

Presidential candidates must present plans for building peace through dialogue and trust, not military expansion

1. Yoon Suk-yeol has been impeached. Throughout his term, Yoon — who advocated for "peace through strength" and designated Democratic People's Republic of Korea as the "main enemy" — exploited the division system and heightened tensions on the Korean Peninsula for political gain, even at the risk of a localized conflict. Despite insufficient tax revenues, he increased defense spending and fixated on an endless cycle of confrontation. Meanwhile, peace vanished entirely, and the two Koreas spiraled into repeated cycles of hostility and standoffs. All dialogue channels were severed, and even the September 19 Military Agreement—which served as a safety pin to prevent armed clashes—was scrapped. Repeated psychological warfare and military drills near the border have severely endangered the peaceful survival rights of residents in those areas. Yoon Suk-yeol's "peace through strength" policy has utterly failed.
2. Yet calls for "peace through strength" persist. In the early presidential election driven by public demand, candidates are emphasizing "strong defense capabilities," claiming that "K-defense industries are future growth sectors." Some even advocate for nuclear armament as a part of their pledge, including developing nuclear submarines and acquiring nuclear deterrence, arguing that "We must respond to nuclear threats with nuclear weapons." These are reckless and dangerous proposals.
3. Failed policies must not be repeated. History shows that confrontation and military solutions have never brought peace to the Korean Peninsula. Instead, they have heightened conflict, fueled arms races, and made peace even more elusive. One reason the 2018 peace process faltered was the Moon Jae-in administration's failure to build trust while simultaneously increasing military spending. Any candidate genuinely seeking peace must abandon the failed "peace through strength" approach and stop perpetuating the pattern of military expansion seen across successive administrations. They must urgently ease border tensions, create conditions for dialogue, and build mutual trust, to break this vicious cycle with bold peace strategies.
4. Globally, nations are ramping up military spending under the guise of "security," yet this has only fueled an unprecedented level of conflicts and instability. Last year alone, more than 230,000 people died in armed conflicts, and forced displacement reached a record high. This year, the Doomsday Clock was moved to 89 seconds to midnight-closer than ever due to combined threats of climate crises and nuclear risks. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's *2024 Trends in*

World Military Expenditure, global military spending reached a historic high of \$2.718 trillion (~~₩~~3.91 quadrillion), with the Republic of Korea ranking 11th worldwide.

5. On the Global Day of Action on Military Spending, we emphasize that increased military spending leads only to more arms races and corporate profits — not to peace. True peace begins by abandoning the obsession with military dominance and instead fostering dialogue and trust. Public funds should be directed toward addressing climate crises, social safety nets, and building peace — not producing weapons. We reiterate our opposition to making lethal arms a "growth industry," as they only escalate violence and instability. Never exploit wars beyond our borders into economic gain.
6. Pope Francis, who recently passed away, pleaded until his final breath: "War is never a solution to conflict," and "true disarmament is essential for peace." Presidential election candidates must urgently propose concrete measures to end the arms race, reduce tensions, and build peace through dialogue. Rather than making irresponsible pledges for nuclear armament, they must present clear and actionable plans to eliminate nuclear risks and prevent nuclear war.

April 28th, 2025

2025 Global Days of Action on Disarmament Campaign in the ROK

Civilian Military Watch, Green Korea United, Pax Christi Korea (PCK), PEACEMOMO,
People's Solidarity Participatory Democracy(PSPD), Korea-Vietnam Peace Foundation,
World Without War

Translated by PEACEMOMO