

Korean Protestant Churches' Attitude_towards War:
With a Special Focus on the Vietnam War

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Abstract

The modern history of Christianity was witness to an increasing uneasiness with the traditional doctrine of "just war." Nonetheless, until quite recently, Korean Protestant churches appeared to know nothing other than just war theory. Korean Protestant churches were, from the time of the Korea War to the present, among the most avid advocates and supporters of war, with two ideological assumptions underlying their attitude toward war—anti-communism and pro-Americanism. The churches' approach to the Vietnam War demonstrated how the two ideological concepts brought them to support Korean involvement in it. For them, the Vietnam War was a fundamental part of the global struggle against the encroachment of "evil" communism, hence necessitating South Korean help to the United States and its allies in defending a "free" South Vietnam. In supporting Korean participation, churches even canonized it as a "holy" war or a crusade against evil. Both the pro-American and anti-communist world-views blinded the Korean churches to the post-colonial dimensions of the Vietnam War. However, some churches, from the 1970s, began to move out of this cold war mentality and reevaluate America's role in Korean history. The divided opinions on the War in Iraq showed that many Korean Christians no longer embrace these traditional views towards Communism or the United States any longer.

Key Words: just war, Korean Protestant churches, anti-Communism, pro-Americanism, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the War in Iraq

Introduction

Christian churches' attitudes towards war are indeed complex. Early Christians living at the time of the Roman Empire, when Christianity was not yet officially accepted and was still considered a new religion, believed that war or the use of military force could not be justified. For these early Christians, the teachings of Jesus Christ, such as "He who lives by the sword shall die by the sword," were self-evident. Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire following Emperor Constantine's conversion to the faith. Christianity, which became closely intertwined with politics, suddenly found itself unable to unconditionally refuse the notion of war. It was under these circumstances that the concept of *bellum justum* (just war) was born. This concept, which was established by Augustine of Hippo, was used to justify the use of military force to maintain order within the Roman Empire and to defeat the barbarians. Accepted by both the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages and Protestants during the Reformation, this concept of a just war became the central tenet of Christianity's approach to war.

Although the absolute majority of Christians have accepted the concept of a just war, the identification of what constitutes a just political authority, just purposes, and just methods has remained a point of contention. The rapid development of science and technology in the modern era has led to the introduction of weapons capable of inflicting harm on an unprecedented scale. When such weapons of mass destruction are used, a significant number of civilians would inevitably perish. Furthermore, as Christians have pondered the causes, process, and results of war, the viewpoints of contemporary Christianity towards war has also become more critical. However, despite the changing attitudes of world churches toward war, Korean Protestant churches' attitudes towards war have remained for the most part unchanged since the Korean liberation. In large part, Korean churches have supported the wars launched by the Korean government without ever sincerely and reflexively considering the medieval notion of a "just war." This phenomenon can be ascribed to the ideological tendencies of Korean churches, their relationship with the state, and their view of the United States. This paper analyzes Korean Protestants' perception of war, and more specifically, their attitude towards the Vietnam War.

Korean Churches' Perception of the Vietnam War

Ho Chi Minh, the **communist-nationalist** leader of the Vietminh, proclaimed the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam immediately after World War II. He then proceeded to spearhead a war of independence from France, who desired to retake Vietnam, its colony that had been seized by Japan. However, the French military armed with modernized weapons were unable to defeat the Vietminh guerillas, who for the most part were armed with a strong desire for independence, combined with ingenious military strategies. Unable to prevail on its own, France turned to the United States for help. The U.S. intervention in Vietnam began in earnest in July 1950 with the provision of military aid to France. By 1954, the United States were paying 78% of the French government's war costs.¹ The U.S., which relied on a policy of containment for preventing the spread of communism, did not want the Vietminh, led by the Indo-Chinese Communist Party, to expel France and dominate Vietnam. The U.S. intended to establish a pro-American and anti-communist bulwark in South Vietnam.

During the Geneva Conference following the formal defeat of France in 1954, all parties involved in the Vietnam War made the decision to temporarily divide Vietnam, based on the assumption that reunification would be achieved following the holding of a general election.² However, the U.S. government and its counterpart in Saigon, knowing full well what the results of a general election in North and South Vietnam would be, refused to accept the agreement.³ Ho Chi Minh's government in North Vietnam had the overwhelming support of the majority of the Vietnamese population. Right after the Geneva Conference, in September 1954 to be more precise, the U.S. set about strengthening the pro-American and anti-communist alliance structure by organizing the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). **With the support of the U.S. government the Republic of Vietnam was** founded in October 1956, after the period (July 1956) within which a unified government was to have been established through general elections had elapsed.

The Vietminh communist and nationalist followers of Ho Chi Minh decided to launch an armed struggle designed to bring about the collapse of the South Vietnamese government, **whom they thought to be** a puppet regime of the U.S. By this point, the U.S. was widely regarded as the new foreign **presence in Vietnam** replacing France. For

¹ *Pentagon Papers* (1971, 62).

² Ho Chi Minh's decision to accept the temporary division of the country at the Geneva Conference was influenced by the Chinese government's desire to heighten its international position and hold out for further economic advantages. Kolko (1985, 64); Duiker (1981, 164, 357, n. 68.).

³ Duiker (1981, 83).

these Vietminh communists and nationalists, the conflict with the U.S. and its allies represented an extension of their anti-imperialist struggle for independence, which had continued unabated since the French colonial era.

Despite the rosy predictions made by the Department of Defense that the conflict in Vietnam would be wrapped up quickly, the war effort rapidly deteriorated into a quagmire-like war of attrition with no end in sight.⁴ The U.S. attempted to use the same approach which they had employed during the Korean War: that of using multilateral bodies such as the UN, NATO, and SEATO to justify its intervention in the Vietnam War, thus allowing the war to be painted as an international action. However, once it became clear that this plan was not proceeding as intended, the U.S. government changed gears and began asking its allies in the Asian-Pacific region to dispatch troops to Vietnam. Korea was the first country to eagerly respond [*to this U.S. demand for military assistance in Vietnam*].

An advance[d] party of the Peace Dove Division, which was responsible for combat support operations, arrived in Vietnam on 25 February 1965.⁵ Given that Lyndon B. Johnson first approved the dispatch of U.S. combat troops on that same date, and that these troops only arrived in Vietnam on 8 March, the alacrity with which the Korean government intervened in the Vietnam War is evident. The dispatch of the Korean military to Vietnam was carried out under the pretense that the Korean government had accepted a formal request for aid from the American and South Vietnamese governments. However, the truth of the matter is that Park Chung-hee had expressed his desire to participate in the Vietnam War as early as November 1961, [*which was*] shortly after the military coup which brought him to power, when he visited the U.S. and John F. Kennedy.⁶ The dispatch of the Korean military to Vietnam provided Park Chung-hee with an opportunity to secure political, military, and economic benefits for his regime while also improving his relationship with the U.S.

