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The PCI News



2025 PCI Annual Award Dinner

The Pacific Century Institute established the Building Bridges Award in 2000 to honor one individual, and one institution (represented by an individual,) who have exemplified PCI's vision of bringing the people of the Pacific Rim closer by building bridges of understanding.

The Pacific Century Institute's Annual Awards Dinner was held on Thursday, March 6, 2025, at the elegant Beverly Hills Hotel in Beverly Hills, California. PCI President Raymond Burghardt served as the master of ceremonies, warmly welcoming guests to the evening.

Before the main program began, PCI and its Board paid tribute to departed board members. Following a delightful musical interlude by Trio Céleste, PCI Vice Chair Jim Thomson and Dr. Richard Drobnick introduced this year's Building Bridges Award honorees: former Congresswoman Michelle Steel and Dr. Kyung-wha Kang, President and CEO of the Asia Society.

The evening concluded with closing remarks delivered by Vice Chair Jim Thomson.

The 2025 Individual Building Bridges Award was presented to former Congresswoman Michelle Steel and Dr. Kyung-wha Kang, President & CEO of the Asia Society. Michelle Steel, one of the first Korean-American women in Congress, has dedicated her career to tax reform, economic growth, and public service, drawing from her family's immigrant experience and decades in state and local government. Dr. Kang, an accomplished diplomat and South Korea's first female Foreign Minister, has held senior roles at the United Nations and continues to champion global engagement and human rights. The Asia Society, founded in 1956 by John D. Rockefeller III, is a global nonprofit working to foster understanding between Asia and the world through education, policy dialogue, arts, and culture.

The Pacific Century Institute would like to thank our corporate benefactor, corporate sponsors and supporters. For more info, please contact Angie Pak at pci@pacificcenturyinst.org.



((Top Left) Congresswoman Michelle Steel; (Top Right) Dr. Kyung-wha Kang; (Bottom Left) Congresswoman Michelle Steel, Ambassador Raymond Burghardt, and Dr. Kyung-wha Kang; (Bottom Right) PCI Vice Chair Jim Thomson at Beverly Hills Hotel, Beverly Hills, California)

SAVE THE DATE!

PCI Annual Award Dinner

Date: Thursday, March 5, 2026



New Board Members

PCI is pleased to announce new board members, Dr. Eun Mee Kim, Dr. Kantathi Suphamongkhon, and Dr. Man-sung Yim, to its Board of Directors.



(Dr. Eun Mee Kim)

Dr. Eun Mee Kim served as the 17th President of Ewha Womans University from February 2021 to February 2025. A respected academic and global development leader, she also served as Professor at the Graduate School of International Studies, Director of the Ewha Global Health Institute for Girls and Women, and previously held roles as Dean of both the Graduate School and the Graduate School of International Studies, as well as Director of the Institute for Development and Human Security.

Appointed by the UN Secretary-General in 2016, Dr. Kim contributed to the Global Sustainable Development Report 2019, presented at the UN General Assembly. She has held key leadership roles in Korea's international development sector, including President of the Korea Association of International Development and Cooperation and advisor to the Prime Minister's Office and multiple ministries. Her efforts were central to advancing Korea's Official Development Assistance (ODA) system and promoting gender integration in policy. She received the Service Merit Medal from the Republic of Korea. Dr. Kim led pioneering research supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, including the first university grant in South Korea in 2013 for work on Korea's role in global health and development, followed by further grants in 2016 and 2019. In 2021, she received the Chang-Lin Tien Distinguished Leadership Award from The Asia Foundation and was appointed Vice-Chairperson of the Korean National Commission for UNESCO and Chairperson of the 5th Science and Technology Basic Plan (2023–2027) Committee.

She holds a Ph.D. and M.A. in Sociology from Brown University and a B.A. in Sociology with honors from Ewha Womans University.

