Wrestling with Shadows

A Novel

By

Emanuel Pastreich
Wrestling with Shadows

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Wrestling with Shadows

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University of Illinois proposal
Summary

Emanuel Pastreich was a recently-appointed assistant professor at the University of Illinois in April 2000 and looking for research and/or writing opportunities when he happened to attend a demonstration of the new online learning technology that had been developed there. Pastreich was deeply impressed by the opportunity distance learning offered for cooperation with his academic colleagues in Asia and started brainstorming. Within a few weeks, he had a proposal for shared courses online, joint research and other institutional collaboration between University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and the leading research institutes in East Asia: University of Tokyo, Seoul National University, and Peking University. Although those universities in Asia would not normally see University of Illinois as a partner, the idea was so original, and the technology at University of Illinois so advanced, that Pastreich decided to throw himself into the project.

Pastreich had a command of the Chinese, Japanese and Korean languages from his training, and his personal connections with top administrators at these prestigious universities in Japan, Korea, and China allowed him to advance his plan rapidly.

By June of 2000, Pastreich had finished complex proposals in all three languages customized to the needs and concerns of each university. He had cultivated a broad range of supporters across various departments at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, from the schools of engineering, law, agriculture and business. Those academic units granted him more than enough funding to visit Asia to discuss the proposal, and to pursue this plan through a series of online seminars starting that fall.

But something went terribly wrong with the project. Pastreich’s department head at East Asian Languages and Cultures, and the dean of Liberal Arts suddenly refused to fund his trip to Asia, or even to discuss the proposal with him after June, although they had been big supporters previously. The opposition made no sense at all.
Nevertheless, Pastreich managed to secure the necessary funding to travel to Korea, China, and Japan in July, where his proposals were welcomed at all three schools. The enthusiasm at Seoul National University was the greatest, followed by Peking University and University of Tokyo.

Pastreich then returned to the University of Illinois expecting to receive a hero’s welcome for his success, and to discuss the next step in this distance learning project. He discovered, however, that his department head had responded to an interview in the school paper about the trip with uncharacteristic criticism. Moreover, he refused to even meet with Pastreich to discuss the project after he returned from abroad.

It made no sense that the department of East Asian Studies would oppose a proposal that had support across the entire campus at the University of Illinois, as well as in three major Asian universities. Something else was going on.

Pastreich thought that perhaps the dean was jealous of the power of the school of engineering, which could have played a major role in the project, or maybe he was not eager to allow a junior professor to get so much attention. But those scenarios seemed out of character and unconvincing.

The truth was that Pastreich had stumbled into a fight far above his pay grade. The opposition from his department head was mandated by a classified, and illegal operation undertaken by a FBI/CIA team and had nothing to do with him personally.

The operation had been launched under extraordinary circumstances, to destroy the proposal, and, if necessary, to destroy Pastreich’s career, so as to make sure that his ideas and calls for cooperation between the United States and Asia never saw the light of day.

Pastreich’s proposal included not only suggestions for internet learning, but also comprehensive solutions to geopolitical issues like Korean unification and US relations with China that found resonance with many policy makers in those countries. The Chinese, Japanese and Korean versions had been broadly circulated in the three countries.
Those proposals were deeply threatening to certain politicians and military planners in the United States who had decided (at precisely the moment that President Clinton was trying to normalize relations with North Korea) that there would be no limit to how far they would go to make sure that North Korea was perceived as an enemy and China was perceived as a potential enemy that could never be a reliable partner.

This campaign was judged to be necessary to maintain the US military presence in Asia and to prop up an unequal relationship between the United States with its allies in East Asia. Hundreds of billions of dollars were at stake.

A secret team from the FBI, with CIA (and perhaps NSA) input was assigned to Pastreich to subtly undermine the project from April.

The powerful forces in the military industrial complex (not the active military, which was sympathetic) could not stop the momentum generated by the project because the proposal was exciting, potentially lucrative (distance learning would ultimately become a multi-billion industry) and the first steps towards implementation were taken by groups in Korea, Japan and China over which US operatives had little control.

Over time, however, the team was able to squash the proposal, but not without considerable effort.

From August 2000, faculty and administrators were explicitly instructed to stay away from Pastreich by the team, either directly or implicitly. His department head was ordered to take a series of steps meant to isolate him from his colleagues. As the fight within the Pentagon (for and against the initiative for reconciliation with North Korea) heated up, Pastreich became a focus of attention in Washington, D.C., unbeknownst to him at the time.

Things came to a head when a right-wing faction of the military seized power in December 2000 in the aftermath of the catastrophic election. This action was in part related to Pastreich’s efforts. The actions against Pastreich were taken to a new level.

Almost no one at the university would meet with him or speak with him.
When the Bush administration appointed extremists to major positions in the military and intelligence, they were ready to take drastic measures against Pastreich as a warning to other recalcitrant factions in government and academics.

They waited for the right moment.

That moment came when a Chinese newspaper published an article that Pastreich had written advocating for a new peace regime in Northeast Asia on February 24, 2001. This vision of a common community anchored by a partnership between the US and China was the last straw for the “China threat” lobby. Orders went down that Pastreich was to be “suicided” immediately. Although George W. Bush was supposedly the source for this order, Bush had no personal animus against Pastreich. He had no choice but to respond to demands from factions in the military industrial complex.

If not for arguments by Colin Powell and others, Pastreich would likely have been killed. In the end, those wishing to destroy Pastreich had to be content with subjecting him to constant death threats and low-level harassment for four years (and limits on his career opportunities for a lifetime) as a warning to others.

Pastreich’s father came in February to visit the son whom he had been told was suffering from mental illness. His father was led to believe that all the problems his son had told him about were brought about by delusional behavior as a result of a brain tumor he had had removed years before. An elaborate fairy tale had been fabricated for friends and family.

Pastreich was dragged to the hospital when his father arrived, whereupon he was certified as mentally ill without a single medical test. He was forced to go through unnecessary treatments, including being administered anti-psychotic medication, without having had any medical evaluations.

A funny thing happened in his meetings with the neurologist at the hospital assigned to treat him. The doctor showed no interest in his health at all. Instead, he asked him for his opinions about the future of American security, even requesting to see his papers describing his ideas.

The meetings with the neurologists became briefings on geopolitics and then expanded to be discussions of how to respond to the totalitarian rule of the Bush
administration. By April of 2001, Pastreich put forth proposals for how to restore the rule of law in the United States and became, in many respects, the individual around whom organized opposition to the Bush administration crystalized. That group was instrumental in slowly clawing back control and was poised to move to the next step on September 11, 2001.

Pastreich did not know who the individuals were to whom he offered opinions, but he did have occasional opportunities to talk with important figures. For the most part, however, he was radically isolated from everyone at the university and in the United States.

He was put in the bizarre position of being under house arrest and subject to death threats, and at the same time being regarded as a significant figure in US domestic and international policy.

From February 2001 until the Summer of 2002, Pastreich was on medical leave for mental illness. After April of 2002, he was given greater freedom, although few people were willing to meet with him. He was allowed to teach again in 2003 (after 18 months of disability). He was given another chance to try for tenure review in 2004.

Pastreich had occasion to give talks in 2003, and was even granted an opportunity to spend two months in Japan for research in 2004. It seemed for a moment that he was on the way to recovering his career.

The illegal shutdown of the 2004 election, however, removed many of Pastreich’s defenders from government. Although he was not subject to death threats anymore, Pastreich was denied tenure (in spite of strong qualifications) and dismissed from the University of Illinois in December 2004.

Pastreich applied for hundreds of jobs, in teaching positions at major universities, part-time positions at community colleges, and other jobs at companies and NGOs working with Asia. He was not granted a single interview. In most cases, his applications were never acknowledged.

There was one exception. He was offered, in writing, a position as an intelligence officer at the CIA.
This offer, which may not have been serious, was possible because the CIA was the only organization in the United States with units capable of defying the Bush administration. This job offer was enough for Pastreich to decide to move to Washington D.C., which he thought might offer better opportunities than rural Illinois.

He spent two months unemployed in Washington D.C., and that job offer inevitably fell through, too. He sent his family to Korea to live with his in-laws and stayed in a tiny room at one of his cousin’s place.

When Pastreich was unexpectedly invited to deliver a talk on Capitol Hill in February 2005, he was approached by a diplomat from the Korean Embassy, and a Korean reporter who said they would try to convince the new Korean ambassador to hire him.

Pastreich was eventually granted a low-paying position at the Korean embassy (which is not legally US territory) and managed to survive for two years in Washington D.C. working there.

Ultimately, he could not find any other work in the United States and agreed to take a teaching position at a small university in Korea in 2007.

After a difficult start, he reestablished himself as an academic and moved on to the more prominent Kyung Hee University in 2011. He was never granted tenure, however. He preferred writing books for a popular audience, and articles for newspapers. For a while from 2014-2016 he was quite successful in Korea, but never recognized in the US, or invited to conferences. Occasional applications for US jobs were completely ignored.

Pastreich moved to a smaller college in Korea in 2018 when it was clear he was not going to be granted tenure at Kyung Hee University. He made plans to return to Washington D.C. in response to the desires of his family members from 2019.

He moved back in the summer of 2019, and obtained contract work with the Korean Embassy and Korean Economic Institute (KEI) was not sufficient for him to live on in the expensive environment of Northern Virginia.
Things came to a head with the start of the Covid-19 crisis when his contract with the Korean Embassy was cancelled and he was yet again unemployed, this time for two months, unable to even find translation work.

He was forced to return to Seoul where there was at least hope for employment. It would be five months before he had an income again.

In the process, he was separated from his wife and children, and forced into debt.

Pastreich declared himself an independent candidate for president in February of 2020 while in Washington D.C., in response to this extreme political persecution that he was again being subjected to.

He felt he had no choice but to take such an unanticipated big step if he hoped to survive.

With time on his hands, he wrote and delivered a series of speeches that sketched out a revolutionary shift in American economic and security policy.

Although the campaign was blocked in the US and the rest of the world, by US secret law and classified advisories (like most of his activities), Pastreich did manage to get some coverage in the Korean media, and to a lesser degree in the Vietnamese media. His fifteen speeches were carefully crafted, and the transcripts made a deep impression on many people in the United States.

Eventually, a book based on these speeches was published in Korean in Seoul (then in Spanish in Mexico City). Versions in Japanese, Chinese and Vietnamese were also released.

Pastreich wrote more speeches, and he wrote powerful articles for Global Research (the only outlet that would publish his writings) that gained a large following.

He used what money he had to translate his book into German, Turkish, French, Persian, Polish, Romanian, Russian and other languages, and launched an elaborate website, pastreichprez.com, for his campaign that helped garner him a broad following around the world.
Also, Pastreich wrote an article defending Donald Trump in a balanced manner after the ambiguous election of Joe Biden that helped him gain an even wider audience.

He threw himself into the campaign with a new seriousness from March 2021. There was an odd parallel between the battles to build a base of support across Asia for his vision for American leadership in 2000 and 2001 and this new, and unprecedented effort to carry out a global campaign for president of the United States of America. By autumn, however, the scale of the battle was overwhelming and the threat was grim. Pastreich took the next step of establishing a provisional government of the United States in June, 2021 and setting up an International Revolutionist Party in August, 2021 that would become the core institutions for his continuing battle.

In any case, not a single person stepped forward during those twenty years to demand a discussion of what had been done to Pastreich in the United States, let alone to demand an investigation, other than Pastreich himself.
**Introduction**

After twenty-one years, I can now look back on the troubles that started in July of 2000 with a detached and even slightly amused perspective. Of course, the tale that I am going to tell involves a series of odd coincidences and unusual events that occurred during discussions with people in Asia and the United States in 2000 about the future of education, discussions that unexpectedly propelled me forward to the geopolitical frontline in a manner that set me on course toward confrontations I had never intended. I have come to believe that some sort of confrontation was inevitable in my career, granted certain characteristics of my personality. At the same time, I feel that I can easily prove the profound illegality, and immorality, of the actions taken against me, and the shameful participation in that process by colleagues, friends, and family.

I had an odd way of looking at my career. I was interested in changing entire systems, not in making progressive modifications to existing institutions, and I did so as someone who likes processes, and who makes friends easily with bureaucrats and administrators. I was also not all that interested in my own career, or my own pay. I assumed that I would be taken care of if the larger mission were successful.

My underlying message was radical change, yet at the same time, change with a respect for the work that the people around me did. That approach meant that I was not easily dismissed as a fanatic or a dreamer, and at the same time, intriguing and exciting to many who longed for real institutional change. In other words, I was in a position to actually change things in a sleepy and hidebound institution like the University of Illinois.
There was something fundamentally wrong with how I approached my career in the year 2000. I wanted to do something different. I had no desire to aim for a particular career goal or strive to reach a particularly lofty position. I didn't even desire to get in with the most powerful people at the University of Illinois. Instead, I had a dream to create something unique in a rather ordinary, but quite powerful university. This approach alone was enough to make me a serious threat—although it would take six months for me to figure out what had happened.

One morning in 2000, I sat down at my desk in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and started drafting out a proposal for the future of the university in the age of the internet. The world became a tidal pool full of possibilities in my head. Starting with my neck of the woods, Asian studies, I set down a long-term plan for fixing the educational system of our country. I suggested new rules, new cultural standards, and even new approaches to international relations as part of this proposal. My concept of the future of the university was broad, but the description of the potential of distance learning was compelling, and I was able to communicate it easily to others.

Although money and credit never came to me for that proposal, I found that the potential was endless precisely because I did not demand ownership. There was a line frequently employed by President Harry Truman cited in David McCullough’s biography of Harry Truman (which I had read in 1999) that stuck with me: “It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit.” Although I would later learn that Truman was less of a saint than I had been taught, those words were an initial inspiration that undergirded the strategy I would develop in the summer of 2000.
Unfortunately, this was not the course of action you were supposed to take as an ambitious young man in the United States. You were supposed to pursue your own goals of becoming an established figure in the established establishment. In my field, that meant becoming a professor at Harvard, a dean, or maybe even a senator if I went for the political track. Throwing yourself into policy in the most general sense without some immediate benefit for oneself was not logical. That approach meant that at the University of Illinois, and in the United States, I occupied a space in policy and planning that was wide open. I was alone in trying to respond to the exponential advancement of the internet in a positive and ethical manner through applied incremental policies at all levels.

Individuals like the president (of the University of Illinois or the United States) were supposed to be doing this job, but their focus was on cultivating relations to advance their own goals, and assure they were wealthy when they retired. I began to realize as I progressed that I could have a far greater impact than what anyone could have imagined as an assistant professor of Japanese literature.

I invested my time in the greater good and was convinced that eventually it would pay off in a big way. Some individuals were engaged in strategic planning, but their overall goal was always for money and expansion. I was not exceptionally skilled at academic politics at the beginning, but the experience would make me quite capable by the end. I leave it to the reader to judge what my achievements and failures were. Let me only say that I both believed that my ideas were transformational and that they would be taken up by those above me and implemented (with or without credit for me). I had no idea that I would myself become the center of attention while at the same time becoming a taboo subject in conversation.
Self Confidence

The ambition of Hortense Cohan was the first factor that pushed me onto this odd trajectory. Hortense Cohan was my grandmother, a major force in my early life, even though I did not spend much time with her. Of course, I learned much from my mother, a thoughtful woman with artistic ability and a deep understanding of human nature, and from my father, a focused administrator and who ran complex organizations with remarkable effectiveness.

But it was my grandmother who held on to an incredible level of ambition for her family, especially for her children and grandchildren. It would be fair to say that among her grandchildren, she had locked on to me as the key to the future.

My grandmother was born as the daughter of Manny Cohan, a self-appointed and self-made patriarch who ran a metal plating business during the Second World War and managed to accumulate a small fortune. He was successful in the 1950s, but most of his riches were lost soon after. It was my grandmother’s greater goal, as a quite sophisticated thinker, to take the family to the next level. She put enormous effort into raising her three sons for success, but above all her oldest son Peter Pastreich, my father, who showed such potential from childhood.

Hortense Cohan believed that my father was invincible and exceptionally talented. She pushed him to strive for the very best and he responded. When he was admitted to Yale and Harvard in 1955 at the age of 16, he was a rare phenomenon even among the ambitious young Jewish boys in Brooklyn. Despite his Jewish background, and lack of connections to old families, my father set out to prove himself as a capable individual among the establishment WASPs. And
occasionally he made himself a central figure in a cultural and political sense. He started out as executive director of the St. Louis Symphony, and later established himself as a central figure in symphony management as a CEO of the San Francisco Symphony. He was also widely read, an excellent writer and an effective speaker who intimidated me as a child not so much because of his harsh words (although he was capable of such expressions) but because I thought I could never achieve the sort of competence that he had.

As the oldest son of the oldest son, I was the natural object of my grandmother’s attention. I shared certain key character traits with my father, especially the habit of systematic planning for my own career, and for the building of personal relations and the construction of institutions. Whether it was true or not, my grandmother perceived me as extraordinary. My grandmother spoke to me with a seriousness, delivering her words with an anticipation of what I might achieve. It was as if I was on a mission, and she was my leader. She expected me to read broadly, to engage deeply in my work, and to become a central figure in the world. It did not matter that I did not see her often because I knew she had put such faith in me.

My grandmother was not the only individual who had such influence on me. My mother’s older sister, Jeanne Rouff, encouraged me to be ambitious, to work hard, and strive for more from early on. Jeanne Rouff became the first female lawyer, judge, and supreme court justice in Luxembourg as part of a long battle against innumerable obstacles in a conservative society. She also saw me as the child in my generation who could in the future achieve something similar to her, and said so explicitly. Aunt Jeanne had the habit of asking me serious questions about politics and economics, and then listen with great attention to my responses as if I were a judge or professor. I think that she wanted me to feel that
I was entitled to be taken seriously, and that I had an obligation to be diligent in my work. For many years, my Aunt Jeanne’s career was a model for me of what true success should be.

Those two women gave me concrete hints as to how to plan for my own development and I never looked back. My application to Yale was entirely according to my own plan with little help from family and friends, as was my strategy to learn Chinese, and then Japanese and Korean, in order to be positioned to play a critical role in the United States as the international community tipped towards the East. Finding a good position at a law firm or making money was not important to me. My focus was on my position. Even as a young college student, I was thinking about what direction the world should go, making up plans for the United States of America that went beyond anything that politicians or diplomats spent their time on.

The complete confidence that my grandmother had in me, and that my parents had in me when I was young, created a confidence that could not be easily shaken. I would later come up with my own ideas about what the future of the United States should be, and pursued those goals without any reinforcement or social approval for long periods of time, because I was so certain of my judgement. Efforts to isolate and intimidate me were ineffective.

**Mortality**

Throughout the course of this story that I am telling you, I had to make many decisions by myself, and some of them were very risky. They were risky for my career and for my safety. To this day I do not know whether the death threats to me and my family were serious, or merely harassment, but these threats
seemed quite real at the time. I lived for years with the fear that I might not survive for long. Yet the multiple death threats I had been given did not slow me down. Whether I was cut off from family and friends or subject to intimidation campaigns, there was nothing that would stop me from following my plan.

With hindsight, I am thankful for those traumatic experiences in that they made me tougher and more creative. But there was also something rather odd about my behavior at the time. I watched my colleagues and my family abandon me as the threat level soared. Yet I was unmoved. I was not particularly frightened by risks that terrified those around me who had grown up in a prosperous and stable America.

Something set me apart from other educated upper middle-class professionals in the American society of 2000. I think that it was a profound awareness of my own mortality. I was a bit morbid in elementary school. I enjoyed reading gloomy books about death and destruction, and I dwelled on death. Whether it was the Holocaust, or the German campaign at Stalingrad, I buried myself in those books.

My own death was a topic that fascinated me. There was a reason. When I was five years old, my parents took me to the hospital one day without explanation. To this day, I can still vividly remember the visit. The events leading up to my eventual surgery involved multiple meetings with experts, after my mother had felt a protruding bulge up in my stomach. I was subjected to a series of tests, including a painful spinal tap. This visit turned into an overnight stay, and then preparations for surgery. I never received an explanation. At the age of five, this experience was foreign to me and so was the idea of surgery.

There was an enlarged ganglion on my spine, which turned out to be non-
cancerous. My parents had been told that the odds of a cancerous tumor were higher than of a benign one. My five-day vacation at the hospital was a bit of a blur, but I was aware that something was seriously wrong. My understanding of the technical side of surgery was vague, but I sensed that something of grave importance had occurred. To this day, I do believe that the experience altered the manner in which I perceived the world.

No one knew at that time that the ganglion on my spine wasn’t the entire story. I also had a tumor on the right frontal lobe in my brain. We do not know when it first formed, but quite probably at the same time.

The brain tumor didn’t act up for decades and I was unaware of its existence. It was only when I was studying in Korea in 1995, at the age of 31, that I started having odd experiences. I would fall asleep in the afternoon and have vivid dreams. They were brief, but many of my dreams seemed to be distant memories from my childhood otherwise completely forgotten. I felt an odd nausea after these dream sequences.

These dream episodes increased over time. My father introduced me to a psychologist who specialized in dreams, and she gave me a fascinating interpretation. Yet there was no suggestion that there might be a neurological cause for my experience.

In the spring of 1999, during my second year of teaching at the University of Illinois, I went to see the doctor for a regular check-up. At the end of my visit, he asked me if there were any other matters that I wanted to discuss. I mentioned the odd dream sequences I had occasionally experienced, and he recommended that I have an EEG done the next day. My results showed irregularities and an MRI was ordered.
The neurologist put the MRI up on a display for me after the scan was complete and declared in a very matter-of-fact manner that I had a brain tumor on my right temporal lobe. I felt a bit light-headed when I heard his words and I had to sit down. After a semester in Japan on anti-seizure medications, I had brain surgery in August of 1999 at UCSF Hospital. My surgeon was a young Korean-American doctor who worked under the famous Mitchel Berger, whom my father had cultivated a relationship with so that I could get the best treatment possible. My surgery ended up being successful, but, beforehand, I was fully aware that it could have killed or crippled me. Since the surgery had gone smoothly the doctor decided to release me the next day. Although I had some trouble with sleep, I was in fine shape to start teaching at the University of Illinois the following September. Life seemed to have gone back to normal quite quickly.

I did not think that this experience with my own mortality would change me, but it did in a fundamental manner. My purpose and my goals began to shift. I did not give up ambition, but money or status became far less important. I was more concerned with the role of an intellectual in modern society.

Because the brain tumor could not be removed completely (it abutted my motor pathways critical for coordination) a tiny piece was left behind that served to remind me of my own mortality. My sleep patterns were disrupted for years, and, occasionally, I would receive an odd sensation throughout my body. It felt as if I were perceiving the world in a new and rather unfamiliar way. Additionally, I lost stamina. I had less endurance when exercising.

After 2011, I detected an occasional numbness in my right foot and thereafter a slow decline in my coordination. Doctors told me that the scar tissue from the surgery had hardened and begun to impinge on my coordination. The slow decline in coordination continued thereafter.
My health contributed to my decision to confront the dangerous powers described in this story. I was ready to repeatedly put myself in positions of considerable risk because I had decided that it would be fine if I were abused, marginalized, humiliated, or even killed. I think I was rare among academics, or among individuals in general who were involved in international relations at the time of the Bush administration takeover, in my willingness to take risks.

My interactions with the military and intelligence community described herein were not a product of any particular desire to enter into that field. But, rather, they were the result of the grotesque failure of an entire class of educated upper-middle class Americans to take even a minimal risk for the sake of transparent governance. To this day, I am not certain as to why I was different from my colleagues, but I have suspected that my own experiences with illness and my profound sense of mortality were contributing factors.

It is also important to note that the partial complex seizures themselves may have been conducive to the unusual reasoning that I used in the formulation of my internet-based education plan, and its implementation. Partial complex seizures encourage interactions between parts of the brain that otherwise do not interact and can result in unexpected conclusions or reasoning. Moreover, such seizures can lead one to have a mystic sense of purpose or of vision that can be inspiring or compelling. I would not want to overemphasize the impact of seizures on my project, but they may well have been a factor.
Study of the Classical literature of China, Japan, and Korea

There are very few Americans who are fluent in any Asian language, let alone two or more. Although I consider myself to be far from native, my proficiency in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean was considerable at the time I started drafting my proposal for internet instruction in the spring of 2000. Secondly, because of my comparative approach to literature of the 18th century, I had close relations with important scholars in China, Japan, and Korea. When I started to introduce my proposal, I was able to send emails to scholars at major universities in which I described the project, and its significance, in these three languages. Those emails also included complex discussions of culture and contemporary politics. The customization of the messages that was possible because of my command of the languages played a significant role in the promotion of my project.

I was often miffed when people referred to me as someone who spoke fluent Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. I felt that learning languages was never my goal, but only a result of my approach to understanding Asia from within, as well as holistically. Learning Asian languages with high proficiency had been a critical element of my strategy from the start.

1979 was a critical year for my life because I made the decision to move to San Francisco to live with my father. I thought the educational opportunities there would serve me better, especially because my father was more stable financially. This meant that I could potentially attend a better university. Once I settled into my new home, I started studies at Lowell High School. This public school was very competitive, and they did a good job at placing students in Ivy League colleges. I give credit to my father for sending me there. Although learning an Asian language at Lowell was an option, I was not that interested.
yet. However, I had many close friends who were familiar with Asian culture because my high school was 70% Asian-American. Asian culture was alien to my family, but it became quite familiar to me through socialization. These experiences meant that this was not just a fascination with the exotic that I acquired later in life.

My first semester at Yale University in 1983 I enrolled in a French literature class. Both of my parents had studied French literature, and I had taken Advanced Placement French in High School. This Yale course, oddly, was rather difficult for me. Not only because the reading load was large, but because I was not motivated. If I had stuck with that course, I am sure that eventually I would have hit my pace. I wanted to do something different but was not sure what.

I decided to drop the course and so I started flipping through all the classes offered in the course catalog after dinner. After reading over the descriptions, and making lists of intriguing courses to attend, I finally decided that the most appealing course was Classical Chinese Literature in Translation. The course was taught by Kang-I Sun, a very enthusiastic young professor who had just finished her Ph.D. at Princeton University. It was her first semester teaching in the position once held by Stephen Owen, who had just moved to Harvard (and would later become my adviser). Professor Sun took me under her wing and encouraged me to take the course, and to study Chinese. She also took time to read with me various ancient Chinese poems and to discuss the details of Chinese philosophy.

Learning Chinese felt completely right, as if it was a mission granted to me. Yale was a unique environment for what I was trying to do. There were few students in the major of Chinese literature and the faculty had the time to spend with us. I started to feel a sense of mission about my work, as if I would be the next generation of Asia expert, and I frequently stopped by the offices to meet with the professors and learn about Chinese language.

The head of the Chinese language program was a distinguished woman by the name of Vivien Lu who also took many, many hours to help me learn the Chinese characters and Chinese language. The product of a highly educated Chinese family who had come to the United States in the 1950s, she immediately
The turning point in my sense of mission came when I read a book entitled, *1587: A Year of No Significance*, by Ray Huang, as part of my broad readings about China over the summer. The author of the book chose a series of important intellectuals from the Ming Dynasty and showed how their gallant efforts to reform the bloated Ming Dynasty bureaucracy were frustrated and ultimately unsuccessful.

It was the date 1587 from that book that stuck in my mind for years after. Hwang argued that the critical turning point for the all-powerful Ming Dynasty was the otherwise insignificant year of 1587 when the system started to come undone. And there I was preparing to graduate from Yale College in 1987. Somehow, I sensed that beneath the surface of things there was something profoundly wrong in the United States on a scale equal to that of the Ming Dynasty. I started to see shifts taking place beneath the surface after reading the book.

But I also was impressed by how the Chinese, so confident in their culture and their institutions, ignored the rise of the West in the years leading up to the Opium Wars in the 1840s that so humiliated the great empire. I wondered whether the reverse would take place this time, that Westerners would become addicted to the opium supplied by Chinese, and Western intellectuals would not make the effort to seriously learn about Asia. I felt that it was imperative that the Americans of my generation be fluent in Chinese; to know the language inside and out.

For several years I became obsessed with learning Chinese in every spare moment. I pushed myself to go to Taiwan National University through an exchange arranged with a professor of Chinese literature and to try to teach myself Chinese day and night. I fell behind from the very beginning. Although my command of Chinese was not so strong at the start, I forced myself to spend all my time with Chinese and to avoid Americans. I read dictionaries from cover to cover, and as many books and articles as possible. By the end of the year, I had reached a high level of fluency and wrote several essays in Chinese.
Learning Chinese was not a hobby for me. I felt this was my mission in life and an ethical imperative. Although I would become a professor of Asian literature, I saw some sort of service to the country as my ultimate goal.

After I returned to Yale from Taiwan as a senior, I started my study of Japanese. Japan was taking off economically at the time, and I had convinced myself that my role was not only to become a China expert, but rather an Asia expert. Japanese language was considerably different from Chinese, and Japanese classes were extremely difficult for me. In Taiwan, I had learned how to acquire languages, and I pushed myself to the limit to try to master Japanese quickly.

I graduated from Yale College in 1987 as one of just four students in the major of East Asian Languages and Literatures. I went to Middlebury College for the summer, where I was able to place into third-year Japanese. I pushed myself to enter the Inter-University Center, a one-year language program run jointly by major American universities for Japanese majors.

I wanted to stay on in Japan and master the language and culture, eventually becoming a research student at the University of Tokyo’s Department of Comparative Literature through the introduction of Professor Hirakawa Hirosuke. Again, I forced myself to speak only Japanese, to read only Japanese, and to spend all of my time around Japanese people, and I made considerable progress over 18 months. I was ultimately admitted to the M.A. program after over a year of study, and I completed the M.A. program and the first year of the Ph.D. program, including an M.A. thesis written in Japanese.

I decided to return to the United States, to Harvard University, to pursue my Ph.D. Most of the courses that I took there were in Chinese literature, although I took Japanese literature courses as well. Along the way I met many outstanding students working in Korean studies, and I thought that I should make the effort to learn Korean as well. My adviser, Stephen Owen, agreed with my idea and he helped me to get a scholarship to study in Korea for one year. After a semester of Korean at Harvard I headed to Korea for a year of study at Seoul National University.

My dissertation was ultimately about the reception of Chinese vernacular narratives in Japan and Korea, and I employed many materials in all three
languages. I felt that it was imperative that I learn these languages, and that I learn them well. The issue was not the study of literature, but rather preparation for the next era of the geopolitics, when Asia would become absolutely critical for the United States.

When I started teaching at the University of Illinois in 1998, however, I was immediately struck by the lack of opportunities for me to speak the Asian languages there. In fact, I was treated just as another regional specialist in an underfunded humanities program. It struck me as profoundly wrong that Asian languages were treated as marginal in a major university considering how important Asia had become to the global economy.

**The Consequences**

The confidence that had been instilled in me by my upbringing, and the faith that my grandmother and my parents had in me, combined with the sense of my own mortality, gave me a distinctive sense of mission and bravery that would shape my fate. The decision to focus on East Asian languages placed me in a position to articulate a vision broadly that few Americans could do.

Equally importantly, I was not afraid to put my entire academic career, and any possible promotion to Harvard on the line to put forth a complex, multinational proposal for both international cooperation in research, but also for global governance. The insistence by the senior faculty around me that I should be worried about tenure had little impact on my actions. My previous experiences gave me the confidence to follow my intuitions. I was even willing to continue that effort in the face of physical threats.
Chapter 1

The Plan for Distance Learning and the Price I Paid

It was in March of 2000 that I happened to see part of a demonstration of a distance learning class taking place in the Foreign Language building of the University of Illinois where I worked. I was an assistant professor of Japanese literature who had arrived there two years previously, and was just starting to understand how a university worked. I was amazed by the presentation. Here I saw students far away in rural Illinois taking a class at the University of Illinois, and asking questions of the teacher via a video conference in a vivid and effective manner.