In October 1965, or shortly after the Johnson administration's decision to "Americanize" the Vietnam War, the Korean government dispatched a division-size battalion of the Tiger Division. While taking part in combat operations, the U.S. government was forced to reevaluate the military strength of its enemy, and send additional ground troops. General William Westmoreland, the head of the Military Assistance Command Vietnam, asked the U.S. government to supply him with at least 470,000 soldiers by the end of 1966, a request which was soon raised to 550,000.⁷ The

⁴ Berman (1989, 10-11).

⁵ Smith (1985, 375, 377).

⁶ Na (1996, 162, 163, 168, 175-76, 178-79).

⁷ Berman (1989, 34).

U.S., unable to mobilize any additional troops because of the growing anti-war sentiment at home, made a formal request to the Korean government for an additional dispatch of troops. Following negotiations with its U.S. counterpart, the Korean government decided to dispatch an additional division-sized battalion.⁸ The troops that were dispatched were from the 9th Division, more commonly known as the White Horse Division.

Korean Churches' Perception of the Vietnam War

At 10:00 AM on 26 August 1966, a farewell service hosted by the National Council of Churches in Korea (KNCC) was held for the troops headed for Vietnam in the barracks of the White Horse Division located in Yeoido.⁹ Before this, the KNCC sent out a letter under the name of six denomination leaders, asking all churches nationwide to hold a special prayer service for the soldiers who were being dispatched to Vietnam.¹⁰ The prayers and sermons delivered by church leaders during this farewell service for the White Horse Division clearly demonstrated Korean churches' perception of the Vietnam War and of the dispatch of the Korean military to Vietnam. This service hosted by the KNCC included many high-level clergymen from various denominations, such as Yi Cheon-hwan of the [Episcopal Church](#), president of the KNCC, Kil Jin-gyeong of the Presbyterian Church, [KNCC's acting general-secretary](#), and Jang Un-yong of the Salvation Army, who encouraged the soldiers and prayed for their safe return. In a speech responding to the church leaders' blessings and concern, General Yi So-dong of the White Horse Division pledged to those assembled that his forces would obey God's will and would only be used for good. General Yi also asked those present to continuously pray for his soldiers and their victory, stressing his certainty that God would use fire and brimstone to protect his forces.¹¹ While most other churches in the world opposed the U.S. government's intervention in Vietnam, Korean churches maintained a close affinity with the Korean troops dispatched to Vietnam in alliance with the U.S.

The speeches made by the leaders of these Korean churches during the farewell service for the members of the White Horse Division were very similar to the message that President Park read out during the official farewell ceremony held in the square of

⁸ For the detailed negotiation, please refer to Na (1996, 187-198).

⁹ [Gidok gongbo](#) (Christian News in Korea) 6 August 1966.

¹⁰ [Gyohoe yeonhap sinbo](#) (Ecumenical Press), 7 August 1966.

¹¹ [Gidok gongbo](#), 6 August 1966.

the Central Government Complex.¹² President Park justified the Korean troop dispatch to Vietnam based on the American-led Cold War, anti-communist ideology. The fact that Korean churches adopted the same attitude as the President explains why these churches so closely cooperated with the state on issues related to the War.

The Korean churches' perception of the Vietnam War was that of a confrontation between the expansionist forces of communism and the free world aligned to stop it. The Christian press and Korean churches tended to describe the dispatched soldiers as having been sent to "protect the freedom of the South Vietnamese allies," or as "repelling the communist invaders." The use of such expressions demonstrates how the Vietnam War was viewed as a confrontation between North Vietnam and the Vietcong on one side, whose purported intention [it] was to destroy a free South Vietnam, against the United States and its allies on the other, [who were endeavoring to stop this invasion](#).

In a column published in May 1966, before the additional dispatch of the White Horse Division, the monthly journal, *Gidokgyo sasang* (Christian Thought), expressed its concerns over the growing anti-American protests in South Vietnam. It went on to identify the Vietnam War as an issue that was not only linked to the freedom of Vietnam, but one directly connected to the destiny of the free peoples of Asia.¹³ At the prayer meeting for dispatched soldiers, the KNCC adopted a recommendation stating that Korean soldiers had been sent to help defeat communism and protect peace in Asia and the freedom of the Vietnamese.

Kim Hwal-lan, the director of the missionary division of the KNCC, who led the above-mentioned farewell service for the members of the White Horse Division, prayed for God to bless them. She identified the Korean soldiers as crusaders fighting for the freedom of humanity and the dignity of mankind.¹⁴ Similarly, Yu Ho-jun, the secretary-general of the Presbyterian Church of Korea, asserted during his farewell speech that to defeat the communists who were threatening a free Vietnam was not simply an act of humanitarian love, but was directly related to [a global war against communism](#). As such, once one part of this [front](#) was broken, the freedom and peace of Korea, Asia, and even of the entire free world would be in danger.¹⁵ In January 1967, Kim Jun-gon of [Campus Crusade for Christ](#) also emphasized that although war in itself was evil, as it was impossible to have a sincere dialogue with communists, the Vietnam

¹² [Author?](원문에 저자 표기 없음) "President Park's message during the farewell ceremony for the White Horse Division", [The Vietnam War and the Guaranteeing of Korean Security. \(1966, 2-6\)](#).

¹³ Ji (1966, 30-31).

¹⁴ *Gyohoe yeonhap sinbo*, 4 September 1966.

¹⁵ [Gidok gongbo](#), 3 September 1966.