Dr. Man-sung Yim is a leading expert in nuclear engineering, security policy, and global energy strategy. He brings a wealth of experience in science-informed policymaking and international cooperation to PCI's mission of promoting understand-



(Dr. Man-sung Yim)

ing and engagement across the Pacific region.

Dr. Yim currently serves as Professor of Nuclear Engineering and Director of the Center for Nuclear Security Science and Policy Initiatives (NSSPI) at Texas A&M University. He previously held academic appointments at MIT, North Carolina State University, and the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST), where he served from 2011 to 2024.

Throughout his career, Dr. Yim has worked at the intersection of technology and policy, focusing on nuclear nonproliferation, energy innovation for carbon neutrality, nuclear waste management, and international nuclear security. His insights and leadership have shaped national and global approaches to nuclear safety and sustainable energy development. Motivated early in his career by concerns over nuclear safety in South Korea, Dr. Yim earned a Ph.D. in nuclear engineering before pursuing a second doctorate in environmental health science at Harvard University, where he focused on the health and safety dimensions of nuclear waste.



(Dr. Kantathi Suphamongkhon)

Dr. Kantathi Suphamongkhon a seasoned diplomat, scholar, and business leader, brings decades of international experience and deep expertise in diplomacy, global affairs, and regional development to PCI's mission of fostering cross-Pacific understanding and cooperation.

Dr. Suphamongkhon served as the 39th Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand from 2005 to 2006. Prior to that, he held the position of Thai Trade Representative with cabinet rank from 2001 to 2005 and was elected to Thailand's Parliament for two terms, in 1995 and 2001.

Before entering politics, Dr. Suphamongkhon spent a decade



New Board Members

as a career diplomat with Thailand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including four years as a representative to the United Nations in New York. Following his government service, he joined the faculty at UCLA (2007–2014), where he taught in the Anderson School of Management, the UCLA International Institute, and the Burkle Center for International Relations. Dr. Suphamongkhon also contributes to global policy and academic communities through roles with the RAND Global and Emerging Risks Advisory Board, the Dean’s Advisory Board at American University’s School of International Service, and past affiliations with the Asia Society, RAND Center for Asia Pacific Policy, and Pacific Council on International Policy.

In the private sector, Dr. Suphamongkhon serves as Chairman of Kanta Enterprise International Company Limited (KEI), a real estate development firm in Thailand. He also holds directorships at Kanta Sahakij Company Limited and Athakravi Company Limited. Previously, he was a director at the Post Publishing Public Company, publisher of the Bangkok Post and Post Today.

Dr. Suphamongkhon holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from the University of Southern California, an M.A. in International Studies from American University, and a B.A. in Political Science from UCLA. He completed high school in Germany at U.S. Department of Defense schools.

PCI is proud to welcome Dr. Eun Mee Kim, Dr. Man-Sung Yim, and Dr. Kantathi Suphamongkhon, whose distinguished expertise and international perspectives will strengthen the Institute’s leadership as it deepens its work at the intersection of policy, security, and cross-cultural dialogue. Their voices will be vital as PCI continues to promote peace, dialogue, and mutual understanding across the Pacific.

Book Review—by PCI Board Member Glyn Ford

Fyodor Tertitskiy. *Accidental Tyrant: The Life of Kim Il-Sung*. Hurst, London, 2025. ISBN 9781911723547

North Korea's founder Kim Il-sung was a survivor, but was it through serendipity or aspiration? In this biography, Tertitskiy puts his thumb heavily on the serendipity side of scale, crafting his story accordingly. But the reality is that all lives are serial accidents and Kim Il-sung's no more than most. Kim had the right biography, educated - for a Korean of his era - and brought up a Christian with exposure to Western ideas. The most brutal phase of a harsh Japanese colonial occupation of the Korean Peninsula dragooned the family into fleeing to

Manchuria, where the ideas of a radicalised Kim evolved quickly from moral to physical opposition to Tokyo. He joined a guerrilla band harrying Japan's troops and then the Chinese Communist Party. The latter provided a steeper learning curve than the former. The result was that Kim's war ended along with the remnants of the region's resistance. By the autumn of 1940 his unit had been pushed over the border into the Soviet Union, months before Moscow signed its Neutrality Pact with Tokyo. Kim's official Korean biography has a more hagiographic reading of this period but is a recognisable - if laundered, embellished and dramatised - reading of Tertitskiy's.