I watched the class for only a few minutes, but it stuck in my mind for days. The more I thought about it, the more it seemed to me that this new technology was seriously underutilized. After all, there would not be much technical difference between teaching students online in Decatur or in Tokyo.

In part, I thought about the potential of distance learning for many hours because I missed Asia. I was teaching Japanese literature at a university, but it was far from the Asia I had come to love so much, and few around me had much interest in the issues concerning traditional, or contemporary Korea that concerned me.

I had a few friends in my department who were well-informed about Asia, but their fields were not mine, and they had little interest either in my work on 18th century intellectual history, or contemporary Asian politics. After spending so much time in Asia, all I wanted to do was to read Chinese, Japanese and Korean, and to talk with others about my work in those languages.

This use of video conferencing to bring together teachers with students, or with other teachers, over vast distances offered a tremendous opportunity. I thought that I could use the incredible advantages that the University of Illinois had in technology to connect with my friends in Asia, to conduct seminars and classes in Asian languages, and create an entirely original and exciting approach to research and teaching.
The implications of such an approach to online teaching entirely changed my thinking about my job and my work. I came to the University of Illinois in 1998 after I failed to get the job I had wanted at Harvard University because of a bureaucratic disagreement. The joint appointment between East Asian Studies and Comparative Literature departments at Harvard could not be filled because of different priorities between them. It was interesting back in the Midwest where I had grown up, but my feelings about the University of Illinois were rather ambivalent. I did not think that the Asian Studies program was strong and I planned to move on soon to a better school. But the problem was deeper than that. I had doubts that I wanted to be a professor at all. I was not that excited about academic research on classical literature, and although I found teaching stimulating at times, much of the work was rather dull.

In Korea and Japan, my friends highly valued the fact that I was an American with a high fluency in Chinese, Japanese and Korean. But at the University of Illinois, I was just a literature professor in one of the poorest and the most mismanaged parts of the University of Illinois. I thought that if I went into business, government, or some other line of work like my father, rising to be the head of some international think tank, my skills would be recognized, and I could make use of my abilities.

But as the full potential of online instruction came together in my head in April of 2000, I realized that I was at the forefront of a multi-billion-dollar revolution in education that could make me into a world leader in an entirely new approach to international exchanges. Suddenly, I did not want to be anywhere else but the University of Illinois. Not only that, but I was also ready to stay up late at night working on these plans and fight to use video conferencing and internet-based education to make Illinois into a global player. It was a once-in-a-life opportunity that could make me rich and famous and make my life more interesting.

Video conferences and other forms of electronic communication for research and teaching might allow me to work with the best people in China, Japan, and Korea. The University of Illinois was clearly a leader in both distance learning (then limited to Illinois) and in computer science and engineering. If I could use video conferencing to do innovative work in education, perhaps becoming an administrator in the process (which I thought at that time might a better match for my personality), then the potential for my career of the University of Illinois would be greater than Harvard, or even greater than what was available outside of academics. I was convinced about the potential of what I was engaged in and was completely uninterested in the arguments of senior faculty that I should
focus on my research and get tenure. Or to put it more bluntly, the University of Illinois was of tremendous value to me, but only insofar as this project offered me such potential. If I could not pursue this project, I did not want to be at the University of Illinois, or even to be a professor.

This perspective was extremely difficult for the academics around me, or others to understand. In part, the problem was that few had grasped the potential value of distance learning. But more importantly, they assumed that I was an academic and committed to the shared assumptions of academics. Those who tried to discourage me, both inside and outside the University of Illinois, assumed that threatening my tenure, suggesting that my dean or department head would be displeased, would be sufficient to get me to abandon this project. But there was literally no limit to how far I would go to make sure I was at the front of this enormous wave in higher education that I had happened to stumble on.

I started drafting a proposal for employing distance learning globally, not just as a means of providing content to students, but also as a means of allowing researchers to collaborate with each other, team-teach, conduct seminars, and develop programs. I also imagined sophisticated systems for linked research centers and laboratories that could break down tasks and then integrate them again later.

The more I wrote of the proposal, and the more I thought about what I had proposed, the stronger my feelings that I had stumbled on a concept that no one had grasped, but one that would determine my career. These trends overlapped with other developments in East Asia that had also grabbed my attention, and drew me away from classical literature and more towards international relations. The introduction of China into the World Trade Organization, and the broad engagement with North Korea in the spring and summer of 2000 suggested the real potential for a profound shift in the region and my internet-based proposal could play a role in that process as well, I thought.

I was completely committed to my project, and I spent many hours drafting and redrafting my proposal, and showing it to an increasing number of fellow faculty members in all fields. What my department head or department head thought of what I was doing was helpful, but not important.

I decided that the best way to move forward was with a consortium for cooperation in distance learning, in online seminars, and in other experiments to fully realize the potential of internet-based research and education. I thought
that there would be a positive impact on education and that such efforts would bring together the nations of Asia. Regarding the positive impact of technology, I think I was overly optimistic and did not realize the negative results of technology on society. I think, however, that if internet communications had been driven by educators, NGOs, and students, that much could have been done which was never accomplished because the ideas that I proposed were employed exclusively for profit in corporations.

I concluded that although the University of Illinois was not the most famous university in the world, it had sufficient advantages in both distance learning and in computer science to justify a proposal for working together with the best universities in East Asia. I guessed, correctly, that the gravity between those three countries created by such a proposal would be sufficient to draw the University of Illinois in, regardless of some scholars at major Asian universities. After some thought, I took the dive and decided to focus on the University of Tokyo, where I had received my M.A. degree, Peking University, where I had several close friends teaching, and Seoul National University, where I had studied for a year.

It is important to note that I had several close friends in the School of Engineering by that time. Some five months earlier I made up my mind, because of my frustrations about the lack of ambition and the stifling bureaucracy in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, to reach out to faculty in the School of Engineering, which was one of the top five in the United States. The College of Engineering had the lion’s share of the university budget and most of the famous faculty.

I went through the homepages of all the departments in the School of Engineering, and wrote short emails of introduction to those people whom I thought might be interested in working with me. I managed to correspond with about 40 faculty members with similar interests, and met in person with a few who had specific interests in Asia. I would eventually send notes to far more faculty members whom I thought might be interested in my project and received enthusiastic responses from many.

During those exchanges, I started to formulate the details of my proposal for a global distance-learning project. I found that the professors I met in the engineering school were far more enthusiastic about exploring the concept that I proposed, and their insights helped me to identify the potential value of a systematic approach to distance learning.
The progress I made in my exchanges with engineering, law, business, and other schools at the University of Illinois made my attempt to cooperate with the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences increasingly frustrating. It seemed as if my department head and other senior faculty had no interest whatsoever in what I had proposed. In the early stages, the problem had to do with a sluggishlyness in the demoralized department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, which had lost several of its best faculty recently. There was also pressure from the dean, who feared the increasing influence of the School of Engineering on liberal arts.

There were all sorts of these little bureaucratic issues, but they were entirely manageable, and I was on good terms with my dean, my associate dean, and my department head, granted that there were occasionally moments of minor tension, such as when my department head wanted me to teach several of his classes for him without returning the favor.

When the team from the FBI/CIA was assigned to my case, however, their first task was to look for all such minor tensions, and blow them out of proportion in an effort to discredit me and make it seem that everything had fallen apart because of my abrasiveness. I had no idea at the time that the ideas I was tossing around would bring on a conflict of that scale.

2000 was the last year of the Clinton presidency, and hurried efforts were being made to come to some sort of a deal regarding North Korea’s nuclear power program. Several high-level figures in the Clinton administration were positive about the potential for some breakthrough that would leave them a legacy equivalent to that of Reagan in his dealings with the Soviet Union. The efforts would culminate in the visit of Madeline Albright to Pyongyang in October of 2000, and a serious discussion about a visit by Clinton at the end of his term.

A serious backlash at the highest levels of military and intelligence had already begun that would spill over into the mucked-up election that followed. The resolution of tensions in East Asia could mean that there would be no market for weapons and no demand for an American presence in the region. The progress could not be allowed to go too far. Such groups, and they were not small in number, had already decided that they would do literally anything to avoid a resolution of the tensions in East Asia. Solving the North Korea issue, they feared, would result in calls to cut military spending, and end their most lucrative projects, such as missile defense and overpriced spy satellite systems.
They lacked the imagination, and the will, to come up with any other role for the United States in the region.

In fact, there were a series of classified directives already in place that allowed the FBI, CIA, and other agencies to actively take steps to prevent any actions that might lead to such a breakthrough, and although I did not know if, I qualified as a target.

Although I had never thought about it, I was already tagged early on by intelligence. Tagged, of course, had both a positive and a negative meaning. I was one of a tiny handful of Americans fluent in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, and with an extensive network in Asia. I had also had good relations with the ambassadors in Seoul and Tokyo in the past, and I had even spoken with my Yale classmate Woo Chan Lee about whether there might be a position for me in the State Department a year previously. That was not the only career I was interested in, of course. But when orders came down to watch me more carefully, a substantial file already existed. Fortunately for me, I was not perceived from the beginning as a hostile element, but rather as someone with potential, at least lower down on the chain of command.

I was not being watched closely before. But my discussion with faculty across the University of Illinois campus in April of 2000 changed that.

The University of Illinois, with its schools of engineering, agriculture, law, business, education, and music, was linked to the rest of the country at every level. I might as well have been speaking to the US Congress when I talked to professors in computer science. The ideas that I promoted generated enthusiasm sufficient for me to raise more than enough money for my trip to Asia, offered in small amounts from some fifteen different units. But those ideas were being shared by the intrigued faculty members I reached out to with many, many more people. Because I was on the advisory board of the Center for East Asian Studies, which had members from across the campus, I was uniquely positioned to make arguments about what the University of Illinois should do regarding Asia.

The first concern for those deep in the military was the possible impact that my ideas about distance learning and peace in East Asia might have on the US security position in that region, and the possible impact on military spending. I often asked myself why, later on, if they did not want me to promote my ideas,
they did not simply tell me that, or simply offer me something else to do. In fact, for bureaucratic reasons, the CIA people assigned to me were not permitted to contact me (although in the end they would do so), and the system was set up so as to discourage, not to reason with people.

But there was also concern about the very concept of using distance learning in a complex two-way manner between countries. The concerns were in part legitimate, in that they derived from worries about how this breakdown of national borders would impact national security, but it was also a fear of outside influence on the United States.

There was also the concern with profit. The investment banks who saw the classified briefings on my activities could see the potential massive impact that technology and the resulting distance learning system might have on education. They wanted to make sure that such technologies were used in a manner to assure the maximum amount of profit. My project, which threatened to do innovative things in education using such technology without charging anything, could bring about a revolution in education under the guidance of professors, not CEOs. This model was one to which investment banks were deeply hostile, and when their analysts read about my work, they decided that my plan would go nowhere, and that the ideas would be launched in the private sector first.

All this came to a head in May 2000 when I put together my ideas in the form of an effective and focused proposal. Although I was completely unaware of what was going on at the highest levels in my country, I had decided on the three universities in East Asia that I would approach with my proposal. I then customized the proposal to explain how it would make each of those universities truly international; best in the world. I drafted customized proposals that would be compelling within China, Japan, and Korea, and that would appeal to local concerns and needs.

I then had the proposals translated for me into Chinese, Japanese, and Korean respectfully, and then I went over the proposals again and again to make sure they were effective. This approach seemed to me to be the best way to be successful, but what did not occur to me was that I was trying something that had never been attempted before. I was using my writing skills, my language skills, and my personal networks to push for a project in a manner that no
university president, or for that matter, US senator would have been capable of. I was able to get many Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans to advocate for my vision for how those countries should cooperate with each other, and with the United States. As an American at a major university, I had a status that could not have been duplicated in any one of those countries.

I was stepping way above my pay grade. Although I did nothing illegal in the slightest, for the power figures in government, finance, law, and consulting who were supposed to control that level of policy, I had committed the greatest crime of all: breaking the chain of command.

I had already received positive responses from professors in Tokyo, Seoul, and Beijing, whom I had contacted about my ideas. I felt confident that even though the University of Illinois was not the most famous university, that its advantages in engineering and distance learning were sufficient to close a deal with the leading universities of China, Korea, and Japan.

My friend, Professor Kevin Kim of the Department of Electrical Engineering, introduced me to the dean of the graduate school at Seoul National University with whom I started up a cordial relationship through numerous emails about every number of topics. By chance, the number three person in the university was a professor in the Department of Korean Literature whom I also knew well.

Kevin Kim also recommended that I contact Kim Taedong, a professor at Sunggyungwan University who had served as a senior advisor for President Kim Daejung at the time that he visited North Korea for a summit meeting. I also started up a friendly correspondence with Kim Taedong, and he read through my proposal with great interest. I did well with these Koreans, in part because it was such a novelty to have an American professor who could write in detail in Korean, but also because I knew quite a bit about the minutiae of Korean policy and society.

It seems I had crossed a line when I wrote to Kim Taedong. The risk, in light of the impending visit of President Kim Daejung to North Korea on June 13, 2000, that the momentum for integration in East Asia would become unstoppable, had the establishment in Washington worried. Things might spin out of control. Having an articulate American scholar advocate for East Asian integration could suggest, at home and abroad, a larger American policy shift that had not been approved by the Council on Foreign Relations. I was perceived by them as a threat, and whatever good intentions I might have had, whatever legal rights I might have had, went out the window on that day.
A team was formed by the NSA and CIA, in coordination with the FBI and other organizations, to engage in a low-level campaign to undermine my efforts. I think that the nature of the team and its mission shifted over time, but we do not have access to any internal documents. The operation was at first entirely invisible and went no further than emails that I sent never being received, and letters sent from me to others, or from others to me being lost.

Those efforts did nothing to slow down my progress, and the growing wave of good feelings about integration in East Asia. In May of 2000, the extraordinary step was taken of contacting a few members of the university administration and giving them instructions regarding how they should respond to my proposal. Because the number of people contacted at first was very small, and the instructions were not easy to comply with, the results were mixed. At the minimum, they contacted my dean, my associate dean, and probably my department head in May or June. Others would be approached, on a need-to-know basis, later.

All this fun and games led to the rather unusual situation in which I had received extensive funding for my trip from departments across the campus, but I had obtained no funding from my own department. The classified campaign to undercut my project was never meant to be disclosed to anyone, and I was completely unaware of the hidden hand. The mandate was to stop me by any means necessary. Yet, because there were so many people in the military who did not think there was anything wrong with what I was attempting, the actions taken were limited. To this day, I do not understand what was, and what was not allowed. It seems to have been an interference pattern of conflicting directives.

But there was clearly plenty of paranoia that my efforts, precisely because they were by nature altruistic, could trigger a chain reaction that could no longer be controlled by intelligence units and consulting firms.

It should also be noted that the contents of my file were expanded considerably. Extremely qualified intelligence officers were assigned to spend many, many hours on me. It was a foolish project, but it led them to read through much material about me, and read with interest the complex arguments that I made in multiple languages to many people around the world. If anything, my position was strengthened as a result. It was clear I had some political skills from my success in bringing together people from diverse backgrounds for this project, and I was able to write up complex policy proposals entirely on my own. The manner in which I advocated for my ideas was considered a mark of skill that
was noted by the psychologist engaged to draft a profile of me, which, at the time, was widely circulated.

The initial effort by representatives of the FBI to discourage me was directed at the dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Jesse Delia, and the associate dean, Charles Stewart, both of whom I had good relations with. They were not allowed to disclose why they were taking such an inflexible position, and most assumed it was simply their lack of imagination, or their fear that a move towards distance learning of any form would reduce their power relative to the college of engineering. Although both these factors were present, their actions were in fact forced upon them using classified advisories, although this story has never been released.

But for all the lack of enthusiasm in my department and in my college, there was overwhelming support for my proposal across the campus, and increasingly in the universities in East Asia I was communicating with. The trend was too big for such a small interference campaign to stop. The path was leading toward my taking a trip to Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo to discuss the proposal with the top people there. The proposal was no longer just my own, and I was heading to a large breakthrough.

After talking to various supporters at the University of Illinois, I submitted a letter to the provost of the University of Illinois, Richard Herman, in May, and also sent a similar letter to the president, James Strukel. Provost Herman had already responded positively to previous notes I had written him about the potential of the university (and I later learned that our dean did not like my contacting the provost directly). In any case, both the provost and the president responded to my proposal with an extremely positive letter of support. Dean Delia grew only more negative as time went by. To some degree, the negative response by my dean was an issue of territory. Delia was afraid of the negative impact of working with the college of engineering, which had a much larger budget. Later in my career, I came to appreciate what Delia’s concerns were, and I was disillusioned by the misuse of distance learning.

But Delia had always been supportive of me, and even gave me a start-up package when I came to the University of Illinois, which he did not have to grant me. So, the hostility to the proposal seemed rather to have been the result of other factors. Delia was approached as early as April with advisories (probably from the FBI) limiting his ability to help me in my projects and prohibiting him from disclosing the source of the directive. By August, internal memos were issued to many faculty members limiting the nature of their
interactions with me. I had heard from others about such completely illegal memos, and was mystified. It seemed such complete overkill (as I was happy to work with anyone and issuing the memos was so blatantly illegal). Those notices to faculty and administrators were private, but they were not classified.

By the end of May, I had concrete plans for a trip to Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo in July of 2000 which would be supported by various units at the University of Illinois. The very fact that my proposal was about making the university into a world-class institution was quite different than anything other faculty at the university were talking about. Such idealism about the potential of the university was more in line with the age of Adlai Stephenson.

In some respects, I found even greater enthusiasm among top administrators at Seoul National University when I forwarded my proposal to a few close friends there. I wrote to Professor Paik Nakchung of the English department, a major Korean intellectual and a thoughtful individual whom I had corresponded with on occasion, who was quite interested in my ideas. Kevin Kim of the electrical engineering department, who had become a close friend over the following few months, recommended me to Professor Woo Jongcheon, who happened to be the dean of the graduate school at the time. By coincidence, the current academic dean at the time was Professor Kwon of the Korean literature department whom I also knew quite well from my year at Seoul National University.

The dean of graduate studies, Woo, took considerable interest in my proposal, and seemed to be rather amused to meet an American scholar interested in Korea. He was a scientist, and I do not think he had ever met an American who had tried to write elaborate emails to him in Korean and share his ideas about Korea’s culture and its destiny. Within a week we were close correspondents, even though we had never met.

Dean Woo read through my various drafts with considerable care, and was excited to have a chance to participate in such a project. I exchanged hundreds of emails with him in which I tried to make an argument about why internet-based learning was so critical.

But it then occurred to me that the best way to make this project successful would be to get the proposal, an innocent and inspiring suggestion that the four schools could combine forces in internet-based education and research and form close ties that would bring Asia together, published in the school newspapers of
each university. I had the closest ties to faculty at Seoul National University, so I started there.

I did not approach the top administrators about the concept of an article in the school newspaper. I thought they would be too cautious about such publicity. It seemed to be a perfect opportunity to launch a larger discussion about the potential for the positive use of technology. I had no idea that there were already active efforts by the NSA and other organizations to limit the impact of my proposals.

So, I wrote a letter to the professor of English literature, Paik Nakchung, a famous opinion leader deeply involved in the democracy movement in the 1970s and 1980s. I asked if he might recommend a new version of the article that I had written for the Seoul National University student newspaper. The article included multiple references to the potential for internet-based collaboration with North Korea that would make concrete the proposals being put forth for cooperation by Kim Dae-jung at the time. Professor Paik wrote back to me a few days later with a copy of an email that he had already sent to the dean of graduate studies, Woo Jongcheon. The email gave his full support for the proposed article.

When I saw this letter, I felt that I had made a historic breakthrough. Professor Paik was a broadly-respected intellectual in Korea, and it would be hard for Seoul National University to say no to such a letter. Moreover, the general mood in Korea was for integration with Asia, and cooperation with North Korea all around. I gained a new sense of self-confidence, and of purpose that would drive me to complete the rest of the task with new enthusiasm.

My close friend at the Ph.D. program in English literature at Seoul National University, Yoo Hee Seok, helped me to translate the proposal into Korean. We worked hard together to make a proposal focused entirely on Korea’s role in East Asia, and on Seoul National University, that would be inspiring. I think the proposal was quite effective.

The revised proposal for Seoul National University discussed the potential for an integrated East Asia, and suggested how the United States could cooperate with Japan, Korea, and China to form an economic unit that would be the equivalent of the European Community and would serve as a platform for a peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula. The proposal also suggested distance learning might be a first step towards engagement with North Korea as it would not require anyone to cross the DMZ, and explained how such online
exchanges could build confidence. This suggestion would be taken up by the Maxwell School at the University of Syracuse in a program with the Kim Chaek University of Technology in Pyongyang that was led by Professor Stuart J. Thorton from 2001.

The next step in my work was the formulation of a proposal to the University of Tokyo. I assumed, mistakenly, that the University of Tokyo would be my strongest suit, because I had studied there for five years. Professor Takada Yasunari, who it just so happened had been the advisor of my previous girlfriend, Yoshiko Kobayashi (and professor of English literature at the University of Tokyo), had been quite kind to me when I had conducted research there as a visiting professor in 1999. He was serving as a special advisor to the president of the University of Tokyo, Shigehiko Hasumi, a maven of post-structural critique, who was also a scholar of literature from Komaba. I had ties to all these people, and I wrote with to Takada with the Japanese version of the proposal as soon as my graduate student had finished translating it. Takada expressed interest, but indicated that he was too busy to work on this matter. I sent the proposal to other professors that I knew and received quite positive replies from many.

Finally, there was the proposal for Peking University. The general assumption among my peers was that because China was a more closed society, it would be difficult to run such a program with Peking University. This assumption turned out to be essentially a myth, but I did wait to the end to make sure I had strong support at the other three universities before I sent the proposal in Chinese to Peking University.

Fortunately, I had as a research assistant an extremely capable Chinese student by the name of Du Yuancheng, who not only did an excellent job with the translations, but also offered me helpful suggestions as to how to approach Peking University. I soon had a proposal written up that reflected well my ideas about the potential of distance learning and distance collaborative research, but also linked such educational innovations to China’s new role as a member of the international community.

I sent the proposal to Professor Yan Shaotang, then department head of comparative literature at Peking University. I had known Professor Yan for many years, as he was an expert in Chinese and Japanese literature, and his field of research was quite similar to my own. He was a serious scholar, and not a political figure, so his comments to me about my proposal were quite pure in intention. I was much encouraged by his response.
I was also introduced by another University of Illinois to Min Weifang, Vice-President, and a professor of education policy at Peking University who was very fluent in English, and considered a major reformer in education policy. Professor Min was serving as vice-president at Peking University at the time. Min responded immediately to my note, and to my proposal suggesting that we should meet when I arrived in Beijing. He recommended that I contact Hou Jianjun, chief of the division of distance learning.

I wrote to Professor Hou immediately, and we hit it off from the start. In fact, Professor Hou and I remained in contact long after that day, meeting up again in 2005. I had not expected any breakthroughs at Peking University when I started correspondence, but the reception was quite positive and suggested there was a strong willingness to go forward. After all, I was just hoping we could conduct a video conference one time. They seemed to be ready for something far more substantial. I was content to start with any small part of the proposal that could be easily developed into a viable project.

As the scale of the discussions continued to expand, not so much through my own actions as through the actions of those I had contacted in Asia, it occurred to me that there could be misunderstandings with the United States government if the trip was not handled appropriately. For this reason, I called up David Shear, then head of the Korea Desk in Washington D.C. (and later ambassador to Vietnam), and explained to him the nature of my proposal, and the intentions that lay behind it. He expressed considerable interest in the details, and he requested that I email him a copy. I even asked Shear whether it might be possible for me to visit North Korea to discuss this proposal. It seemed like a tremendous opportunity in light of the opening up of exchanges with North Korea after Kim Daejung’s visit. Shear thought this was a good idea and suggested we should discuss the matter at length after I returned. He told me that he would make the proper introductions. We would never speak with each other again.

As the date for my departure for Korea drew near, I wanted to get my proposal published in the university newspaper, the Daily Illini. Such a move might inspire the newspapers of the other universities to also publish such articles, I reasoned.

I called up the Daily Illini to describe our project and my plans to visit Asia. The reporter, a young man about 23 years old, suggested that rather than publishing my proposal verbatim, they would interview me about the proposal
and about my work. I agreed to do so the week just before my trip to Korea, China, and Japan in July 2000.

But, although most at my school thought this was a tremendous opportunity to put the University of Illinois on the map, alarm bells were ringing at high levels in the military-industrial complex. As I pranced merrily forward toward my dream of an integrated East Asia with America as a central partner coupled with China, I was stepping on toes (invisible to me) everywhere inside the beltway. Most importantly, I mistook the overwhelming silence about my actions in the United States for simple lack of interest. But there was a tremendous political conflict brewing in the United States that would, by August 2000, create a perfect storm. Isolationists and corporations promoting heavy military equipment could not stand the idea of Al Gore being elected president, and continuing Clinton policies aimed a global cooperation and a move away from the military status quo. By the summer of 2000 there was a significant group of military factions who were determined to ensure that Gore would never be president.

Judging from what I heard from the State Department in July 2000, my trip to Asia was a go and there was real support at the working level. A team from the CIA and FBI (the exact makeup of the team seems to have varied over time) were camped out at the University of Illinois already by this time to monitor me, and they had very different marching orders indeed. Above all, a large faction within the military-industrial complex was feeling extremely nervous about the slide toward integration between the United States and China. Normalization of relations with North Korea was a step that they could not tolerate, and they were ready to call out the big guns to stop it.

These factions wanted to preserve, at all costs, the classic hub-and-spokes formation for US security policy in East Asia. That is to say that the United States was required to maintain bilateral alliance relationships with the Republic of Korea and with Japan that were not linked together as a whole (in contrast to NATO). Also, the United States could not consider China to be a trustworthy partner for engagement on security issues. This doctrine was not in the interest of the United States, but it was considered to be essential by strategic thinkers, who felt that the most important issue in East Asia was to keep Japan and Korea in the American orbit, while keeping them at a distance from each other. It was a classic divide and conquer strategy, combined with a play-up of the immediate threat from North Korea, and the long-term threat from China, as a means of keeping up tensions in Asia, and, of course, making money off arms sales, and military deployments. Realists also suggested that any move toward resolution
would result in the end of the American role in Asia, and domestic calls for a pullback. This part was accurate.

The only role for China, from the standpoint of investment bankers and other corporate players with real impact in Washington, was as a factory to the world, and it was imperative that China be kept out of positions of influence. All this discussion was taking place in the context of China’s application to the World Trade Organization. My proposals were also very disturbing because they were written with considerable sophistication, and struck the reader as a serious policy proposal, but they suggested that China could be a long-term partner. This discussion was not permissible. China should always be in an uncertain position as a possible adversary, so as to discourage people from seeing the world from the Chinese perspective, and to weaken the Chinese position in negotiations.

But not everyone in the Pentagon agreed with this accepted opinion. There were significant forces, especially among experts, who felt that China had met all the required steps to enter the international community, and that China was a more reliable partner than Israel, Saudi Arabia, or other so-called allies.

I saw considerable evidence over the next few years that suggested that the Chinese were sincerely interested in establishing a meaningful collaborative security structure with the United States, and that they were even willing to accept the somewhat humiliating conditions it required.

However, although there were those in the military who saw the logic of such a move, the American hawks, backed by right-wing racist groups (which happened to quite active in my state of Illinois) were determined to make sure that such ideas never saw the light of day.

The orders given to the team observing me was to make sure that my impact was limited. The operation was so illegal that it was assumed that nothing about it would ever be known to anyone. However, as my project started to take off, and I showed myself able to operate with considerable sophistication in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, they realized that low-level interference was not sufficient to stop this project. The proposal was exciting for those in East Asia who had heard about it, and they started taking steps that were beyond the capacity of the FBI team at the University of Illinois to control. It was decided that firmer steps need to be taken to control me.
By the middle of June, the basic outlines of the proposal had been forwarded to the administrations of the three universities, and had met with quite positive responses. It appeared that internal discussions were already taking place, based on the replies that I received. But a major problem remained: although I had broad support at the University of Illinois, and more than sufficient funding for my trip from across the campus, my dean and my department head refused to give me any funding, did not want to discuss the plan with me in person, and only asked that I put the exploratory trip off. They spoke only about their worry about my tenure issues, words that I interpreted as blatant attempts to intimidate.

Based on what I witnessed later, and the informal remarks made by various people after the fact, I now believe that Dean Delia was put in the uncomfortable position having to actively discourage me from all activities related to this project, and to make sure that nothing came of it. He was forced to repeat the litany that I needed to concentrate on my research as an assistant professor up for tenure, even though I had significant publications, and there was not much doubt as to my qualifications. All the while, he was not allowed to reveal that he had been served with a classified directive by the FBI that ordered him to engage in such actions. I assumed at the time, not knowing any better, that the primary reason for Dean Delia’s opposition to this project stemmed from his fear that it would increase the influence of the school of engineering on campus, and threaten his fiefdom in the impoverished and powerless College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

That concern on his part, and a certain degree of self-serving, and even corruption among senior faculty in his department was a reality, but it was not a serious issue, and the project could easily have gone forward if it had not been for this outside interference. Yet, looking back, I think I was also naïve about the potential destructive power of online learning within a university, and dismissed the opposition as simply reactionary. I saw online learning and video conferencing only in terms of the potential to engage in conversations with experts around the world in that medium, and pursue discussions on critical issues of the age across multiple languages. Such a vision of internet-based university education was entirely possible, but it would never come to pass.

I simply did not know what the larger implications of the introduction of technology into the classroom would be. It would not be to allow teachers around the world to consult with each other and design classes that brought together students from different backgrounds for a profound discussion. Rather,
distance learning would be used to degrade the status of the professor, and allow for the replacement of teachers with programs. In that it became international, it was about marketing branded universities around the world and undermining local universities that did not have the finances to compete. If I had known how investment banks had intended to approach the question of distance learning, I would have been more sympathetic to those who stood in opposition.

It was the studied craft of those assigned by the FBI and CIA to be my silent partners to seek out existing tensions, and use them as a means of covering up their actions, so that the fallout from this event would seem to be entirely contained within some obscure dispute within a university department. It amazes me the degree to which essentially everyone within the group at the time was willing to buy into this ridiculous tale, and maintain it for years after. No one was willing to even discuss what might have been improper, or illegal about the process, even though it was far more illegal than many, many other cases involving junior faculty which had been widely debated in the press.

At the time, the overly close relationship between the previous department head Ron Toby and Dean Delia seemed to me to be a major reason for why Toby and the new department head, Jerry Packard were so inflexible concerning my proposal. After, all I was asking was to be allowed to use video conferencing a few times to link up with colleagues in Asia. But again, I do not think that they were so foolish as to think that they could just shut me down by being unpleasant. Rather, other forces made them an offer that they could not refuse.

At the time, I thought that the proposal was so important, and the opposition of the dean so irrational that I needed to take a step that I was certain that Dean Delia would not like. I felt I had no choice. I wrote letters to Provost Richard Herman and to President James Stukel describing the proposal. They both wrote me back formal letters which were quite supportive, and Provost Herman even forwarded the letter to Dean Delia—no doubt to his great irritation.

Finally, a meeting was arranged at the office of the associate provost for international relations, Earl Kellogg, to discuss my trip to Asia. It seemed that a compromise had been reached in that I was given a letter from the Provost Herman in which he said that funding would be provided by LAS for my trip, but that I should work in the future with LAS directly (and presumably not with other units). Packard, whom I had gone out of my way to support in his campaign to be appointed a few months previously, was at this meeting. There were a few other staff members from the provost’s office present taking notes.
Kellogg spoke about my proposal in a remarkably positive manner, noting that it “has been the topic of much discussion.” He was very diplomatic in his approach, avoiding expressing an opinion, but the overall impression was that those at a higher level were very enthusiastic. In retrospect, I think that at that moment many of the higher up figures had no idea that my department head, my associate dean, and my dean had been served with classified advisories concerning their actions.