War was one which was being waged to liberate those being enslaved by communism, to prevent anybody else from being enslaved, and also to prevent bigger sacrifices [*from having to be made*] further down the road.¹⁶

These comments demonstrated that Korean churches perceived the Vietnam War through the lens of the America-centered Cold War and anti-communist ideology. As the Cold-War order was rapidly established after World War II, the U.S. government quickly came to perceive itself as the leader of the free world. The United States struggled against the communist bloc led by the Soviet Union, based on two overarching strategic principles: containment and massive retaliation backed by nuclear weapons.¹⁷ This stemmed from the American international strategy of containing communist expansion. The establishment of NATO in 1949, and the U.S.' rapid intervention through the UN in the ideological civil war on the Korean peninsula in June 1950, can be understood as having their origins in these strategies. After the Korean War, U.S. politicians and administrators came to believe that Soviet Russia was determined to politically and militarily conquer Asia as part of its plan for global domination. Therefore, the Vietnamese people's struggle for independence also came to be solely perceived through this prism of alleged Soviet desire for global hegemony.¹⁸

The decisive factor in the formation of the pro-American and anti-communist ideology of Korean churches was the division of Korea and the subsequent Korean War. Most Christians in the North, especially those in the northwest part of the peninsula who led the Korean Protestant movement prior to Korea's liberation and imbued with pro-American and communist sentiment, could not accept the socialist regime.¹⁹ The majority of these church leaders escaped to South Korea, and once there, began to make anti-communism a tenet of theology to justify their own behavior.²⁰ As the political division deepened, Christians became divided in accordance with their ideological orientations. The leadership of South Korean churches was assumed by anti-communist and pro-American individuals. These South Korean church leaders, who had been influenced by American missionaries and their own studies in the U.S., exhibited pro-

¹⁶ Quoted from Kim S. (1967, 114).

¹⁷ LaFeber (1994, 473-76, 540-44). The containment policy was designed by Soviet specialist George F. Kennan right after World War II. The massive retaliation policy was adopted by President Dwight D. Eisenhower as a means of deterring the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the huge sacrifices made during the Korean War.

¹⁸ Kennan (1984, 163). Leffler (1994). The world order during the Cold War era was the result of a "specter" created as a result of the mutual misunderstanding and suspicion between the capitalist and communist blocks. This misunderstanding created an acute sense of fear within both camps.

¹⁹ Kim and Ryu (2002, 56-83).

²⁰ For example, in 1949 Han Gyeong-jik identified communism as the red dragon of the apocalypse. Han (1992, 300).

American tendencies, with many of them regarding the U.S. as the model upon which the state should be established after liberation.

The Syngman Rhee government, over which church leaders who had escaped from the Northwest yielded an important influence, adopted a rabidly anti-communist stance. Some of these church leaders perceived communism as a sign that the end of the world was close at hand, [and](#) vehemently promoted a policy of “marching north” to unify the country by force well before the Korean War. Moreover, they also fervently objected to the signing of the Armistice Agreement that effectively ended the Korean War.²¹ The tragic Korean War created a deep-seated hatred of communism within the hearts of South Korean Christians that proved to be difficult to overcome. This polarization of emotions is well represented by the case of Kim Jae-jun, a church leader who was considered to be a progressive and who was opposed to the establishment of a separate government in South Korea. Kim defined, [in the aftermath of the crucible](#), those who had any sympathy for communism as being delusional.²² As such, South Korean Christians became anti-communists, regardless of [their](#) theological standpoint. As the U.S. government intervened in the Korean War and launched relief activities through American churches, Korean churches took on an even stronger pro-American stance, coupled with their anti-communist outlook.²³

The vivid memories of the Korean War had a decisive influence on Korean churches' perception of the Vietnam War. As only a decade had passed, it was only natural that Korean churches regarded the Vietnam War as an extension of the Korean War. At the prayer meeting for dispatched soldiers, the KNCC lent added significance to Korea's participation in the Vietnam War by stating that Korea was now at the forefront of the war against communism.²⁴ Kim Hwal-lan praised the White Horse Division soldiers for setting out to repay the debt Korea had towards its allies who had come to Korea in its time of need, and for helping out a neighbor in a similarly difficult situation.²⁵ In an article published in the *Gidokgyo sasang*, Ji Myeong-gwan criticized the anti-Vietnam War movement among churches in Asia, including the East Asian Christian Conference, and [attributed such a movement to a lack of understanding the true nature of Communism](#). He asserted that only people like Koreans, who had experienced the division of their nation because of Communism, and had lived through the invasion of these [“barbaric”](#) Communists, could understand the atrocious nature of

²¹ Kim H. (1995, 429-433).

²² Kim J. (1971, 302); quoted from Kim H. (1995, 425).

²³ With regards to the background of Korean churches' pro-American and anti-communist stance, refer to Ryu (2004, 65-69).

²⁴ *Gyohoe yeonhap sinbo*, 7 August 1966.

the Communist regime.²⁶ In January 1967, the Secretary-General of the KNCC Kil Jin-geong, based his opposition to the UN Secretary-General U Thant's position on the war on similar arguments. Kil refuted U Thant's demands that the Vietnam conflict be resolved through dialogue on the grounds that, during the Korean War, Koreans had learned firsthand the impossibility of sincere dialogue with Communists.²⁷

Both the anti-communist and Cold War-based outlook of Korean churches led them to view the world and the Vietnam War as a struggle between good and evil, with the U.S. and its allies on one side, and the "evil" communist nations on the other. Such Manichean dichotomy was easily accepted by the Korean churches. Moreover, Korean churches went one step further and painted the war with their own theology-based perceptions. Yu Ho-jun told the White Horse Division that God, who had created this world and defeated evil, was sending them to Vietnam to protect the lives and destinies of Vietnam, Korea, and Asia.²⁸ Kil described the Vietnamese people as suffering because their freedom was usurped by invading communists and their economy and society as having been destroyed by the oppressive Vietcong dictatorship. He condemned the Vietcong while arguing that they disturbed the Vietnamese social order, committed acts of violence, and destroyed peace through violence.²⁹

Development of the Christian Signification of the Vietnam War

The Christian signification of the Vietnam War was developed through the following methods: First, Korean churches emphasized that the majority of the commanders of the troops dispatched to Vietnam were Christians. These included the Commander of the Korean forces stationed in Vietnam Chae Myeong-sin, Commodore Yi Gye-ho of the Navy's Seagull Division, and General Yi Bong-chul of the Blue Dragon Marine Brigade. There were an especially large number of officers within Chae Myung-sin's Tiger Division, such as the commander of the armored division, artillery commander, and the director of the 6th evacuation hospital, who were Christians. In fact, according to statistics published in April 1966, 88 of the 97 officers stationed in Vietnam were Christians.³⁰

On 20 August 1966, [Gidok gongbo \(Christian News\)](#) carried the following

²⁵ *Gyohoe yeonhap sinbo*, 4 September 1966.

²⁶ Ji (1966, 27).

²⁷ Kil (1967).

²⁸ [Gidok gongbo](#), 3 September 1966.

