts to establish empirical studies of North Korea in history and political science. He received a master's degree at Seoul National University and a doctorate at Kobe University. He is fluent in Japanese, Korean, and English.

**Military cooperation between North Korea and Iran within North Korea's military cooperation policy toward Middle East**

North Korea, which has been engaged in military cooperation with many countries in the world,

has also been promoting military cooperation with Middle Eastern countries. The military cooperation between North Korea and Iran is thought of as a part of such cooperation, The purpose of this study is to examine North Korea's military cooperation policy toward Middle East, and military cooperation between North Korea and Iran, with using North Korean public documents and records of defectors which are rarely used in previous studies.

North Korea has promoted in earnest diplomatic relations with Middle Eastern countries since the 1960s. Then North Korea had strong ties with Egypt and Syria for Non-Aligned Movement. North Korea dispatched its air force to Egypt and Syria during the Yom Kippur War in 1973 with little compensation.

North Korea began the military cooperation with Iran after Iranian Revolution in 1979 which broke diplomatic relations with the U.S. and Israel. During the Iran-Iraq War, North Korea had exported many weapons including missiles and dispatched its troops to Iran. After the Iran-Iraq War, North Korea began to export weapons not only to Iran but also other Middle Eastern countries to earn foreign currency. The military cooperation with Iran had changed the purpose of military cooperation of North Korea from cooperating with Non-Aligned Movement to earning foreign currency.

However, the international sanctions made almost impossible for Middle Eastern countries to import North Korea's weapons. North Korea seems to make its Middle East policy back to cooperating with Non-Aligned Movement. For North Korea, Egypt and Syria were more important countries than Iran as Non-Aligned Movement members. However, Egypt had already good relations with Israel and the US, therefore I think that Syria is most important county for North Korea's military cooperation policy toward Middle East.

### **Satoshi Ikeuchi, University of Tokyo and Tel Aviv University**

**Satoshi Ikeuchi** is Professor of Religion and Global Security at the Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology (RCAST) of the University of Tokyo. He is the founding chair of the RCAST Open Laboratory for Emergence Strategies (ROLES). He is a scholar on Islamic political thought and Middle East politics. He was a visiting scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in 2009 and Visiting Fellow at the Clare Hall, University of Cambridge in 2010. Currently, he is staying at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University as a Senior Visiting Scholar-in-Residence from 2022 to 2023.

### **North Korea's relations with Egypt: A personal tie or institutional memory?**

In this paper, factors which sustain diplomatic and security relations between Egypt and North Korea are examined. Egyptian-North Korean security relations have seen an extraordinary longevity and resilience. What have caused this longevity? Possible factors which sustain their

strong security ties across the consecutive regimes in both countries. It traces one the origins of reciprocal security assistance towards the inception during the October/Yom Kippur War in 1973 and the trust fostered between the North Korean leader and Egyptian future leader. The flourishing ties and economic and military assistance between military institutions during the late 1970s and 1980s are comprehensively described. The remarkable fact is the seeming scarcity of influence on Egyptian North Korean relations caused by the Camp David Accords and Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in the late 1970s despite the hostility shown by North Korean regime both towards the United States and Israel. The effect caused by the end of the Cold War was also arguably small. Egypt's sort of "One Korea policy" has not been redressed until 1995 after the death of Kim Il-sung in the previous year. Recent reports by international institutions and media revealed sustained security relations between two countries even after the fall of Mubarak and the death of Kim Jong-il in 2011. Factors and actors behind the tenacity of security ties are examined in this presentation.

**Alon Levkowitz, Bar Ilan University**

**Alon Levkowitz** is a Senior Lecturer and the Chair of Social Science and Civics Department at Beit-Berl College. Dr. Levkowitz teaches as well in the Asian Studies program at Bar-Ilan University. He is a Research Fellow at Begin Saadat Institute for Strategic Studies (BESA).

His research focuses on the foreign and security relations between the Korean Peninsula and the Middle East. The Security alliances in East Asia and the inter-Korean relations.

**Israel-South Korea relations: The first six decades**

This paper examines relations between the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the State of Israel from the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1962 to 2020. It analyses the internal and external factors influencing their foreign and security policies as well as mutual misunderstandings and the attendant problems, notably the failure to sign a free trade agreement till 2020. Despite these difficulties, and the geostrategic complexity of the Middle East, especially the Persian Gulf, that influences Seoul's interests in the region and its relations with Israel, the bilateral relationship will further improve once the free trade agreement is ratified by both states.