In any case, Kellogg was considerate towards my department head, Packard. It should be noted that when the Office of the President called me to ask me how I wanted the president to respond to my letter describing the proposal, I had told the secretary that he did not need to respond at all. But President Strukel went out of his way to write an extremely supportive letter. It may have rubbed others the wrong way, especially Dean Delia, who was hoping I would be discouraged, intimidated, and frightened, and just go back to writing academic papers so that everyone could just forget about this whole matter.

Jerry Packard then presented his opinion. He spoke of his sincere worries that a non-tenured faculty member would work on projects other than his required research. I found his comments disingenuous and insulting. After all, I had never seen any senior faculty members in my department take any interest in my research or my publications. Nor was it at all clear that this project would stop me from publishing. In fact, I felt that this project might be the only thing that would keep me in academics at all.

I replied to Packard, “I am not concerned about tenure.” To which he responded, “I would not be so sure about that.”

That exchange was a massive misunderstanding. What I meant by “I am not concerned about tenure” was that I did not care if the University of Illinois gave me tenure or not. I would find some other career in which I could make good use of my skills outside of academics. But Packard interpreted what I said as an indication of glib self-confidence on the part of an assistant professor. I suspect he knew that this comment was a bit forced, and entirely inappropriate for the meeting.

Kellogg did his best to patch things over, and suggested that, granted the broad support, but lack of complete consensus, I should go alone on this trip to explore the possibility, without formal backing from the university, but with a bland cover letter from my dean. He added that we should meet up again as soon as I returned.
He noted that the College of Liberal Arts would make a small contribution to the cost of the trip, thereby removing the greatest point of contention: that I was going without any funding from my own unit. When we left the office, Jerry Packard came up to me and asked me if I would have time to have a cup of coffee before I left for the trip.

I told him that I did not have time. I had had enough of his lecturing about what I could and could not do. I was getting sick of the department head acting as if I worked for him, even though the university was explicitly set up in such a manner that I did not.

But for years afterward, I wondered what Packard would have told me if we had had coffee the next day. Would he have merely repeated the litany about tenure review, and my lack of experience, or might he have hinted at a more profound political crisis? I never found out.

**The trip to Asia**

I was in a tremendous rush in the days before I left Chicago for my trip to Seoul. Unexpectedly, I received a response to my inquiry to the school newspaper, The Daily Illini, at the last moment. Following up on the request to publish my proposal in the university newspapers in China and Korea, I had decided to try my own school first. I had not heard anything back, so I gave up on the whole matter.

But a young man called me up and interviewed me the day before my departure. I tried to give him an overview of the concept, and I took it as a positive sign that the paper would interview me, suggesting an increasing degree of support. As a whole, The Daily Illini was quite conservative, and unwilling to go out on a limb for anything. The interview went well, and I took the bus to the airport with a feeling of considerable confidence.

My flight for Seoul departed and landed on July 18, 2000. I arrived at the campus of Seoul National University one month after Kim Daejung’s historic visit to Pyongyang, and the remarkable opening up of exchanges between North and South Korea. When I visited my wife’s family (she was not with me for the trip), I sensed a high level of excitement and anticipation. Some felt that true
reconciliation and the road toward unification were not far away. Given what I had sensed in Japan and China, this seemed believable to me as well.

When I arrived in the morning at Incheon Airport, I took the bus to Seoul National University, and arrived at the office of the dean of graduate studies, Professor Woo, about thirty minutes late for the meeting. He was not there yet. I sat down in a chair, with my suitcase at my side, and promptly fell asleep, I was so exhausted. He woke me up in a rather embarrassing moment. But I quickly recovered and started to explain the proposal to him. In fact, we had already exchanged hundreds of emails previously, and he was fully aware of the concept and of its potential. He explained to me that Seoul National University was excited about the concept, and that they had set up a committee to consider further action. He told me that the president had been consulted, and that they had hoped to conduct a few trial video conference seminars in the near future.

I then went to visit the vice president for academic affairs, Kwon Duhwan, a professor of Korean literature with whom I had worked with previously when I studied there in 1995. He told me that the proposal I had sent was very relevant to Korea at such a time of economic and cultural integration, and he promised his full support. Although we did not speak for very long, I came away with the impression that there was a stronger consensus at Seoul National University concerning the proposal than at any other school.

The last faculty member I met at Seoul National University was Park Nakkyu, a professor of art history. I had done most of my work in his office during my year in Seoul studying classical literature back in 1995, and we had worked together on various projects thereafter. Park discussed with me at length the technical difficulties of video conferences at the time, but he also expressed his belief that most could be overcome with sufficient preparation. He had obviously spent a good amount of time discussing the topic with his peers before he met me. My impression from the conversation was that Seoul National University had already adopted the concept, and was engaged with other universities in discussions about how to further develop it.

When I met with Professor Chung Byungsol of the Korean literature department, a good friend of mine of approximately the same age, he suggested that based on what he had been told, there was a consensus on the proposal at the highest levels, and that it would most definitely go forward in one form or another. I felt considerable confidence as I packed my bags up at my mother-in-law’s apartment, and prepared to fly to Beijing.
I reserved a small room at the faculty residence at Beijing University, and prepared about 20 copies of my proposal in Chinese to give to whomever I happened to meet while walking around the campus. When I took my seat on the Asiana Airlines plane in Seoul, the middle-aged man sitting next to me immediately struck up a conversation with me with great enthusiasm. He explained to me that he was a professor at Tsinghua University who taught in the computer science department. He asked why I was visiting Beijing and I tried to explain. In the process, I mentioned my proposal, which fascinated him to no end. As Tsinghua University is the primary rival of Peking University and has a strong technology program, I had already thought about making a proposal to Tsinghua University before. I mentioned my proposal to him, and he lit up with excitement. He insisted that I make up a proposal for Tsinghua University for him immediately, and told me he would be happy to show me around the campus the following day, and meet with senior faculty.

It was a bit too much of a coincidence for me. I just happened to sit down on the plane next to someone who was exactly the sort of technical expert to work with me closely on this project at the leading technical university in China. That was the moment that I realized that this project was starting to take on large proportions, and that I was being watched rather carefully. I did not see it as a risk, however, but rather an inspiration to try even harder.

My actual meetings at Peking University were slightly more limited. I met several administrators in the Office of International Academic Exchanges. They were quite considerate, but clearly not in a position to make any decisions concerning this matter. I spent more time with Professor Hou of the distance learning program, who asked me meaningful questions about what approaches we might use. He actually knew what he was talking about, and was interested in working with the University of Illinois. I could see that he did not care much that the University of Illinois was not Harvard, and was rather interested in our technology related to distance learning. There was none of the disdain that I would later encounter at the University of Tokyo.

I did not meet Vice-President Min, who seemed to think it was rather inappropriate to meet someone like me at that point. Or perhaps the visit had already become that sensitive for him. I was also unable to meet up with Professor Yan Shaotang, the person I was closest to, and who had been most supportive of me from the beginning. Professor Yan was a gentle scholar who had worked on comparative study of Japanese and Chinese literature, and we had met many times before. Professor Yan took the extremely unusual step of writing me an email, which I was able to read via Yahoo while in Beijing, in
which he said that although he was not sure what the university might decide, he personally agreed with my proposal for international cooperation and would support me.

Such a note from a Chinese professor, especially a dean, was extremely unusual, and his commitment at such an early phase deeply impressed me. I regretted thereafter that I failed to make a copy of that email for my records. But who knows. Many of my emails would oddly disappear later, leaving me with limited means to reproduce the details of the trip. Most emails from Japan, however, survived.

I arrived in Tokyo on July 22, the second day of the G8 Summit in Nago, Okinawa. In a real sense, everything was coming together for me. The importance of economic integration in Asia, and cooperation with China was the central topic in the media, complementing the recent Inter-Korean Summit. The Japanese newspapers were filled with discussions about what cooperation might be possible after the G8 Summit.

I was struck by the fact that although Asia was the focus of the G8 Summit discussions, the chairman of China had not been invited. This decision struck me as profoundly wrong, and of a piece with the Eurocentric attitude I had observed at the University of Illinois. I could see an essay, the content for a cover letter to go with my proposal, forming in my head.

I stayed for four days at the home of the Kodate family, who had rented us a room when we came to study at the University of Tokyo in 1999 for six months soon after I started teaching at the University of Illinois. It had been just a year, so I remembered their place most fondly. I stayed in the same room. But there was no time to relax at all. The G7 Summit in Okinawa and other news had my mind racing with ideas about how we could take advantage of this unprecedented level of integration in the region to start mapping out a new geopolitical future for Asia. The project was no longer just about distance learning and the transformation of the university, but also about how we could create a new potential for the region through our activities.

The discussions concerning the project had gone far better than I had ever anticipated. The combination of a revolutionary concept of the role of the university with the potential of profound changes in communications that would come as a result of new technologies had caught the imagination of many. I spent hours at a local print shop working on the text on their computer, trying to create a masterpiece of some sort. I read newspapers, checked facts on the
internet, and produced a complex argument for how this internet education proposal was linked to the next level of integration in Asia and offered Japan to play a new leadership role. I described the Inter-Korean summit, the possible entry of China into the WTO, and implications of technology on society. I also criticized the G7 for leaving out China, suggesting that Japan needed take its neighbors more seriously.

As I wrote in greater detail, my argument became more about geopolitics than education, and this new approach would influence also what I wrote thereafter in Chinese and in Korean. I expanded in a letter to faculty members and students, accompanying my proposal, my argument about how Japan would develop closer ties with Korea and China while transforming its relationship with the United States. The vision for a community like the European community made up of the four countries seemed so obvious and compelling that the letters, and various emails, literally wrote themselves.

I had a strong sense of mission regarding my work once I was in Japan which was not limited to the use of internet-based teaching, and had little to do with the University of Illinois. I felt that this was a historical moment, that I had been given an opportunity, and that I would do my very best to make this project successful. In a sense, I saw success in this project as a means of giving a positive spin to integration in Asia that would have great historical significance. Whether my ideas were overly grandiose or not I leave to the reader to determine.

The Kodates did not have a computer. I found a computer center nearby that would rent me one by the hour, and spent many hours there working on my letters, emails, and other compositions. I suggested that Japan had a responsibility to deepen its relations with the rest of East Asia. I was naively assuming at that stage that the problems in East Asia between nations were the result of cultural misunderstandings. It had not occurred to me that there were forces within the United States who were working actively to limit cooperation between those nations. It was true, however, that at that moment at the end of the Clinton administration, the general policy was in favor of integration and cooperation.

I had a strong sense of mission that was not related to the University of Illinois, and I was determined that I would do my best to make this project successful at every level for the nations involved, and so that humanity could concentrate on the more serious issues of climate change, technological development, and other emerging issues.
I went to the computer center to write up an elaborate cover letter to accompany the proposal in which I described the historical significance of the project, and lamented how Japan had failed to do more to cooperate with the rest of East Asia. I was, of course, naively assuming that no one would pull out all the stops to silence this effort. At the time, it appeared completely in line with the efforts at the end of the Clinton administration to support such integration. I was inspired by what I saw around me, and kept writing and revising for hours.

When I arrived at the Komaba Campus of the University of Tokyo, I went first to see the department head, Takeuchi Nobuo. We talked a bit about the proposal, and it was clear that although he wanted to support me, he was not at all interested in the details of distance learning. He told me that he planned to have me as a visiting professor the following year; something which never happened. I also spoke with my friend and classmate, Tokumori Makoto, about my ideas, and then I made up my mind that I would do my best to promote the proposal, which now had substantial support in Asia, let alone at the University of Illinois.

I had a copy of a directory of faculty from Seoul National University that I had been given by Professor Park Nakkyu. I made a copy to give to the comparative literature department at the University of Tokyo. I even translated the names of each unit into Japanese for their easy use. I wanted to make cooperation between the two universities as easy as possible. In fact, no one at the University of Tokyo was that interested. But Professor Tokumori gave me a copy of the directory of faculty at University of Tokyo in return. I decided that this time I would not limit myself to those whom I knew at the University of Tokyo.

I felt that the proposal was so original, and my letter so powerful (and the risk for Japan of failing to engage China so great) that I decided that I would send copies of my proposal to some 200 or so professors across the campus by email, or mail them in printed form. I knew that some administrators in Japan might not like my taking the liberty, but I felt that because there had been so much strong support so far, I was entirely entitled to do so. I also thought that if 200 professors at the University of Tokyo received such a proposal, that they would talk to influential politicians and businessmen and a much greater audience would learn about my ideas. That part was most certainly true, although I would only learn a bit of the scale of the impact much later and indirectly.

I went back to the computer center, and customized the letters so that they were addressed to individual professors, including details about their fields of
interest. I then printed the letters and proposals and took them to a coffee shop near the University of Tokyo’s Komaba campus, where I sat in a Chinese tea house that I was fond of, and wrote by hand the names and addresses of the faculty on them. I sat in the tea house, and wrote down the addresses on the envelopes by hand on envelopes. After I stuffed the letters and proposals in the letters, I then went around the campus putting them in the professors’ mailboxes, or mailing some to professors with offices at the Hongo campus.

By the end, I thought I had covered a wide range of individuals who might have an interest in the topic. I was sure that many would throw the proposal away, but I was also certain that the proposal would attract real interest among a substantial number of people who might play a critical role going forward.

By the end of the third day, I was exhausted. I stopped at the Grand Prince Hotel near Shinagawa station in Tokyo. The Grand Prince Hotel is a soaring complex which I had never visited. I saw it from the train, and just made up my mind I would go visit. I stopped at the next train station and walked over. That sort of behavior was not unlike how I lived in Tokyo when I was a student (1988-1992) at the University of Tokyo. I would go out with a few books and papers and roam around the city, stopping at a café to read and write for two or three hours, sometimes even late at night.

I enjoyed walking around luxury hotels back then, which were well above my pay grade, both then and now. Today I tend to look at such spaces as wasteful and representative of the terrible concentration of wealth, but in 2000 I was not seeing the world that way yet.

I took the elevator to the top floor and found a fascinating bar which was almost empty, and offered vistas of southern Tokyo through enormous windows. The table included a service which allowed you to listen to any song you wanted from a digital list. I sat there listening to a variety of songs using the earphones provided. For some reason I was struck by the song, “With or Without You” by U2. I sat there drinking a gin and tonic, and listening to that song for about 30 minutes. Somehow it captured something of my complex feelings about Japan. I remembered how central Japan had once been in my life (thinking I would spend my entire career there), and was also aware that, somehow, I had not succeeded in Japan. I was a professor of Japanese literature, but did not have such close ties to Japanese academics anymore. Although my proficiency in Japanese was higher than most American experts, having written an MA thesis in Japanese, and having built up such close ties with Japanese institutions, somehow, I was drifting away from Japan.
I also remembered the short encounter with my old girlfriend, Professor Yoshiko Kobayashi, for two minutes on the Komaba campus of the University of Tokyo. I happened to run into her as I was giving away copies of the proposal. I handed her a copy of my proposal and we exchanged a few words. The manner in which that relationship had come to an odd end because of parental opposition some six years previously came to mind. I also remembered how we walked around the campus a decade before, concerned as to who might see us together, whereas now nobody knew or cared at all.

At that moment, I imagined that this trip could mark the beginning of a closer working relationship with Japan. I had received maybe 50 very enthusiastic emails from various faculty members about the proposal and imagined we would have a video conference in the very near future. Yet, despite several exciting discussions, and the offer from Professor Takeuchi that I should come the following year as a visiting professor, that last day in Tokyo, immediately after the Okinawa G7 meeting, was the end of my close relationship with Japan. It would be almost two years before I returned, and although I would spend two months there in the summer of 2003, I would never live there again.

I boarded the plane and headed back to Chicago the next day. I was quite excited about the tremendous response from the people I had spoken with, and although I had not been taken out for fancy dinners, or given any awards, it seemed quite clear that I had made a significant impact and perhaps even launched a serious reconsideration of Japan’s ties with the rest of Asia. I felt it was a profound breakthrough in my career that would change everything for me, and I considered that working on putting together shared instruction programs between universities in the US, China, Japan, and Korea would make my career, and put me on the road to traditional success. The first part was true, but the expectation of rewards was entirely wrong. My life would never be the same, that much was certain, but the welcome back to the United States would be anything but warm. Although I had assumed that China and Japan would be the hardest part of the project, it was my own country that proved far more difficult than anyone had imagined.
Returning to the University of Illinois

The strange series of events after my return to the University of Illinois have never been fully explained, and most people among my family, friends, and colleagues refused to even discuss them. In the case of my immediate family, essentially no one has been willing to discuss the events of August 2000 to August 2001 with me at all for the last twenty years.

I do not pretend that I can explain the various incidents that took place. The patterns I observed were contradictory and suggest that there was considerable back and forth at all levels—forming an interference pattern.

There were, for example, intelligence officers assigned to subject me to low-level harassment (computer not working, problems with ATMs, car breaking down, documents lost at my department), but many of those people, whatever they may have done, were sympathetic to my position, and in some cases tried to be helpful in the midst of harassing me. For example, some acts of harassment were humorous in nature, and at times formed comical, tongue-in-cheek banter with me in the form of spam email, odd notes in my postbox, and comments by strangers that seemed out of place. Even death threats to me in the form of letters, or even the printing on the side of my pen, were at times quite frightening letters, and at other times humorous inside jokes intended to make me feel as if I were part of the team.

That split that I observed in my experiences with my “secret partners” reflected a deep rift in the federal government that went to the very top, and resulted in contradictory actions that made no sense.

The evidence that I was being subjected to this long-term harassment, which at times was harrowing, is overwhelming. But not every turn in the story is easily explained. Even in the midst of a political crisis that had CIA and FBI people watching me day and night (and I tried to be entertaining for them, as I knew it must have been tedious to have to watch my boring life), there were some things that were simply bureaucratic issues within the University of Illinois. Some problems with other faculty members were really based on personality differences, but for the most part, my relations with other people would never be the same after I returned from Tokyo.

Everything in Champaign looked the same, but I was no longer just an assistant professor of Japanese literature. I was a figure who had shifted the thinking in Asia, and among a significant group of Americans. I would have to be punished,
not so much because I had done something wrong, as to prove to everyone that professors, little people, are not supposed to play a role in the formulation of policy, and that if they get too big for their pants, they can be severely punished. Although my case was not written up by anyone, it was widely known.

As soon as I arrived in Champaign, I had to devote myself to the task of moving from our old apartment to a much nicer apartment in a wooden building from the 1920s that was close to the campus on a tree-lined avenue. The first-floor apartment had wood trim that reminded me of the home I grew up in in Parkview, across from Washington University.

On moving day, I asked six graduate students from my program to help me load up the van that I had rented with our furniture. I had excellent relations with our graduate students, but oddly, the next day, no one responded to my emails or phone calls (perhaps they never received them). I had to carry all the furniture and boxes of books down three floors and load them on the truck by myself. At the very end of the move, a Chinese student showed up and he helped me out immensely. The move was exhausting.

It is hard to imagine FBI agents asking each of the graduate students to not help me with my move that early on, or for my department to have done so. But the event was so odd that I must say I was rather puzzled, and I believe to this day that some action was taken to stop my students from getting my messages (as would later happen on numerous occasions).

Once settled down in the new apartment, I started writing to various friends at the universities in Asia to follow up on my proposal. I received a few thoughtful responses from a few friends, but there was a dramatic decline in the amount of correspondence that came to me from Asia compared to what I received before my trip to Asia. I suspected that politics in China might be more sensitive, but Japan and Korea seemed just odd—as if people were not getting my messages, or I was not getting theirs.

There were some other odd happenings in line with low-level harassment to which I was subject.

My phone was fine, but the long-distance service in the new apartment did not function for about 10 days, and there did not seem to be any way to fix it, despite repeated calls. The service was restored after one week without any explanation. Even at that time I was rather suspicious.
At the beginning, I was just mystified. There did not seem to be any reason to bother me. After all, I had talked to David Shear of the Korea Desk at the State Department about my project at length and it had been entirely above board, and supported by a large number of people (with the exception of opposition from my department head and my dean). It seemed that if there were something wrong, people would just come to me and tell me what to do, or what not to do.

But that was not how it worked. Factions at a high level in the Pentagon had assigned FBI and CIA people to harass me, because they wanted to make sure this project failed, and because they wanted others to know that anyone who tried something so independent-minded would suffer, too. But the people who were actually on campus carrying out this operation were not the people who were mad at me. They were merely doing a job that they increasingly felt was unethical and illegal.

Another incident was the disappearance of the crayfish. I set up a bowl made by a famous Korean potter on a table in the front room of our new apartment. We had been given the bowl as a gift at our wedding in 1997. I bought a blue tropical crayfish at the fish store to keep in the bowl. The crayfish looked quite striking in the bowl, and I was most pleased with myself. Two days later the crayfish suddenly vanished. I never found it anywhere in the house, even when we cleaned up and moved out a year later. Moreover, there was literally no way for it to have crawled out of a slippery porcelain bowl. This incident puzzled me to no end, and I have come to believe it was also part of the fun and games with my silent partners.

I had rather intense discussions about the proposal with several Japanese professors, some of whom showed remarkable interest. I also learned about the debate at the University of Tokyo concerning the merits of my ideas. After two weeks or so, the emails from Japan petered off and I never have received any significant amount of email from Japan again. In many cases, even today, emails that I send to people I know are not returned. But until August of 2000, I had had lively discussions with Japanese academics about any number of topics.

Then I started to write to a few of my friends at the University of Illinois about my trip. The number of responses was limited, but I attributed this to the fact that everyone was on summer vacation. I later had my doubts that summer vacation explained this oddity. I did find a few people who remained interested in the proposal.
When I wrote to the associate provost Earl Kellogg about my successful trip, he gave me a very positive response. He suggested that we should set up a meeting on campus at the end of August when everyone had returned, to discuss the next step. I also had a series of exchanges with another strong supporter, the associate dean of engineering, Bruce Vojak, and we set up a meeting for the following week.

It was from one of the email exchanges from one of the faculty members supporting me that I learned about the odd article about my trip to East Asia that had been published by The Daily Illini, on July 5, 2000, during my time in Asia. My part of the article was very positive, but the interview with my department head, Jerry Packard, was so negative as to be startling.

“Pastreich will only talk with administrators at the East Asian universities. He is not serving as a formal representative of the university”, said Jerry Packard, head of the EALC.

“We in the department told him to cool his heels and take things in a methodical fashion, but he’s chosen not to do that,” said Packard.

The EALC has not given any funding for Pastreich’s trip. Representatives said that university administrators “have not decided whether they want to buy in” to Pastreich’s plan. Pastreich said he has contacted other departments, but Packard said he thought Pastreich was paying for the trip largely out of his own pocket.

The technology necessary is already largely in place, but there are still substantial challenges. If Pastreich felt getting university support was difficult, he might face even more challenges overseas.

“Talk about dealing with red tape. You may think it’s difficult to push something through, but it’s relatively easy compared to China,” said Packard. “Red tape is much more tangled there. It’s very difficult, especially when you’re an outsider.”

Jerry had been a good friend since I started at the University of Illinois. I could certainly understand that he might have been under pressure from the dean. But
even in that case, for him to go so far out of his way to speak so negatively about my trip in a public interview seemed weird, and possibly quite damaging to him. After all, I had support from some twelve units across campus, and I was quite popular as a young faculty member dedicated to improving the university. It seemed both out of character for Jerry and disingenuous. For him to go up against a junior member of his department who had broad support across campus on a project that was popular seemed simply politically incomprehensible. I believe now that Jerry was compelled to respond to me in that manner.

When I met with the associate dean of the college of engineering, Bruce Vojak, a few days later, he expressed amazement as well that Jerry had made such a statement in public. I decided at that point that there was clearly a deep political division within the university (and perhaps beyond) that had forced him to make such a statement. But as much as I knew the politics of Dean Delia, it seemed to be a big mistake; something that did not make a lot of sense. In any case, I cut back on the discussions regarding the matter and decided to wait until the next faculty meeting. One was never held that semester.

The case of my interactions with one of the secretaries in the office of the dean of LAS was typical of my experiences in September 2000. I wrote to her as soon as I returned, and told her about my success. Although she had been quite active in supporting my efforts, there was no response. When I saw her in the hall a few weeks later, she said hello, but avoided me in a manner which seemed extremely odd. There had not been any fight or problem as far as I could see.

In early September I received a friendly email from the associate dean, Charles Stewart, inviting me to his office to discuss my trip. He greeted me in an affable manner when I arrived, and he seemed to be his regular self. He then passed me a letter from Dean Delia, which thanked me for my efforts, and told me that from that moment all exchanges with East Asia would be handled by the office of the dean, that I had no further responsibilities, and should focus all my attention on my teaching and my research.

Stewart did not even try to explain the letter to me, but remarked something like, “We will take care of things from now on, and I am sure there will be lots of opportunities.”

I was in no mood to challenge Stewart, whom I had always liked, and who had been so enthusiastic about the project from the very beginning. In fact, although
he was an extremely political associate dean, I never thought that any of this had to do with him.

The letter struck me as incredible. I knew full well that the dean had no authority to tell me what to do or what not to do in my actions as an assistant professor. I was free to advocate for my ideas whether the dean liked them or not. Of course, he was responsible for a larger agreement for a program, but an internet-based class taught here or there was something I could put together without any help from the dean, and the proposal had already been taken up by other units at the University of Illinois.

Later, I came to understand far better how great the gap had become between the ideal of what a university should be and what it really is.

It was clear to me that this letter was quite dangerous for the dean to give me. It was certainly grounds to successfully sue him, and could cost him his job. Harry Hilton of the college of engineering confirmed this perspective.

I came to the conclusion that Dean Delia was a political idiot, and that others on campus would eventually bring him to his senses. In fact, although I am sure he would have loved to have put this whole matter behind him, that was not an option.

I also received a few important emails from Japan at the end of August. The first was a series of letters from Sato Hiroaki, a professor of English literature at the University of Tokyo, who had been a very good friend to me in the last year I was at studying there. I think that if I had stayed on in Japan, we might have become quite close. As it was, we corresponded frequently. He had been very supportive of my proposal from early on. He explained to me that Professor Takada Yasunari had expressed great irritation about the emails that I had sent out suggesting a new direction for the University of Tokyo. He explained that the main problem for Takada, and other senior professors, was that the University of Tokyo was such a prestigious institution, and to suggest that it would take Seoul National University, Peking University and the University of Illinois as partners was demeaning. If they did anything, it would be with Harvard or Cambridge.

The email suggested that the topic of my proposal had been widely discussed at the university (even if no one contacted me at all), and that there was both a significant opposition and significant group of supporters. Not only did I not learn anything about that discussion further than those few emails, over the last
18 years my proposal has never been mentioned to me by a single Japanese faculty member. It is literally as if it never happened. For that reason, I cannot give any further detail on what was discussed in Japan.

I readily admit that I had overstepped my bounds by writing to some 200 professors at the University of Tokyo with my proposal. But I was that enthusiastic, and the response at the beginning was quite positive. There was nothing in the description of my trip to Asia that suggested I was not able to do so. In fact, because I was sent over to discuss the matter in such an unclear manner, there were no defining rules for my advocacy. If anything, I was more concerned that the University of Illinois might be left out of a future agreement if I did not try harder.

In any case, I took the time to write an elaborate letter taking responsibility for my behavior, and promising that I would do my best to promote closer ties in an effective manner. I mailed the letter to Takada, and I also sent a copy by email. I did not receive a response from him, but I am sure that he received it. We would have occasion to meet again in Korea at a Kyung Hee University event in 2015. We had a pleasant conversation, and I promised I would see him in Tokyo.

I also heard from Nobuhiro Shinji, a professor of Japanese literature, whose class I had taken back in 1991. Professor Nobuhiro also urged me to contact Professor Takada about the internet education proposal. He did not suggest that what I had done was wrong in any way, but rather he stressed that we needed to understand the sensitivities of Takada as an administrator. At this late date, I suspected that Tanaka was the sacrificial lamb. He had no good reason to be mad at me about my proposal, and like Charles Stewart at the University of Illinois, he had been supportive, in that he was capable of being supportive. The problem was that the powers that wanted to stop this process of enhanced exchange did not want their identifies known, and, therefore, pressured certain professors to take the fall.

I received a detailed letter from another professor at the University of Tokyo, Professor Mitani Hiroshi, who specialized in Japanese history. Professor Mitani wrote at length about my proposal and discussed the possible bureaucratic issues involved in implantation. We discussed issues related to intellectual history. He told me he had no time to be involved in the project, but hoped that it would be successful.
Finally, I received a lengthy note from Professor Ito Ken of the University of Tokyo. Ito Ken is a composer, conductor, and scholar of culture, who also has a solid background in physics and in computer science. Ito was a central figure in the establishment of an innovative academic program at the University of Tokyo that was launched at precisely the same time as my proposal, Interfaculty Initiative in Information Studies & Graduate School of Interdisciplinary Information Studies.

I knew already about the initiative from my preparation for the trip, and I had written a letter to all the faculty members involved, offering to work with them. Professor Ito had been the most intrigued, and he wrote to me at length.

His emails suggested to me that he had already heard about the controversy concerning my proposal that had unfolded among high-ranking officials and professors at the University of Tokyo. He told me that he had decided that the proposal had real merit, and that he would openly support it.

Ito was an extremely thoughtful reader, and every single point that he made, and suggestion that he proposed showed considerable insight. We had a long series of email exchanges on multiple topics. He put forth suggestions as to how we should go forward.

After two weeks of intense correspondence, I ceased to hear from him. I am not sure whether he had some reason for backing out of the discussion, or whether there were emails that I never received. I planned to call him on the telephone, but other issues became so overwhelming that I never had the chance.

I was able to travel to Tokyo briefly two years later, and I met Professor Ito for lunch near Akihabara. We talked about history, literature, and music, and he told me about his classes. He never mentioned a word about my project. In fact, no Japanese has ever mentioned anything about my project to me, or in public, since October, 2000.

I also received an odd email in September from a professor whom I had never met at Seoul National University. Actually, the email was not addressed to me directly. Rather, I was included as one of several CCs as part of an invitation to participate in a video conference to be held between Seoul National University and Peking University. I was most excited about the opportunity, and I wrote back immediately. But, oddly, the professor responded to my request with the comment, “I am sorry. I was not supposed to send that email to you.”
Needless to say, this was simply bizarre. The two universities were going forward with the ideas from my proposal, but keeping it secret from me. And in the middle of all that, they intentionally leaked it to me so that I would know. I was not sure what to make of this email, but something did not make sense. If the program was that valuable, it would be a considerable loss to my university to purposely ignore it, and a considerable liability to the administrators to have purposely marginalized me. But I would learn through this experience that some actions taken at a high enough level can be essentially kept secret indefinitely.

There were also numerous articles that came out in the Japanese and Korean press about the internet and education that suggested quite directly my original proposal. Proposals for closer academic exchanges between the three schools, and for internet-based learning programs. I did not save all of the articles, but did clip a few of them which seemed to reflect my proposal most closely.

There were a few professors who strongly backed me, and took many hours to make suggestions as to what I should do next. Their efforts were the reason that I put off consideration of a deep conspiracy theory, because it made so little sense that there were some professors who would make that effort on my behalf. Harry Hilton was a professor of aeronautic engineering who believed strongly in the university as a space to put forth ideas. He also felt that I needed to be protected as a capable young faculty member with a valuable idea (actually, it was but one idea that I had about improving the University of Illinois, and he was fully aware of my efforts).

Yet it was odd that he never took me to meet any of the administrators to hash things out. He was never able to set up a video conference for me with any of those universities, and he was not able to find me even the slightest funding for anything thereafter, even though I had been able to raise the funds for my trip to Asia in a matter of days. Looking back on the story, I sense that Hilton was also aware at some level that there was something profoundly wrong with this picture.