²⁹ Kil (1967).

article regarding the inaugural ceremony of Yi Gye-ho as the commodore of the Navy's Seagull Division:

Korean soldiers who are dispatched to Vietnam are welcomed by the free world. The Korean military will be forever remembered as the guardian of world peace and freedom. Furthermore, as these soldiers are imbued with Christian spirit in their quest to defeat the atheist enemy, they are even more fondly evaluated as an army of the free world.³¹

Thus, we can see that Korean churches regarded the Vietnam War as a confrontation with communism, and furthermore, from a religious standpoint, as a battle with evil. As Yi Gye-ho was a Christian, the entire Seagull Division was regarded as soldiers imbued with the Christian spirit. The fact that the majority of the Korean commanders were Christians helped these churches identify the entire deployment as crusaders for God, and also facilitated their interpretation of the Vietnam War as a holy war. When Chae Myeong-sin returned to Korea in July 1966, the KNCC held a welcoming prayer service and invited Church leaders. Kim Chi-muk gave a speech in support of the war and prayed that the Vietnam War would be a conflict in which all the nations would join hands together under God to achieve victory in this “just” war.³²

The Christian signification of the Vietnam War by Korean churches was given [in large part through](#) the Immanuel Battalion. This Immanuel Battalion was a company within the White Horse Division (the 5th company of the 29th regiment) that was composed of only Christian soldiers. The very fact that a battalion composed solely of Christian soldiers, as well as its name, shows the close relationship that existed between the government and the Korean church.³³ Kil Jin-gyeong, who gave the sermon for the White Horse Division's farewell prayer service, said that the presence of the Immanuel Battalion meant the division could be regarded as crusaders for the faith and an army for justice. He prayed to God to further bless the White Horse Division because of the presence of this Immanuel Battalion.³⁴ In his letter to *The Ecumenical Press*, Bak Gwi-hyeon, army chaplain for the Immanuel Battalion, identified his men as 20th century crusaders for freedom sent to implement God's will. He then went on to add that his battalion, [*who was*] sent on a holy mission from God, was the shield protecting the freedom of Vietnam. Thereafter he added his hope that all the troops in Vietnam, and

³⁰ O In-tak (1966); Kim Jun-yeong (1967, 20).

³¹ [Gidok gongbo](#), August 20, 1966.

³² [Gidok gongbo](#), July 30, 1966.

³³ [Gidok gongbo](#), 3 September 1966; *Yeonhap gidok sinbo* (The Ecumenical Press), 27 November 1966

³⁴ *Gyohoe yeonhap sinbo*, 4 September 1966.

further all of the Korean military, would follow the path set by the Immanuel Battalion and become crusaders for justice sent to impose God's will.³⁵

The army chaplains played the role of linking the Korean churches to the Vietnam War. Korean churches' interest in the Vietnam War began with the dispatch of 2,000 soldiers from the Peace Dove Division in March 1965. The dispatch of [these troops](#), although [they were](#) not a combat unit, signified the onset of Korea's full-fledged participation in the Vietnam War. In addition to the dispatch of this Peace Dove Division, Korean churches' interest in the Vietnam War also [began to arise](#) with the dispatch of Protestant army chaplains. The Korean government decided to send a Presbyterian army chaplain from the 26th Division, [American-educated](#) Yi Chang-sik, to Vietnam.³⁶

The dispatch of army chaplains to Vietnam marked the onset of the Korean churches' direct involvement in the Vietnam War. From that point on, army chaplains acted as the bridge connecting Korean soldiers to the Korean churches, as well as the Vietnam War to Korean churches.³⁷ These chaplains, as well as some Christian soldiers, sent letters to Christian [publishers](#) back in Korea in which they introduced their activities while also requesting [churches'](#) help. Such letters from army chaplains were regularly published by the Christian press.³⁸ In addition, the chaplains who returned to Korea would, through their writings and participation in Vietnam related meetings, create an exaggerated account of the Korean military's achievements in Vietnam. These individuals' activities served to strengthen the Korean churches anti-communist interpretation of the Vietnam War.

The contents of the pieces contributed by these army chaplains usually described the situation in Vietnam and the Vietnam War from an anti-communist standpoint, with several Christian significations also thrown into their observations. For example, in his contribution to [Gidokgyo sasang](#), Bak Min-su, a chaplain attached to the Peace Dove Division, interpreted the Korean military's activities in Vietnam as those of the good Samaritans.³⁹ Son In-hwa [of the Tiger Division](#) asserted in the same journal that the Korean soldiers were welcomed with open arms by the Vietnamese people because of their relief activities, and that their decisive tactics had allowed them to gain victories without any serious loss of life. He argued that Korea should not avoid the

³⁵ *Gyohoe yeonhap sinbo*, 27 November 1966.

³⁶ [Gidok gongbo](#), 13 February; 20 February 1965.

³⁷ In October 1966, the number of army chaplains in Vietnam was 400, consisting of 86 [priests](#), 3 rabbis, and 310 Protestant ministers. For its part the army chaplains whom Korea sent out were fathers and ministers. However, the exact number of these Korean army chaplains remains unclear. *Gyohoe yeonhap sinbo*, 9 October 1966.

³⁸ For example, the diaries of Son In-hwa and of an army chaplain nicknamed [llam](#) were published in [Gidok gongbo](#).

³⁹ Bak M. (1967, 71-72).

mission that had been directly designated to them by God and send more rear area support troops and missionaries.⁴⁰ However, there were many cases in which the reports of these army chaplains' lacked objective judgment. For example, upon his return to Korea, Yi Chang-sik [stated](#) that as the Vietnamese people only fully trusted the Korean soldiers, and the Vietcong had been defeated by the power of *Taekwondo*, the Vietnamese situation would settle down within 2-3 years.⁴¹

Korean Churches' Reactions to the International Anti-War and Peace Movements

Korean churches supported the dispatch of soldiers to Southeast Asia, which surfaced as critical issue with the dispatch of the Peace Dove Division to Vietnam. No criticism was voiced of either the Vietnam War or of the legality of the Korean troop dispatch to Vietnam. [Korean churches' attitude](#) towards the Vietnam War and the dispatch of Korean soldiers appeared to be solely based on hostility towards communism and on a sense of crisis which was in turn based on a Cold War and an anti-communist ideology. However, the United Nations and other international organizations, churches in other countries, influential intellectuals, as well as factions within the U.S and Vietnam themselves, continuously questioned the justification for the U.S. government's intervention, as well as its objectives, and how the war was being implemented.