Kim spent the next few years parked in Stalin's Foreign Legion near Khabarovsk, where he rose up the ranks as much because of his command of Russian than of his men. After the Soviet Union joined the war against Japan, and Washington dissected the peninsula, Kim and his comrades were belatedly shipped home, this time to Soviet occupation. Soviet military intelligence went looking for a puppet-leader but couldn't find a suitable candidate. Lavrentiy Beria, head of the NKVD, trumped them with Kim. Kim rapidly became the first among equals as his faction co-existed alongside Pak Hon-yong's Southern Communists, the Soviet-Koreans and the Chinese-Koreans.

Division along the famed 38th Parallel allowed political osmosis: the Left leached to the North and the rich fled South, with Syngman Rhee bloodily suppressing attempts at southern insurrection in the years before Stalin and Mao signed-off on Kim's civil war. It was too late; the 'fifth column' in the South had long been consigned to camps or mass graves. The civil war turned into a Sino-US proxy war as Mao chose to fight what he saw as an inevitable conflict with America on away turf rather than at home. The result was a draw with both sides claiming victory. Kim took the opportunity of purging Pak and his faction for their revolutionary optimism. Kim followed, rather successfully, the Stalinist road to industrialisation with coal, steel and concrete in the vanguard, sugared with land reform for the countryside, all under the shadow of a burgeoning cult of personality.

Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech' in 1956 denouncing Stalin led to suicidal moves by Pyongyang's internal opposition. They attempted to sideline Kim and forlornly failed. Those that were able fled to China or the Soviet Union. Those who were unable were dead men talking. Kim and his 'partisan generals' were the victors. At this point, *Accidental Tyrant* dives into an exegesis of Kim's ideas of *juche* (self-reliance) that seemingly

(Continued on page 5)



PCI Programs

William J. Perry Lecture Series

Ewha Womans University and PCI hosted a special lecture titled "U.S.-Korea Economic Relations: Opportunities for Cooperation" by Wendy Cutler, former Deputy U.S. Trade Representative, as part of the William J. Perry Lecture Series. The event took place on Wednesday, April 30 at ECC Lee Sambong Hall.



(Wendy Cutler, Vice President, Asia Society Policy Institute, Ewha Womans University, Seoul, Korea)

Wendy Cutler is widely regarded as one of the foremost veterans in the field of U.S. foreign trade and diplomacy. After earning a degree in International Affairs from George Washington University and a Master's degree in Foreign Service from Georgetown University, she spent over 30 years as a diplomat and negotiator at the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR). Notably, she served as the lead U.S. negotiator during the 2006–2007 U.S.-Korea FTA talks, working with Korea's chief negotiator Kim Jong-Hoon, and left a strong impression in Korea through her pivotal role in the negotiations. Since 2015, she had served as Vice President of the Asia Society Policy Institute, a non-profit international organization that promotes U.S.-Asia understanding.

The lecture, began at 3:30 PM on April 30, opened with welcoming remarks by Ewha President Hyang-Sook Lee and an introduction by Professor Youngjeen Cho, Vice President for International Affairs. Wendy Cutler then engaged in a conversation with Professor Ji-Ae Sohn, a visiting professor at Ewha's Division of International Studies and former Seoul Bureau Chief of CNN, under the theme "U.S.-Korea Economic Relations: Opportunities for Cooperation." The discussion addressed recent developments and future opportunities in U.S.-Korea trade relations, as well as economic cooperation

between the two countries and strategies for responding to global economic changes. In light of heightened interest following tariff announcements by U.S. President Trump and the anticipation of U.S.-Korea tariff negotiations, the lecture drew significant attention.