The whole process by which events unfolded in Asia, and at the University of Illinois, was profoundly confusing to me. I tried to lie low for a few weeks, but even that was not so easy to do as my colleagues intentionally ignored me, and the department secretary was suddenly so unfriendly. I still felt compelled to try to do something about this situation. I knew enough about how universities work to know that my weak department and my lazy dean were incapable of carrying out a complex conspiracy over months against me. Something else had to be going on.
It was in early September when my wife and I were invited to a dinner at my colleague Rania Huntington’s home. Rania was a classmate from Harvard, and I knew her the best of anyone in the department. Her husband, an Indian-American named Dipesh Navsaria, had a background in medicine and we met socially with them very often. That night, we visited their rambling Victorian home for a sprawling dinner. After dinner, Dipesh started to talk to me about the problems I had had with my department head. But rather than engage me in a discussion of why such problems might have arisen, or make any suggestions as to how I could engage my department head and resolve the problem, he told me that I needed to seek psychological help.

Of course, I have no problem in seeking out therapists, and I have done so previously. But this comment struck me as truly bizarre, and remarkably inappropriate. There was no sense anywhere that I was depressed or even overly angry. Rather, he was suggesting, without any consideration of the actual situation, that the only solution was for me to seek therapy. Rania looked extremely nervous at this point, and was completely silent. So odd was that conversation that I cannot explain in any other way that Dipesh was coached to make that statement to me by a third party. It was simply too out of character for him.

I stopped by the home of another colleague, Nancy Abelmann, the following day at about 9 PM. Nancy had also studied at Harvard, and was considered the up-and-coming professor in my department; extremely popular with students, and an effective writer. She avoided discussing anything about the actual process by which my successful trip to Asia had suddenly resulted in the senior faculty in my department not wanting to even meet me. What she did say was that if I wanted to, I could engage a lawyer. This statement seemed like a similar evasion of the problem. What I wanted was for her to say we could talk with other faculty members and ascertain what the issues were. But no one wanted to look for solutions.

The fall of 2000 was my semester off from teaching because of the grant I had received from the Center for Advanced Studies. Moreover, Bill Greenough, an expert in neurology, was the director of the Center for Advanced Studies and we got along extremely well from the very beginning. I was going to spend the semester working on my book manuscript, and, of course, trying out video conferences. I applied to the University of Illinois for funding for that semester. Several people had told me that if I was awarded a semester at the Center for Advanced Studies, I was guaranteed to get funding. Needless to say, I was not given any.
Nevertheless, I had my own office, away from the department. There was a poet who also used his office there, and we had many pleasant conversations. But I made almost no progress on my book manuscript, because of the intensely hostile environment, and the constant pressure on me to respond to various forms of harassment.

My father invited me to come out and visit him in San Francisco in the middle of September 2000. When I arrived at his home in Ashbury, he remarked to me that he had made an appointment for me to visit the University of California, San Francisco Medical Center, for a checkup with a therapist. This visit, he suggested, was a good idea that had been recommended to him, considering my recent brain surgery. I was happy to go with my father to see this therapist.

I had had surgery for a benign tumor on my right temporal lobe in July of 1999. The surgery was performed at UCSF by the famous brain surgeon Mitchel Berger, whom my father had gone out of his way to cultivate a relationship with back in the fall of 1998. The surgery had been extremely successful, and I was released from the hospital the next day. The surgery was not without side effects, however. I suffered minor seizures for months afterwards for which I took medication. Moreover, my energy level remained quite low for years afterwards.

I was a bit surprised by what happened when we arrived at UCSF. We did not meet with Dr. Berger, or any of the neurologists. There were no questions asked about my recovery from brain surgery. Rather, my father had made an appointment for me to see a psychologist. I spoke with him for about 30 minutes. I told him about my life, my marriage, and various incidents in my career, and he smiled and took a few notes. Then, for some odd reason, the therapist asked to meet with my father separately. I did not object to this.

I did not think deeply about this event until much later. But there was one scene that stuck in my memory. On the drive home, my father suddenly remarked to me, “The doctor said, ‘sometimes people are so smart that it is hard to detect anything wrong.’” At the moment, I thought nothing of this comment. But it appeared to suggest that the doctor had remarked to my father somehow about my suffering from some sort of mental condition, even though he had not said anything to me, and my father had not revealed anything of the conversation.

Peter Pastreich, my father, spoke with his close friend, Zach Hall, the vice-chancellor of UCSF about my condition in September 2000.
I also knew Zach Hall from high school, as well as his son and his second wife. Zach had related to my father that according to my supervisor, Bill Greenough, Zach’s close friend and a fellow neurologist, my behavior towards my department head was quite irrational and suggested that I must be suffering from mental illness, most likely brought on by the recent brain surgery. Rather than relate this information to me and listen to my side of the story, my father kept this conversation secret from me, as well as the whole reason for going to see the therapist. He began from that date to engage in a criminal conspiracy, and I wonder whether he did not realize at some level just how serious the implications of his actions were.

My father later met Greenough at a conference in January 2001, in San Francisco. Greenough expressed deep concern about my mental health, and suggested that he feared I would lose my job. My father was deeply shaken by this meeting, and proceeded to tell many family members and friends that I was suffering from mental illness. He kept the meeting completely secret from me as well and did not tell me that he thought I was suffering from mental illness—let alone the reasons.

By February of 2001, many family members were dismissing everything I said because it was widely known to my family members that I was suffering from mental illness—based entirely on what Greenough had told him, and not based on observed behavior.

Even in September of 2000, my father assumed that any problems at the University of Illinois were a result of some mental issues on my part. He made no suggestions as to what I should do, and certainly never gave me any legal advice. I do not know the point at which my whole family had heard about my mental illness, but I can state with certainty that I received literally no advice from my family about what I should do.

This change in my family’s behavior towards me was incomprehensible. I had counted on their advice on practical matters since childhood. My father loved kibitzing, and most of our conversations were about how he should respond to a challenge in the workplace. He had also given me such political advice frequently in the past. The stunning silence this time was shocking to me. It did occur to me that someone might have done something to influence how he perceived me, but I dismissed this possibility because of the extremely unethical and illegal nature of such an action, one that would inevitably be uncovered.
By the end of September, the environment at the University of Illinois was so frustrating for me that I wanted to get out. There were a few friends across the campus who were willing to meet with me for a cup of coffee, but basically, I was isolated from everyone. All the members of my department avoided responding to my emails, or talking to me in the hall. None of them wanted to hear what had happened, or give advice as to what I should do. There were many people among my most enthusiastic supporters who now refused to talk to me.

It was at this moment, around October 1, that I wrote to associate dean Charles Stewart about the payment for my trip to Asia from LAS that I had not received yet. He wrote me back a brief email stating that he did not remember any such agreement and he asked me whether I had any written record of a promise for funding. I wrote him a bland note back suggesting that I would look for funding elsewhere.

But I was mad. The dean was telling me to pay for the trip out of my own pocket. But the reason I was asking for money was because the provost had explicitly told me in letter to seek the funding from my college. Otherwise, I could easily have raised enough money for the trip without asking for anything from my college.

The cause for this sudden about-face seemed to be the fact that I had continued to meet with people and discuss the internet instruction project with others on campus, even after I had been served a letter by my associate dean telling me that the project would be taken over by the college. But I knew full well that the college was not authorized to tell a faculty member what do to or not to do. I was mad about this treatment, but most likely Charles Stewart was fully aware of the lack of his authority and had followed orders dictated to him. He had always been extremely supportive and had no reason to engage in such behavior with me.

I was angry, and I wrote emails to a group of supporters across campus explaining how successful my trip had been, explaining that I had received funding from units across the university, but had not received a penny from my own department and my own college. I ultimately sent about 100 such emails and they were plenty effective. I heard from Jerry Packard that his mailbox had been flooded with hostile emails.

I kept at it, but increasingly the whole situation made no sense at all. My dean was simply not that powerful, and I had backing across the campus. Under
normal circumstances there would be some compromise, and we would move on. Yet the dean was incapable of allowing me to do a single thing related to my project, even as I ratcheted up the pressure on him. I made a point not to discuss these matters with anyone outside of the university, and even in the university only with a tiny group of people. The solution was easy but my dean and department were incapable of action. I believe they were subjected to classified advisories that forced them to act in this manner.

I received an email from Jerry Packard in September (that was sent to all faculty members) stating that the department had been denied all requests for new faculty positions. Considering the close relationship of the previous department head Ron Toby with the dean, this also made little sense. It seemed as if (and I could never prove this) the reason for opposition to my project was a result of a secret threat on the part of the dean to slash funds for our department.

Two days after I received that email from Packard, and five days after the note I received from Charles Stewart, I wrote an email to the associate provost, Earl Kellogg, about the matter. I appealed to him, as a well-placed and thoughtful man, to figure out a solution. I wrote, frankly, that it looked like this act by my dean was explicitly a form of revenge.

I was shocked by Earl Kellogg’s response.

He wrote me back a very formal email in which he said, “The matters which you have mentioned are sensitive, and should only be addressed to your department head or associate dean.” The tone and the content were entirely out of character. I would learn later that this letter was written by Tina Gonzales, attorney, and advisor to the provost, Richard Herman. Blind copies of the email had also been sent to my Jerry Packard and my associate dean, Charles Stewart. In effect, the letter was intended to inform my dean, behind my back, that I had spoken to the office of the provost. I would later make an issue of the matter and Kellogg, in December, would admit that he had sent blind copies.

It was at this point that I decided that I would have no mercy for Dean Delia. He was guilty of multiple corrupt actions as dean, and he had engaged in a series of actions against me that were so illegal that I thought the university, in light of his extreme unpopularity, would be required to take action. That was a rather naïve assumption on my part about how universities work.

Whatever the reality may have been, I felt that at that point in the game I had no choice but to fight back. These corrupt forces were doing everything to isolate
me and to destroy a project that I thought had global significance far beyond the University of Illinois. I had no intention of giving up something that would make my career.

I also felt that there were a large number of people on campus who supported me. After all, there had been announcements across campus of new programs to encourage cooperation between LAS and the sciences, to encourage the contribution to policy matters by junior faculty, and also to increase the commitment to East Asian studies. I suspect that much of this support for my ideas, if not for me, came from the provost, who was keeping a distance from me, but who had clearly supported me from the beginning. It is also possible the support came from other forces off campus whom I did not know, who had showed a strong interest in my work.

I also made the mistake of forwarding an email to about 100 faculty members that I had received from anthropology professor John Lie, in which he suggested that Delia was so incompetent that he was obviously going to be opposed to any proposal from me. John was quite angry at me for sharing an email he considered to be personal. He said it was the end of our friendship, although we later discussed the matter and I later apologized to John for the matter. We would have a chance to meet up again later, when I was in Korea, some ten years later.

My father was about to leave for a vacation at his home in France at the end of September. I had spoken to him several times about the stress associated with my work, and although he didn’t offer either advice or help, he was vaguely concerned about me. He invited me to come visit him in France with my wife, Seung Eun, and I readily agreed to leave the following week. To be subject to such treatment by my department after all the work I had done was quite painful for me.

The day before we left, I wrote a final email to Jerry Packard, copied the associate head, David Goodman, in which I presented a list of eight highly illegal things that the department had done to me and demanded an explanation. The list of actions was quite devastating by that point. I was certain that the department would simply allow me to do a few stupid video conferences rather than have this information, which could force the dean’s resignation, come out into the public. I was completely wrong.

We left for France the next day. I ran into associate head David Goodman right before we left for the airport. He said, “I received your email” in a rather neutral
tone, almost as if he was entirely aware of the seriousness of the situation, and had no interest in getting into a dispute with me. I told him I would call when I returned.

The trip to France was not relaxing, but it was better to be there than to be at work. I was a bit shocked at my father’s complete lack of interest in what had happened to me at my university. After all, I had grown up enjoying his kibitzing, and hearing about how he dealt with people at the symphony who were difficult, most famously, the president, Brayton Wilbur. All my father could say was that I should relax and forget about the whole thing. It did not sound like my father at all.

When I returned to the University of Illinois, I discovered that nothing had changed at all. My department head made no effort to respond to my last emails, and I was not receiving emails from anyone in the department at all.

I stopped discussing the matter with anyone but a core group: my biggest supporter in the school of engineering, Harry Hilton, my supervisor, Bill Greenough, at the Center for Advanced Studies (and his assistant Masumi Iriye, daughter of Akira Iriye, a professor of economics at Harvard), and Jacqueline Bowman, director of the ombudsman’s office.

Jacqueline turned out to be the only person who took a sincere interest, and actually listened to what I said. She instantly grasped that there was something profoundly wrong with the picture, and she made several efforts to arrange meetings. One with Charles Stewart was successful. She also asked around, and was able to determine that an internal memo had been sent out to discourage people from interacting with me; a clear advisory. Although she could not obtain a copy for me, it was an open secret that such a letter existed.

I was deeply impressed by Jacqueline’s skills, and wrote to her concerning many of my concerns. It became clear, however, that she lacked the authority to work out a solution in the manner that Bill Greenough might, as the equivalent of an associate provost.

Harry Hilton continued to give me good advice as to what I should say to various faculty members, but, although he clearly valued what I was advocating for, after the first month he stopped trying to arrange meetings. The situation looked increasingly grim.
The more complex relationship I had was with Bill Greenough. Of course, I knew nothing of his secret interactions with my father at the time.

I had always gotten along well with him from the beginning, even though his personality was a bit prickly. And we exchanged numerous emails concerning neurology and science. We discussed my ideas about the internet, and its impact on education. Bill went out of his way to support me, but never confided much in me about what he was planning to do about my case. He never said that he agreed with me, but I could tell from the amount of time that he took to dedicate to my case that he had considerable sympathy. He had been dismissed from a previous position because other faculty did not recognize the value of his work.

My many conversations with Greenough started to feel like a tremendous waste of time. But then we had a breakthrough when I mentioned to him about the email I had sent to Earl Kellogg about my work (telling him about the actions of my dean). This story had been concealed from him previously, and he seemed offended. He went back to his office, and within a few hours I received a note from Earl Kellogg informing me about the blind copies of that odd email.

You might ask yourself how Greenough could be so angry about what my dean had done, considering that he had engaged in a deeply unethical conversation with my father without telling me anything. I do not know, but I suspect that all the people at the University of Illinois served with classified advisories about me tried to maintain normal relations with me, while at the same time adhering to the rules for certain contingencies. The result was an extremely confusing set of events.

That was all I wanted. I immediately wrote to everyone whom I remembered complaining to about my department, and apologized for my immature behavior. I told people to contact Charles Stewart directly if they had any interest in the project.

In the end, Bill Greenough received a relatively positive response from Charles Stewart concerning future discussions about my work.

Charles Stewart wrote me a kind note in December saying he would be happy to investigate how we could promote the proposal for shared internet instruction the next semester. We met for coffee before winter break and had a very friendly conversation about our work together. I told him I would be interested in pursuing a career in administration at the University of Illinois and he seemed
to be touched that I took such a deep interest in the school. For all the unpleasant steps Charles had taken, I never felt any animosity towards him.

I also had lunch with Jerry Packard that last week as well. He was very friendly and seemed quite happy to move on. We discussed my work the following semester and he seemed anxious to have me back. Before parting, I mentioned to him that I had destroyed the letter I had written back in September listing the eight illegal actions taken against me by the department. He replied blandly, “What letter?” I thought for a moment that all would be fine.

The problem was not to be found in my department, or in the provost’s office. The United States was changing rapidly during this period. In October, the consultant for George W. Bush, Karl Rove, launched a campaign against Bush’s rival, John McCain, in which he accused him of being mentally ill as a result of his experience as a POW. That campaign may well have been related to the campaign launched against me claiming I, too, was mentally ill.

It came to a head when the forces around George W. Bush used political pressure, and the threat of force to shut down the election in Florida, and essentially launch a coup d’état. Large numbers of military and intelligence assets linked to the Bush family, and to other factions who hoped to benefit from a Bush takeover, used their cash, and their brawn, to shut down all serious discussion about the fraud involved in the election. Bush was declared the victor by the corporate media. Explicit threats were made that forced the Supreme Court to make a ridiculous ruling against Al Gore, and the election recount was stopped illegally. Gore was forced to leave for six months in Europe.

The country became extremely tense, although people refused to express their feelings explicitly. The professors around me made a point of just playing stupid. No one wanted to admit that something unprecedented was taking place.

But the increased authorization of intelligence assets to work at home to smother opposition had some unexpected results. In the chaos of the Bush administration’s establishment, factions in the military and in intelligence who were opposed to the Bush takeover grew more powerful.

I attended the first meeting of my department in January. Everything went smoothly. Of course, I did not feel entirely at ease, but I had decided to wait before mentioning my proposal again.
I did not feel entirely at home in my department, and although I had two student assistants again to help me with my work, oddly, they did not do anything at all. I sensed that there was still something wrong, and I did not ask them to do anything for me again. I was again returning to the opinion that somehow the problem was much larger than my department.

I received an odd note one evening in early February from Bill Greenough that suggested something had gone wrong. The cryptic email stated, “Your recent emails are not helping your case and you must show greater care.”

Greenough did not elaborate. But I was certain that I knew which emails he was referring to. I had forwarded, to about ten of my friends in East Asia, links to articles that I had found describing the illegal manner in which the Florida election had been shut down, and explained the conspiracy to suppress discussions of these illegal actions. This email included information that was clearly not supposed to get out to Asia. I think that the FBI/CIA unit assigned to me had reported back about this incident and Greenough had, in turn, been ordered to stop me.

I did not know any of that background. For me, it appeared as if after I had done everything that the university requested of me, and had thrown away the case on various illegal actions taken against me, suddenly Bill thought it was his business to tell me about politics.

I told him how useless I thought he was, and I did not mince any words. I described how he had wasted my time, and had failed to follow through on any of his promises. I sent a follow up email later that night in which I told him that I did not want any more assistance from him. He wrote back one final note, saying, “I am doing all I can to help.” Clearly the whole process was taking a toll on everyone after months and months. He did not even try to respond to my other emails, as he obviously understood the gravity of his actions (and also understood the gravity of my situation better than I did).

I saw Bill the next morning for a meeting we had scheduled earlier. We had a friendly conversation, in which I made no references to the email exchange of the previous evening. At the end of the conversation, he remarked, offhand, “There are decisions that the provost can make. He has the real power.”
This comment caught my attention. I knew the provost’s office pretty well, and I knew that the provost certainly did not have that sort of authority. Bill was not describing Provost Richard Herman. He seemed to be referring obliquely to more powerful figures in the political realm. His message was unmistakable: the country had fundamentally changed.

That conversation was followed by several other odd conversations over the next few days. I met with a friend who worked in the school of education two days later, and we exchanged pleasantries. He looked at me and remarked, “I am surprised to see you are still smiling.” The comment implied that my situation was so serious that I should be full of anxiety.

I also met a close friend from the school of law, Phillip McConnaughay, at a university reception that week. When he saw me, he immediately remarked, “Here is Emanuel, the man with thousands of enemies.” This comment was bizarre. Even at the height of my problems with my dean, only a handful of people knew the details of what had actually happened. He seemed to be referring, I believe, to those in the military and intelligence who hated my efforts to create a new open environment in Asia that brought in China, and therefore threatened their budgets for missile defense and other projects.

These conversations, combined with the hostile manner with which administrators whom I barely knew treated me, convinced me that the situation at the University of Illinois, and in the United States, was so serious that I should just stay low and do my job. There was nothing so critical about my project that required me to stand up against the world for it. I advocated of my own accord. I would advocate for the rule of law, but I would not bring up video conferencing and education again.

The weird hints made by other faculty members seemed to be too perfectly coordinated. There were also numerous occasions on which certain posters were placed so that I would see them. Some were threatening, some encouraging.

It became increasingly obvious that my mail was being read. The CIA/NSA team assigned to me became increasingly sloppy. I think they did so on purpose, to express a certain sympathy after having watched up close what was being done to me for so long. On several occasions, it was clear that events that took place during the course of the day were related to emails I had written the night before.
For example, when I wrote a letter to Charles Stewart suggesting that my email was being read, the next morning I had trouble logging on. That situation lasted for about eight hours. I also received odd spam mail. But although some actions were clearly hostile in intent, the people assigned to me did not seem hostile. If anything, they were increasingly playful. My letters to Charles Stewart were increasingly aimed at them as well. I played along with them, making up jokes, and sending emails to myself that were intended for them.

Then came the fatal moment. I wrote an article in Chinese describing the potential of internet-based education, and putting forth a vision of its conceivable positive impact on humanity. The article also included the argument that the United States should work together with China, Japan, and Korea to establish a joint community in Asia. Through the help of a friend, Jiang Hongsheng (a student from Peking University) I was able to publish an article on February 21, 2001, in the Chinese journal Zhonghua Dushubao (Chinese Reading Daily). This was an opinion that the Bush administration had intended to bury, and which I was not permitted to get out to anyone. All access had been blocked for me. But I had managed to get the idea out in Chinese, and there was considerable interest on the Chinese side.

The article had my enemies in the military-industrial complex seeing red. But the newly-installed powers that be in the military, along with the Bush administration, were drunk with their recently acquired power, and they felt that they could do just about anything that they wanted to anyone. A group, with considerable influence, wanted simply to kill me through an “accident”, or a “suicide” or some other nefarious means. The intelligence group assigned to me, however, was not part of that faction, and they offered some real pushback. However, the political opposition to the new Bush machine was growing weaker in February of 2001.

The order came down to destroy me. Harassment reached a new level. My email was constantly interrupted. And weird death threats were inserted into the emails I received from friends.

A set of workers set up a ladder in front of our apartment and set to repairing the door. Every time I passed by, they gave me threatening looks that suggested that they were malicious in their intent. The purpose was to increase my stress level in a manner that could not be detected by people around me. I would see those two men again on several other occasions. There was a major increase in hostile encounters in the course of my day thereafter with them and with other strangers.
Around February 20th, my landlord came to our apartment unexpectedly around 9 P.M. She had a forced smile on her face as she asked me if everything was alright in the apartment. She had never come to our home before, and her arrival struck me as remarkably odd. I could not figure out what her purpose was. But then I noticed a strange detail. Although she had a bland expression on her face, and left soon after, her hands were trembling, as if she was terrified. The short interview was more than enough to convince me that we were in totally uncharted and extremely dangerous waters. I cut all my interactions with people down to a bare minimum, and did absolutely nothing.

My father was scheduled to come visit me in Champaign on February 24, 2001. He had planned to check up on me, and his wife Jamie would come soon after. I think he had finally figured out that if he was telling everyone that I was mentally ill, he ought to make the effort to meet me in person.

I thought his visit would be a chance to finally get this problem solved. I imagined that we would find a way to go for a walk deep in the forest. Then, far away from everyone, I would tell him what had happened. It seemed so obvious to me. After all, I remembered my father, for all his peculiarities, as being deeply concerned about me.

It was not to be. In fact, it would never happen.

There were three occasions years later when I started to tell my father a bit about what had happened while we were walking outside. He listened to what I said, but asked no questions and made no effort whatsoever to either figure out what had happened, or to make suggestions as to what needed to be done. Perhaps he was subject to a classified advisory, but in any case, it was the end of my relationship with my father, and in some respects, that was the most terrible cost of the entire adventure.

I picked my father up at the Champaign airport, and we dropped his baggage off at our apartment. Then I took him out for a meal at an Italian restaurant near our home. After we finished dinner, I made an effort to start a conversation about what had happened to me recently. I described recent events for him, and he listened. The narration broke down, however, within ten minutes.

I mentioned my father’s friend, Zach Hall. I had spoken to Zach a few days before my father came to town about my work, and about my concerns about the University of Illinois. I stuck to bureaucratic issues, and did not even touch on my deeper concerns. Zach listened to what I told him about my
conversations with my department head and my associate dean, and how they had gone from allowing me to go forward with my project to suddenly refusing to allow me to do anything. He did not offer any suggestions about the process, or what the department might be thinking, or even how I might have misunderstood things. At the end of the conversation, he remarked, tersely, “I think you are a bit too excited, and are imagining things that simply are not there.”

I had not put forth any elaborate conspiracy theories and was sticking only to the problems in procedure. I was a bit shocked that Zach, who had known me since I was 13 years old, would dismiss my story so easily. I felt that he was basically on the same page as the rest of my department.

I briefly described that conversation for my father at that point in our conversation, remarking that, “After that recent conversation with Zach Hall I feel like I cannot put that much trust in him.”

My father’s response was open indignation. He told me firmly, and angrily, that Zach was one of his best friends, and that Zach would never engage in any actions towards me that were in any way unethical. It was irresponsible for me to express such distrust for Zach, who was just trying to help.

My father did not ask why I had lost trust in Zach. He did not want to know any details.

I learned later that Zach had visited my father a week before he suddenly decided to fly out to the University of Illinois to see me in person then. That meeting between them, kept secret from me, was the real reason my father decided to come, and I would never have known about it at all if my father did not, by accident, refer to the meeting a few months later.

At that meeting, a week before my father decided to come visit me in Illinois, my father met with Bill Greenough and Zach Hall at a hotel in San Francisco, and Bill had told my father he was deeply worried about my mental state, that he thought my behavior was highly unusual, and that he feared I would be dismissed from the university.

I felt trapped after that unproductive talk with my father at the restaurant. Clearly, he had already made up his mind as to what the problem was.
I spoke to my wife later that evening, telling her that I thought that if things continued like this I could be in grave danger. She looked at me rather amused, unable to comprehend why I would think such a crazy thing.

When I brought up the topic again a few hours later and tried to explain the details, she expressed deep irritation. “I am pregnant!” she exclaimed, “Why are you bothering me with these things?”

The campaign to isolate me had been completely successful. I was cut off from my family, my friends, my wife, and my associates, and was totally alone. I thought about the recent emails from other professors at the University of Illinois into which covert death threats had been inserted into the signatures, and I came to the conclusion that the time had come to give up.

I had no option but to go along with whatever my father, Zach Hall, or my dean suggested that I do, even if that meant being diagnosed as mentally ill, dismissed from the university, or some other fate. No one around me wanted to support me, or even engage in a discussion of the topic. By the end of the day, I felt that the closest friends I had were the wise guys who were tapping my phones, and reading my email. They, at least, alternated death threats with pledges of strong support in their cryptic messages to me.

I wrote a few more emails to Charles Stewart that night before going to bed.

Writing to Charles had become my manner of writing to those who were assigned to watch over me. I mentioned in an email that although I thought George W. Bush’s coming to power was a criminal enterprise, we were oddly linked. I explained that the red, black, and white college scarf I wore around campus was in fact a Davenport College scarf. Davenport College had been the most “shoo” (Yale slang for a well-heeled undergraduate) of the undergraduate colleges, one dominated by elite WASP families. But my father, a Jewish son of a pharmacist from Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn, had managed to get into Yale in 1955, and he was assigned to Davenport College via a newly-adopted lottery system that was meant to make sure that there was greater diversity in the college system. When I entered Yale in 1983, I was also allowed into Davenport College.

But there were two people involved in this story who also had resided in Davenport College. George H. W. Bush, the son of Senator Prescott Bush, was in Davenport College before my father, and his son, George W. Bush, was in
Davenport College after my father, and before me. Thus, I suggested, there was something rather ironic about my scarf.

I closed with a few remarks about Harry Truman, a man I had come to identify with quite a bit in the course of my adventures.

I later came to doubt the accuracy of the glowing biography I had read by David McCullough, but at the time Harry Truman seemed to be, for me, a model of a leader who stuck to ethical concerns and would not compromise. I closed the email with a comment that Harry Truman was “a man who held the highest office and carried out the bravest reforms, with a commitment to the common good, but he rose to power with the help of a variety of people.” The point of the last line was, of course, to show how Truman had started out in machine politics. But it was also meant as an appeal to those assigned to surveillance that I hoped they would step in to help. That appeal, at some level, was successful.

The myths about Truman were also effective, if historically inaccurate.

I thought that because my life was in such danger, and I was completely surrounded by a family that had no concept of what risks I faced, I would have had trouble sleeping. Yet, perhaps because of exhaustion, I fell asleep without much effort. I tried to imagine what would happen next as I lay there in bed. I had literally no idea.
Chapter 2

Through the Looking Glass

When I woke up the next morning and joined my wife and my father for breakfast, he told me that he had received an email that morning from Bill Greenough suggesting that I should go to meet a therapist at the Carle Clinic in Champaign at 11 AM that very day. It did not seem at all strange to my father that he had suddenly received this email after our conversation the previous evening. I suppose he came under the assumption that I was mentally disturbed, so it was entirely natural that Bill would make such a suggestion. I suspect that he was aware that the entire process was fishy, but he had decided to ignore the disturbing facts, and stick to the reassuring process. That mentality was widespread at the time.

I went with my father to the Carle Clinic, and we filled out a pile of forms, and then sat in the waiting room of the neuropsychology and psychology section. We were called in after about twenty minutes, and met with neuropsychologist Dr. Joseph Alper. That 30-minute session between Dr. Alper, my father, and myself was one of the strangest meetings I have ever had.

Joseph Alper was a rather diminutive figure with a bald head, fuzzy brown hair, and small, intense eyes behind gold spectacles. He employed a rather humorous style of narration, and there was a constant strand of irony and levity in his speech. He employed a heavy Brooklyn accent that made him stand out like a sore thumb in the rural Midwest.

Alper started his narrative without asking me any questions. He made no effort to learn anything from me in the entire session. He was, rather, laying down the law for me in the most empathetic and polite manner possible.

He explained, “You have been suffering from mental illness, the result of a failure of the executive function in the brain. The cause of the failure was your brain tumor, and the 1999 surgery. This state has created a state of diminished social empathy in you, and challenges in your ability to work with others, or interact in organizations.
The university is concerned about you and would like to make sure that you get the proper care for a speedy recovery. This deficit has deeply impacted your relations with others, leading to tremendous misunderstandings. We recommend that you take a semester, or one year of medical leave, effective immediately.”

The means of narration was remarkable. Alper’s attention was focused on my father, not on me. He did look in my direction on occasion, but did so with a humorous look in his eyes, as if to say, “This routine is what we have to do.” His visual signaling to me was so blatant that I would have thought my father would have noticed. But my father did not seem at all disturbed that this interview by a neuropsychologist that consisted of him reading off his notes, and did not include a single question to the patient to ascertain what the problem was. But my father had entered a state of induced mass psychosis that he would not recover from, and he shared that state with many other educated Americans at the time.

Then the conversation between my father and Alper then turned to Brooklyn. As the two were from the same town, they were able to reminisce about the old days in Brooklyn, specifically about Manhattan Beach and Sheep’s Head Bay. The rapport was strong, and when we left, my father seemed to have had an extremely positive impression of Dr. Alper, and trusted his every word.

There were a few notable points about the interview. First, it was extremely unusual that my father had been invited in with me for the initial psychological evaluation. The entire process was a show to make my father feel important, and he fell for it completely. There was no medical evaluation involved whatsoever.

Alper read off a prepared sheet of paper, which listed hearsay and rumors about my interactions with other faculty which had not been confirmed in any scientific manner. No tests, no questions, no effort to ascertain what had taken place. The conclusion was immediately that everything stemmed from my mental illness.

In fact, although the mental illness supposedly was the result of my tumor, no MRI was ever taken of me over the next three years of treatment, nor any other standard tests. It appears that the doctors involved purposely left out all meaningful treatment, as a way of showing to anyone who wanted to know, that the entire treatment had been a fraud from the start.
Alper’s references to a “failure of executive function” were meant not as a medical evaluation, but rather as a description of the political situation after the Bush administration took over the federal government. The entire interview seemed to be a rather humorous exchange, almost like a skit from Saturday Night Live, and in a sense, the process reassured me that there were at least a few people out there willing to talk about real issues, if only in an indirect and humorous manner. Clearly, there were a few people near to me who were actively trying to protect me.