As the Vietnam War became a confrontation between U.S. pride and its military forces on one side, and the national pride of the Vietnamese people and their willingness to die for their cause on the other, the war dragged on and become more destructive. The international community began to demand a stop to the war and a peaceful resolution to Vietnam-related issues. The majority of Korean churches were opposed to these international anti-war and peace movements. While some individuals did attempt to reconsider the war from a theological standpoint, and even raised issues surrounding the justification for the Vietnam War, such efforts were limited to the efforts of a few individuals.

[The Early Anti-War and Peace Movements](#)

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The U.S. and other international churches began to adopt a more serious and organized interest in the war in 1965, the year when the U.S. directly intervened militarily in the conflict. In the *New York Times* on 4 April of that year, the Clergymen's Emergency

⁴⁰ Son I. (1967, 76, 85).

⁴¹ [Gidok gongbo](#), 7 May 1966.

Committee for Vietnam, in the name of 2,500 clergymen from Protestant churches and Jewish rabbis, published an advertisement in which they raised their objections to attacks on North Vietnam.⁴² In May, the Interreligious Committee on Vietnam, which was composed of religious leaders such as John C. Bennett, the dean of the Union Theological Seminary, and civil rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr., carried out a silent protest in front of the Department of Defense. The Interreligious Committee on Vietnam, expressing their concerns about large-scale attacks on North Vietnam and the tragedy and pain caused by these attacks, also urged the president of the United States to peacefully resolve all Vietnamese issues through dialogue involving all concerned parties.⁴³ A month later, *Christianity and Crisis*, one of the representative Christian magazines in the U.S., whose editorial committee included such people as Reinhold Niebuhr, chief editor since the foundation of the magazine, **Bennet**, and **Harvey Cox** identified the Vietnam War as a civil war, and criticized the U.S. government for trying to establish an independent government in South Vietnam.⁴⁴

Despite these early anti-war movements, Lyndon B. Johnson decided to Americanize the Vietnam War. He thereby decided to launch a massive war in order to avoid Vietnam falling to the communists.⁴⁵ As the Vietnam War intensified, the anti-war and peace movements became more organized and spread across the globe. These international efforts to urge a peaceful solution to the Vietnam War soon came to the attention of [Korean](#) churches. [Korean churches' negative reaction to international efforts](#) to bring about a peaceful resolution of the Vietnam War was made [known](#) immediately after the [NCC in the U.S. \(USNCC\)](#) publicized their resolution in October 1965, along with the joint report prepared by the East Asian Council of Churches and the [USNCC](#) soon thereafter.

During the Sixth World Order Study Conference in St. Louis, Missouri, the [USNCC](#) adopted a series of resolutions and urged the U.S. government to: negotiate with all concerned parties, including the National Liberation Front (Vietcong); stop the bombing of North Vietnam; limit the sphere of attacks to military bases in South Vietnam; and recognize the Vietnamese people's right to choose their own government.⁴⁶ This resolution, which was moderately critical of the U.S. government's Vietnam policy, was one of similar resolutions adopted in the same period by other religious organizations, such as the Catholic Peace Fellowship and the Union of

⁴² Hall (1990, 9).

⁴³ Hall (1990, 9).

⁴⁴ Hall (1990, 9-10).

⁴⁵ Johnson (1971, 383); quoted in Berman (1989, 9).

⁴⁶ Hall (1990, 10); *Yeonhap gidok sinbo*, January 16, 1966

American Hebrew Congregation. Based on this resolution, the [USNCC](#) sent out a letter to churches around the world in which it clearly spelled out its position on the Vietnam War. Meanwhile, from 1 to 4 December 1965 clergymen from the United States, Indonesia, Vietnam, Australia, Singapore, and Thailand participated in a meeting hosted by the East Asian Councils of Churches in Bangkok; a meeting in which participants adopted the report as follows: the U.S. government should stop attacks on North Vietnam; all concerned parties should suspend military operations and join negotiations; and both sides should cooperate with settlement efforts being made by the UN.⁴⁷

The overarching theme of the report and resolutions passed in St. Louis and Bangkok was that the Vietnam problem could only be resolved through negotiations and not war, an approach in keeping with the basic Christian tenet of love and reconciliation. However, Korean churches' reaction to this approach was less than enthusiastic. In January 1966, Kim Deok-su, secretary of the international committee of the KNCC, revealed that clergymen from Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines had not been invited to the Bangkok meeting. Kim expressed his concern about the [naive](#) expectations that these churches who had no **direct experience of communists** had for negotiations with the "Reds."⁴⁸ During the meeting of the international committee held in February, the [KNCC](#) stressed that while they found no reason from a moral standpoint to oppose the position adopted by American and East Asian churches, their entirely different experience with communism made it impossible for them to hold any hope for negotiations with the communists.⁴⁹ Thus, the committee decided to extend invitations to clergymen from the U.S. and East Asian churches to Korea in order to ["correct"](#) their perception of communism, a perception solely based on theological notions.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the decision was made to publish a resolution that rejected opposition to the war on theological grounds and also called for a further deepening of the anti-communist stance.⁵¹

The World Conference on Church and Society

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The interest of churches worldwide in the Vietnam War was greatly increased by the World Conference on Church and Society held in Geneva in July 1966. This conference, hosted by the World Council of Churches (WCC), had as its theme, "Christians in the

⁴⁷ *Yeonhap gidok sinbo*, January 16, 1966

⁴⁸ *Yeonhap gidok sinbo*, January 16, 1966

⁴⁹ *Yeonhap gidok sinbo*, February 6, 1966

⁵⁰ [Gidok gongbo](#), February 12, 1966.

⁵¹ This resolution was drawn up by Yu Ho-jun, Kim Deok-su, Kim Jong-dae, Kim Chi-muk, Kim Yong-

Technical and Social Revolutions of our Time.” This was a historical conference in which 500 clergymen from 164 churches in 80 countries participated. The purpose of this conference was to discuss the church and society’s response to the revolutionary changes that had taken place in the political, economic, technological, and military spheres, and to suggest a future direction for churches worldwide and the WCC. The Vietnam War was one of the most important issues on this conference’s agenda.⁵² The resolution on Vietnam passed by this conference, and [Korean church leaders’ reaction](#) to this resolution, clearly exposed the extreme differences between these two camps’ positions on the Vietnam War.