**12:00-13:30: Lunch**

**14:00-15:30 Roundtable: Conflict management on the Korean Peninsula and in the East Asian Region: Challenges and opportunities from a conflict analysis and resolution lens**

**Chair:** Galia Press Barnathan, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**Discussants:** Roland Wilson, George Mason University (online) and Alon Levkovitz, Bar Ilan University

**Roland B. Wilson** is the Program Coordinator, Associate Professor and faculty advisor for the Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University's campus in South Korea. He is also the Peace and Conflict Studies Center Asia (PACSC Asia) Director, an international mediator and consultant. Dr. Wilson received his bachelor's and master's degrees in linguistics, Korean, and teaching English as a second language from Indiana State University. He received his doctorate in conflict analysis and resolution from George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution.

**Alon Levkovitz** is a Senior Lecturer and the Chair of Social Science and Civics Department at Beit-Berl College. Dr. Levkovitz teaches as well in the Asian Studies program at Bar-Ilan University. He is a Research Fellow at Begin Saadat Institute for Strategic Studies (BESA). His research focuses on the foreign and security relations between the Korean Peninsula and the Middle East. The Security alliances in East Asia and the inter-Korean relations.

**15:30-16:30: University tour for the conference participants**

**16:30-17:00: Coffee Break**

**17.00-18:30: Keynote speech**

**Chair:** Irina Lyan, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**Balázs Szalontai, Korea University**

**Balázs Szalontai** is Professor of North Korean Studies at Korea University, Sejong Campus (Republic of Korea). He has done extensive archival research on the domestic and foreign policies of North Korea and other Communist regimes, analyzing them from a comparative angle. His publications include *Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era: Soviet-DPRK Relations and the*

*Roots of North Korean Despotism, 1953-1964* (2005) and the following peer-reviewed articles on North Korean-Middle Eastern relations: "Courting the 'Traitor to the Arab Cause': Egyptian-North Korean Relations in the Sadat Era, 1970-1981," *S/N Korean Humanities*, 5:1 (March 2019), pp. 103-136; "'This Is Iran, Not North Korea': Conflicting Images of the DPRK in Iranian Public Discourse," *North Korean Review*, 17:1 (Spring 2021), pp. 79-95.

### **Hard power and soft power in Korean-Middle Eastern relations:**

#### **The lessons of history, the challenges of the present, the hopes of the future**

By using the criteria of the world-systems theory (industrial, technological, educational, and military capabilities, composition of exports, geopolitical position, and influence over less developed regions), South Korea, Israel, and Iran may be classified as semi-peripheral countries, while North Korea and the majority of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) states – with a few possible exceptions, such as Egypt – may be placed into the global periphery. Thus, an analysis of the political, military, economic, and cultural interactions between the Korean Peninsula and the Middle East offers some fascinating opportunities to further elaborate and refine the world-systems theory. For instance, both Israel and South Korea have been close allies of a core superpower, the United States (which thus naturally favored a harmonious partnership between Jerusalem and Seoul), and the various socioeconomic and cultural similarities (including the factor of religion and the traditions of entrepreneurship) built additional bridges between the two countries. At the same time, South Korea's efforts to expand its diplomatic and economic presence in the oil-rich Middle Eastern and North African countries could (and did) create friction in Israeli-ROK relations, with the implication that occasionally even some peripheral states could be sufficiently important for Seoul to distinguish its position from that of its core and semi-peripheral partners. These episodes were at variance with the conventional image of a semi-peripheral state playing a mediating role between the core and the periphery. North Korea approached the Middle East with the principal aim of confronting the U.S. and South Korea, but since its preferred partners (such as Iran and Algeria) were usually more interested in confronting some other local state than the ROK, the DPRK repeatedly found itself on a collision course not only with Israel but also with various peripheral states (e.g., Iraq and Morocco). In any case, North Korea could pose a serious challenge to South Korea and Israel only in the sphere of hard power (military and diplomatic competition). In the sphere of soft power, South Korea overtook North Korea in the Middle East as early as the 1980s (first in the field of economic diplomacy, later also in cultural diplomacy), and has retained its superior position ever since. Notably, the ROK managed to maintain an economic foothold in the Islamic Republic of Iran even in the darkest periods of the U.S.-Iranian relations (such as the 1980s and the sanctions of 2006-2013), and it readily took advantage of Iran's

improving international relations, whereas the DPRK, which could offer only military assistance to Tehran, felt itself adversely affected by the Iranian nuclear deal. Judging from these historical experiences, the recently signed Israeli-ROK free trade agreement may turn out just as an important element of cooperation between the two countries as their shared security interests (i.e., their joint opposition to North Korean nuclear and missile proliferation). It remains to be seen whether these two semi-peripheral economies will be more complementary to each other than the countries of the East/Southeast Asian semi-periphery (South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore), whose exports were directed toward the core and peripheral markets (where they faced each other as competitors), rather than toward each other.

