

ECAAR Takes Issues of 'Peace and Security' to Seoul

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ECAAR was represented by a panel of speakers at a Korean conference on Globalization, Handshake or Fist. This October conference of non-governmental organizations held in Seoul was convened by the president of Kyung Hee University and the NGOs linked with the United Nations. With an opening address by President Kim Dae-Jung and closing by the First Lady, the event included Asian dancers, musicians, acrobats, singers and folk artists linking the concepts of Culture and Peace.

The Conference worked in 10 areas. ECAAR's panel was part of the section on Peace and Security with four speakers: Akira Hattori, of ECAAR-Japan, Dorrie Weiss, the event organizer, Jong-II You, a Harvard and Cambridge educated economist who is an advisor on economic public policy in Korea, and L. Eudora Pettigrew, president of the arms control commission of the United Nations and the International Association of University Presidents. The panel was moderated by Ambassador Jonathan Dean, Union of Concerned Scientists advisor on arms control.

The panelists considered the impact of globalization on social and economic institutions; the role of the United Nations in a world where borders are blurring and issues of sovereignty are increasingly irrelevant; the question of whether increased homogenization will be an impetus for peace or simply destroy old cultures without providing values to replace them; and whether new technologies that make globalization possible prove to be a comfort or a scourge to humankind.

Panelists also discussed the flow of information and ways information can be manipulated. In Japan, for example, where there will be no laws until 2001 addressing freedom of information, secrecy about certain government figures prohibits people from assessing official assistance to developing countries.

This lack of transparency is a major factor in the near collapse of the Japanese pension system and in the huge debts accrued by major corporations. Information technology was cited by one panelist as a possible threat to world peace because of the ease with which it can transform itself into information warfare. A frightening array of information weapons have been developed, ranging from extraordinary surveillance tools, intelligence intercepts and satellite eavesdropping, to sophisticated hacking that can disrupt power grids, banking systems, airport control, and emergency response lines. Because of the anonymity afforded the perpetrators and the lack of global law, it is hard to know where attacks originate and hard to prosecute offenders.

Economists for Peace and Security

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