According to the official report of the World Conference on Church and Society, the Vietnam War was discussed by the 3rd subcommittee under the theme of “Structures of International Cooperation: Living Together in Peace in a Pluralistic World Society.” A final resolution was adopted following discussions of the Cold War nuclear order. This resolution called for recognition of the right to establish new states, and called on the nuclear powers to refrain from using their own ideological prejudices and interests to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.⁵³ Issues of the Vietnam War were discussed in this context, and the plenary session adopted a resolution on the Vietnam War, including the assertion that churches needed to continue questioning the wisdom and justness of the concerned powers’ policies towards Vietnam and the large-scale dispatch of U.S. soldiers, and that the bombing of targets in South Vietnamese villages and in the vicinity of North Vietnamese cities could never be justified.⁵⁴ Moreover, the resolution also included demands that all hostilities and military actions be stopped immediately and that a peaceful resolution of the Vietnam conflict be brought about through the combined efforts of the UN, the countries participating in the Geneva Conference, as well as other international organizations. Furthermore, [the resolution deplored that China could not join the UN was unanimously and](#) decried the international isolation of China, which was seen as becoming an increasing threat to world peace.⁵⁵

Korean church leaders such as Jang Hong-sik and Kim Jun-yeong of the Methodist Church, along with Baek Nak-jun, Kim Jae-jun, Kang won-yong, and Han Bae-ho of the Presbyterian Church [*of Korea*] participated in this [*World*] Conference [*on Church and Society*]. However, through an interview with Kang Won-yong, the

gu, and Bak Yeong-suk.

⁵² Thomas and Abrecht (1967, 48).

⁵³ Thomas and Abrecht (1967, 127, 147).

⁵⁴ Thomas and Abrecht (1967, 127, 147-148).

⁵⁵ Thomas and Abrecht (1967, 148), cf. pp.127-128

contents of which were subsequently published in such articles as “Encouraging the Development of a Pro-communist Attitude” and “Korean Church Leaders’ Differing Attitudes about Peace Related Issues,” Christian presses reported that Korean [delegates](#) objected to what they perceived as the conference’s pro-communist tendencies. According to the [Gyohoe yeonhap sinbo](#), Kang Won-yong allegedly pointed out that the resolution’s condemnation of the U.S. intervention and attack was skewed because it unilaterally criticized the U.S. without making any mention of the “[barbarous](#)” actions committed by the Vietcong and Vietnamese. It also said Kang went on to claim that if this “[unfair](#)” resolution were to be enforced, then some countries, including Korea, would be unable to abide by it.⁵⁶

Further allegations stated that Kang Won-yong claimed the Secretary-General of the WCC, W. A. Visser Hooft, supported Kang’s opinion, and that as a result the resolution critical of the U.S. could not be passed. For its part, [Gidok gongbo](#) argued that Kang Won-yong’s statement was one of the major catalysts for censuring criticism of the U.S. and including the Vietcong’s brutality in the final draft of the resolution.⁵⁷ In addition, the [Gyohoe yeonhap sinbo](#) stressed that Baek Nak-jun had raised objections to any praise of China, or demands for its inclusion in the UN, being included in the resolution. The paper went on to claim that as a result of these objections, the timetable for China’s ascension to the UN was pushed back.⁵⁸

It is not clear whether Kang Won-yong distorted the results of the conference, or if the newspapers that interviewed him simply exaggerated or wrongly construed his remarks. However, no reference to the main points put forward by these newspapers is found in the official report of the World Conference on Church and Society. Kang’s assertions regarding the inclusion of the brutality of the Vietcong and the deferment of China’s membership in the UN in the resolution are different from what was described in the official report. In general, the remarks and conclusions reached by the World Conference did not jibe with the anti-communist values of Kang Won-yong and other [delegates](#), which lead us to believe that Korean church leaders were less than happy with the results of this conference. Kang Won-yong argued that the participants’ attitude towards communism was akin to, “running into the tiger’s den scared by the bears.”⁵⁹ He also added, “I am worried that the WCC will wind up siding with the communists.”⁶⁰ Such comments by comparatively progressive leaders provide us with a

⁵⁶ [Gyohoe yeonhap sinbo](#), August 28, 1966

⁵⁷ [Gidok gongbo](#), August 27, 1966

⁵⁸ [Gyohoe yeonhap sinbo](#), August 28, 1966

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ [Gidok gongbo](#), August 27, 1966.

clear illustration of the Korean churches' perception of the Vietnam War.

Other Discussions

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As we can see from the above discussion of the World Conference on Church and Society, China's ascension to the UN was an issue, which was closely related to that of the Vietnam War. By the 1960s, China was no longer a simple bystander in the Cold War structure erected by the U.S and the Soviet Union. The world had no choice but to accept the fact that China had risen to become an influential power in the Southeast and East Asian regions. Moreover, at the beginning of the 1960s, China began to attack U.S. and the Soviet imperialism and revisionism, respectively. China's criticism of two countries encouraged nationalists in Indochina, including those in Vietnam, to develop anti-American and anti-foreign power resistance movements.⁶¹ The United States regarded China, a country it had entered into direct conflict with during the Korean War, and its anti-imperialist platform as being more subversive than Russia, and tried to isolate Beijing from the international community by blocking China's entry into the UN. However, China emerged as the biggest supporter of North Vietnam, both from an ideological and material standpoint. As such, ending the isolation of China was widely perceived as a necessary step to be taken before any resolution of the Vietnam War was possible.

The [NCC](#) in the U.S.A. and the [WCC](#) both firmly advocated China's ascension to the UN, a position that Korean church leaders were at odds with. The U.S. government's China policy was roundly criticized during the [USNCC's](#) World Order Study Conferences of 1958 and 1965, during which calls were also made for [Washington](#) to allow China to become a member of the UN. The KNCC criticized [its American counterpart](#) for possessing a solely theoretical understanding of communism.⁶² The Korean churches reacted similarly to the WCC Central Committee's resolution concerned with arms reduction and the Vietnam War, which was announced [in February 1966](#) shortly before the World Conference on Church and Society held. In this resolution, the WCC Central Committee stated that China should be given a legal opportunity to become a responsible member of the international community and to contribute to the promotion of international peace. [Gidok gongbo](#) rejected the WCC Central Committee's appeal out of hand, stating that the forces bent on communizing the entire world could not be dealt with solely through negotiations. Furthermore, [it](#)

⁶¹ Smith (1985, 16-17, 32).