About 150 attendees, including Ewha students, faculty, and professionals from diplomacy, trade, and academia, participated in the event. As a seasoned diplomat with over 30 years of experience and a prominent female leader, Wendy Cutler offered students practical career advice and meaningful inspiration, making the event a valuable opportunity for personal and professional growth.

This lecture was part of the ongoing William J. Perry Lecture Series, established through a partnership between Ewha Womans University and the Pacific Century Institute. Ewha had previously hosted annual lectures featuring distinguished experts such as Janet Napolitano, former U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security (2021), Kathleen Stephens, former U.S. Ambassador to South Korea (2022), Dr. Siegfried Hecker, American nuclear scientist (2023), and Robert Gallucci, former U.S. Special Envoy for North Korea (2024), offering continued insights into peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula.



(Top: Jie-ae Sohn (L) and Wendy Cutler (R); Bottom: Wendy Cutler with PCI and Ewha staff and students, Ewha Womans University, Seoul, Korea)



Book Review

(Continued from page 3)

bedevils Kremlinologists of the North. For me it's a self-discovered variant of Lukacsian Marxism where the will of people and leader can overcome all; explaining how a small benighted country on the edge of history can lead the world. Nietzsche will never be dead while *juche* lives.

In the late 1960s, Stalinist development was stuttering and stalling as Kim failed to make the transition from heavy to light industry and Seoul's economy threatened to overtake that of Pyongyang. Kim looked for lessons in Vietnam's struggle and learnt them badly: neither fresh insurrections nor underground opposition would win a second Korean war. Kim, as Tertitskiy details, continues to play-off Moscow against Beijing to the North's benefit. Neither re-assures Kim of the safety of his legacy. In 1971, the highly pejorative definition of hereditary succession vanishes from the North's lexicons. Kim Jong Il is made 'crown-prince' and the country's precocious *éminence grise*.

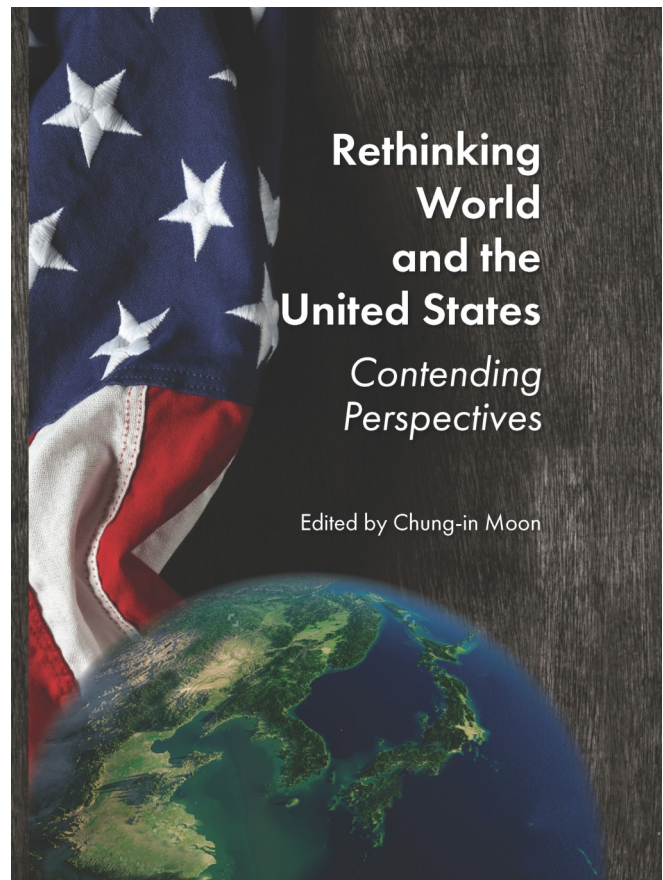
By the 1980s, the North is increasingly on life-support as Seoul stretches its lead, threatening to disappear over the economic horizon. The endgame is disastrous. The collapse of the Soviet empire is the trigger. Moscow abandons the North and Beijing demands hard cash. Industrialised agriculture, now bereft of fertiliser, electricity and spare parts, sees a collapse in production with hunger stalking the land and hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of premature deaths. Grandparents starve themselves for their grandchildren. Kim's last decisions haunt the present. Firstly, a desperate attempt to normalise relations with Washington was ignored until it met with its first willing president in the form of Donald Trump (but even he proved unable, as the Hanoi Summit demonstrated). Second, Kim decided that no-one was to be trusted. Pyongyang's security was to be under an indigenous nuclear umbrella. Today this threatens the end of the Non-Proliferation Treaty as the next likely dominos to go nuclear are Seoul, Tokyo and Taipei.