**19:00-20:30: Dinner for the conference participants at Adom restaurant, the  
First Station Jerusalem**

**19:30-20.30: Korean traditional music performance by SangJaru band, the  
First Station Jerusalem**

**23 May 2022, Monday**

**10:00-10:30: Conference registration**

**10:30-12:00: Panel III: Historical parallels, the Cold War memories, and representations of  
North Korea in the Middle East and vice versa**

**Chair:** Or Rabinovich, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**Dafna Zur, Stanford University (online)**

**Dafna Zur** is Associate Professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures and Director of the Center for East Asian Studies at Stanford University. She teaches courses on Korean literature, cinema, and popular culture. Her first book, *Figuring Korean Futures: Children's Literature in Modern Korea*, traces the investments and aspirations made possible by children's literature in colonial and postcolonial Korea. She has published articles on North

Korean popular science and science fiction, North Korean translations, the Korean War in North and South Korean children's literature, childhood in cinema, and Korean popular culture. Her translations of Korean fiction have appeared in [wordwithoutborders.org](http://wordwithoutborders.org), *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Korean Short Stories*, and the *Asia Literary Review*.

### **The diary of Anne Frank in North Korea and the politics of self-writing**

After the division of the Korean peninsula in 1945, translated literature became central to the development of North Korea's burgeoning field of children's culture. Translations of Soviet, Chinese, and other communist bloc fiction were featured regularly in the periodical *Adong Munhak* [Children's Literature] in the first two decades after the Korean War. By the 1980s, however, translations all but disappeared from *Adong Munhak* with very few exceptions, among them *The Diary of Anne Frank*. The North Korean translation of Anne's diary was serialized in fourteen installments in *Adong Munhak* between July 2002 and February 2004; it was also published in book form by educational publisher Kyoyuk tosŏ ch'ulp'ansa in 2002. Coming at the heels of North Korea's disastrous famine, I argue that the decision to translate Anne Frank's diary was likely driven by the need for the state, which was in the throes of extreme humanitarian crisis, to provide its young readers with a model of resilience and perseverance. While the translator's choices exhibit predictable ideological proclivities, the translation is surprising in two ways. First, it demonstrates that the North Korean literary establishment, even at its points of greatest isolation, was part of a global circulation of texts. Second, a close examination of the translation reveals moments in which, despite the translator's best efforts, the text exposes itself to the possibility of multiple readings that confound the demand for a monolithic interpretation. Ultimately, this paper questions the extent to which self-writing—which, in North Korea, relates to practices such as diary keeping (*ilgi*), self-criticism (*saenghwal ch'onghwa*), and most recently manifests itself in the form of defector memoirs—reveals the individual's most truthful self.

### **Balázs Szalontai, Korea University**

**Balázs Szalontai** is Professor of North Korean Studies at Korea University, Sejong Campus (Republic of Korea). He has done extensive archival research on the domestic and foreign policies of North Korea and other Communist regimes, analyzing them from a comparative angle. His publications include *Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era: Soviet-DPRK Relations and the Roots of North Korean Despotism, 1953-1964* (2005) and the following peer-reviewed articles on North Korean-Middle Eastern relations: "Courting the 'Traitor to the Arab Cause': Egyptian-North Korean Relations in the Sadat Era, 1970-1981," *S/N Korean Humanities*, 5:1

(March 2019), pp. 103-136; “‘This Is Iran, Not North Korea’: Conflicting Images of the DPRK in Iranian Public Discourse,” *North Korean Review*, 17:1 (Spring 2021), pp. 79-95.