⁶² *Gyohoe yeonhap sinbo*, 6 February 1966.

argued that since China's invasion of Vietnam was part of its plan to communize all of Southeast Asia, appeals that China be allowed to play a part in bringing about a peaceful resolution of the Vietnam problem were seen as nothing short of preposterous. What's more, such a stance would only result in Vietnam falling completely into the Chinese sphere.⁶³ Given Korean churches perception of China as the aggressor in the Vietnam War and as the most disruptive force in the world order, [the KNCC secretary-general's](#) rejection of Chinese UN membership was only natural.⁶⁴

This strange phenomenon, in which Korean churches opposed the WCC demands for the peaceful termination of the Vietnam War, continued well into the 1970s. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches, which was a union of the Reformed and Presbyterian Alliance and the Congregational Council, adopted a joint resolution on issues related to race, war, and development during their general council held in August, 1970. In this resolution, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches stated that the U.S. should withdraw its military from Vietnam in order to bring an end to hostilities, and also pursue the peaceful resolution of the Vietnamese problem.⁶⁵ The Korean clergymen, including Han Wan-seok, participating in this general council, along with their Filipino counterparts, expressed their objection to this resolution.⁶⁶

In May 1972, when U.S. ground forces had been almost completely withdrawn from Vietnam as part of the U.S. Vietnamization policy, the WCC Executive Committee proclaimed the Vietnam War an immoral war, while also labeling the "Vietnamization" policy a racially discriminatory approach designed to make Asian countries do the dirty work of the U.S. Upon hearing this, [Gidok gongbo](#) published [an editorial](#) in which it expressed a "[righteous indignation.](#)" [The editorial](#) stressed that although the ultimate goal of all Christians was peace, the painful experience of the Korean War had made it clear that peace, and the survival of the Church itself, was impossible to assure as long as communism existed. According to the newspaper, Korean soldiers were dispatched to Vietnam in order to play the role of crusaders for peace and to express their unforgettable gratitude toward Korea's allies who participated in the Korean War.⁶⁷

As more and more U.S. ground forces withdrew, the situation on the ground became increasingly tenuous. The safety of the Korean soldiers in Vietnam became the most important issue for the Korean churches. On 15 May 1972, the Korean Christian Laymen's Association held a prayer service for the safety of Korean soldiers in Vietnam

⁶³ [Gidok gongbo](#), 13 March 1966.

⁶⁴ [Gyohoe yeonhap sinbo](#), 22 January 1967.

⁶⁵ [Hanguk gidok gongbo](#), 12 September 1970.

⁶⁶ [Hanguk gidok gongbo](#), 12 September 1970.

⁶⁷ [Yeonhap gidok sinbo](#), 7 May 1972.

at the YMCA. This prayer service gained further prominence as a result of the fact that the KNCC and the Daehan Council of Churches (DCC) also decided to participate. Kim Byeong-seop, the president of the DCC's Laymen organization, criticized the attitudes of world church leaders, while also arguing that by thoughtlessly demonstrating "a shortsighted . . . and baselessly sentimental approach," these church leaders had blemished the ideological and religious obligations of those Korean soldiers dispatched to Vietnam.⁶⁸ In their "Message for President Park," the Korean churches argued that the reason they had consistently prayed for these Korean soldiers was that they knew all too well, from their own tragic experiences during the Korean War, that communism was the scourge of humanity. Moreover, Korean churches also [reemphasized](#) that the dispatch of Korean soldiers to Vietnam had been carried out to repay the debt Korea had towards its allies during the Korean War, as well as to protect the freedom and dignity of humanity, and furthermore, to preserve world peace.⁶⁹

Korean church leaders' perception of the Vietnam War continued to be trapped within this Cold War and anti-communist framework, regardless of whether they were conservatives or progressives. In an essay published in [Gidokgyo sasang](#) in July 1967, Hong Hyeon-seol, [the](#) president of the Methodist Theological Seminary, wrote about the anti-war and peace movements being promoted by churches around the world. In this piece, Hong expressed his hope that despite the difficult position it found itself in, the U.S. government would not withdraw from Vietnam. Hong went on to argue that the safety of the world was dependent on the U.S. government.⁷⁰ This statement is an example of how the anti-communist mentality, which prevailed in Korea as an *a priori* judgment, made it very difficult for Christian intellectuals to properly assess the situation in Vietnam.

Of course, differing opinions about the Vietnam War did emerge within [Korean](#) churches. In the essays published in [Gidokgyo sasang](#), some argued that since a war should always be a moral action taken for purposes of self-defense, the Korean soldiers dispatched to Vietnam should labor to create peace and not simply be ruled by their hostility towards communism.⁷¹ Other essays pointed out the serious dilemma that Korea found itself in, that of participating in a war in which the objectives were unclear and which was grossly unpopular around the world.⁷² Others argued that the impasse that had been reached in the Vietnam War, which now appeared to be impossible to win

⁶⁸ *Yeonhap gidok sinbo*, 14 May 1972.

⁶⁹ *Yeonhap gidok sinbo*, 14 May 1972.

⁷⁰ Hong H. (1967, 50).

⁷¹ *Gidokgyo sasang*, May 1966, p.8

⁷² Kim Y. (1967, 5).

militarily, would only result in increasing the number of soldiers' sacrificed for no good reason.⁷³ Another argument which appeared was that if mankind was going to be saved from the horrors of war and in order for peace to prevail, the Korean churches needed to launch global appeals for peace and ally with religious organizations around the world to begin the reconciliation process.⁷⁴ In this way, one saw Korea's duty as joining hands with its allies [for](#) a peaceful resolution of the Vietnam War, while in the process forming a true friendship with the Vietnamese people.⁷⁵ Yet another opinion [argued](#) that it was necessary for Korean churches to oppose nuclear war and to promote arms reduction.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, these minority voices had little to no influence on the general perception of the Vietnam War among Korean churches.

Conclusion

Richard M. Nixon chose to disengage from Vietnam shortly after his victory in the 1968 presidential election through his proclamation of "Vietnamization" of the war and the Nixon Doctrine.⁷⁷ Nixon hoped above all to assure the permanent division of Vietnam [through negotiations](#). [He](#) adopted a strategy of launching unprecedented, massive air strikes against North Vietnam in order to force them to the negotiating table. From 1969 to 1973, the U.S. forces dropped on average one ton of bombs per minute, an action that earned Nixon the infamous nickname "the greatest bomber in history."⁷⁸ However, Nixon failed. The unceremonious withdrawal of the U.S. from Vietnam was completed with the ceasefire agreement signed in Paris in January 1973. In the end, Vietnam was unified under North Vietnam.