Although many other parts of this story became clear to me in the following 15 years, either through what others have told me, or by process of elimination, the status of Dr. Joseph Alper remains ambiguous. Initially, I assumed that he was a professional psychologist employed at the CIA for assessing people, and that perhaps he might have been a member of the team that had been observing me since the previous year. After all, the CIA employs many such people, and I had a chance to meet a few of them later. It also made sense that Alper would be a Jew from Brooklyn, as that background would make him better able to assess my behavior and my actions. It would also make him more convincing to my father.

Moreover, there were several occasions in which Alper clearly had access to extremely sensitive information which would not regularly be given to a doctor, or to anyone without an extremely high level of clearance. I thought that perhaps he had been placed there the day before our meeting in a rush. I remember some remarks that he made which implied he was fully aware of email exchanges I had had with third parties. He even made jokes at times that referred to events he could not possibly have known about. It was of course possible that it was not Alper, but some other person who was reading my mail, and then briefing Alper, but I could not be sure. In any case, the course of our conversations involved some of the most sensitive issues imaginable, and he was there for all of it. But then again, I did not have any clearance, either, and no one asked me to leave the room when the conversation turned serious.

He also had a name card that read, “Diplomat of Psychology”, that he gave that first day, one of many humorous details suggesting a tie to politics. Those wisecracks were not made up by Alper. The running line of jokes between me and those who observed me would go on for years; I would draw pictures, take images with implied meanings that I would then send to Alper, or others, as a running commentary. I would not underestimate the entertainment value of my writings and postings to keep me sane.
I later wondered whether it was not possible that Alper was in fact a doctor, either from Carle or some other hospital, who had been assigned this job and rose to the occasion and played this complex and difficult job without any formal preparation. I visited the University of Illinois in 2012, and I had a cup of coffee with Alper, who was still working there. If he had been a CIA officer on a temporary assignment, he would most certainly have found a way to move after a few years.

I visited Champaign in 2012 for two days to discuss cooperation in science between University of Illinois and Korean institutions. I met with Alper for a cup of coffee in North Campus. He was still interested in my work, and concerned about my slow progress forward. The relationship was ultimately a close friendship, and at times I was writing emails constantly to him, but we were never able to meet informally (although on three occasions we met for coffee...hmm...that sounds informal, no?). At times, he took actions which were harsh, or even a bit cruel. But I always felt that he was merely following orders, and that there was nothing personal about the process. He did remark to me, when I asked him to go out for a drink, “I wish.”

In the course of my experiences, there were many other ordinary people who were let in on extremely sensitive matters temporarily, because they happened to cross paths with me. If anything, the team seemed intentionally sloppy, happy to have an enormous number of people involved in a highly sensitive operation. So, it is not impossible that Alper was someone who just happened to have been there, but that would have been a tremendous coincidence.

Back to my meeting with Alper in February, 2001. We picked up some medicine at the pharmacy on the way out of the hospital. By that point, I really wanted to take the medicine quickly, as I felt increasing anxiety in this state of uncertainty as to whether I would live or die, or be sent to some home for the mentally disturbed. I was feeling increasingly agitated.

I took the medicine as soon as we reached the pharmacy, and then Seung-Eun, my father, Jamie (my stepmother, who had also arrived) drove back with me to our apartment. I found that I became even more agitated, and even a bit paranoid as we drove home. When I entered the front door, I sat down at the table and poured myself a glass of water. I swallowed two of the pills immediately. Three minutes later I had a very odd sensation. It felt almost as if something suddenly switched in my brain. It was not a slow process of the medicine taking effect, but rather a sudden relief from the agitation I had felt. My mind was entirely clear and there was no trace of tension or paranoia.
I later came to the conclusion that I had been drugged without my knowledge and then was given this new drug to counter the disorienting effects of that drug so as to convince my family that the medicine helped to cure my mental illness.

I asked my father what had happened, and he explained a bit about the trip to the doctor. I felt that perhaps I had dreamed up everything, that I had been in some sort of a paranoid state.

I started to tell my family what had happened to me; that I had been under surveillance, that the government had tried to kill me, that there had been a coup d’état in the United States after the fraudulent election, and that I had met a Dr. Alper, who was someone from the government who had been sent to handle me.

My family assured me that none of these things were true. I felt as if a tremendous weight had been lifted off my shoulders. It so happened that my brother Michael, who was in Elgin, Illinois, but would not arrive until the following day, called me at that moment. I told him with great enthusiasm that everything I had told him about my problems at the University of Illinois had been part of a massive delusion, and that I was sorry for all the trouble I had caused him.

Michael was a bit confused, as it did not make sense for me to say I had imagined everything, when clearly, some events had happened.

I was a bit confused after the conversation. I felt as if some part of the story must have been true. I asked my parents a few more questions about contemporary politics, and learned that the political events that I had remembered were not paranoid fantasies, but the truth. It became increasingly clear that my family was simply in deep denial about the political crisis in America. I was not recovering from a psychotic delusion, but realizing that my assumptions had been essentially accurate. Checking through my email quickly revealed that the entire story was accurate. The emails containing veiled death threats and other harassment that I remembered were all there.

That moment of awakening from my sickness was the result of being administered drugs to make me agitated and paranoid, followed by being given a drug that countered those medications. It was a created event, and I was impressed by the sophistication. But the whole story would have fallen apart if my family had asked me any serious questions. They did not. I think that they desperately wanted to believe that I was mentally ill, because they did not want to face this sign that the United States was now occupied by a military force.
Buying into the story of my mental illness was essential to them to hold on to their delusions, and they clung to it even in the face of evidence that it made no sense. They did so because to doubt the story would require them to face the reality of radically illegal activities in the United States, and that was simply too much for them, psychologically.

My relationship with my family was permanently damaged as a result. Although the entire story was full of holes, they never asked me a single question aimed at determining what had actually happened.

I did make a few comments to my father, and to Jamie, to suggest that the story was more complex, and that it required more explanation, but they seemed to prefer thinking of me as mentally ill, so that they would not have to ask real questions that might lead to the truth. I felt then, and I still feel, that if I had suddenly died from a “suicide” or “drug overdose” at that time, my family would not have made any effort to find out the truth. They had written me off, and were not interested in getting to the bottom of things.

My father was taken around the next day to meet senior administrators, including Dean Delia, Tina Gonzalez, the assistant to the provost, and other high ranking figures. They all told him how much they cared about me, and how deeply worried they were about me. But, in fact, none of them had ever met me since the problems started, and I had been stonewalled in every effort to discuss the matter with anyone other than my associate dean. I was unimpressed at the time, but later I came to realize that most everyone was served with classified advisories suggesting that they should not interact with me.

There were a few moments when my father indicated that he had some doubts about this entire story, and he seemed unconvinced by the narratives that he was being told. Moreover, after he met Dean Delia, he returned to tell me, “Dean Delia is your biggest fan.” But when I suggested that I would be happy to meet him as soon as possible, my father remarked, “That might not be such a good idea. I saw some of those things you wrote about him in your emails.” It seemed that at some level he did not believe that I had imagined all these problems. He understood that there were some serious issues.

But he did not make any effort to try and find out what was real, and what was imagined. In fact, he pretty much avoided any serious attempt to learn anything from me at all.
It is also possible that my father understood the entire situation from the beginning, and was just doing these actions to help me, but I did not see much evidence of a plan to help. He seemed to be more pleased with how important he had become in my life, and showed no interest in my condition.

The next day, my brother Michael visited me from Elgin (is the place name important? A bit esoteric). I was so fed up with trying to talk to my parents about my case by that point. I was also aware that the risk at the time was extremely high, so I decided to avoid having any serious conversations with him. More accurately, I decided to wait until he asked me a question. Although he had heard a wide range of contradictory things about me, he did not ask me any questions during the day. I was somewhat surprised by this complete lack of interest, and was also suspicious that my brother did not completely buy the ridiculous story, but had decided to go along with the cover up on some deeper level, because he simply wanted to avoid the inconvenience of knowing the truth.

There was a moment, however, when he asked a real question. We were sitting out on the staircase in front of our apartment on Busey Avenue, and he said, “Tell me about what happened.” I responded, “What would you like to know?” He said, “Were the death threats real?” I replied, “Yes.” He then said, “I would think that if something like that happened, that you would just go to the police.”

I did not reply. I suppose I could have ventured an answer at that point, but I figured that the very fact that I suggested I was subject to death threats, but did not give a clear explanation, would be so suggestive of an extremely serious situation that he would feel a need to ask me about the matter again.

I was completely wrong. Michael did not ask any further questions for the next twenty years. He did not ask me how my mental health was, nor ask me about what had happened that day, or on the days before or after. He would not discuss any part the story with me until 2006, when I insisted on telling him something about what had happened. Michael listened to me, but he never responded. When I wrote a letter later detailing the story, he never responded to that either.

The following day, I went to the Carle Clinic to meet Dr. Alper, and discuss my further treatment. I saw the first examples of the low-level harassment that I would suffer for four years, until January 2005 (and occasionally after that) as soon as I arrived. There were posters put up at the Carle Clinic along the path I walked down from the parking lot with frightening notes about suicide, missing
children, mental illness, and other topics clearly set out in prominent places to serve as a threat to me. Also, there was a group of men in trench coats who were clearly dressed up to look as if they were armed and menacing, who stood in front of the elevator in the lobby. I tried to smile at them and walk on.

But when I reached Dr. Alper’s office, the staff was quite friendly. Dr. Alper met with me after just a ten-minute wait, and we talked at length. Alper did not have the slightest interest in my health. I had hoped that he would, as the stress of the situation had taken a toll, and the medicine that had been secretly administered to me had worn me down. But I learned that although there were plenty of people who were supportive of me, no one could help me with this case.

Alper explained again that I had a deficit to the “executive function.” He then explained to me with a kind smile, “It has been agreed that you will sign these documents certifying that you are suffering from mental illness. You will be put on medical leave for a year and then you can go back to recovering your career.”

I responded, “Can’t I just say, ‘I’m sorry’?”

He explained, with a glint in his eye, “Saying sorry doesn’t work for the death sentence.”

Alper had a remarkable command of the circumstances, and a sense of humor that I came to appreciate. Although I did not fully trust him, in that I thought he would do to me whatever he was ordered to do, I did think he was extremely insightful, and a careful listener, and he clearly liked me as a person. It would also become clear that he was privy to information at an extremely high level.

He continued, “Well, it is like Florida: there is the way things are supposed to work, and the way that they really work.” He was referring to the shutting down of the recount in Florida.

I asked him again whether there was some compromise as to how I could avoid signing some documentation certifying me as mentally ill.

“You see, I would like to avoid something in my record that refers to some sort of mental illness.”

“I don’t blame you!” he remarked in a humorous tone.
“Look,” he continued, “what situation might there be in which it could be a problem?”

“Well,” I responded, “What if I wanted to run for senator?”

This comment clearly caught Alper’s attention. He looked at me intensely, and with great interest, and asked, “Are you serious?”

“Well, it does not have to be senator per se, but some position like that.”

“If you undergo successful treatment, and the documents are complete in your file, that record would not cause any problem at all.”

I replied, “Fine. Then I will sign whatever documents you give me.”

He was clearly relieved, as was I. We had a bit of time to discuss my father, whom Alper suggested had shown great concern for me in his meetings with administrators.

And then we then shook hands. As I left his office, Alper remarked, “That is a very attractive scarf you have on.”

“It is a scarf from Davenport College at Yale, where I lived, and my father prior to me. George W. Bush and his father also lived there,” I explained.

“You do not see many of those around here,” he remarked.

It appeared that he already knew the entire contents of my emails to Charles Stewart.

One memorable moment from that time was when a military aircraft flew very low directly over our house in the afternoon. Although I do not know what the significance of that was, there was no mistaking that the flight path was extraordinary, and that it was clearly intentional. I took it as a sign of support.

The following day my mother arrived from California to see me. She had rushed out, having heard that I was now mentally ill. I was quite close to my mother, and for this reason, the time we spent together was deeply painful. I had already tried to hint to her on the phone previously that something was seriously wrong, but she had willfully ignored what I said.
We made some light conversation the morning after her arrival, and then set out for a walk in downtown Champaign. Along the way, I started to explain bits of what had happened to me. My mother was not listening very carefully to anything, even though she was deeply worried about me. I think that she had already been told by several people about just how mentally ill I was, according to authorities, and she was, therefore, rather confused about what to make of what I said. I think it was easier for her to dismiss what I said out of hand because to admit that there might be some truth to it would be so jolting to her entire world view.

But there was a moment at which she started to listen a bit more carefully to what I said about the medication I had been given by the pharmacy the first day when I was with my father. Suddenly, she asked me, “Do you mean to say that you think they intentionally gave you medication that made you sick?” “What level of security clearance would they have to have to be able to do that?” I replied.

She looked shocked, and said that she needed a moment to get a breath of air. She walked about ten meters away from me, then returned, her thoughts collected. I think that she must have been on the verge of tears at that point, faced with the possibility that her son was suffering from mental illness. It did not seem to occur to her, in her disturbed state, that there might be something to what I said. It certainly did not occur to ask whether there were precedents for the government doing things like that to Americans. If she had looked into the matter, she would have learned that such a story is entirely plausible.

We then drove to Saint Louis together, some three hours away. I grew up in Saint Louis, and it was an odd moment to be there together at this moment of crisis in my life. We stopped by Left Bank Books, a bookstore I knew from childhood, and attended a reading by an author whose novels my mother was very fond of. I enjoyed the event, and started at last to relax. We met with Barry Lieberman, the owner of Left Bank Books, whom I remembered fondly from childhood. I would later talk with him on the phone, and he was the only one who actually thanked me for my efforts at that time. I didn’t pursue this, but it seemed a bit ambiguous to me. I wasn’t quite sure what he was thanking me for, but given all that had happened to me to that point, being thanked for anything at all was comforting.

That evening, after we had returned to our hotel room, I pulled out my binder and found an article that had been published in the Daily Illini the day that I had been put on medical leave from the University of Illinois. The article quoted the
Chinese Prime Minister, Zhu Rongji, who praised a Chinese official who had been unfairly dismissed from government on made-up corruption charges. I do not have the article anymore, but it seemed rather contrived, and a clear reference to my case. There was no reason for such an article to appear on the front page of the Daily Illini. I handed it to my mother to read, saying, “Take a look at this article. It will help you understand what happened to me.”

She started reading it. She seemed confused. “I don’t understand. It is just an article about some Chinese bureaucrat,” she remarked. “You see, it is an allusion to how I was unfairly dismissed from the university.” I explained.

She was silent for a moment. And then she stood up suddenly, looking deeply disturbed. She had actually read through the odd article, and noticed how unnatural it was. For the first time, it crossed her mind that what I was claiming might be true. At the time, she was the only one in my family who actually listened to what I was saying.

But her response was not an effort to understand better. Rather, she was swept over with an irrational terror. I started to think that perhaps I had made a mistake by even talking about the matter.

She told me we must burn all the papers and destroy all files. I did not express great enthusiasm for this idea, as it was clear that everyone knew more than enough about every aspect of my actions. There were no secrets at that point. She was so nervous, that she was incapable of discussing the matter with any detachment, and the conversation fell apart.

The next morning, we set out to drive back early in the morning. I felt extreme anxiety and tension as I drove, the events of the last few days constantly circulating in my mind. I was so nervous, that I had to stop driving for five minutes.

This round of nervousness seems to have been drug-induced as well. It worked to convince my mother that I was mentally ill, and she did not want to discuss the topic again that day. She called me four days later to tell me that a friend had explained to her how certain people under stress could be led to imagine elaborate scenarios. She seemed to accept that this anecdote fully explained my case.

My mother and father were being influenced by the culture of denial that was prevalent in the United States at the time. No one wanted to face the clear
evidence that the nation had been taken over in a military coup, and they ignored any proof that might force them to confront reality. Even 18 years later, Americans are afraid to confront that reality.

I also disagreed with my mother’s interpretation. I saw that my impact was over, and that the harassment operation was not so much aimed at punishing me as it was at showing others, including the agents assigned to me, what punishment they might suffer if they acted out of line, or tried to support me.

Also of interest were my interactions with the members of the CIA team assigned to keep tabs on me at the time. Of course, there were plenty of people whom I had never met, those who read mail and observed me. But I took multiple steps to try to show appreciation and develop a relationship with them all even if the relationship had to be one-way.

Many of those involved were not in Illinois. I was thinking of a broad audience, when I drafted my email. I saw it as an explicitly political act of building a following. After all, I guessed, only those with the highest clearance would be assigned to me. I should pitch my ideas to them.

There were some specific people who were assigned to work outside my house who I could identify readily, and there was no attempt to conceal what was going on.

First, there was a young man who was assigned to fix the door to our apartment building who had given me a hostile look, and laughed at me in a menacing manner, at the height of the campaign. This perplexed me. Later on, I introduced myself to him, and presented him with my business card. He seemed quite appreciative that I was so considerate, as he had been assigned to harass me for two weeks. We spoke on several times after that occasion, and I saw him randomly in the crowd when I was walking around Champaign with an unusual frequency.

Later, there was an incident where a car crashed into ours on the road near our home. Our car suffered only minor damage. The same young man was the driver. The entire accident seemed a bit suspicious, including the smoke that came out of the back of our car (suspicious, inasmuch as it seemed odd that such a fender-bender would cause the car to emit smoke). The accident was part of the harassment campaign, but by that time I was familiar enough with him that I felt quite at ease.
The other group assigned to me consisted of two Cambodians who were to paint the outside of our house over a period of three weeks. They were always kind to me, and seemed to feel some solidarity with me. I also made an effort to speak to them every time I passed by. I had a small bronze Buddha statue in the house that I decided I wanted to give to them as a present. I thought I would just place it on the steering wheel of their truck as a little surprise they would discover later. It was meant to be a parallel to the various humorous objects that had been placed in my house by other members of the team watching me.

But when I tried to open the door to the truck, a loud alarm went off, and they came running towards me looking rather worried. I explained what I was doing and gave them the Buddha. They were pleased with the gift. But it seems that no one was supposed to monkey with that truck.

At first, I enjoyed the whole adventure, but at the same time I was deeply concerned by the complete takeover of the United States by the Bush administration, and the indifference of Americans to the coup. It was fun to make jokes with Alper about the political situation through obscure analogies. I wrote him a series of postcards with cryptic notes. My favorite postcard was one with a scene from Babylon from D. W. Griffith’s movie, “Intolerance”, a humorous reference to the state of American politics.

Perhaps the most vivid example of this kind of inside joke was an email that I had sent to my department head Jerry Packard, in which I wrote, “I know that we have had disagreements in the past, but I apologize for all my actions, and hope that we can work together in the future. After all, we have bigger fish to fry.”

I later referred to this letter in a conversation with Alper, and he looked at me with a mysterious expression, not uttering a word. It seemed almost as if he had read that very email. A running gag ensued, not only between Alper and myself, but on campus and elsewhere, which alluded to “Bush” sounding somewhat like “fish”, and the phrase, “We have bigger fish to fry” being a reference to Bush.

In any case, references to fried fish appeared left and right in newspapers, on billboards, and even junk mail in our mailbox. It was quite a scene. We were taken out to dinner the next evening by Kevin Kim and his family to a restaurant where the special for everyone was fried fish. By the end of the week, the fried fish joke was getting old.
This campaign was remarkable for several reasons. Although it started from an inside joke between my department head and Alper, an enormous number of people were involved in getting the word out all over the place, and it evolved into an enormous prank of sorts, which must have been known to many thousands of people. Moreover, the Bush administration had seized virtual control, and yet these large groups did not seem to be frightened in the least about such actions. It also seemed reasonable to assume that a large number of people knew about my case, but did not acknowledge it directly.

There were several characteristics of the low-intensity, and on occasion high-intensity harassment which I was subjected to between January 2001 and December 2004, and on occasion thereafter. First and foremost, although there were officers who were under orders to act in a hostile manner toward me, and even occasionally appear clearly threatening, it did not appear that anyone was truly angry at me, but rather they were forced to go through the process of following orders. And they felt they had to follow out these totally illegal orders to the letter.

The entire process was aimed not at frightening me, or at modifying my behavior, but rather at making it clear to everyone else around me, and those further up on the chain of command, that I was being punished for violating the rules of the game. The message was that you could make money and rise in stature, but you could never formulate a vision for how the system ought to be run.

Overall, my interactions with others were extremely limited during that period. Very few people met with me. I lived on a reduced salary, and we had considerable medical expenses related to my bogus treatment for mental illness. There were literally no opportunities for me to earn any income other than my regular salary, despite attempts to contact people about possible translation, writing, consulting and other work over the period that I was on sick leave. My wife’s social interactions were equally restricted, which would put tremendous stress on her. The limits on income and range of activities in the United States dictated by the classified advisories remain in place to the present day.

A large number of people were explicitly instructed concerning how to act towards me, and what to do, or not to do, when interacting with me. There was very little effort to restrict how many people were informed about this process by which I was put under house arrest and subjected to constant harassment. Threats were combined with humorous, even lyrical moments. The men and women assigned to handle me cut through the tedious threats, and showed their
support for me through little signs. The number of people who knew about the operation at the University of Illinois was in the hundreds, if not more. And many thousands, or more, knew about the operation in the United States. To this day, I honestly do not understand why the case has not broken out into the open, granted the scale of the illegality, and the number of people involved.

I was able to affirm several things about this operation. It was so much aimed at intimidating me. There were real orders given at a higher level that were designed to scare me, but the people giving those orders were far away from those carrying them out, and with some rare exceptions, the death threats were delivered in a deadpan, or even ludicrous manner.

It was clear that what was done to me was not intended to punish me, or convince me of the wrongs of my actions, but was rather meant for those around me, to give them the clear message that an intellectual could be subject to the worst forms of political prosecution in broad daylight, and everyone would just go along with it.

There was no desire on the part of those making up the rules to go back to a normal state, and to forget that the whole thing had ever happened. The harassment continued in such an overt manner that it tipped off complete strangers to the fact that something very odd was happening. That did not seem to be a problem. At times, near strangers were brought into events that seemed highly sensitive, if not top secret, but that also was not seen as a problem.

It was also clear that there was a significant group of people within the CIA/FBI who were handling me who not only sympathized with me, but looked at me as someone who could play a leadership role. I was at the bottom of the totem pole, in the sense that I had no freedom of action, but they were looking to me for ideas as to what to do next, almost from the beginning. Many of the messages to me, the scenes set up for me to encounter when walking around campus, showed a loving attention to detail, and an effort to communicate with me at different symbolic levels.

Perhaps the original message was that I was to be discouraged, to be made to feel I was under constant threat of being killed, and that I had no hope whatsoever, but I did not feel that way about what I actually saw. At times I was rather inspired. This contradictory structure of the operation remains a mystery for me to this day. Was it an interference pattern, or something else? What was clear, however, was that the intimidation process was not aimed so much at stopping me. If anything, I was encouraged to speak more boldly than ever.
I have heard indirectly that there were several other such similar cases at the time, but I was never able to confirm this fact. I feel, however, that in terms of the extremes of the actions taken, and the stakes involved, that there was no other case on a par with mine. I personally think a lot of this process had less to do with the fact that I was fluent in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, and more to do with my love of writing. I essentially recovered my skills as a writer that dated back to my role as editor of the Myriad poetry magazine at Lowell High School. I loved the ironic banter, and put tremendous efforts into coming up with pithy summaries of current events.

Over the next few years, from January 2001 to around November of 2004, there was a constant string of inside jokes, indirect references, and sometimes hints as to rather obscure aspects of my personal life that appeared scattered throughout the media. The most common place was the Daily Illini, but there were also implications, sometimes quite blatant, in my opinion, in the Champaign News Gazette, in the New York Times, both in odd turns of phrases in articles, or in the themes treated in advertisements and elsewhere. Tom Tomorrow’s column, “This Modern World”, was also a source of explicit references to my case on a regular basis. So, too, the daily fortune in the Daily Illini featured references to my private life in it. The whole operation must have been so enormous that it could not possibly have been kept a secret. That was not the intention.

In one case, a curly doodle that I frequently scribbled on my papers suddenly became a popular theme in commercial design at Target, and across the advertising field. But there were other such examples where things I had made were integrated into high profile commercial art, but without any means of tying it back to me. I thought that perhaps I had grown so narcissistic, that I saw myself everywhere. But when I was dismissed from the University of Illinois in December of 2004, such fun and games ended permanently. Such hidden messages completely disappeared.

At first, I collected various clippings. But the material was so plentiful, that I gave it up. Many of the references to my political persecution were expressed in the form of a narrative about Chinese scholars who were punished by their government. It was a cute way to hint at something which could not be openly addressed because of a secret law blocking public recognition of this classified operation. It was also a bit disgusting. The whole process is explicitly referred to in the movie, A Beautiful Mind.

At times I thought it must have been my overly active imagination. But now, after fifteen years, the messages seem to have been pretty straightforward, and
the process essentially stopped in November of 2004, after which period I saw very little that fit such a description.

In any case, I was given the rare chance to engage in a broad dialog with a number of people, many of whom were very supportive, and some who were extremely hostile. I felt that every email I wrote was aimed at a broad range of possible supporters, but I was also aware that unsympathetic people would also read what I wrote.

Sometimes I received very clear messages and instructions suggesting what I should do, or what I had done wrong, and at other times the messages were ambiguous, or allusive. Many were rather ingenious, and suggested that someone had taken considerable trouble to make up the clues. And there were little puzzles presented in weird phrases in emails, or comments by Dr. Alper, or other odd notes left in my mailbox, that I never quite figured out.

I was told by Alper I had to vacate my office at the University of Illinois in March, and to stop all interactions with faculty members and graduate students. Interactions had already stopped for the most part some time before then. He told me this action was part of my treatment for mental illness, and that talking with my colleagues might cause interpersonal problems. The order made no sense, but I went along with it to the letter. Moreover, I had little interest in talking to them. I emptied out all the books from my office in an afternoon, and stored them in the basement of our apartment. My department head was not informed that I was vacating the office, and he wrote me an email a week later expressing shock that I had taken everything with me.

Interestingly, my department never made use of my office during the 16 months that I was on medical leave, and it was uncertain what my fate would be. I think this was an action of solidarity and support, granted they were not allowed to talk with me in person. I was frustrated, and even angry at how they treated me, but at the same time I had to recognize that I did not know the whole story.

For all the amusing banter, the stress was considerable. Looking back, it seems that everything was great, but at the time, I honestly did not know if I would be “suicided”, placed in an institution, subjected to long-term unemployment, forced onto public assistance, or something else. I spent many hours alone, and there were no real friends with whom I could talk about the most serious issues. Many people were nervous talking to me at all.
Concentrating was difficult, to say the least, given the low-intensity harassment, which ranged from very oblique comments to rather frightening notes. At the same time, I could focus effectively on certain topics that struck me as vital. There were periods when I was able to read. I read several books by Benjamin Franklin, a biography of Huey Long (which helped me immensely to understand the importance of charisma in politics), Viktor Frankl’s book, Man’s Search for Meaning (on the recommendation of my mother). But I also read many articles and papers on the internet. I found the study of history to be essential to comprehending the political crisis unfolding, because although it was unprecedented in my life, this is certainly not the case for others.

The topics covered in emails and letters to Alper were diverse, ranging from history and politics to literature and philosophy. I tried to formulate my views on what American engagement with East Asia should be, building on the material that I had written for the internet instruction proposal. In fact, I discovered that in spite of the harassment, and the severe limitations on my activities, I seemed to be quite free to write whatever I wanted to write to Alper (and others). That process of writing transformed me, and set the stage for my emergence ten years later primarily as a writer of short essays offering insights into contemporary affairs.

In the middle of March, Alper explained to me that “someone at the university, the provost, or secretary of state” was working on a plan for me. He did not explain what this plan was, but for a few weeks I was convinced that there would be some big breakthrough. In fact, there would never be a significant improvement for me.

In any case, I was required to fill out endless forms which were then lost, and I was required to fill them out again. The forms were for my rehabilitation at the University of Illinois. Forget my dreams of working at Harvard, just staying on at Illinois was a near impossible task.

Numerous suggestions were made to me by faculty members across campus as to research projects that I might participate in. I spent many hours in correspondence, but not a single plan materialized. One of the more involved projects involved a company that was working on the development of a Jurassic Park-type theme park to be built in China.

I spent hours on the phone with the organizer, wrote a series of letters with suggestions, even made introductions to people who could help him. But despite the tremendous enthusiasm expressed by this organizer, and his warm thanks for
all my advice, I was never paid a penny for my work, and I was never allowed to participate in the project. Most likely there was never a chance for me to make any money. I was forced to live on my income from my sick leave. I was not paid for any other work. It was quite obvious that a blanket advisory had been issued, and I accepted this state of affairs. At least I was not quite as afraid as I had been that I would be killed in the near future.

I would guess there were some thirty or forty such projects for me that came up over the remaining three years at the University of Illinois. There were chances to work elsewhere, to travel abroad, to be a consultant, to attend conferences. Few amounted to anything, and by the end, I did not expect much of anything from anyone. Asia had become quite distant for me, and my chances to interact with Asians had plummeted.

One day, around March 25, Dr. Alper suddenly requested that I write an essay in which I was asked to put forth what I thought were the real challenges for the United States in Asia, and around the world. The request seemed quite serious, as if he were representing a group that honestly wanted to know what my opinion was. I was quite honored, and sat down that evening to write a rather complex essay. I tried to articulate a vision for what security needs would be in the future. I assumed that there would be fundamental shifts related to the evolution of technology, and changes in the environment, and suggested that a fundamental redefinition was required.

I concluded with a phrase that I still remember, more or less, “as technology continues to evolve, we will reach a point at which a single individual will be able to kill millions of people. This will completely change the concept of security. We will need everyone we have in the military, but we must completely retool.” At the time, my thinking on this topic was still not well thought out, but I assumed that most weapons systems were completely outdated, and irrelevant to the challenges we would face. I also offered my perspectives on Asia, suggesting that the US had to work more closely with China if it hoped to survive. Alper and friends seemed to agree with this opinion, but it did not get much traction in the United States as a whole.

I saw Alper at his office the next day and we talked about how I should deal with my father, my wife, and other problems with colleagues that had arisen from my odd position. It was a friendly conversation, but a bit pointless, as it was clear that it would be years before any sort of normal relationship with colleagues was possible. In fact, I would feel alienated and distance myself from Asian studies before my colleagues ever started to interact with me again.
At the end of the conversation, I asked him about the letter I had sent him. “Was my letter inappropriate?” I asked. He broke out in a playful smile, saying, “Well, there are people who are paid to think about these sorts of things. Yes, well, if you can just give your opinions sometimes, it could be helpful.” We were on our way towards a beautiful friendship then, although the United States was veering out of control.

On April 1, 2001, there was a mid-air collision between a US Navy intelligence aircraft and a Chinese jet fighter that resulted in the Chinese plane crashing and a pilot dying, at least according to the official story. As soon as I heard the story, I was a bit taken aback. The accident seemed to be so perfectly related to a joke I had made in an email to Alper just a few hours before the announcement. I had said that we must be prepared for everything and always have a plan. Even if you lose a wing while flying, you need to have a plan for what to do.

Of course, I cannot prove any relationship between what I said and what had happened. Nor do I know whether the story was accurate. But there were several such odd moments that made me wonder what exactly was going on. The theme of incidents involving two planes would continue.

I felt some excitement when it looked like there might be some big breakthrough, but over time it became apparent that no matter how popular, or helpful my emails were, I was not getting out of that subordinate position at the University of Illinois, always broke, for years and years. At times I was quite discouraged. I would take my car out for a drive by myself late at night. It is hard to imagine doing something like that now—my wife would no longer tolerate it. But I listened to U2 or other music that somehow got me psyched-up, and tried to imagine that I was making some tremendous difference, even as I was completely isolated and cut off from everyone.

