

Summary

This issue of #시각 buttresses some of the Sino-NK community's dominant research themes. One major subject concerns defectors resettling in the South: there is cause for concern at average income levels, which remain far below the national average, but this is mingled with optimism at the growing number of defectors entering South Korea's elite universities. Most refugees must battle against ingrained social prejudices, but it is worth noting that things are slowly getting better, especially for the young. Elsewhere, this edition comes with an international flavor: foreign workers find themselves mistreated at a museum headed by a close ally of President Park Geun-hye, a former Japanese leader speaks publicly on the comfort women issue, and, as ever, there is the question of how to teach East Asia's conflicted history. Finally, AhnLab founder and respected philanthropist Ahn Cheol-soo breaks cover and reveals the name of his new political party.

Steven Denney @StevenDenney86 Feb 18

안 신당 '새정치연합', 선관위 정식 등록 - 경복일보 <http://ow.ly/tLwYE> Ahn formally registers new political party; translation of name will vary. #시각

Ahn Cheol-soo, the independent Assemblyman representing Nowon-gu who nearly supplanted Moon Jae-in on the Democratic Party ticket in the last presidential election, has officially registered a new political party under the name “새정치연합,” translated thus far as “New Political Party” or “New Political Vision Party.” A practice common in South Korean politics, charismatic political leaders, rather than join an existing political party, start an entirely new party. In Korea's non-institutionalized party system, all parties have ambiguous policy platforms, weak links to voters, and catch-all ideological bases. Buttressed by his unspoiled public image, Ahn Cheol-soo does indeed practice a “charismatic politics” of his own.

Steven Denney @StevenDenney86 Feb 14

Cumings 1980s legacy lives on. But beyond the bombs, the narrative is much more complicated. @adamcathcart <http://ow.ly/tD1u4> #시각

John Pilger writes approvingly of Bruce Cumings' effort to push back against the “good war” narrative, a worldview that sees actions by powerful countries, like the United States, as honorable efforts to save the world. Pilger compares Cumings' *The Korean War: a History* (2010), which he “just read,” to other counter-narratives works, such as EP Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*. Cumings' massive two volumes on the Korean War, *Origins of the Korean War*, of which the much shorter 2010 book can be read as a distilled version, redefined Korean studies in North America, South Korea, and elsewhere. His primary claim, that the origins of the Korean War were apparent in the immediate post-World War II political, economic, and social conditions on the peninsula and that the United States stymied full independence in the South for broader geopolitical reasons defined—and continues to define—the revisionist school on the study of post-war Korean history. There are, however, [those who unapologetically challenge the revisionist narrative](#).

Steven Denney @StevenDenney86 Feb 14

Defectors in SK Report Incomes Half National Average--assimilation isn't easy, that's historically proven.

<http://ow.ly/tCZbr> #시각

The *Daily NK* reports on the results from the North Korea Refugees' Foundation "annual survey into the economic activities of adult defectors in South Korea." The main finding: "they continue to earn far below the national average." Half the national average, to be specific. Other issues, like below average employment rates highlight the difficulties of [second-class citizenship](#) and the broader difficulties associated with assimilation into foreign societies. On the positive side of things, "the survey reports a consistently high level of defector satisfaction with life in South Korea despite... economic difficulties." What's more, if Korean nationalism continues along its "civic" path, as recent data suggest, there is reason to believe the notoriously exclusive "*minjok*" will become more inclusive of "outsiders."

Steven Denney @StevenDenney86 Feb 7

Culture shifts and the fall of the "old" Left in South Korea. Indeed, Ahn will be its death knell. <http://ow.ly/tNXm7> #시각

Joshua Stanton writes on a "political realignment" in South Korea and the slow but steady decline in the "old" left's dominance of the discourse on North Korea within South Korea. "Ten years ago," he writes, "the left could draw crowds of candle-carrying thirty-somethings to swoon about reunification, at least in the abstract." Now, he finds, President Park Geun-hye, a conservative, can speak of reunification as a "jackpot"—"an issue that the left had 'owned' for at least a dozen years." Indeed, the dissolution of pro-North sympathy within South Korea has accelerated to a palpable pace. With the recent "RO" shenanigans, Lee Seok-ki's prison sentencing, and the release of the United Nations' Report of the [findings from the Commission on Inquiry on Human Rights in the DPRK](#), Pro-Pyongyangists and their less-radical sympathizers may be swept up in the dustbin of history.