### **Maneuvering between Baghdad and Tehran: North Korea’s relations with Iraq and Iran during the Cold War**

The paper explores how the North Korean leaders tried to maneuver between Iran and Iraq, each of which they could regard as a potentially attractive partner, but which were often on hostile terms with each other; which external and internal conditions enhanced or reduced their chances to gain a foothold in Baghdad and/or Tehran; which benefits they could draw from the Iraq-Iran rivalry and which obstacles it placed in the way of their diplomatic efforts; and how they reacted to the various shifts in Iraqi and Iranian domestic and foreign policies. The author observes that Pyongyang’s commitment to Baghdad vis-à-vis Tehran, or to Tehran vis-à-vis Baghdad, was by no means as permanent and unconditional as the solidarity that the DPRK expected from its Middle Eastern partners vis-à-vis South Korea. Even in those periods when North Korea’s political or military collaboration with one of the two antagonistic states (e.g., with Iraq in 1971–1972 or with Iran in 1982–1984) reached a high level, and its contacts with the other state were virtually non-existent, the DPRK leaders were more than ready to reach out to the latter country if they saw a chance of rapprochement, no matter whether their old partner liked it or not. In most cases, the North Koreans sought to avoid taking a public stand on the Iraq-Iran dispute, and readily praised the attempts that Baghdad and Tehran made to settle their differences. Thus, it seems that the supreme objective of North Korea’s Middle Eastern strategy was to maximize the number of partners, rather than to make a stable commitment to certain specific states. In turn, Pyongyang’s Middle Eastern partners eventually came to perceive the DPRK as a state that often adopted a shifty and double-faced attitude toward Middle Eastern issues, yet selfishly and aggressively pursued its own national interests.

### **Pyung Hwa (Tim) Park, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem**

**Pyung Hwa (Tim) Park** is a graduate student in The Davis Graduate School of International Relations, or Telem, at the Hebrew University. He has a BA degree in international relations and the Islamic and Middle Eastern studies at the Hebrew University and an MA in the Islamic and Middle Eastern studies. Tim’s MA thesis was about North Korea’s involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

### **Aggression against them is aggression against us: North Korea, the Yom-Kippur War, and the Israel factor**

This paper asks what drove North Korea’s involvement in the Yom-Kippur War in 1973. North Korea had been involved, albeit to varying degrees, in almost every major war between Israel

and its Arab neighbors, from the 1956 Suez War to the Palestinian guerilla warfare in the 1980s. This study focuses on one episode of the 1973 involvement as it was the most extensive and direct of all. The paper shows that North Korea's involvement in the conflict began primarily as a way to reap diplomatic gains in the Arab world, with which North Korea sought to secure international legitimacy at the expense of South Korea and boost internal political legitimacy. However, as Israel became the dominant geopolitical actor in the Middle East and became perceived more as an imperialist force in its own right after 1967, North Korea developed an ideological imperative to resist Israel militarily. The paper argues that the Israel factor played a significant role in its involvement decision. The paper uses South Korean diplomatic archives and Egyptian and Palestinian sources. It also utilizes North Korea's published materials and its media sources. This paper seeks to enhance our understanding of North Korea's recent, more alarming military cooperation with the Middle Eastern actors, including Syria, Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas, by shedding light on its historical origins.

#### **12.00-13.30: Lunch**

#### **13:30-15:00: Panel II: Korean cultural diplomacy in the Middle East**

**Chair:** Guy Shababo, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**Young A Jung, George Mason University (online)**

**Young A Jung** is an assistant professor of the Korean Studies Program, Department of Modern and Classical Languages at George Mason University. One of her recent essays, "Mobile Media and Kirogi Mothers: Place-Making and the Reimagination of Transnational Korean Family Intimacies," was published in *Mobile Media and Asian Social Intimacies* (eds. by Jason Vincent A. Cabanes and Cecilia S. Uy-Tioco, Springer, 2020). Her current research project, "Division and Connections: Korean Popular Culture Fans' Racial Dynamics," examines the racial dynamics of Korean popular culture fan communities and explores the (im)possibilities of constructing pan-racial fan communities.

#### **When "Squid Game" Meets Arab Parody**

The mega-hit Netflix series, *Squid Game*, leads to hundreds of parody videos and response videos on YouTube and TikTok. One of the most popular parody videos is the Arab version that draws more than 10 million viewers and nine thousand comments. Arab parody videos of *Squid Game* reveal the international fans' transcultural desire to appropriate original themes and characters. Arab version parody videos transform the dystopian theme into fun educational

ones and live-or-die characters into sympathetic ones. By offering close readings of fan-made parody videos and analyzing international fans' comments on YouTube, this essay explores how Arab fans and international fans of Korean drama create virtual space to express transcultural desire. Arab fans recreate their passion for finding cultural affinities between East Asia and the Middle East through parody videos and responses to those videos. At the same time, they reconfirm their Arab cultural identities. Furthermore, international fans' responses to the Arab parody videos illustrate a potential fan engagement with the pan-ethnic fan community.

**Aviya Amir, University of California, Riverside**

Aviya Amir is currently a Ph.D student at University of California, Riverside, where her dissertation deals with militarism and portrayals of soldiers in contemporary Korean, Israeli, and Japanese fiction. She is interested in the ways that soldiers in these works negotiate the power structures of their lives, and the tension between their own shifting existence between soldier and civilian. Her secondary area of research is translation studies. She completed her Master's at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, on the Talmud translations of Korea and Japan.

