



# Understanding KOREA

## Past, Present and Future

Themes : *territory of disagreements, challenges in Korea-Japan relationship, hope for peace in East Asia and a journalist's perspective of North Korea*

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Gabriel Jonsson, Stockholm University  
Eun-jeung Lee, Free University Berlin  
Mka Mäkeläinen, Finnish Broadcasting Company

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FREE ADMSSION  
Refreshments will be served.

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## **Territory of Disagreements? Modern History Debates in Contemporary South Korea**

Vladimir Tikhonov (Pak Noja), Oslo University

Historical narratives are always contentious. It is especially true in the case of South Korea the modern history of which includes such traumatic events as Japanese colonization (1910-1945), more than 70 years-long national division and dictatorial rule. Divisions in the understanding of modern history go deep. In many cases they are embedded in the class and group interests: parts of South Korean establishment, with its roots in the colonial-era local elites, have a view of the Japanese colonial period which seriously differs from the common-sense "regime of truth" of most South Koreans. High-speed development under the authoritarian military regimes (1961-1993) provides yet another source for bitter controversies. The present lecture will attempt to give a structured account of these controversies. Moreover, it will aim at putting them into the wider international context comparing the historical debates in contemporary South Korea with the controversies over recent past in other post-colonial societies. In addition, it will attempt to understand the conservative revisionist narratives in contemporary South Korea in a wider perspective, with an eye to the current revisionism debates in Japan and Europe.

## **Challenge in Korea-Japan relationship**

Gabriel Jonsson, Stockholm University

What characterizes Japanese-Korean relations? To illuminate this complex issue, the lecture begins with a historical outline focusing on the Japanese occupation of Korea 1910-1945. More emphasis is put on the post-war period and Japan-South Korea relations since Japan does not recognize North Korea. The impact of the colonial period on relations, economic exchanges and the security situation in the region are included.

## **Hope for peace in East Asia**

Eun-jeong Lee, Free University Berlin

On the Yellow Sea, near the port of Incheon and not far from Seoul began the war between Japan and Russia in 1905. In Korea, many people hoped that this war fought on Korean territory would bring peace to East Asia. In fact, it brought peace for years to come; yet it was not the peace Ahn Choong Kun and other intellectuals had hoped for. Instead, after the Japanese victory in 1905, Korea became colonized gradually by Japan. Hence, the optimistic expectations of those Korean intellectuals proved to be quite naïve. Even 100 years later, Koreans are still dreaming of peace in East Asia. Can this dream become sometimes reality for Koreans?

## **A journalist's perspective of North Korea**

Mika Mäkeläinen, Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE)

How much do North Koreans earn and how do they survive? Foreign news reporter Mika Mäkeläinen gives an eye-opening account into what daily life in the capital Pyongyang is nowadays. Mäkeläinen explains what visitors will encounter on arrival in Pyongyang, and more importantly, what visiting homes, stores and workplaces in Pyongyang reveals about the living conditions of the privileged loyal class in Pyongyang. He will also explain about the restrictions imposed on foreign journalists visiting the country.