So how was I treated during that time? My immediate family seems to have honestly believed the entire fiction that I was suffering from mental illness at first. I have some doubts that my father truly believed it, but he made efforts (which I could observe) to convince himself that it must be true because he could not face the other possibility, which would be too terrible.

After about a month, they all stopped asking me about my medical treatment, my mood, my work. Although it would be quite natural for a father, mother, or brother to inquire as to how I was doing after such a serious mental illness, they left it alone. They also never made any effort to figure out what part of the story
was real and what was my delusions. They avoided any discussion about the process leading up to my dismissal, placement on disability, and, finally, sick leave. Following any of these stories carefully and asking simple questions would quickly lead to irreconcilable problems in the official narrative, so they studiously avoided asking real questions.

After making the initial effort to try to tell each of them the truth, I discovered that I was rebuffed by all, although my mother originally tried to understand. No family members asked me any meaningful questions about what had happened. I know that, because I had made up my mind that if they did, I would start to tell the true story. It was only three years later that I forced them, one by one, to listen to my story. They would never have asked on their own, and they never asked me any questions after I recounted the details, nor did they ever ask any probing questions.

This process was serious for me. Here were people like my mother, my brother, and my father turning into complete strangers, acting in a manner that I do not think I could have done even if the CIA had threatened to kill me. It seemed as if it was natural for them to just go along with this massive fraud, and they would not even hint that there was anything wrong. The CIA operatives watching me were more honest and straightforward than my family. I thought to myself, and I still believe it, that if I had been killed then, my father would have given a tearful speech at my funeral about how he could not understand how his son took his life. He had absolutely no interested in finding out the truth.

To some degree, I had discovered something about the upper-middle class in American society. They are not interested in inconvenient truths. But I think that the United States was decaying as a culture, overall, and citizens were engaging in behavior that would not have taken place previously.

In any case, I was disgusted with my family, and I made up mind that I would not tell them anything until they asked me some questions. Ultimately, I had to bring up the topic of the true story on my own, because my family would have been perfectly happy to bury this whole weird story forever.

Actually, I never met a single person who was willing to cooperate in pursuing an investigation of the criminal conspiracy against me. On very rare occasions, there were people who were willing to allude to this process.

This phenomenon led me to feel that the problem was definitely not George W. Bush. I felt, rather, that the problem was a result of the decay of American
culture, and the passivity of intellectuals, all quite capable, but not willing to take any risk at all, and happy to maintain complete fictions for their own convenience.

"The Sleepwalkers" (Die Schlafwandler) is the title of an extended novel by the Austrian novelist, Hermann Broch, in which he describes the lives of three fictional characters who were caught up in the collapsing cultural order of Europe in the days leading up to the First World War, and through that debacle. Broch describes a bizarre psychological state in the educated classes of Germany at the time. People lived like sleepwalkers, functional in society, competent at their jobs, but in the most profound sense completely oblivious to the signs of economic and systemic collapse. Because they could run a society while remaining unaware of the consequences of their actions, they made the unthinkable possible.

One only need look at what happened between December 2000 and June 2005 (and today as well) to see what was wrong with the United States. The United States was clearly taken over in a military coup d’état, in which a small group of people took control of large sections of the government, but not of the entire government. For about a year after January 2001, the media offered up completely unrealistic propaganda, with rare gems hidden beneath the surface. Yet, with extremely rare exceptions, most of the people that I met were completely silent about this obvious fact.

Nobody dared to say anything, or better yet, they deluded themselves for their own convenience. There would be several attempted coups and counter coups over the following years, but although I have read through any number of left-wing, right-wing, and conspiracy blogs, I have never seen any effort to describe that process on the internet.

One thing I can say for sure is that although I was clearly placed on a blacklist, there were so many humorous incidents staged for me, odd events in which I just happened to run into people wearing t-shirts that quoted my recent emails, or even sketches left on my desk, that I did get a certain pleasure in the midst of severe isolation. It was a mixed experience, that at times left me rather confused.

But the harassment did not let up, and there were even death threats to me and my family, despite the fact that I was not so worried about what would happen to us after about six months.
I am certain that this story, although it is never discussed, is extremely well documented, and that many of the related documents remain, probably including many that are not classified. I have not started to request documentation, for the simple reason that I cannot find a single person in the United States who would support me taking such an action.

I was aware of the dangers of writing emails, but I had come to believe, perhaps mistakenly, that writing these emails was a chance to express my opinions to a broad readership, one that most likely included those in the FBI and CIA who had been sent to harass me. Some of them might have been deeply hostile to me, and might have abused the information that I gave them. But my distinct impression, based on what had happened to me to that point, was that they were basically sympathetic, and wanted to know what I thought.

I was aware that there was a real danger that the advice that I had offered up on foreign policy, or, later, regarding other security matters, might be abused by the strangers who read it, for immoral, or unethical purposes. This was a risk I was fully aware of. I also had no illusions about what the CIA was. I just felt there was clearly a core of people who were willing to take some serious risks to help me.

I felt, however, that I had an ethical obligation to work with whomever it was who was willing to pursue the restoration of the rule of law in the United States given that level of risk. This was not an effort meant for sissies. It was a calculated risk that I had to take. The risk would increase in the following weeks. I tried to convince myself that if I had the chance to suggest ideas, although there was a risk the ideas would be misused, I had an obligation to do something in light of the chaos in the United States at the time. I am not so sure if that gamble was successful, but I do not ultimately know.

I had applied previously to take the exam for the State Department when I was so frustrated at the University of Illinois. It was not really my first choice as a career, but it was the only career change available. The exam was in April 2001. Other people I had contacted about work at universities often did not even reply. I was not even invited as a candidate for the position at Harvard I thought would be mine.

The State Department opportunity was the only one that came through. My wife, who was not interested in thinking about the seriousness of the situation for me, locked on to this idea that I would join the Foreign Service, and harbored great hopes for a new life away from the Midwest. I thought that
passing such a government exam in that sort of environment would be absolutely impossible, but I also thought that perhaps there might be some opportunity in that symbolic act.

It was in that context that in the middle of a conversation with my wife around April 18, I made an odd comment. I was driving, and I remarked to her casually, “I wonder if perhaps I should join the CIA.” She was taken aback by my comment, and insisted that I apply for the State Department.

I was articulating a thought that had been developing in my mind for some time. There is some risk of distortion, as many years have passed, and I cannot recall the exact correspondences that had gone on between me and Alper about the serious political crisis in the United States. I certainly did not have illusions about what the CIA as a whole was at the time. I knew plenty about the criminal actions it had been engaged in for decades, and its ties to the drug trade and money laundering.

What that slightly off-hand comment meant was rather that I had been deeply impressed by the discipline and the raw bravery of the small group of people associated with the CIA whom I had encountered, who had been sent to watch me, but more accurately, to defend me. I had already started to formulate in my mind a way to take advantage of this small group of people with the bravery to take on the Bush administration, and move forward to real reform in the United States.

I came to believe, although obviously I could not prove it, that it was, in fact, this small faction in the CIA itself, and in the military, who had the only chance of taking the US in a new direction, because the intellectuals I saw around me were such cowards. I may have misjudged. Certainly, for all the acts of bravery that would follow, those brave souls within the system were unable to stop the institutional and cultural decay of the United States, but I could not have known that back in 2001.

The next day I had an appointment with Dr. Alper at his office. I was meeting with him three times a week, and we were talking more about politics and foreign policy than about mental health issues. When I sat down across the desk from him, he smiled at me and remarked, “You really have to avoid being dominated by your wife. I am sure that you can win her over with your strong personality.”
That line came out of nowhere. There had not been any discussion about my wife at all previously. Alper continued the whole routine, which sounded like it had been practiced to perfection in advance. He continued to refer to my wife’s stubbornness, and specifically mentioned the question of my taking the exam for the State Department. Then, in the middle of his dialog, he used a most pregnant line, “I mean I DON’T work for the State Department, or anything…”

By that point, it had become crystal clear that he was referring explicitly to the conversation I had had in the car with my wife. He was conveying to me the very strong opinion (most likely of the entire team) that they wanted me to join them. But it was the total opposite of recruitment for the CIA. I had at least one audience that was seriously interested in what I thought. How big that audience was then, or later, may ultimately be a question that can never be answered.

The tone of the conversation then shifted. Alper adopted a rather unusual tone. He was detached, yet spoke in a relaxed manner, and suddenly turned to me point blank with a real seriousness. He said to me something that not a single American around me had been willing to say up until that moment. Alper remarked, “The country is in a state of anomy. Complete political chaos.” He openly described the severe disorder in the political system since the Bush group had seized power, but were unable to fully control all parts of government.\(^1\) He also suggested that if this state continued, there could be a real conflict (I imagined a civil war, but I may have read more into his words than he intended).

I saw that conversation as a turning point, not only in our relationship, but also in my role. Of course, I had offered up my opinions on international relations previously, but I was not actually playing an active role; just giving detached advice. But now I feared that the conflicts beneath the surface in the American government were spinning out of control. I decided that I would do my best to find a political solution to what I perceived as an extremely dangerous situation in the United States, and I would do so by appealing to the people who were looking after me.

One can interpret this vision of mine as symptomatic of tremendous confidence (or arrogance) in my personality. That somehow, I thought I could run the entire

\(^1\) I believe that there were at least three groups: those around George W. Bush wishing to consolidate power in a coup; those opposed to his extreme actions, some of who were contemplating violent action; those who seized power within their organizations taking advantage of the chaos, but who were not necessarily supporters of Bush, and were more like warlords. I do not have any idea how many people were killed at that time, but I think it unlikely that such a level of conflict could take place without violence. Perhaps we will learn some day.
show better than anyone else even as I was sitting under virtual house arrest, subject to constant surveillance. But that was my personality, for better or worse, and I sat down to think about what needed to be done.

I also thought that those people who were assigned to watch over me in such a blatantly illegal operation were clearly of high rank, and with high clearance. It seemed that presenting ideas to them was as good a strategy as any.

But there was, of course, risk. Not only was there risk to me personally, and to those around me, but equally as significant, there was real risk that if I gave useful suggestions they would later be abused. You could argue that this is what did happen, to some degree, but I think that at that moment there really was little choice, or so I thought.

Whatever the risks, I decided then that I would write down some ideas about how intelligence could be transformed, at least in part, into an organization that would play a positive role, not a negative one.

After eighteen years, I believe that the loyal group of people with whom I interacted did not abuse my trust, and that they were sincere in their efforts to make intelligence into something meaningful, and to use their influence and their raw bravery to resist the Bush administration. But what the ultimate results of what I wrote were, and how they played off other ideas, we do not ultimately know.

It must strike anyone as odd that I would have possibly thought that the CIA, one of the most corrupt and anti-democratic institutions in the United States, could play a positive role, but based on what I saw at the time, that was what I felt at the time. I saw clearly that this faction within intelligence was literally the only place in the country where the truth was getting out. All the progressive and liberal institutions in America had broken down. No one else at the University of Illinois was willing to speak so frankly about the crisis. So, I felt that the CIA not only had factions that brazenly broke the law to help corporations, but also contained small cells who were willing to stand up against tremendous pressures to fight for due process.

I think that what was taking shape back then was an alternative intelligence community that would eventually feed into such groups as Anonymous and Wikileaks, and support efforts by people like Edward Snowden, Bradley Manning, and thousands of others who had used intelligence or military positions to disclose illegal activities, or to try to hold government accountable.
I had nothing to do with those acts of resistance. Most importantly, all those self-righteous leakers did not have any interest in my case.

I felt that the only people willing to stand up against this oppression were a small group of people within the military, and the intelligence community; people who were not afraid to die in complete obscurity, without anyone ever having known what had happened. I was impressed with what I saw, and I chose, for better or worse, to stand with them. I may have been mistaken, and certainly things that I had said may have been misused, and I may have inadvertently worked with people who did not have good intentions. They formed a contrast with the cowardice I saw in my friends, family, and colleagues.

I think that I have held myself to a high ethical standard, and I hope that this has come across to the readers of this novel. So many people already know some part of this story, that I feel an obligation to write down what I think transpired to set the record straight. I cannot write about things I do not know, of course.

What I can say with certainty is that this operation, “Babysit Emanuel”, was so complex, and so intensive, that there must exist considerable documentation, and I am certain that someday the details of the story will be released. There were a large number of people involved in the operation who had no clearance at all, and so it was not strictly secret in nature.

One of the reasons I feel I must write this book is that there have been so many people who have made comments, and jokes, about how I work for the CIA. I want to tell the story here as accurately as possible, so that there is no doubt as to what actually took place. I never received any compensation from the CIA, and I was never asked to do anything other to humiliate myself by acting like someone suffering from mental illness. I was generally treated kindly by the people around me, even as they did things to me that were obviously unethical.

I think that the best way to understand the story is to imagine that the CIA was the only organization in the United States with an independent budget, and complex powerful hierarchy which had factions within it capable of defying the Bush administration, and offering a dissident any position at all at the time. Perhaps the CIA was literally the only organization that could adopt someone like me.

I spent the next day at the university gym working out, as had become my habit. Between rounds of lifting weights, I scribbled down on various pieces of paper
my suggestions as to what needed to be done to restore order in the United States. It was not a radical statement, by any means. I think that the pithy remarks I had made, and the suggestions I had offered represented some of the best of my thinking and writing. The words were few, but the implications were vast. I rewrote the contents of those notes into a short letter some years ago, and it may be possible to find it.

I put together all the materials in an envelope, including some writings in Chinese, and addressed it to “Dr. Alper.” I drew on the back of the envelope a rising/setting sun, which was meant to serve as a question: Is the United States declining, or is this a moment of rebirth? The shape, of course, was meant to reflect the shape of the CIA logo as well.

I was making an appeal to those invisible people who had taken that much risk to keep me alive, that somehow, by virtue of their bravery and their imagination, they could remake the CIA, or some part thereof, into something that would be virtuous, and could start a movement to turn the country around. This may seem a rather naïve assumption. It is, after all, just a mark on the back of an envelope, and there was never any contract written otherwise explaining anything. My comments were laconic, and only meaningful to those who already knew what the crisis was that I referred to obliquely.

In many respects, my proposal was not successful. Although there were some brave people in the CIA who had taken a risky stand, and there would be later whistleblowers who would carry on that effort, the vast majority of the CIA just marched forward in a destructive direction that continues at an increased pace today.

I think, however, that a counterargument could be made that the effort to systematically resist the Bush administration started there, in the one organization that was basically assumed to belong to the Bush clan. The brave battle to preserve, in pockets, bits of the rule of law and meritocracy within a
barbaric government would set the stage for some reforms that took place (in a limited sense) under Obama and give other government workers bravery to resist.

I want to set the record straight about what I had written. Although I do not repeat it here, the text is available elsewhere. One cannot understand what I had written unless you imagine that I was not so sure how long I would live at that time, that I felt as if I was in the middle of a low-intensity civil war in the United States, and that I had to move fast. Whether you think my perspective was correct or not depends entirely on where you stood in American society at the time.

The story of my being somehow involved with the CIA was spread widely among friends and colleagues, and among complete strangers, over the next few years. This “campaign” (which I think was almost humorous in nature) resulted in a situation wherein I met people years later who would say to me, as a greeting, “You know many Asian languages. I guess you work for the CIA.” I did not find this rumor campaign all that amusing, although it was relatively harmless.

But the bottom line regarding my actions is important to set straight. I never signed any contracts, and had no written or spoken agreement about any cooperation with the CIA at all. I gave advice about what needed to be done in the United States, and that advice included suggestions as to how to reform intelligence, but it was almost never advice that was solicited. I never made statements to third parties based on what the people at the CIA told me to do (I never acted as an agent). Most importantly, I was never paid a penny by the CIA, or by the US government in any form. And ironically, although my ideas were followed up on at a high level on occasion, the CIA could protect me, but they could not help me to solve the most basic problems of monthly finances or the end of the low-scale harassment to which I was subject. My salary at my department remained the lowest of any faculty member, even though I had worked there longer than three other faculty members. I was driven into debt paying for the treatment of a non-existent medical condition, and I was subjected to constant harassment and threats (mixed with occasional humor and supportive comments) for four years.

At times the hidden messages in email, advertising, junk mail, and the media were so common that I wondered whether I was overreacting; seeing things that were not there. But when I prepared to leave the University of Illinois in December 2004, all such messages suddenly disappeared. I have occasionally
had a few experiences that have indicated that some officer was trying to suggest something to me, but such moments have been few and far apart. Essentially, that dialog ended in 2004, although the classified restrictions on my work and my activities remain in place to the day.

The following day, April 20, 2001, I was already scheduled to take a battery of tests at the Carle Clinic. When I was preparing to leave our apartment, the radio news came on, and I heard a broadcast announcing that a plane had crashed. The story was that a Peruvian Air force fighter plane engaged in counter-drug operations fired on a plane suspected of drug trafficking that was contracted by the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism. Two people were killed, and the plane made an emergency landing, thanks to information provided by a plane operated by the CIA. The notable point of the broadcast was that the CIA was “giving information”, which immediately struck me as a direct reference to my letter to Dr. Alper that I had written the previous afternoon, and which I had not even taken to him yet. As soon as I heard this broadcast, the reference was clear to me. Most likely, my letter had already been copied while I slept, as I was clearly under 24/7 surveillance. It was a rather striking moment for me, because it seemed to me then, and now, that the broadcast was an obvious and direct reference to what I had written.

Significantly, that day I did not have a chance to see Alper, as I had expected. Instead, I was administered a series of psychological tests. The tests involved matching up a variety of images and shapes, many of which seemed to be very much related to my letter. In fact, I had the distinct feeling that someone in a CIA lab somewhere had had a lot of fun over the 8 hours reading my handwritten letter, and putting together this “test” for me in a format that looked convincing.

In any case, from that moment on, I was trying to give advice as to what needed to be done in the United States to people I assumed were deeply connected to the system. I should also note that there were any number of indirect references to me that I saw in the newspapers, and also other actions by people around me, or posters posted at the University of Illinois, that suggested a deep hostility towards the Bush administration on the part of these groups who supported me. I was equally concerned at the time that this emergency could result in serious violence, or even a civil war. I was wrong on that point, but the tensions within government were extremely high in the chaos of that moment. That story of what happened in the United States between December, 2000 and July 2004 has yet to be told.
In any case, I was not certain how long I would live, or what might be done to me, and so, fearing the worst regarding the chaos in the United States, it seemed to be the smartest move, even an ethical obligation, to work with this small group within the CIA who were willing to stand up, regardless of risk.

But I was aware of the possible ambiguities of my actions, and I accepted the risk that I might be associated with things I had never planned or intended, or that I would be used or manipulated without my knowledge. Overall, I think that I was allowed at the time, and I am still allowed, to speak the truth about important issues. That was the great blessing in what was often a complete catastrophe. I do not think I was manipulated or exploited much and although things I suggested were certainly linked to actions that would later be criminal, it was clear that I had no part in the shift in the application.

Many people have asked me about the degree to which the movie, “A Beautiful Mind”, is intended as a “film a clef” description of my experiences at the University of Illinois at that time, and specifically of my involvement with that breakaway group in the CIA/military which stood up to the Bush administration when it seized power in 2001. The question is not easy to answer, as there is much of the story that I do not know.

That big-budget film, directed by Ron Howard, was about Professor John Nash, and specifically about his experiences as a math prodigy suffering from schizophrenia while at Princeton University. Large sections of the film are not relevant to my case. However, the basic plot line is well matched to represent what transpired in my case, and there is plenty of evidence that the plot was modified so as to make it a better match for my case, and less of a match with John Nash’s actual experiences.

The movie was released in December 2001, at the height of the controversy over my status at the University of Illinois, and I am certain that many of the references in the film were not lost on many viewers. But I would also like to suggest that many parts of the film can be read as referring to any number of other individuals in government, academics, law, and elsewhere who were similarly abused at the time by the government.

The sections that matched with my life are obvious: a professor teaching at a university who is perceived by those around him as suffering from mental illness, but who thinks he is leading the way in a classified operation to save the nation.
The scenes of Nash trying to teach his classes in a natural manner, while at the same time, fearing he could be killed at any moment, seemed an accurate portrayal of my experience. Moreover, there are no such scenes in Nash’s actual life.

The story was cleaned up, to fit my rather simple life closely. Howard left out details about Nash’s family with a woman he never married, and some of his sexual experimentations. He was portrayed as a straight and rather bland professor, with a wife and small child; a far better representation of me at the University of Illinois in 2001, when my son Benjamin was just a few months old (the same age as the baby boy in the film).

Moreover, Nash’s delusions described in the book, *A Beautiful Mind*, are not that believable. They included fantastic stories ranging from massive communist conspiracies in the United States, to visitations by UFOs. Nash’s hallucinations were not logical, and did not form a consistent plot. He thought that aliens were sending him messages, and that everyone with a red tie was a secret communist. He claimed to colleagues that he was the pope, and also the emperor of Antarctica. He even suggested he was a messenger sent by God.

But the movie describes a professor who is unexpectedly brought into a classified operation by the military/intelligence, and is told that he is not allowed to tell his family. The operation goes amiss, and he finds his life at risk. As a result, he is accused of having a mental illness, and is dismissed from his job. Such a scenario is, in fact, totally believable, and is a close match for actual events involving the CIA that have been documented. But more importantly, this modification of the storyline makes it a far better fit for me than for John Nash.

The scene with the tie at the beginning of *A Beautiful Mind* is a perfect example. John Nash sees a pattern in the refraction of light through multi-faceted glass while at a cocktail party, which forms a half-sun pattern. That pattern is then projected onto slices of an orange, and then again, the light is refracted through a glass vase, before being transposed onto the necktie of one of the students. The necktie is covered with a series of small rising-sun motifs, and one large one, that are illuminated by the light.

Nash remarks, “There must be a mathematical explanation for how bad your tie is.”
In the story, the narrative about neckties suggests that Nash had become terrified of men wearing red ties, because he assumed them to be part of a communist conspiracy. But in the case of *A Beautiful Mind*, the tie is not red, but rather an orange color. And Nash is not frightened, but rather amused by the tie.

When I saw the film in early 2002, I saw the scene immediately as a direct reference to the compass shape of the CIA logo, and the question as to whether the United States was a rising or a setting sun, as I described above. When I saw the movie, I was amazed that that incident, which I assumed would never be known to anyone outside of a small group, was thereby made public knowledge for everyone to see. To this day, I do not know exactly why they did so, but it was clear that I was not going to go back to being an ordinary professor.

Another notable difference between the movie and Nash’s life is his relationship with his wife. In real life, Nash’s marriage completely fell apart during the progress of his illness. He had a child with another woman, and had sexual relations with many others. In my case, I lived a faithful and rather domestic life without any of those tendencies.

Several of the scenes in the movie are pretty close to actual events in my life, particularly the chaos in my life at the point at when my family had all been told by authorities that I was mentally ill, and were completely oblivious to what was actually taking place.

The conversations between Nash and the agent assigned to him, William Parcher (played by Ed Harris) of the Department of Defense had real parallels in my experience with Alper-some scenes making direct references. Although I did not keep the incredible piles of newspaper clippings that Nash did in the movie, there was a time when I did cut out articles and advertisements that hinted at my experiences for future reference. Most of those clippings I threw away when I realized that the process would drag on for years, or for decades. I believe that the movie included references to other cases that are still undisclosed, involving numerous people in the United States who were subjected to similar treatment at the time.

Finally, at the end of the movie, John Nash is awarded a Nobel Prize as an old man. This scene suggested to me that I was going to be held back from any public role for decades, and that if I received any credit for my efforts, it would be extremely late in my life. That did not turn out to be true, as I started to get
significant attention within Korea, at least, and Asia as whole, within twelve years, but not for what had happened in the United States.

I had made up my mind to leave the University of Illinois, and to leave academics, if possible, a year before this crisis. I had applied for a teaching position at Harvard, to get away from Illinois, and I applied for a position with the State Department. Neither was my dream job. I could have sought employment much more broadly, but I thought that my innovations in distance learning would be enough to make a career for me. But, in fact, I played almost no role in the massive development of the ideas that I described in my proposal.

It seemed clear at that time that my career was over, at least for a few years. The advice I had offered up for what the United States should do may have been deeply appreciated by some, but there was little they could do to improve my lot. Granted, they did a few amusing things to me, and protected me from threats.

I was never called to give a talk at Harvard for the position that I applied for, even though many saw me as the leading candidate. I think it must have taken some real work to get me off that list. But the application for the foreign service continued to move forward, and I passed the initial written test. I was, to my amazement, sent a letter in March telling me to come to Chicago for the foreign service interview and exam.

When I told Alper about the foreign service interview, he remarked, “Well I think it is a bit early, considering your illness, but why don’t you try.” I was not sure what to make of his comment, but I went ahead with my plan, rented a car, and set out to take the examination at the University of Chicago.

I stayed at International House near the University of Chicago that night. It was a tremendous adventure; amusing for the most part. International House is a Romanesque structure, with remarkable moldings and woodwork, much to my taste. It no longer rents out rooms, unfortunately. The building was filled with any number of posters and advertisements that referred to themes found in some of my emails, and political events of the day, and many made reference to inside jokes I have since forgotten (and that would have been obscure to all but a few people). It was a rather amusing experience, and stood out in my mind as a relaxing moment in what would otherwise turn out to be a brutal summer.

I headed out early the next morning for a cup of coffee and then walked to the test center on Michigan Avenue.
The test itself was uneventful, with written essays, and acting out various scenarios with others who had also come for the exam. The conversation at the end with the foreign service officers administrating the test was weirdly unique. They told me that I had not passed, and they wished me well. They informed me in a somewhat humorous, and even intimate manner, suggesting that at some level they knew all about me.

When I left the office and walked out onto the green grass of the park under the bright sunlight, it occurred to me that I had forgotten my calendar in the office where I had taken the test. I rushed back to retrieve it, and I was met by another foreign service officer, who had not appeared previously, and who engaged me in a rather thoughtful, short conversation. Afterwards, I asked myself whether that man was one of the people who had been assigned to listen to me for the time I was at Illinois, but I will never know. I felt as if the entire thing has been choreographed, although it seemed as if I had left my calendar behind of my own volition. Who knows.

I got into my rental car, and started to drive out of the parking garage. I was led around and around by a series of arrows that pointed to the exit, but which seemed to keep leading me in the wrong direction. It became an ongoing game, until I at last managed to get out. It was the beginning of a series of amusing practical jokes and tricks which I think were meant to suggest that even if I did not pass the foreign service exam, I still had my supporters.

It was a bit of special ops bravado for my personal benefit. There must have been a tremendous amount of effort put into creating that experience intended entirely for my solitary benefit. Such events, set up for my amusement, or my mystification, took place often during that period.

The music that I heard on the radio was so distinctive that I was certain that the entire broadcast had been made up for my benefit. It included several of my favorite songs, and of course, “Hotel California”, and its famous ending, “You can check out anytime you want, but you can never leave.”

Although I thought that I had been unofficially accepted into the club, even if I could not enter the State Department properly, it was my misreading of the situation. The kindness shown to me by the working-level people who had been sent to supervise me, control me, and ultimately protect me, was limited in its impact on my career, no matter how considerate they were. There may have been a few fun moments of solidarity in our resistance at the start, but as the
summer of 2001 wore on, I became increasingly aware of a ruthless battle that was taking place within the federal government. I was back to being subject to the same low-level harassment, the complete isolation from colleagues and friends, and the general alienation that I had suffered from before.

I was completely wrong in my estimation of what would happen to me. I had thought that I would become immensely successful very soon as a result of my role, and that the people who I had supported, and who supported me, would soon find themselves in strong positions in the world, and my career would take off in a big way as result. But I also thought it entirely possible that I would simply be killed, or maybe put in prison, and my career would end. It never occurred to me that there was another possibility; that many people would know about my story, but not talk about it. That I would be given undue credit in an obscure manner through things like *A Beautiful Mind*, but would continue to suffer humiliations, and setbacks in my career, for years, or perhaps decades.

It was also my assumption that because the actions taken against me were illegal, and because so many people had witnessed this behavior directly, that responsible people would do everything in their power to end this farce, and bring things back to normal soon. There was absolutely no problem for anyone who committed blatant violations of the law in my harassment, that went on for years and for hundreds, even thousands of people to be made aware of the process.

In retrospect, it appears that the whole purpose of the operation was not to intimidate or punish me (although obviously I was punished), but rather to show the world what could be done to someone who tried to alter policy at the highest level as a warning. My family, friends, colleagues, and essentially everyone in the community who was asked, participated in this illegal farce. That fact altered the manner in which I viewed my own country, over time.

I use “Bush administration” in this book with some trepidation. I am convinced that although Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and other members of the administration engaged in numerous illegal actions which were entirely impeachable, many of the actions I witnessed were not ordered by people at the top, who had lost interest early on. Rather, it was a broad range of people at a lower level in government who took advantage of the vacuum in power created in the Department of Defense, and elsewhere, to launch their own campaigns to expand their power. We blame Bush, but that is only partly accurate. The looting and the warmongering was not exclusively a product of Bush. These groups were naively assumed by those around me to be working for Bush, but,
in many cases, their efforts to destroy the federal government had nothing at all to do with Bush.

My summer of 2001 was slow. The action of February, March, and April had been terrifying, but also exciting and meaningful. It became clear that for all the attention I had received among certain factions, there was no chance of a miraculous recovery, and I was most likely looking at years, maybe decades to recover my career. The excitement of the first stage quickly died down, and I felt quite let down.

There were still occasions when I offered advice, and some things were even acted on, but for the most part, my time was taken up with filling out forms for my “illness” that I had to submit to the University of Illinois, trying to pay off the tremendous debt caused by extensive medical costs trumped up for my benefit, and paying my new mortgage. The fact that I had never suffered from the illnesses with which I was diagnosed, that I was not allowed to earn a single penny outside of my university salary in any format, and the extreme restrictions imposed on my interactions with others, made the period far more painful. I reached a new level of isolation that went beyond the worst of February.

But the most painful part of the process was the realization that I was neither going to be killed heroically in the brave struggle to restore democracy, nor was I going to be promoted as a remarkably capable person who had won such broad support around the world. Rather, I was going to be treated like a nobody for a long time by my fellow colleagues, who would not speak with me anymore.

It was a relief to finally finish teaching my classes, and go on my so-called sick leave. It was sheer murder trying to teach two classes, while at the same time being caught up in trying to understand, and to respond to, one of the greatest political crises in American history (or that is what I thought it was), while thinking that my family and I could be at risk at any moment if there was a political shift. The courses had been time-consuming, and they required me to pretend that there was nothing wrong, and focus on classical Japanese poetry and Chinese novels.

Dr. Alper informed me that I would be on sick leave for the next two semesters. It was, of course, a relief, but it was just another of the blatant indications that this entire process was entirely political in nature. Although I had successfully taught two classes without any problems, I was now being ordered to go on sick leave without having had a single medical exam, or given a reason why this was
necessary. It must have been obvious to just about everyone what was going on, but I only ever had one or two people suggest to me that there was something wrong with this process.

I also was starting to change my perspective on America as whole. At first, I was angry and humiliated that George W. Bush could come to power in such a clearly illegal manner. But over time, I came to feel that the real problem was not the Bush administration, or their drive for war, or any of the other fun and games they were carrying on. The essential problem was the decline of personal ethics, and the decay in institutions in America that allowed all these professors, government officials, professionals, and even my family to think that it was perfectly fine for them to go on living well, pretending that not much had changed under Bush, while watching me be subjected to the worst forms of political persecution.

If such things had been done to an intellectual in China or Russia, they would have been up in arms. But here I was, a close family member, and they purposely avoided any questions that might have brought up the ambiguities in my story. My father, for example, did not ask again about my “mental illness” after one phone call at the end of February. Not a single family member asked me for my story, ever. They passively watched me undergoing hundreds of rigged-up humiliations. The operation was not secretive at all. Most people nearby could see exactly what was being done.