**K-Talmud: Jewish texts as Korean children's education**

Ever since the first translation of Rabbi Marvin Tokayer's Japanese collection of Talmud stories to Korean in 1975, they have gained steady popularity until an extreme spike in 1998. This paper links that spike to the neoliberal educational changes in post-IMF bailout South Korea. It then builds on previously researched groundwork in order to closely analyze the contents of several Korean Talmud compilations, identify their most popular stories, source them, and analyze the changes that translators and editors have inserted into the text. The stories within, this paper argues, have been largely decontextualized into a collection of homilies populated by recognizable folkloric characters, preaching generalized morals about the importance of education and good behavior, transforming the word 'Talmud' into a brand name which signifies appropriate educational content for children.

**Irina Lyan and Nissim Otmazgin, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem**

**Irina Lyan** is an Assistant Professor and the Head of the Korean Studies Program at the Department of Asian Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She is the recipient of prestigious scholarships and awards, including visiting postdoctoral fellowships at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Freie Universität Berlin, and the University of Oxford. Her research deals with South Korea's economic miracle, known as "the Miracle on the Han River," and the cultural miracle, known as "the Korean Wave," or Hallyu. Irina has published several articles and

book chapters on national images, imagery, and imagination, and their impact on the global positioning of Korea.

**Nissim Otmazgin** is the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His PhD dissertation (Kyoto University, 2007), which examines Japan's cultural politics in Asia, won the Iue Asia Pacific Research Prize for outstanding dissertation. He is the author of *Regionalizing Culture: the Political Economy of Japanese Popular Culture in Asia* (University of Hawaii Press, 2013) and *The Anime Boom in the US: Lessons for Global Creative Industries* (with Michal Daliot-Bul, Harvard University East Asia Press, 2017). He has also co-edited six other books on society, politics, and culture in East Asia, and published articles in a number of international journals including *International Relations of Asia Pacific*, *Pacific Affairs*, *Asia-Pacific Review*, *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis*, *Global Policy*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *Contemporary Japan*, *Cross Currents*, *Kritika Kultura*, and *Media, Culture & Society*. He can be reached at [nissim.otmazgin@mail.huji.ac.il](mailto:nissim.otmazgin@mail.huji.ac.il)

### **Fandom makes the world go round: Practice, institutions, and entrepreneurship among Hallyu fans in Israel**

Fandom studies have often described fans in a stigmatized way, as fanatical-like individuals willing to pay a high price for their fandom. While such negative depictions contribute to our understanding of the power of fandom, it overlooks the institutional aspect of the story—in particular, conceptualizing fandom as both an institutional and anti-institutional activity. Against work-leisure binary, fans both challenge its definition and try to fit in or expand it through their entrepreneurial activities.

Based on a longitudinal study of Hallyu fans in Israel, we present a comprehensive account of fandom as an emerging field of study by examining institutional fan-entrepreneurship in action. Specifically, we follow the institutionalization of Hallyu in Israel focusing on the Korea Festival that attracted about 600 people in 2021. The on-site event analysis of online and offline data, including surveys, participant observations, visual materials, interviews, and informal talks allows us to examine Hallyu's acceptance by a community of fans, the entrepreneurial drive it encourages, the tensions it arouses, and the social activism and change it inspires.

The initial findings demonstrate that the experience of Hallyu fandom in Israel may be relevant to an understanding of the grassroots processes and mechanisms responsible for the spread and early institutionalization of cultural content that transcends and translates national, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries. Stated differently, our wider contribution lies in theorizing institutional fan-entrepreneurship that simultaneously form a new institution of Hallyu fandom while reinventing work-leisure binary.

**15:00-15:30: Coffee Break**

**15:30-16:30: Concluding remarks and discussion on the special issue publication**

**Chair:** Irina Lyan, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**18:00-20:00: Celebratory reception at the Korean Embassy in Herzliya**

**24 May 2022, Tuesday**

**9:00-14:00: Post-conference Old City tour for the conference participants**

This conference is supported by the 2022 Korean Studies Grant Program of the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS-2022-C-016), the Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, the Louis Frieberg Center for East Asian Studies, and the International Office at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The Department of Asian Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is the oldest in Israel and is one of the biggest departments in the Faculty of Humanities, home to over 300 students specializing in Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Indian and Indonesian Studies. The department is characterized by its excellence in research and teaching, and it maintains an environment of cooperation between students and faculty in a wide array of extracurricular activities (<http://en.asia.huji.ac.il>).