김재연/통합진보당/청년국회의원 @opentree20 Feb 17

박근혜독재의 사법살인을 규탄하며 청와대 앞 노숙농성을 시작했습니다. 종로경찰서는 이곳에 모인 수백 명의 진보당원들을 곧 연행하겠다고 합니다. 이들을 해산시킨다고 박근혜독재에 대한 분노까지 잠재울수는 없습니다. #시각

Unified Progressive Party (UPP) lawmaker Kim Jae-yeon promotes a sit-down demonstration outside the Blue House [presidential residence] in response to "judicial murder" by the "Park Geun-hye dictatorship." Kim is referring to an ongoing court case against the UPP that, if lost, would result in the party's dissolution. The key question at this stage is whether the UPP was connected to a "RO" (Revolutionary Organization) led by fellow UPP lawmaker Lee Seok-ki, who was handed a 12-year sentence some days prior for attempting to overthrow the South Korean state. Kim is herself an interesting character: a young woman who runs completely counter to established South Korean political stereotypes, and is rather more powerful for that. As [Christopher Green tweeted](#) the following day: "김재연 has become a meme in coverage of UPP demonstrations. Demure, thoughtful, singing. Always in camera shot. Never named. KBS뉴스, 민중의 소리 etc."

동아일보 @dongamedia Feb 17

탈북청소년 114명, 서울대 등 주요대 합격 bit.ly/1oJc2dx #동아일보 #시각

The successful resettlement of refugees from North Korea is an important social issue in the South, and educational attainment is regarded as a key metric of overall progress for the young. According to the story, 114 young North Koreans are to enter universities and vocational institutions, and the police and other government agencies will offer them financial assistance. It notes the following successes: six North Korean students to attend Donguk University; five more to Kookmin University; three to Sogang University; two each to Hanguk University of Foreign Studies and Korea, Hongik, Kyungpook National, Chungnam National, Yongnam universities and Kyungin University of Education, one each to a number of other schools, including the two most famous schools in South Korea (Seoul National and Yonsei). 16 of the 114, the largest single group, is to study Chinese, which reflects the length of time many young North Koreans will have spent in that country en route to South Korea.

Prof. Steve Hanke @steve_hanke Feb 18

Exchange controls - nothing more than ring fence within which gov'ts can expropriate subjects' property.

#Venezuela <http://www.cato.org/blog/venezuela...> #시각

Prof. Hanke is an ally for anyone seeking to put North Korea's grossly distorted economic policy in comparative perspective. Disliked by "[smug, overbearing, patronizing](#)" Paul Krugman, here this controversial conservative free-marketer and evangelistic supporter of currency boards (a *Yuan* variant of which Christopher Green would like to see established in North Korea, but doesn't expect Pyongyang to adopt since it would mean ending a ruinous addiction to economic manipulation for spurious political objectives) cites Hayek's classic [The Road to Serfdom](#) in explaining the situation in Venezuela, and moreover North Korea: "Nothing would at first seem to affect private life less than a state control of the dealings in foreign exchange, and most people will regard its introduction with complete indifference. Yet the experience of most Continental countries has taught thoughtful people to regard this step as the decisive advance on the path to totalitarianism and the suppression of individual liberty."

Peter Ward, 워드 피터 @rpcward89 Feb 5

South Korean film spotlights claims of sickness linked to Samsung plants <http://gu.com/p/3mfma/tw>

@guardian #시각

The *Guardian* have run an article discussing a new film recently released in South Korea that deals with the suspiciously high number of deaths from rare diseases amongst Samsung workers in a semi-conductor plant. The film, due to Samsung's inordinate influence over South Korean society and business, was funded entirely by private donation. The case itself presents yet another example of the power of the country's largest corporation and the perverse effects that such power have on a democratizing society.

Peter Ward, 워드 피터 @rpcward89 Feb 6

The testimony of a former Samsung semi-conductor factory worker with leukemia and her father (2007.2):

<http://youtu.be/TgicI2pjzw8> #시각

Related to The Guardian article above, this video, posted by the Left-wing South Korean website Minjung Sori [Voice of the People], shows Yu Mi in the final months of her life, as well as her father, explaining how she became ill and their views of the case and other workers who had also caught similarly exotic and lethal cancers.

Peter Ward, 워드 피터 @rpcward89 Feb 10

A close ally of the president involved in Slave Labour scandal at African museum http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/623468.html ... #시각

The *Hankyoreh* has recently reported on the case of a number of African dancers and artists who allege that they were forced to work for less than the South Korean minimum wage at the Africa Museum in Pocheon, Gyeonggi Province. The case came to light after the victims protested outside the New Frontier Party's (the ruling party) offices in Yeouido in the heart of Seoul. It has garnered much attention in the opposition-minded parts of the press because of the fact that the Museum is headed by Hong Mong-jong, a representative from the ruling party and a close ally of President Park Geun-hye.