All hope of escaping from Champaign, and the rather hostile environment at the University of Illinois came to an end when Alper instructed me that I had to buy a house in order to recover from my mental illness. This order was most discouraging, but it was quite clear that there was no choice in the matter. I wanted to get out of Champaign as soon as possible, and move to a big city where I could make use of my skills. That had been my intention from the second year of teaching at the University of Illinois. Although a small Midwestern town like Champaign is great for raising small children, overall, both I and my wife were frustrated with the limitations on what we could do, and I had had enough of my unsympathetic colleagues. Buying a house suggested to me that it had been decided that I would be in Champaign for years, if not for decades.

My son Benjamin was born on June 11, 2001, and his presence made an enormous impact on my life. At times I spent and enormous amount of time with Benjamin, taking him around the neighborhood in the stroller and wrestling with him on the carpeted floors of our apartment. I later became far
busier, but at that time I had the time to properly spend with him. And he was a remarkable son, thoughtful and constantly listening most carefully. He obviously did not know that his father was under house arrest.

But the pleasures of my family life did not solve all problems. We were on the edge of bankruptcy for years, and my family did not want to even ask any questions about what was going on in my life. I felt deeply alienated from my colleagues and never recovered those relations. I could not understand how my country could undergo a military coup, and remain on the edge of serious political conflict for so long, and yet people seemed totally unaware of the severity of the situation. I also noticed how they studiously avoided any conversations that might lead them to discussing such topics. They obviously knew something was seriously wrong.

Soon after Benjamin was born, we moved into a new house in Champaign. It was a single-floor bungalow dating back the 1930s out on Church Street some distance from the university. It was a very modest home that we were able to purchase for a mere $75,000 back then. Given our financial situation at the time, that was about all that we could reasonably afford. It had quite attractive woodwork, and classic windows with counterweights like the house I grew up in.

I did not want to buy a house at first. I harbored the secret hope that, somehow, we would be able to escape from Champaign in the near future. But Dr. Alper insisted that I must buy a house, and after what I had seen so far, I knew that I was in no position to say no to such an order. I feared that buying a house meant having to stay in Illinois for years, or even decades. It signified for me an end to any hope of moving on in my career. That was not an accurate reading of the situation.

Actually, planning and carrying out the move proved to be an extremely valuable distraction. The time I spent cleaning the house, polishing the woodwork, and repairing the basement took my mind off of larger geopolitical and political issues that had paralyzed me. I found a routine in cleaning and repairing the house that brought order to my rather erratic life. I had no regular job, I was subject to constant pressures, and obscure threats, and I was not sure what would happen to the nation, or even how long I would live. I threw myself into repairing the house to clear my mind.

After the move was complete and the basement repainted, the rest of the summer was taken up with planting tomatoes and cucumbers, mowing the lawn,
taking Benjamin out for a walk in his stroller to the park nearby, helping to cook food, and otherwise being engaged with daily life. There was much less time to worry about faraway Washington D.C., no matter how serious the situation there appeared to be.

In July of 2001, Dr. Alper responded to a question from me about work in the affirmative. He told me that he thought I was sufficiently recovered for me to seek out consulting work, and translation projects, in light of my reduced income, and increased expenses. I spent hours and hours looking for translation work, and asking friends if there was any consulting work available. I did not get paid a single penny for my work. It was extremely rare over the next fifteen years that I received payment for any work I did outside of my regular salary.

I also spoke with other companies working with Asia to see if I could help them with their business efforts. Although I had the qualifications, and offered plenty of advice, no one was willing to pay me a penny, although they often said they would pay me in the very near future.

To give one example, I was introduced by a friend to a group in California that had a contract to plan for a Jurassic Park-type theme park in China. They said they had money and they really needed my help. I spoke for hours with the head of the project, listened to his concerns, and wrote detailed proposals. I edited their brochures and offered helpful suggestions. They told me they would fly me to China, and said that were about to give me a contract for consulting. As the friend who introduced them was quite professional, it looked quite legitimate. But at the last moment, they suddenly stopped corresponding. They never paid me a penny, and never wrote or called again.

This pattern also was repeated on many other occasions when someone approached me about research projects, with invitations to conferences, opportunities to attend seminars in Washington D.C. and numerous other chances during the summer of 2001 through to 2004. In most cases, just when it looked like we were nearing a breakthrough, things fell apart.

In retrospect, I think many of the people with whom I talked while looking for some part-time work were well-meaning, they did not try to make life difficult, but they could not do anything to help me, and they knew it. A few such experiences were interesting, but it became increasingly obvious that I was not allowed to do anything at all except to offer my opinion to Alper, and receive my sick leave pay from the University of Illinois.
Over the next three years, I would go through long periods of doing virtually nothing, other than reading books and newspapers, and, of course, writing. I had minimal contact from university colleagues, or friends and family. At times, I did not even see that much of Alper.

And then, all of a sudden, someone would contact me out of the blue, and engage me in exciting and stimulating email correspondence about some topic. It might be a professor, a businessman, a head of an NGO, or a government official. The discussion would be interesting, and it would seem to be leading to some project in which I could play a central role. But then after a few weeks or months, the project would peter off, and I would never hear from the party again. It was not like that before 2001, and I felt that my sphere of activities was actively limited.

But along the way, I wrote up numerous CVs, and tried to sell myself to strangers from a variety of backgrounds. That experience, frustrating as it was, did help me to develop real skills that would be infinitely valuable when I was in Washington D.C. later.

By 2004, I had had so many false starts that I was quite surprised when something actually came through. Needless to say, such intentional harassment (especially if ordered by a government agency) is all completely illegal, and forms a low-level psychological warfare that is a felony. But everyone around me had no problem going along with the farce. I did not find a single person, besides myself, interested in investigating the past events. In effect, an entire class of educated Americans around me found nothing wrong with going along with such a blatantly illegal and unethical process, even as they could tell that my sin had been advocating for peace, and opposing authoritarian government. That fact, more than anything, led to a deep alienation on my part. After a while, I preferred to be around decent working-class people who I came to deeply respect, and I did not have anything to say to my academic colleagues.

I was placed on a one-year rehabilitation program that was to restore my linguistic and social skills through intensive therapy. I think most everyone involved in that program could see that I was simply under house arrest. The interactions with those involve in my rehabilitation were friendly and even humorous. The whole point of the exercise was to make it clear to others what could be done to intellectuals who did not toe the line. There really was no other point, and there was virtually no resistance.
The rehabilitation program was run by an assistant professor of psychology at the University of Illinois by the name of Julie Hengst. She was an expert in “adult-onset cognitive-linguistic communication disorders” and she, and her graduate student from Greece, Antigone, met with me twice a week from September 2001 through March of 2002. The meetings were comical, in that I did not suffer from any linguistic challenges whatsoever. I would start to develop some linguistic problems some sixteen years later, however. I had no choice but to go through the program, and I found lots of good advice on public speaking and writing there.

I think the process was making me less of a scholar, and more of a public speaker. Within a few years, my writing for newspapers eclipsed academic writing in its significance for my career. That shift started from this period, or perhaps we can trace it back to the moment Alper asked me for my opinions about American foreign policy.

Julie was a very kind woman, who made an effort to help me both personally and practically. Our family met several times with her family (her two daughters), and she was personally concerned about my well-being. She was, however, like everyone else, perfectly happy to play along with the set script, and she never raised any doubts as to the legitimacy of the project itself. She was extremely important to me, as I was so profoundly isolated at the time, with none of my colleagues at the University of Illinois, or other universities, willing to talk to me. So, her friendship made a big difference, and I took her advice very seriously, as it was the only advice I was getting from anyone. But, ultimately, I thought her actions were just as unethical as everyone else’s. I ultimately decided that as unwieldy as the position was, I thought everyone was responsible.

Dr. Alper spoke with me about American politics for hours during our sessions. There was no medical component to our meetings. He did, on occasion, explain which of the numerous forms I must fill out for the insurance company. But then suddenly in July of 2001, he announced to me that I needed to get to work on the revision of my book manuscript about Japanese and Chinese literature. It was assumed by both associates and family that the only work I could possibly do in my life was to be a professor. This perspective was reinforced by statements from Alper, and from my department head. It was, of course, in complete opposition to my strong desire to get out of academics, which I had expressed numerous times previously. It was generally assumed by everyone that the only way forward was for me to write this book. But, for me, the rejection of the book by Harvard University Press had been quite suspicious,
and the process of reading about classical literature no longer interested me. The task was pretty much nearly impossible for me. I was, at last, able to turn half of the manuscript into a book in 2011, some ten years later.

The manuscript was rejected in January 2001, as part of the harassment operation against me. John Zeimer, the editor for the Harvard University Press Harvard East Asian Monograph series, refused to discuss the issues for the rejection with me. I received a letter with a list of problems with the manuscript, but none of them was a viable reason to reject a manuscript.

When I meet Zeimer at an Association for Asian Studies conference two years later, he walked away from me to avoid talking with me.

This shift in close professional relationships was most painfully true for my interactions with Stephen Owen, my advisor at Harvard, and a close friend. Owen had supported me in numerous ways when I was a graduate student, and we carried on a correspondence on literature, history, and numerous other topics over the course of my graduate career, which I felt represented some of the best of my writing. He was a major figure in my life, and a major influence on how I conceived of myself as an intellectual. It was true, however, that Stephen Owen was not an easy personality type.

Owen sent me a short, hand-written note in April 2001, to encourage me not to lose hope because my manuscript had been rejected. He related how his first manuscript had also been rejected. It was a touching note, but it was the end of our correspondence. He never answered an email or letter from me again. I saw him at an Association of Asian Studies conference in 2005 briefly, and he said a brief hello, but we never had a conversation after that.

I wrote an email to Owen every time I travelled to Boston over the next ten years, but he never responded. I do not have an explanation for the complete end of the relationship. Perhaps Owen felt I was drifting away from being a professor of literature, and perhaps he did not feel much sympathy for what he saw me becoming. Perhaps. But I would not rule out the fact that, potentially, he was explicitly instructed that he was not to write to me again, as part of the harassment campaign against me.

I was completely cut off from my colleagues in Asian studies. Alper was only talking to me about politics, and I had only the most negative associations with the process of writing on classical literature. It was extremely difficult to motivate myself to work on the book manuscript. It seemed almost impossible.
But I did manage to force myself to start doing some revisions. Instead of attempting to write a book about the influence of Chinese popular novels in Korea and Japan, I decided to focus only on the Japanese reception of Chinese novels. I would have a chance to work on this manuscript over the summer of 2003 in Japan, and then I revised that material into a book for Seoul National University in 2011.

Oddly, in the midst of my complete isolation at the University of Illinois, I was invited by my friend Adam Kern to give an academic presentation at Harvard in October 2001. I thought it was a tremendous breakthrough, and figured that I would be back to normal soon as an academic. That was not the case at all. For reasons that I do not understand, I was given this one solitary opportunity to see some folks at Harvard, and to hang out with my close friends Eric Marler and Neil Katkov. It was my only chance to leave Illinois in 2001.

I traveled to Harvard just a week after 9/11, and I wondered what chaos might be awaiting me there. It remains a mystery to me today how the United States managed to hold itself together in the midst of that level of turmoil, but somehow it did. I spoke with Katkov at Harvard, who was writing up his Ph.D. thesis, and I tried to tell him a bit about what had happened to me. I was taken aback when Neil, one of my most trusted friends, told me he did not want to hear the details about what had happened to me. He essentially cut me off. Nor did he, or anyone else I approached, want to talk about what exactly happened on 9/11. The United States was feeling increasingly alien to me, and that damage was not so easily repaired. I was disgusted by this class of intellectuals and professionals in the United States, who were completely at ease pretending that everything was fine in a country that was, in part, under military rule.

The operation to constrain my activities was not subtle or limited. Hundreds of people, thousands of people, were drawn into the effort to deny me access to due process, to promote this fiction that I had suffered from mental illness, to block me from interacting with my colleagues and friends around the world, and to subject me to low-level harassment. They did so for years, even decades, and I have never seen any indication of an attempt to resist or criticize this. Everyone involved must have known how illegal and how unethical the whole matter was. Yet they were perfectly happy to go along with the whole process.

I did have a few moments to play a real role, however, in the middle of my severe isolation. The most notable involved the case of Timothy McVeigh, the man accused of being the co-conspirator in the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. There was a drive to execute him in May of
2001 by the vengeful Bush administration. I argued that it was a serious mistake to put this man to death granted the political chaos of the moment, and the potential of his supporters to launch further attacks.

There was an immediate response to my suggestion in the form of the release of a large amount of documentation by the FBI suggesting that the trial had been pushed through. The government workers who tried to help me did their absolute best, but sadly, we could not stop the dangerous process of the arrogant Bush administration. McVeigh was executed, most significantly, on June 11, 2001.

At times, I was subjected to humiliating abuse by colleagues, or those watching over me. But at other times, I was given unique opportunities to play an important role at the university, and in the United States. I never understood how I could be valued to that degree, serving at times as the central figure in the efforts to organize against the Bush administration, and yet I was never given a chance to meet with anyone, and I was continuously subjected to the same abuse, and endless financial and bureaucratic challenges.

Perhaps the forces opposing the Bush administration were able to regain control of certain parts of the federal government, but could not dislodge Bush loyalists from parts. The same was true for the corporate world. The result was an odd and unpredictable political environment in which many mysterious actions took place. I could be freed to do whatever I wanted at one level, but still be locked in a virtuous cage at another level.

I was repeatedly led to believe, through elaborate set ups, that I would have a chance for a new career, a new source of income, or a new set of friends who would welcome me into an exciting network. The pattern became rather predictable. First, there was an intense flurry of proposals by email, then conversations by phone, and finally talk of my going for a visit and taking a position. But in the end, without fail, the proposal would not work out, or would just fade away. The communications from the businessman, the researcher, or the government official would slowly dwindle down and come to a complete end. In every case, I was not rewarded with a penny for my work.

At first, I assumed that I was being punished for the sin of starting a movement toward true economic and political integration in Northeast Asia with the support of the United States, and that the cause of my punishment was that I had offended powers in the Department of Defense who did not want to have their budgets put in danger. I thought the point of my punishment was to stop me
from doing what I had planned, and to make sure that I never tried anything again. But it became clear that this was not the point of my harassment at all. If anything, the CIA (and other agencies) protected and supported me, encouraged me to do more, and to be more outspoken.

The intention of the harassment and the blocks on my activities (which at some level was still taking place 18 years later) was, rather, to show everyone else what could happen to a figure who tried to do something completely original, who wandered off the reservation and thought too big, rather than just focusing on his narrow career path. The message was that radical oppression was possible within the system, and that nothing could be done about it. In most cases, there were no particular feelings about me, on the part of the conservatives, or even the military hawks pushing the China threat.

There may have been anger among some in the military about this upstart young liberal who had come so close to undoing the highly profitable policy of containment for China, and had done so without any authorization, entirely on his own, but that factor was not major, and I never was directly criticized later for my writings.

No doubt, the fact that I had been able to have so much impact on US policy on my own, and had promoted resistance within the federal government itself, meant that I had a thick file that detailed my “political disruptiveness,” but the details were not released to anyone.

Essentially, I was blacklisted from permanent work, or engagement in any establishment organization, because I was perceived as having the political skills, and the educational and social network to play a major role if I were left to my own devices. Most ambitious young people want to become professors at Harvard, or successful lawyers, or senators, or even president. Those are predictable goals, and there are set paths to get there. But I had ceased to think primarily about my career in 2000. I was willing to throw everything to the winds, because I assumed that I could achieve success by reinventing the university, and the nature of international relations. That is a rather risky approach, and there are very few people who would take that path. But I saw that much value in the concept of international distance learning.

I was, in many respects, an insufferable egomaniac. It was not so much that I spent all my time talking about myself, but rather, I felt completely certain of the value of what I was advocating. I was entirely capable of sitting down by myself and making up US foreign policy on my own, and then advocating for it.
I had the confidence to write up my ideas in a convincing manner, and then talk about them with others, as if these ideas were common sense, were something serious that needed to be discussed. Moreover, I never presented my ideas in a manner that suggested an ideological content. I was willing to talk to anyone who listened, and I had many conservative figures at the University of Illinois as friends.

By fall of 2001, the long-term political campaign was set in stone, and I would never obtain any prominence again in the public realm (granted I was often discussed informally).

It was explicitly declared that I could not play any sort of administrative or organizational role, as that would give me the ability to obtain political power in the United States. I was given the authority to write, and to deliver talks, and occasionally to have my writings published in some journals in the United States, and around the world. As a result, I ended up as primarily an essayist, although it had never been my intention.

My family, friends, and associates from that time on have refused to tell me exactly what they were ordered to do regarding their interactions with me. None of them have confirmed to me that they were ever issued orders. My case was so odd, and so serious, that it is extremely telling that no one from among my friends and colleagues ever asked me about what had actually happened. I see that fact as an indication of the grotesque cowardice and hypocrisy that characterized the United States of that time.

In the case of my family (father, mother, stepparents, brothers and sisters, cousins, aunts, and uncles on both sides), they universally refused to bring up the topic for twenty years, except for those rare cases where I insisted. I personally believe that they were not merely frightened, but they were all served with classified advisories that dictated what their behavior should be. I have reason to believe that hundreds of such directives were issued to people around me, and that many thousands have been issued all over the United States over the last eighteen years. One of the greatest frauds in American history is how it was that so many people conformed with such illegal directives, for the most part, to the letter. Even without access to the letters, their existence can be demonstrated through the unnatural actions of those around me. If anyone were interested in such an investigation, it would be easy.

The second policy that has been held up for twenty years is that the entire case was kept out of the media, and out of email exchanges. Everyone was asked to
treat the incident as something that had never happened. That blanket order covered conspiracy bloggers, and other opinion leaders of the right and the left. They followed these directives to the letter.

No one would discuss the events with me, even in private. On rare cases, people were willing to ask me questions about what had happened when I made an issue of it, but there was no effort to advocate for an end to this treatment of me, let alone to advocate for the story being made public, or advocating that I should be compensated. The unwillingness of anyone around me to even discuss the matter, even when it was so blatant that I was being mistreated in a highly illegal and unprecedented manner, bothered me. Over time, I grew disgusted with fellow intellectuals who were willing to go along with this farce, including notable “progressive” intellectuals like Bruce Cummings. In other words, other conspiracies were terrible crimes to be denounced by the left, but my case was one that “never happened.” The experience with my fellow Americans was far more painful and damaging than the actual events of 2000.
Chapter 3

My Patty Hearst period

The rate of change of my status was glacial, but there were real shifts. The speech therapy that I had undergone in the fall of 2001 continued, along with meeting with yet another psychologist in the spring of 2002. And at the end of that semester, there was talk about how I might actually be able to teach again at a future date. All these changes did little to reduce my isolation, or the constant setbacks and paperwork required for my rehabilitation.

I spent my time during this sick leave cleaning my house or playing with my son, Benjamin. I could not earn any money, was not invited to attend conferences, and in most cases, I found it very hard to socialize with my peers, either because they tried to keep a distance from me, or because I had nothing to say to them. It was certainly true that my perspective on my own society, in light of the fact that the establishment allowed and endorsed rule by criminals, was permanently altered.

The months after the 9/11 attacks and the state of what appeared to be close to civil war in the military and intelligence complexes, in the months before and after that incident, has never been documented in any text I have found, including searches on the websites of the far right and far left, and related conspiracy pages. It is truly astonishing to me that such a critical moment in American history has been passed over in silence for so many years by everyone. It would be equally astonishing if it had to be me, of all people, who took the first step towards opening up a discussion.

In January of 2002, large sections of the military and intelligence were still held by the conspirators who had seized power in December 2001, but there were also other factions in government who were not necessarily Bush loyalists, but who, nevertheless, took advantage of the chaos, so as to expand their control. The executive branch lost authority, but military factions that claimed to act on behalf of the president expanded their sphere of influence.
9/11 was an operation that remains to this day ambiguous. Was it carried out by the immediate followers of Bush and Cheney? Were Rumsfeld’s people also involved, or were they opposed? Where were the white nationalists, Israel, organized crime, and other players involved in that process? Was it also tied to Islam, or not? And what about the anti-government white nationalists who blew up the Oklahoma federal building? What role, if any, did they play?

9/11 was an opportunity to push through the Patriot Act, to vastly increase defense spending, and to create a police state. But in the short term, the attacks also empowered a stubborn opposition within government that was unrelenting in its attacks on the Bush faction.

But it is critical to remember that 9/11 had other meanings, as well. It was, as I wrote at the time, “Murder on the Orient Express.” That means, many different factions had a stab.

Important to note is that the organized forces within the military opposing the Bush administration were increasing their power, and were getting close to taking actual control at the time. 9/11 can be read as an effort to push back; to keep power in the hands of those who supported Bush.

But I doubted that this was the work of Bush, or of Cheney. In fact, I have often thought we need to ask ourselves whether 9/11 might have been the work of factions who were opposed to Bush and Cheney, or some odd overlap.

Newspapers like the New York Times formed a confusing palimpsest of pro-Bush propaganda, combined with messages suggesting overt opposition to Bush from deep within the system. Many of these odd articles and advertisements from that time suggesting deep hostility towards the Bush administration have since been entirely edited out of the digital archives.

I remember Alper remarking to me at one meeting, when we were discussing the politics of the United States, “What you see these days just does not make sense.” That is exactly how I felt. It seemed as if the pro-Bush people and the anti-Bush people were rising in power at the same time, and that they were literally fighting each other violently behinds the scenes, while cooperating at the same time. The situation literally made no sense.
The chaos within the federal government came to a head in the bizarre episode in which George W. Bush supposedly choked on a pretzel, and then fainted on January 13, 2002. The story was totally improbable, and no experts believed it. Best to see this story as an inside joke aimed at people in government with security clearance. Perhaps the story relates back to the joke I made about "bigger fish (i.e. Bush) to fry." Following that reading, the pretzel signified the hook in the fish's mouth, and the event suggested that Bush had taken the bait and only needed to be reeled in.

Although the secret service was able to rough up Bush for a few hours on that occasion, they were taking revenge for the arrogant manner in which he had treated them, not making a statement against the push for war, and the militarization of the national economy. Although well-meaning people were able to retake large parts of the federal government, setting the stage for Obama’s election, they could not turn around the massive internal decay of the system that was accelerated by 9/11. Nor could they take back key sections of the Pentagon occupied by the Cheney forces, and their allies. Sometimes the factions (three or more, at times) worked together in the same spaces for different purposes in an odd political war at multiple levels. I do not pretend to know what happened, but I can say with certainty that the story has not been told by anyone yet, although it was known to a large number of people.

The opposition to Bush in government could punish him over small matters, and even set back his embrace of Israel for a little while. But they could not stop Cheney, and multinational corporations who backed him, from privatizing the federal government itself. The corrupt forces around Bush had the money to buy off large numbers of people on the right and the left, and many were quite willing to take the money in return for playing stupid, and never questioning the official narrative.

The entire ideology that supported the federal government since the constitutional convention (and of course the Civil War) was poisoned, and no matter how smart some bureaucrats might be, they could not win this structural battle.

The spring of 2002 gave me more opportunities to speak with faculty members at my university from other departments, especially in engineering, but also in political science. No faculty members from my department were willing to have any conversations with me at the time. I received no invitations to participate in any scholarly activities related to East Asian studies from anyone in the United
States. Although Alper kept telling me to revise my book manuscript, it was just about impossible considering how distant that entire academic field had become for me.

I was not going to go back to a normal life any time soon, if ever, and it appeared that I would not get the slightest credit for anything I had succeeded in doing, or had tried to do, whether it was helping to make the University of Illinois into a better school, or building the field of East Asian studies, or fighting against militarism and totalitarianism in the United States. There would be plenty of backward and obscure credit, as found in *A Beautiful Mind*, but those were only meaningful to those with some knowledge of the case.

As grim as the situation looked, there remained some real hope, and it was nothing like the disaster of 2018. There were a few memorable breakthroughs.

Most notable was the day in April 2002, when Alper informed me by email, saying, “Don’t crow too much about it”, that I had been granted an office again. Until that time, I had stored all my books in the basement of my house on Church Street, and did not have ready access to anything. The symbolic power of being assigned an office at the University of Illinois was immense, and I had the sense, based on what Alper told me later, that this move was the result of an enormous hidden struggle.

The manner in which I was assigned this office is an interesting story in itself. Dr. Alper, and not the University of Illinois, announced to me that I had been assigned a temporary office at the armory, and he did so by email. His email suggested that this assignment was a breakthrough of a rather significant nature.

Yet it would be hard to say that this was a complete breakthrough, or that I was entirely free, as the office was located in a section of the university controlled by the United States military. That is to say, the only part of American society able to stand up to the Bush regime, and to give me a place to stay, was within the United States military itself.

That decision to leave me in the hands of the military reveals something of the tragedy of the United States. The entire system, and culture that I was so familiar with, was in a state of serious decay. The academics and administrators who I knew proved incapable of doing anything at all for me, and gutlessly went along
with the ridiculous stories forced on them. The only factions in American society capable of standing up to the far right, of offering resistance to the criminal actions of the Bush administration, were part of the military itself. Later, in the case of Edward Snowden and Bradley Manning, this irony would become more manifest. I am certain that if I had been supported by the Green Party, or other environmental NGOs, I would be dead. But, unlike Snowden or Manning, I would never become a famous figure, at least not in the United States.

I was instructed by Alper to pick up the keys for my new office at the East Asian Languages and Cultures department. I went to see the secretary, Ms. Jeanne Poole, and she kindly handed them to me. A decent woman from a working-class background, I was always impressed by Jeanne’s actions. She behaved in the most normal manner possible; polite and considerate, all the while observing the most extraordinary acts. By the time I left the University of Illinois, I felt close to her. I walked over to the armory, a massive building with a half-tube on the top flanked by arching clerestory windows through which sunlight shone down on the running track. The space in the center was used by the ROTC for training. I would later jog there on several occasions.

My office was on the second floor, located in a rather obscure corner. When I opened the door with the key, I was confronted with a bizarre scene. I entered into a small windowless room covered with yellow glazed bricks on all sides, wherein the only furniture was a tiny metal desk in the corner. But amazingly, the lights were on in the room, and an elderly man was seated at the desk flipping through some papers. He introduced himself to me as a senior administrator (I cannot remember his name). He shook my hand, and promptly left. It made no sense at all for him to have been in that closet in the first place. In fact, it appeared that he had been awaiting my arrival for some time. He remarked, cryptically, “Oh, I have been using this office lately.” I never saw him again.

It was one of those amusing events set up for me, and me alone, often at considerable trouble. This reduced the stress on me over the constant battle for survival, and I appreciated the humor and the solidarity. At the same time, this special treatment made me feel even more alone. The new office was a tremendous breakthrough, but it had to be presented in the most humiliating and
degrading manner possible. Some kind souls, whose names were often unknown to me, tried to soften the blows.

My assignment to the armory meant that I was essentially under the control of the military, and they were assigned to protect me. I have wondered whether there was a shift in who was assigned to watch me, but I have no idea. I did not spend that much time in my new office. It was far easier to work at home. The affiliation with the armory offered new opportunities. I was able to introduce myself to the other occupants of the depot, including military recruiters, sergeants, and other officers stationed there for various reasons. They were willing to talk to me with a seriousness that the members of my own department were not. I was not in any mood to judge them for their affiliation.

The experience was unlike anything I had experienced before. I spent many hours discussing international relations, technology, and occasionally my own personal experiences with the new group of members of the military, and later, professors working on security and international relations issues.

I was far away from academics, and it was impossible to write about Japanese classical literature while I was working there. Certainly, I did not agree with American military policy. But I was not yet at the point in my life when I was completely revolted by American militarism, and so I was willing, perhaps naively, to consider how I might work with the more thoughtful members of this group on plans for a positive role for the United States in the world.

I consider the time that I spent at the armory to be my “Patty Hearst period.” For those unfamiliar with this reference, Patty Hearst was the daughter of a wealthy publisher, who was kidnapped by a leftist group, and compelled to cooperate with their terrorist activities. In the end, she actively participated in their operation, and even repeated their ideological slogans. But ultimately, Patty Hearst, although influenced by the arguments made by the revolutionaries around her, had been forced to participate in those acts, and did not choose to do so of her own free will.

Similarly, I was influenced quite deeply for a period of time by the people with whom I associated. I wrote numerous emails about security issues, including discussions about the changing nature of warfare, drone and cyberwar, and other
topics which conformed to the assumptions held by those military figures I engaged with. I think my arguments were complex, and deeply critical of the Bush regime as a whole. But that was not universally the case.

It is possible that, in the future, the emails and the other texts that I wrote at this time will come to light, and will show me to be quite a different person than what I later became: the founder of the Korea Peace Movement and advocate for addressing climate change. This book is not an attempt to explain away the contradictions within my own thinking, or in my behavior. I would rather state, from the beginning, that this period existed. I was, in some sense, a result of the crisis in my own life brought on by the collapse of values and systems.

But I did not choose my environment. There was no option to hang out with other professors, or even with the Green Party. I was snubbed, and excluded from daily life in the United States for years, and many so-called liberals actively shunned me. Those figures who might have been my natural allies within American society kept me a distance, following instructions. When I wrote notes about how I thought drones could be used, it was not because that topic was my interest, but because the environment forced me to think that way. I was literally cut off from all my colleagues, and only allowed to interact with members of the military for a year. When that situation ended, my activities also shifted. Like Patty Hearst, I was a captive for that period of time.

I was drawn to the only people with whom I could interact, at a location that I was placed in by third parties. Some of those military officers I met did little or nothing for me, but others were quite thoughtful in their words and actions, and showed real concern. Equally important, I became aware of the issue of class in my interactions with the United States military. No one in my family had ever served in the military professionally, and the institution was quite alien to me for that reason. Yet I saw firsthand how it formed a common path forward for many working-class Americans, both as a career and as a means of learning basic values for social interaction. I saw for the first time the economic pressures that forced people into the United States military, and I also came to sympathize with their efforts to justify and find meaning in their work. I was never going to go back to my previous view of American society.
Moreover, I still believed that the faction within the military that had pledged to resist the drive for totalitarianism of the Bush administration would eventually prevail in restoring some form of democracy. I sensed, therefore, rather naively, some hope for the transformation of the United States through the military itself. This part I was wrong about, but not 100% wrong.

Many in the military who opposed the Bush administration, and his violations of the chain of command, had no interest in democracy or in due process. They were just furious at Bush for a variety of reasons: because he ignored their interests, violated accepted practices, they thought that China could be a good future partner, or because they had their own agenda for military reform that was different from Cheney’s.

My own emotional response to the manner in which my own family, and an entire class of educated, upper middle-class Americans had decided to leave me to die, and to ask no questions, was also a real factor in my behavior at that time. The parts of American society, like Harvard University, that had been most familiar, suddenly looked quite alien. I would never see my family and friends again in the same way.

There were indications that the intelligence and military people immediately around me protected me out of a real interest in due process and in the truth. In many other cases, what people hoped to gain by helping me is obscure, and wrapped up in complicated political games. We must not assume that George W. Bush and his cabinet were always the ones who were so hostile towards me. The game had many players. I doubt we will ever get a clear answer, but no one has ever started asking questions.

I made an effort to introduce myself to the officers who were working in the armory, and tried to build friendships. For all I knew at that point, I might have been about to be swept up in the United States military soon. Certainly, it did not look as if I was going to go back to being a professor. Some of those military officers spoke to me quite honestly about their concerns about the Bush administration, and the dangers of that moment. But, in retrospect, I think I was naïve to think that their personal comments meant much.
I met one army sergeant who offered me many thoughtful comments about the Bush administration’s confrontation with Iraq, and seemed quite thoughtful, even critical, of US policy. We had lunch together often, and discussed the buildup to the Iraqi War. I liked the unadorned and honest approach of the lower-ranking men that I met there. Learning their culture would be invaluable for my survival.