The biggest mistake that the U.S. government made in Vietnam was to view Vietnamese nationalists, including Ho Chi Minh, as nothing more than Soviet or Chinese puppets. It was nationalist sentiment and not Marxist ideology that spurred Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnamese, the National Liberation Front, and Indochinese communists onto victory over powerful enemies such as Japan and France, and eventually even the U.S. The United States has exhibited a tendency to divide the world into good and evil, believing that all difficulties and problems facing the U.S. stem from a single external

⁷³ Kim Y. (1968, 64).

⁷⁴ Kim S. (1967, 115).

⁷⁵ O J. (1967, 43).

⁷⁶ Jeong H. (1967, 123).

⁷⁷ LaFeber (1994, 638-40); *Gyohoe yeonhap sinbo*, 7 May 1972.

⁷⁸ Fulbright (1972, 74); quoted from LaFeber (1994, 640).

evil.⁷⁹ This tendency is in all likelihood related to the U.S. belief that it has received a special mandate from God to decide the destiny of the world. This tendency has made it impossible for Americans to grasp the fact that factors hindering the implementation of their objectives are not always simple ones, and that consequently, these complicated factors may not originate from a singular source of evil. During the Cold War, the source of all evils for the United States was Communist Soviet. The manner in which the Vietnam War was [carried on](#), and the war's eventual outcome, clearly proves just how wrong that judgment was.

As part of this U.S. strategy to block the expansion of communism, Korean troops were mobilized and sent to take part in the “Americanized” Vietnam War. Of course, the Park Chung-hee government's decision to send troops was based on more than the passive fulfillment of a unilateral request from the U.S.; as such, calculations of the military, political, and economic advantages that could be reaped also loomed large in Korea's decision. However, the Americanization of the Vietnam War was a decision that was difficult to justify on either moral or practical grounds. As Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “[The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit.](#)”⁸⁰ The world's conscience criticized the arrogance of the U.S., which had launched this unjust and immoral war, and demanded a peaceful resolution. Religious groups, and the world churches in particular, were the ones who most loudly voiced their opposition to this war.

Nevertheless, in the case of the American churches, the degree of criticism of the U.S. government's Vietnam policy, and the fervor with which demands for the peaceful resolution of the war were made, was heavily dependent on the denomination to which they belonged. Theologically [more](#) conservative groups tended to want to achieve victory by escalating the conflict, not by achieving its peaceful resolution. NCC members were among those who were the most active in the anti-war movement. Meanwhile, fundamentalists such as the Southern Baptists and the Missouri Synod [Lutherans](#) were the biggest supporters of the escalation of the war.⁸¹ The Presbyterian Church [in America](#), a conservative denomination, officially announced its loyalty to the government's position in Vietnam.⁸² In the case of the conservative churches, lay Christians tended to support the Vietnam War more than the ministers did. The majority of the Southern Baptists remained supportive of the war effort, and critical of the anti-

⁷⁹ Kennan (1984, 164).

⁸⁰ Carson (1998, 339).

⁸¹ Hall (1990, 16-17).

⁸² Hall (1990, 46).

war movement throughout.⁸³

The KNCC, which was composed of the most progressive denominations in Korea, demonstrated an attitude towards the Vietnam War that was very similar to the one adopted by fundamentalist denominations in the United States. The KNCC was critical of several domestic matters, such as the Korea-Japan Normalization Treaty, unfair elections, and the Constitutional revision to extend the number of presidential terms to three, all of which emerged during the Vietnam War. The rigid attitude of the KNCC towards the Vietnam War can be understood from the fact that South Korean churches as a whole were transformed into a pro-American and anti-communist entity during the division of the Korean peninsula. Therefore, as long as issues were in any way related to [America and Communism](#), very little difference emerged in terms of the positions adopted by theological conservatives and progressives. The attitudes of the Korean churches towards the Vietnam War clearly exhibit the damage that was done to their moral and theological judgment during the division, the Korean War, and by their subsequent adoption of pro-American and anti-communist ideologies.

Korean progressive churches were able to overcome their Cold War ideology and to actively participate in the democratization and unification movements since the 1970s. However, the political attitudes and statements made by right-wing churches in the 2000s clearly prove just how deeply these notions of pro-Americanism and anti-communism have taken root within Korean churches.⁸⁴ This simple fact is also supported by the conservative Korean churches' approach to the Iraq War and the dispatch of Korean forces to Iraq, which has been very similar to the attitude exhibited by Korean churches towards the Vietnam War. In a statement in October 2004, the Christian Council of Korea (CCK), a representative organization of conservative Protestant churches, urged Korea to send troops to Iraq on the grounds that the U.S.-led Iraq War would contribute to the democratization of Iraq, to the justice of mankind, and to world peace.⁸⁵ The pro-American and anti-communist leanings of this group are made clear by their assertion that as long as the North Korean communists' strategy of unifying the Korean peninsula by force remains in place, the National Security Law should also continue to exist.

However, unlike as in the past, various positions have emerged within these churches regarding the dispatch of Korean forces to Iraq. Some have openly criticized

⁸³ Hall (1990, 66).

⁸⁴ Ryu (2004, 54-79).

⁸⁵ Refer to a statement "The Christian Council of Korea (CCK), a pro-American and anti-North Korean organization, supports the dispatch of the Korean military to Iraq." www.newsnkoy.co.kr, 15 October 2003.

the Iraq War and the dispatch of Korean soldiers to Iraq, thus proving that there are now many people within the Korean churches who are not constrained by the pro-Americanism and Cold War sentiment of the past. Criticism of the Iraq War has also been voiced in some conservative churches.⁸⁶ All of this would seem to indicate that the Korean churches' perceptions of the Korean War and Vietnam War were based on ideological and emotional factors, not theological ones. As such, it is evident that in the contemporary post-Cold War era, pro-Americanism and anti-communism do not remain as the only ideology of Korean churches.

Religion creates within followers what is "really real."⁸⁷ However, given how deeply Cold War ideology is imbedded within the Korean churches' consciousness, one might ask whether religious values can remain intact alongside ideological ones. The Korean churches' attitude towards war during the Cold War era clearly demonstrates that Christian logic can be overwhelmed by ideology. Moreover, the overlap between religion and ideology as seen both in South and North Korea leads one to a fundamental reconsideration of the correlation between religion and ideology, as well as of the ideological characteristics of religion and the religious characteristics of ideology. In this regard, the Korean churches' attitude towards the Vietnam War spurs a reconsideration of Christianity's power and inherent limitations to influence human judgment and values.

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⁸⁶ Refer to articles on the Iraq War published by *NewsJoy* and *Gospel and Context* in 2003, both of which are considered to be examples of progressive evangelistic outfits

⁸⁷ Geertz (1973, 124).

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