Peter Ward, 워드 피터 @rpcward89 Feb 10

RT @ohmynews_korea; The living conditions of African workers at the Africa Museum connected to presidential ally <http://omn.kr/6q38> #시각

OhmyNews has also picked up the story of the African artists and dancers forced to work in conditions akin to slave labor. This story – with video and numerous pictures – documents the cramped, mice-infested living space of these skilled foreign workers, as well as the dreadful state of their food supply. The victims themselves and the article make it clear where they think the blame for this lies: Hong Mong-jong, close ally of the president; the Museum authorities have denied any connection between Hong (the at least nominal leader of the institution) and the working and living conditions of these people.

Sherri Ter Molen 세리 @DaeSherri Feb 17

MT @Diplomat_APAC Former Japanese Prime Minister Meets Comfort Women <http://ow.ly/tGp11> #SouthKorea #NorthKorea #시각

In early February, Former Japanese Prime Minister, Tomiichi Murayama met with Korean comfort women in Seoul where [he admitted](#) that Japan is guilty of “indescribable wrongdoings” and where he told the South Korean parliament that Japan must reconcile its grievous past. These were significant moments since the ways wars themselves are [remembered and commemorated](#) differ across borders for cultural, ideological, and political reasons and since responsibilities for wartime atrocities are sometimes [contested](#). Media such as [CNN](#) and [Wall Street Journal](#) continually remind us that the number of aging survivors is dwindling. Yet, civic, governmental, and media pressure combined has not been enough to sway the Abe administration.

Sherri Ter Molen 세리 @DaeSherri Feb 17

Petition: Make the High School Curriculum More Inclusive of Japanese War Crimes in WWII <http://ow.ly/tGIHH> #시각

An online petition was created on January 19, 2014 on a [White House website](#) asking the US government to require high schools to teach students about Japan's alleged wartime atrocities. The petition ([no longer available](#) but preserved for the moment [here](#)) specifically mentions the “comfort women” issue, Japan's sexual enslavement of primarily Korean women during WWII, and a [hot button topic](#) between the Korean peninsula and Japan. As Steven Denney has written, the South Korean central government's Ministry of Education has [made a myriad of changes](#) to textbooks, sparking a controversial debate over the government's “[ideological bias](#).” But, the United States has already taken a stance on the comfort women issue by [urging Japan](#) to “acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility” for its actions. Regardless, however, the petition is unlikely to achieve any of its associated goals. US textbooks are chosen at the state level (e.g. [North Carolina](#) or [Texas](#)), and the federal government [does not have the authority](#) to mandate comfort women education across America.

Sherri Ter Molen 세리 @DaeSherri Feb 17

#SKorea's Response to Human Rights Abuses in #NKorea: An Analysis of Policy Options (2013) <http://ow.ly/tGmyE> via @EastWestCenter #시각

Long before the United Nations' Commission of Inquiry on North Korean Human Rights released its condemning report in February 2014, the international community [was quite aware](#) of the DPRK's alleged crimes against humanity. In regards to North Korea, the East-West Center recommended [four guiding principles](#) to the incoming Park Geun-hye administration in 2013, and Sino-NK offered a set of [twelve policy recommendations](#) as well. Park had originally "[promised to engage and build trust with Pyongyang](#)," and she was put to the test even before her term began when the [DPRK expressed its desire](#) to send a delegation to attend her inauguration. The relationship between the two Korean states over the first year of President Park's term was [rocky](#), however, and [South Korea's support](#) of the United Nations' inquiry may not have helped.

Sherri Ter Molen 세리 @DaeSherri Feb 18

MT @globalvoices #SouthKorea: Being Native English Teacher & Reverse Racism <http://ow.ly/tGoVR> #education #시각

In mid-February, Global Voices posted a blurb to its site from Geoffrey Fattig's [Jeollamite blog](#) in which he points out the privileges he and other (especially [white](#)) natives of English speaking countries enjoy as teachers in South Korea. At the same time, he points out how "obviously racist Koreans can be," particularly against black people. Darcie Draudt and Brian Gleason have discussed how [some attractive](#) North Korean refugees have been able to harness the power of their beauty to become "feminine participants with agency" on a South Korean television program known as *Now on My Way to Meet You*, and they have also noted the role that [appearance](#) plays overall as part of refugee strategies for becoming assimilated into South Korean society. Therefore, Fattig's post raises questions not just about inequities of race but also about the relationships between perceived attractiveness and power in a country where it [often expected](#) that appearance is uniform.

Contributors: Christopher Green (@Dest_Pyongyang); Steven Denney (@StevenDenney86); Peter Ward (@rpcward89); and Sherri Ter Molen (@DaeSherri). All Tweets cited above can be found on Twitter at [#시각](#).