Accidental Tyrant provides a clear vision of the man who made North Korea the country it is today. Tertitskiy, a lecturer at Korea University in Seoul, has drawn on previously unavailable Soviet sources to help us to disinter and separate myth and reality. As a biography, it leapfrogs over Suh Dae-sook's *Kim Il Sung; the North Korean leader* (1988) and it will take some bettering.

Glyn Ford is a former Member of the European Parliament and now Director of the Brussels-based NGO Track2Asia. He

is the author of *Talking to North Korea: Ending the Nuclear Standoff* (2018) and *Picturing the DPRK* (2023).

Book Release



Rethinking World and the United States: Contending Perspectives

The essays in this volume were prepared for Yonsei University's Center for North Korean Studies James T. Laney Distinguished Professorial Lectures program in honor of the 1993-97 former ambassador to the Republic of Korea and 1977-1993 former President of Emory University. They were organized and moderated by Chung-In Moon, an eminent international relations scholar and the James T. Laney Distinguished Professor at Yonsei University where Laney himself once taught theology. The lectures pay tribute to Laney's life-long interest in the Korean peninsula and his dedication to education, research, public service, and conflict resolution, as does the Pacific Century Institute's Laney Chair for visiting professors at Yonsei University.

For a copy, please contact pci@pacificcenturyinst.org.



Project Bridge

Study Tour to South Korea

Project Bridge is a year-long youth leadership and exchange program by the Pacific Century Institute, the Korea Society, and the Mansfield Center. Each year, 24 high school students are selected as Youth Ambassadors to explore leadership, cultural identity, and Korean society. The program’s highlight is a fully funded 10-day study tour to South Korea, where students engage with local peers and leaders, gaining firsthand cultural experience and emerging as globally minded, cross-cultural leaders.



(2024-2025 Project Bridge Youth Ambassadors dressed in *hanboks* at Gyeongbokgung, Seoul, South Korea)

The 2024–2025 Project Bridge Youth Ambassadors embarked on their journey to South Korea from April 12 to April 24, 2025. For many, it was their first time flying—let alone traveling outside the U.S. Upon arriving at Incheon Airport, the Los Angeles students finally met their peers from New York and Montana in person after months of connecting virtually through joint Zoom sessions. These sessions covered topics ranging from basic Korean language to a group book discussion of *Pachinko*. While their initial meeting was a bit awkward, the students quickly formed strong bonds as they trav-

eled across South Korea together over the next 10 days.

The journey officially began in *Jeonju-si*, where the cohorts were warmly welcomed by President Kim Dae-shik of the *Jeonbuk* International Cooperation Agency. The students explored *Jeonju Hanok* Village, visited local high schools and universities, and got a rare glimpse into monastic life during an overnight stay at *Seonunsa* Temple.

Their travels continued with visits to major economic institutions, including POSCO, HD Hyundai Heavy Industries, Hyundai Motor Company, Chong Kun Dang Pharmaceutical Company, and the Korea International Trade Association. These site visits provided insight into South Korea’s rapid economic development and global industry leadership. The students also enjoyed cultural activities such as dressing in traditional *hanbok* to tour *Gyeongbokgung* Palace and visiting historical landmarks that offered deeper context into Korea’s past and present.



(2024-2025 Project Bridge Youth Ambassadors Jujeon Mongdol Beach, Ulsan, South Korea)

A highlight of the trip was the visit to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Although access to the Joint Security Area was restricted, the Youth Ambassadors observed North Korea from the Dora Observatory, explored Tunnel #3, and engaged in a powerful Q&A with a North Korean defector, moderated by Professor Jin-Heon Jung.

Throughout the trip, the Youth Ambassadors experienced a myriad of enriching activities that deepened their understanding of Korean culture, history, and daily life. From hands-on workshops and traditional meals to conversations with local students and professionals, each experience fostered meaningful connections and cross-cultural dialogue. The journey not only shaped them as global citizens and future leaders, but also helped bridge the gap between peoples and cultures—fulfilling the core mission of Project Bridge.



Project Bridge

Student Study Tour Reflection

By Yarel Mendez, 12th Grade, Abraham Lincoln Senior High School

Through our study trip to South Korea, I had the opportunity to meet a large range of people, explore a new culture, engage in new activities, and further grow my curiosity.

Having the opportunity to witness companies such as Hyundai and POSCO, had truly been a spectacular experience. As someone who has taken engineering for four years and having taken a manufacturing class last year, I've learned about the manufacturing process of a multitude of products and the process is something that has intrigued me. Especially as products such as cars and steel are mass produced due to its high demand. So, having the chance to witness firsthand the manufacturing of large and successful corporations was astonishing and informative. Personally, Hyundai's car manufacturing was one of the most interesting processes due to its consideration for the workers. Seeing as the car lift positions the car at about eye level in order to allow the workers to work on the cars without having to bend down, as well as rotating jobs to prevent repetitiveness. Seeing the consideration the company has of the workers amazed me as it shows the company's care of their workers.



(2024-2025 Project Bridge Youth Ambassadors from Los Angeles, Montana, and New York and staff at HD Hyundai Heavy Industries, Ulsan, South Korea)

Additionally, being able to partake in activities such as cooking *bibimbap*, making a traditional lantern, and archery all which are activities I wouldn't have imagined doing was wonderful. Being able to engage in all of the activities was incredibly fun, but also relaxing and we also ended up with many personalized souvenirs which only added to the fun. Further-

more, participating in these various activities allowed me to get closer with the group and having fun with everyone.

One aspect that surprised me was how welcoming and amiable everyone was. Going to the high schools, I had expected the atmosphere to be awkward especially due to the communication barrier. But, I was pleasantly surprised as when we went to *Jeonbuk* Foreign Language High School all the students were incredibly friendly and it was an amazing experience getting to know them and seeing their amazing English skills. Similarly, at *Poongsan* High School the students truly created such a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere and hearing as they were the ones who helped prepare the activities and the gym. Moreover, even the people we came across by coincidence were amiable. I recall during our stay at *Seonunsa* Temple, during meal times I happened to meet an older gentleman who was incredibly friendly as he started conversing with us, asking about the reason for our stay and what we thought of the food. During the conversation he seemed amicable and incredibly happy to share his culture and see us enjoy it.



(2024-2025 Project Bridge Youth Ambassadors from Los Angeles, Montana, and New York with Poongsan High School students, Andong, South Korea)

Overall, the trip completely exceeded my expectations as we not only learned so much more than I had expected, but had much more fun than I had anticipated. After the trip and being able to have a glimpse of Korea, I most definitely want to travel back soon, but I also have more of a desire to travel to new countries and learn even more cultures than before.

Please visit https://pacificcenturyinst.org/project_bridge to learn more about the program.



Project Bridge



(Project Bridge Youth Ambassadors at the Broad Museum, Los Angeles, CA)



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