Living in the United States after 2001 required a fundamental choice. Either one accepted that much of the United States government had been taken over by mercenaries and cynical profiteers, such as Dick Cheney, who used the military to achieve ruthless goals, or you pretended that the country was basically the same, with just a few problems because of the new conservative administration. I chose the former assumption, and although I kept my mouth shut, I was forever lost to those who wished to live in a state of comfortable numbness and denial.

I read many articles on international relations and security, to understand what was going on in the world around me. This work made me far more expert than I had been, and led me to eventually write articles on contemporary international relations. I made a systematic study of what exactly the United States was doing in East Asia and in the Middle East in the post 9/11 period. I started to attend seminars at ACDIS (Arms Control Disarmament and International Security) regularly. I made friends with the professors affiliated with ACDIS, such as Edward A. Kolodziej of the political science department, and Jeremiah Sullivan of the physics department during this period, and they offered inestimable advice to me.

Colonels from the United States Air Force were assigned to ACDIS each year, and for three years I spent a large amount of time talking with them, and trying to understand their world. I did so, in part, because it seemed possible that that I might end up in the military (like it or not), and also because I felt a need to understand how they saw the world.

These activities led to my first invitation to talk at an academic event, the annual conference of the Association for Third World Studies held in Taiwan in December 2002. It was the first time I had been allowed back in Asia since my ill-fated visit to China, Japan, and Korea in July 2000. I prepared a talk entitled, “Sovereignty, Wealth, Culture, and Technology: Mainland China and Taiwan Grapple with the Parameters of ‘Nation State’ in the 21st Century”, which later received considerable attention on the internet. For a moment, I thought I was heading back to a regular career as an American academic.
The ACDIS program offered me chance in the spring of 2003 to give a talk at their office about Taiwan’s relationship with the People’s Republic of China that was based on the presentation that I had given in Taiwan. I felt accepted at the ACDIS program, and they granted me an affiliation, even though I was still on sick leave, and not allowed to teach, or to interact with my department.

January and February of 2003 ushered in a literal war within the United States, as the factions of the military controlled by the Bush camp fought against other military blocs to force through their war on Iraq. No small number of Americans lost their lives in those shadowy battles in the Pentagon. The press was flooded with ridiculous arguments about why the United States had to invade Iraq because it was developing weapons of mass destruction.

The entire process was such a farce, that I was shocked again by the silence of family and friends about this hyped-up war for political and financial advantage. I felt disgust with the entire show, and I found the ACDIS program events with the military to be less appealing after that debacle.

I came to the conclusion that we had no choice but to put together a faction within the military that would be able to openly resist this push for war, and that even if we were not successful in defeating the drive, at least we would be able to limit their momentum.

I spoke to Alper in detail about what I thought we needed to do, and I sent a few emails to him, as well, describing what I thought needed to be done. Granted, those emails were rather allusive, and would be hard to figure out for someone not directly involved.

My suggestions were directly linked to a major effort by a small but dedicated group within the military to seize control of part of the Pentagon in open defiance of the dictatorship set up by the Bush administration. I think that if the materials were declassified, the tie to my advice would be clear.

For a few weeks before the US invasion of Iraq on March 20, 2003, there were scattered reports that the military was scaling down the armed buildup in the region, and moving toward a peaceful solution. Moreover, some networks broadcast remarkably honest analysis of the issues for the first time. The fight
beneath the surface within the Pentagon was intense, and involved causalities, although I do not know the details. The changes were clear from media reports, and the exact dates of this action are easily confirmed.

Eventually, the military resistance against the Iraq War, even though it produced skeptical CIA reports which were made public, could not stop the drive for war. But it made it clear that there was powerful opposition. Those concerted actions slowed down the process considerably, and reduced Cheney’s options.

The sad fact was that the Bush administration did not have to have complete control of the entire military in order to push the war forward. I think that the major reason for the failure of the effort to stop the drive for war was not the weakness of the military opposition, but rather, the remarkable indifference of citizens. Sadly, although only a small number of military officers were willing to risk their lives to defend due process, literally no civilians were willing to take that kind of gamble.

I would learn that the war in Iraq would take place when I discovered a tampon lying in the middle of the floor of the basement of our house. It was another one of those special messages left for me by my watchers.

My role in that last resistance of the military against the Iraq War was significant. Many of the statements circulated in the military at the time, concerning active resistance to the push for war with Iraq, can be traced back to what I wrote in the three weeks before the Iraq war. I suggested that it was the right time to pull together all resistance in the military, and try to stop the drive for war. There were indications on the news of an effort to pull back US forces prepared for the invasion soon after my proposal, and also an initiative to shift the media narrative, including CIA reports that suggested Iraq did not pose any threat. I am not sure how many people knew my role.

But I had gone too far by again effectively organizing resistance in the government against the Bush clan. The powerful new forces in the US government in the second term decided that I would never pay any role in US policy again, and completely shut me out.

I would meet people in government on occasion after that incident, and even correspond with famous people in Washington D.C., but I was permanently out
of the insider track policy discussion from that time on. I was freed from the threats and intense harassment that I had suffered from for years, but I was also cut out of the action on the American side. Even when I had something to offer, no one wanted my opinion anymore.

Dr. Alper announced that I should put aside the work on my Japanese literature book manuscript, and should start to pursue a career in diplomacy, or in security, in line with my current interests. He suggested I should prepare myself for possible jobs in government. I spent many hours with the researchers at ACDIS, the visiting scholars from the US Air Force, and other people that I had met through email introductions. I soon had amassed a significant list of people to contact in Washington D.C. about possible jobs.

Although it did not make much sense, everyone I spoke with suggested that I must start out as an entry-level employee at the State Department, Department of Defense, the CIA, or elsewhere. I eventually found a person who was ready to take the time and help me with the details of the process. That person was Robert (Bob) Sutter, a professor at Georgetown University with an intelligence background and an expert on China security issues. He took me under his wing for a period of about six months. He both advised me about what work I could do, and introduced me to people I should talk with. Some of those people never responded to my emails, but others engaged me in extensive conversations.

Later, I had several occasions to meet with Bob in Washington, D.C. when I worked at the Korean embassy, and he even arranged for me to give a small talk at Georgetown University. We lost touch for years, but managed to link up again a decade later by email.

The process was not so different from my previous search for work in 2001. I would meet someone from academics, government, or politics through introductions, by Bob or others, and we would engage in a series of intense discussions, followed by extensive email correspondence. The process would then suddenly end, and not a single opportunity for work, or even attending an event would come up. But I still thought it was worth it. Every single person I had met, I thought to myself, was one more person who would realize that I was a hard-working and well-meaning individual. That awareness, I reasoned, could
mean the difference between life and death. But we were not talking about casual friends anymore.

Sutter gave me a list of various experts to consult with concerning possible government work. I began a time-consuming process of contacting some thirty or forty people at think tanks, in government, and in business to inquire as to possible careers. Although I did not honestly believe that any of the leads would bring me employment, I felt that it was still important for me to take the process seriously, and to see whether I could, through those efforts, build a network of supporters in Washington D.C. who might eventually be able to arrange something for me.

Interestingly, the person working at the NSA who Bob had introduced was the only one who never answered either phone calls or emails. I would speak with someone from the NSA one time in 2004 briefly through an introduction by a friend of my father, but before and after, I had absolutely no interaction with the NSA. I wonder whether this fact suggests hostility within the organization.

I took a trip to Washington D.C. in 2003, and met with Bob Sutter and a few other individuals involved in diplomacy and security that he had recommended. Washington D.C. was an alien world for me. I had not been there in a decade, and I had never spent a day meeting with government figures working on national security and diplomacy. At the time, it seemed like an appealing opportunity, since my activities at the University of Illinois had become so restricted.

The people I had met in Washington D.C. had taken an interest in what I said, and they valued my opinions. In Champaign, my role as a professor was quite minimal. I was living on a tiny salary, with which to support my family, and was given no opportunities to travel anywhere for years. My wife felt even more trapped than I did. She longed to move to Washington D.C. We wanted to find some way to get out of Champaign, but every opportunity was a dead end.

I believe that the correspondence I had had with researchers and government officials that I had met in Washington DC who were working on East Asian security during this period offered me a significant opportunity. If I had adopted a Council on Foreign Relations consensus attitude, and mimicked the style of beltway insiders, I think they would have been ready to take me seriously, and
accept me in one way or another. If I had started writing articles defending American policies on free trade, or advocating for military cooperation with Japan, more opportunities would have come my way.

The problem was that I was so disgusted by the corruption and criminality that I had witnessed firsthand, that for me, the only appeal of the CIA or Pentagon was that those institutions contained within them a tiny handful of fearless individuals willing to stand up against such corruption, regardless of risk. I had no interest in conforming to the accepted norms so as to get a cushy job. I had never intended to pursue such a career path.

Looking back on that time some 17 years later, it does seem that I was a bit naïve as to how the federal government actually functioned, and that there really was no possibility that those job opportunities would have worked out, but granted my complete isolation, it was only natural that I had sought out some sort of chance.

Another important development from that period was my experiments in formulating a new approach to security as a whole. Rather than ingest and repeat accepted opinions, I started to develop a comprehensive vision for a fundamental shift in the function of the military and the intelligence communities that meant they would be restructured to respond to non-traditional threats, specifically climate change, and I elaborated on these ideas in great detail after I arrived in Washington D.C. I expressed those opinions in a broadly read article in Truth Out (an online newspaper) in which I explained exactly what the challenges were. Two days after its publication, the head of the Pacific Command Admiral Locklear visited Harvard (2013) for discussions about climate change with experts and articulated an opinion close to what I had expressed.

I cannot prove the cause and effect, but I think it had a deep impact. Sadly, much of that debate was siphoned off for dangerous geo-engineering, carbon trading and other scams.

The article in Truthout was an elaboration on an article that I coauthored with John Feffer in October, 2012, entitled “From Pacific Pivot to Green Revolution” that was published in Foreign Policy in Focus.
The article described, in detail, a US military completely retooled to address climate change directly. The concept was the innovation regarding security should not be limited to the proposal of new weapons systems, but must also include the definition of security at the most fundamental level. The ideas can be traced back to my 2003 talk about Taiwan in which I discussed the evolution of technology and the resulting fragmentation of nation states as a key security issue that was overlooked in the current system.

I wanted to talk about what the real threats were, not about what corporations were willing to fund. I think that the traumatic nature of my experience, how I had been dragged into political conflicts against my will and punished for years, made me unwilling to compromise on the question of the definition of security. My perspective was unique among American experts, but it had real impact.

I was invited to deliver a talk at the Japanese Consulate in Chicago in the spring of 2003 which represented a short period 2003-2004 when I had considerable interactions with Japan. I spoke for the audience about the American role in East Asia and established a close relationship with the consul general as well that lasted until I left for Washington.

For a moment there, I thought I was on the verge of rejoining the mainstream. I also obtained a grant to continue the work on my book on Japanese literature in Japan from the Japan Foundation—a major breakthrough.

I even felt some enthusiasm for revisiting the theme of my book again, and looked forward to returning to Japan after several years away. that summer in Tokyo was one of the most enjoyable experiences of my life. Benjamin greatly enjoyed his time in that tiny house in Kunitachi where we lived, and Seung-Eun made many friends with the young Japanese mothers in the neighborhood. I would not say it was carefree, but Honda Hirokuni, the professor at Dokkyo university who had helped us out, made tremendous efforts to introduce us to his friends among the progressive community. we spent many hours playing with Benjamin in the park, and sent him to a local preschool, where he became quite fluent in Japanese.

I wrote a new chapter for my book about the influence of Chinese language narratives in 18th century Japan, and even met up with my two advisors at the University of Tokyo, Nagashima Hiroaki and Nobuhiro Shinji, to discuss my
work. Although it was no easy task, I made the effort to get back on track as a
professor of Japanese literature. the concepts were coming back to me, and I put
together a manuscript that would eventually be published by Seoul National
University Press in 2011.

I was reinstated as an assistant professor in the department of East Asian
Languages and Culture at University of Illinois in the fall of 2003, with my tenure
clock officially set back two years, so I would have my third-year review in 2004.
I was assigned two classes, and invited to attend faculty meetings again. Although
I no longer felt like a member of the department, I did meet with other faculty
members on occasion, and felt comfortable teaching again. my students, however,
were far more important in my life than my academic colleagues were.

I was amazed by how entirely blind my students were to the massive political
chaos in the United States. At times, I brought the issue up as an explicit topic for
discussion. I think I was one of very few professors who did so. Perhaps the years
that I had spent in Japan had somehow impacted how I perceived the world.
Maybe those years abroad made it possible for me to see distortions in American
ideology in a manner that Americans, including my family, could not, or would
not, see.

The fall of 2003 was also the first time that I had written a short description of
what had happened to me. In five pages, I summarized the major contours,
staying away from the details, or the names. I wanted to start the process of
truth and reconciliation, but no one else was interested. I eventually sent a copy
to my mother, father, and brother. My father wrote back later saying that he had
received it. I did not get a clear reply from my mother or brother. Later
conversations with my mother and brother indicated that they had read what I
had written, but they did not want to discuss the matter.

There would be a moment in 2006 when my mother, father, and brother were
willing (separately) to listen to me, but not to ask me any meaningful questions
about what had happened. After 2007, the window closed on purposeful
conversation, and my brother went back to trying to poke holes in my narrative.
By 2017, he, my father, and my sister, Anna, went back to suggesting behind
my back that I was suffering from mental illness. Such allegations had become
almost second nature for them.
I sought out Francis Boyle, a professor at the law school at the University of Illinois, who had drafted articles for the impeachment of George W. Bush at the time. I remember that the secretary at the law school looked askance when I asked where his office was. It seemed that he was somewhat unpopular with the staff at the university, so my enquiry must have taken her by surprise. Granted how far he had gone to take on the Bush administration, I thought that he would be a natural ally for me. I was wrong.

Boyle seemed to enjoy talking with me about contemporary politics, but he did not want to discuss my problems at the University of Illinois in any terms other than my being subjected to an unfair tenure review by an unsympathetic senior faculty. At the time, I was willing to accept this cover story if Boyle would advocate for me, but I was not happy with this state of affairs. I felt strongly that Boyle should, at the minimum, be honest with me in private about what had actually been done to me (which he was clearly aware of). But that was asking too much. He did meet with David Goodman, who was on my third-year review committee, to discuss my case in the spring of 2004. Boyle related to me that Goodman had told him that the only problem was my lack of publications; an obvious lie, as I had had substantial publications up until that point.

One unexpected figure entered the discussion about my future, from the spring of 2004, as it looked increasingly likely that I would be denied tenure. That person was Bruce Cummings, of the University of Chicago, the most famous progressive member in the field of Korean studies, who, it seemed, would have made a natural ally for me. Clearly, Cummings, whom I had known from my time in Korea back in 1997, was trying to help. He had arranged for me to give a talk at the University of Chicago, and had spoken with me on the phone several times. Interestingly, he also introduced me to Professor Stanley Fish, an English professor who had written frequently for the New York Times about current affairs. Professor Fish, according to Cummings, had some ideas about possible future employment for me. Fish’s short, cryptic emails did not explain much, and he never spoke with me on the phone, or gave me any concrete suggestions. I suppose I should have been grateful that such a lofty person was willing to look at my CV, and think about my future.

But what exactly had my family and friends been told that kept them so far away from me; so unwilling to hear my side of the story? I later did a bit of research on the precedents for such advisories from the FBI and other agencies, and drafted a copy of what I think the letter looked like. My father and brother went to great lengths to insist they had never received such a letter, but their refusal to have any serious conversations with me about such a critical topic
suggested that they were lying to me, perhaps in accordance with the specifications of the advisory.

Here is what I think that letter stated,

This letter is a formal request for your cooperation regarding all of your interactions with Professor Emanuel Pastreich. Professor Pastreich is currently subject to restrictions concerning his activities in the United States, as determined by a series of national security directives. The content of these directives is classified. You are hereby requested to comply with all instructions concerning the nature of your interactions with Professor Pastreich that may be provided to you by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Those advisories will be provided to you by me, Officer XXXX, or by another authorized FBI officer. Such advisories apply to all of your interactions with Professor Pastreich in spoken, written, or other formats.

The following are the key restrictions concerning Professor Pastreich’s activities in the United States. You should consult with me at any time if are uncertain as to what your interactions with Professor Pastreich should be.

Professor Pastreich is prohibited from earning income from any institution or corporation in the United States without an explicit authorization from the FBI. You are explicitly prohibited from offering him any form of compensation for his work.

Professor Pastreich is prohibited from taking any form of employment, institutional affiliation, or other association that has a formal or binding nature, without authorization from the FBI. You are not authorized to offer help concerning his career without explicit permission from the FBI.
Professor Pastreich is not to be interviewed, photographed, or otherwise described in any American media source without explicit permission from the FBI.

Professor Pastreich should not be engaged in lengthy discussions concerning institutional cooperation, contracts for work, research projects, educational initiatives, or other matters with potential financial implications without explicit approval.

Thank you for your cooperation in this sensitive national security action. We will keep you apprised of all future developments.

In accordance with 18 U.S.C. * 2709 (c) (1), the disclosure of the fact that the FBI has made the request described in this letter may endanger the national security of the United States, interfere with a criminal counterterrorism, or counterintelligence investigation, interfere with diplomatic relations, or endanger the life or physical safety of a person. Accordingly, 18 U.S.C. * 2709(c) (1) and (2) prohibits you, or any officer, employee, or agent of yours from disclosing this letter, other than to those to whom disclosure is necessary to comply with the request of the letter.

2004 was an extremely confusing year for me. There were some signs of real chances for a breakthrough at the beginning of the year. I was invited to join an internet-based instruction program with Senshu University in Japan. I had detailed conversations with Sakamoto Motoko, a professor who was organizing the effort, and who had written extensively on 18th century Japanese literature. I knew her work well. She invited me to come to Tokyo for a series of meetings about our planned project, and she even hinted that there might be a chance for me to work at Senshu University in the future.

In April of 2004 I flew to Senshu University for three days to meet Professor Sakamoto, and the other faculty members for discussions. Above all, I enjoyed my conversations with the young Japanese students who were assigned to show me around. Professor Sakamoto invited me to her home for dinner with her husband, during which time we discussed my work on the influence of Chinese
novels in Japan in the 18th century, and we planned for future scholarly collaboration. For a moment, I felt I was back on track again.

Although the funding provided by Senshu University for my trip to Japan did not cover all my expenses, I was nevertheless excited to be working with Japanese faculty again, and to have the prospect of teaching Japanese students directly via the internet.

But within a few weeks of my return the United States, the entire project came to an abrupt end. I wrote a detailed thank you note to Professor Sakamoto, but received only a terse reply that seemed entirely inconsistent with the conversation we had had in Japan. I wrote to her assistant, as well, who told me the project had been delayed, and then stopped answering my emails altogether. I never had a chance to teach their students, and received no compensation for the many hours I had put into the project. The entire experience was inexplicable. It would be another ten years before I had serious interactions with any Japanese again.

The prospects for some recovery in my career in the spring of 2004, in spite of the indications that my contract might not be renewed that were conveyed to me through third parties, were based not on the efforts of Japanese professors, or Bruce Cummings, but rather on the reemergence at the working level in government of level-headed figures who had survived from previous generations, because they had been protected by Colin Powell in the Department of State, and by George Tenet in the CIA (and other, less well-known figures within the DOD). At the time, there was a belief that, somehow, a democrat could be elected president, and the Democratic Party would take control of both houses of the Congress.

This moment of possibility was real, but it did not last. The factions supporting Bush took harsh measures to push out all those who did not support the hardline. By May of 2004, the transition to the second Bush term, run by a group of even more brutal and ruthless figures, had already been determined, and my career in the United States was essentially over. My case was striking, but it was not all that different from the manner in which Dennis Kucinich and Ron Paul were permanently pushed out of the House of Representatives, or the way in which figures like Larry Wilkerson were pushed out of the State Department.
Another important development for me in 2004 was my work with the Dennis Kucinich campaign for president that started in April. Dennis Kucinich was one remaining congressman (alongside Ron Paul) with the balls to take on the Bush administration (granted, he did so in a limited sense). He presented articles of impeachment, and he also asked well-informed and probing questions of the nominees for office put forth by the Bush administration. I was impressed by Kucinich’s work, and I thought he was the only candidate for president worth supporting. I entered a few online discussion groups concerning American politics in the Spring of 2004, and was able to find a handful of committed and thoughtful individuals who were willing to work for a better society.

Several of those individuals I met through the email discussion about Kucinich ended up becoming good friends, such as Kucinich’s campaign manager, David Swanson, who went on to run World Beyond War, a global movement to end war, and establish sustainable peace, and who lent me some support on several occasions. I also met Jim Kawakami, a native of L.A., who became one of my closest friends (on line) for several years, and whom I emailed almost every day in 2004. Kawakami would later turn into a very mainstream Democratic Party line in his writings (including in the newsletter I had helped him to design), and we would drift apart.

I did not find Kucinich to be an effective politician. His proposals were not sufficiently convincing, and his “Department of Peace” bill was described in such naïve terms, that it was hard to imagine how he would get any traction. But he clearly placed emphasis on critical matters such as climate change and the distribution of wealth in a manner which no one else would do, and he presented a positive vision for the United States’ role in the world that was far better than what Bernie Sanders would bring up in his campaign.

I thought Kucinich’s campaign had a positive impact, as a whole, and I spent many, many hours making suggestions to the discussion group, and to members of his campaign as to how he should approach the primaries, and how he could garner strong and broad support. That process was excellent training for me, and I developed many of my political concepts and strategies in that process. I also found myself falling away from the study of Japanese literature, as a result.
I thought that Kucinich was not planning to stay in the race very long. But we (myself and a group of others in the discussion groups) managed to make quite powerful arguments as to why he should remain in the race to the end, and we also were able to suggest improvements in his approach that gave him unexpected momentum. It became clear, however, that the hidden players within the Democratic Party did not want him to be too successful, and he was pressured to cut back on his statements. The longer I stayed in the discussion, the clearer it became that our ideas were being vetoed at the highest level, and that Kucinich could not do much within the Democratic Party. At times he looked like something of a broken man. Certainly, that was what he looked like to me when I met him in Washington D.C. in 2006. He was most welcoming to me, promised he would find me work if the Democrats were successful in the midterm elections, but I never heard from him again.

Ultimately, our efforts kept him in the campaign until the end, and that put political pressure on John Kerry to make strongly critical remarks about Bush when he was ultimately given the nomination. But the project was discouraging. I saw enthusiastic followers misled by political operators, and the conversation led constantly back to trivial issues, and away from real policy debates.

That experience led me to believe that there existed an abject decadence in American society that was leading us ineluctably towards unprecedented catastrophe. Whereas I harbored hopes that somehow, if we all worked together, we could bring about a real change in the direction of the country, and that we could even turn this crisis into an opportunity, I no longer believed that to be the case. Although I did not completely lose my drive for activism, I felt, increasingly, that we could not achieve much in the political system, or in government, and that it was only catastrophe that could wake up my fellow Americans.

My work with the Kucinich team also gave me training in writing up concepts and themes in a brief and accessible manner, and doing so quickly. It was an entirely different skill than academic writing. My emails were dragging me in the direction of journalism bit by bit. I found that I was most effective in short, two-page articles on contemporary issues. Unlike my academic writings, I enjoyed such work. That shift, however, was not merely a personal evolution. I was essentially cut off from any opportunities to interact with my colleagues in Asian
studies, and although I would, in the future, present in academic conferences again, I never felt myself to be a member of the community. The impact of academics on American society was also declining precipitously.

Conversations with Alper, with other faculty members, and my general reading of the increasing indifference of the university administration towards me, suggested that I would not survive my tenure review in May of 2004. The committee had never met with me, and showed minimal interest in what I was actually doing. There was no doubt in mind that I had more than enough academic publications for a renewal of my contract, but I knew that there was not much that could be done if the powers that be made a ruling. I took three steps in preparation: 1) I followed up on the various connections in government and think tanks that Bob Sutter had recommended; 2) I started applying broadly for academic positions at universities and colleges across the country, including small, obscure institutions that I would never have applied to under normal conditions; 3) I started teaching an additional class at a local community institution called Parkland College. I was told that I could continue to teach there indefinitely if I wanted, granted that I had no benefits, and the pay was quite low. In the worst-case scenario, it would offer me a job for the moment, considering that I did not want to be in Champaign any longer.

Not a single college, NGO, company, or any other organization called me for an interview pursuant to my letters or calls. Only a small number of people even bothered to write to me in response to my letters at all.

A Marxist friend of mine remarked years later that the main problem was that I was a traitor to my class. Although I am not fond of such reductionist analysis, I have to say that there is a certain logic to this interpretation. There was something about what I was saying that disrupted the storyline that so many professionals in the United States had made up to justify their collaboration with a totalitarian government. As a card-carrying member of the establishment, it was particularly jarring and irritating that I kept pointing out what was systematically wrong. Eventually, my very presence became a reminder that something was very wrong, and thus, it was more comfortable for everyone to simply not have me around at all.
Later, my family, and others, would suggest that the reason I could not find a job was because of the problems I had had at the University of Illinois. This argument was distinctly dishonest; a way to avoid the discussion of blacklisting, a topic that was not limited to me at that time, but which they felt was taboo. I had had relatively strong relations with my department, and I doubt that they spent much time speaking to third parties about how they did not get along with me.

I was also out of the loop in terms of the political battles taking place in the United States, whereas I could find references in the New York Times, or even in spam email, that helped me to understand what was really going on, and this time there was nothing for me at all. By the summer of 2004, there was not a trace of any reference to my case to be found in the media. Moreover, my exchanges with people in government and in international relations also were much curtailed, although they did not reach zero. It looked like I was heading for unemployment, or radical underemployment, perhaps working at Parkland College part-time.

There was, however, one job offer that actually progressed to the next level, and then led to an interview and a job offer. This opportunity arose in a rather random manner. I was walking on the University of Illinois campus in April of 2004, and I came across a massive job fair in the Illini Building to recruit graduates into government careers. I wandered around the booths set up by the FBI and CIA, and started up an informal conversation with one of the CIA recruiters. I did not take that encounter all that seriously, having been rejected from every discussion with a government agency, university, NGO, or other organization over the previous four years. But I left my business card with the recruiter and went back to my office.

The recruiter wrote me an email a few days later, and I sent him a copy of my recent CV (much polished in my language therapy class). He passed that CV on to others, and I was told a few weeks later that more biographical detail was required. Eventually, it was suggested that I apply in the fall of 2004 for a position in the Japanese division of FBIS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service), a section of the CIA devoted to open intelligence. I agreed, of course, and was given articles from newspapers in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, and asked to translate them as part of the first level test.
FBIS is a well-established organization in the federal government that provides translations in English of important articles from high-level newspapers around the world for government officials. It is a key source of information for members of the State Department, and other branches of government, and provides the most reliable translations of what actually appears in the local language, as opposed to English language journals.

I travelled to Washington D.C. for the last of my pathetic foreign service exams in May of 2004, and took advantage of the visit to meet with various people at universities there, and in government, who had taken an interest in Asia. I had a chance to meet with a young man who worked on the Japanese team of FBIS, and we toured the office. I exchanged a few words with some of the other employees, and even ran into the Korean team. It was a brief visit, but the effort made by that office suggested that my application was being taken seriously.

By the summer of 2004, the application to FBIS was the only remaining prospect for employment at all. I was fully aware of the possibility of ending up teaching part-time at Parkland College, or even of being unemployed.

There were two reasons why the FBIS job remained open for me while all others had vanished. First and foremost, the CIA is an organization with sufficient brawn, and is supported by deep, complex financing structures that it contains within; factions that cannot be controlled by anyone on the outside. This “deep state” structure is quite dangerous, but at times it has distinct advantages, in that even if a particular faction controls the White House and the Congress, there are circles in the CIA that can still say no. That reality was the reason I ended up having anything to do with the CIA in the first place.

In addition, I think there was a desire on the part of those who supported me to give me some sense of hope in the midst of an extremely stressful period. My future was looking rather grim, and they did not want me to be too discouraged.

I was called to Reston, Virginia for an interview for the FBIS position in Japanese translation in September of 2004. I honestly could not tell whether this interview was serious, or part of an elaborate game. Perhaps many of the people involved in the process did not know either. Maybe there was real ambiguity until the very
end. What I know is that although the CIA was supposed to reimburse me for the plane ticket, I never received payment, in spite of having made numerous requests.

I flew out to Washington from Chicago’s O’Hare Airport in the afternoon, and stayed at a Holiday Inn nearby the interview site. The hotel was packed with young people in their twenties and thirties who had come to interview for the CIA. Although these recent college graduates assumed that the entire process of interviews was confidential, it soon became quite apparent that nothing was particularly secret in Reston, and we were given our CIA packets in the open when we checked in, and were told when to board the minivans in front of the hotel that would transport us to the interview site.

I enjoyed the conversations I had had with the young people I met there. I was also saddened to see how their ideals of public service were being fed into the sawmill of a ruthless, privatized government. Many of them were the same age as my own students at the University of Illinois.

We were given a short welcoming lecture by a bland bureaucrat, and then each person set out for a series of one-on-one interviews with experts from different divisions in the sprawling complex of wood-paneled, two-story structures in a forested strip of land surrounded by a high fence. I followed the printed schedule included in my own manila envelope faithfully.

Although I have forgotten the content of most of the interviews, there were two that stuck in my mind. One was my meeting with a psychologist in a corner room with a view over the forest. The room had bookshelves filled with writings on mental health that reminded me of Alper’s office. Across the table was an elderly woman who spoke with a vaguely eastern European accent. She asked me a series of probing questions about my values, about my parents’ divorce, and about the progress of my life so far. Her expressions were literary, even playful, and I felt as if she was trying to create an epic profile of my life akin to Joseph Campbell’s *Hero of a Thousand Faces*, and not find a match for me in the bureaucracy. I came away from the conversation feeling that nothing is quite what is seems, and that somehow deep within that structure called the CIA, there were pockets of humanity which were able to thrive precisely because they were so isolated.
The high point of the day of interviews was my meeting with “Bob,” a long-time intelligence expert, who seemed to be of high rank, and who had been assigned to administer a lie detector test to me. I met him three times in the course of the day, and he seemed to be the person in charge. He also suggested that he had been watching me throughout the whole day. Bob was quite thoughtful in what he said, and the familiarity in the manner in which he addressed me suggested that perhaps he had been one of the people who had observed me closely back at the University of Illinois. This was his only chance to actually meet me in person. I do not have any particular proof concerning this matter, but I implied such a long-term relationship by the manner in which we interacted as friends immediately.

Sensing that such a relationship existed, I remarked to “Bob” when we parted after our first short meeting, “I have always relied on the kindness of strangers.” He smiled gently in appreciation.

Later that day, I was taken to the room with the lie detector machine by a young man around 30 years of age, and asked to lie down while he attached the electrodes to my body for monitoring. Once we were set up, he started to ask me a series of questions about my life and about my work. The questions were rather self-evident, even banal. I answered them with complete honesty. I assumed that although this young man might not know who I was, those observing me certainly knew more about me than I did myself. The process went smoothly for about thirty minutes.

But when he asked me a question about my work teaching at the University of Illinois, suddenly a rather loud beeper, like a fire alarm, went off. He stopped, and asked me the question again.

I am afraid I cannot recall the exact question, but I do believe that I answered the question as accurately as I could. I was not in any way trying to gild the lily. The beeper went off again. The young man left the room, and Bob entered in his stead (presumably after watching me from behind the scenes). Bob started to ask me more specific questions about my work at the University of Illinois, and why I had left. The beepers went off randomly, and the entire process was starting to look like a comedy of sorts.
Finally, I started tiring of the show, and I told him, “Listen, why don’t I just tell the whole story from the start.”

“Sure. Great idea. Take your time,” Bob responded.

I started to tell him the main tale, starting from my trip to Asia in July of 2000, up to that moment. Bob took notes feverishly, and kept asking me for the names of people, and approximate dates. But there were times in this process when Bob stepped over the line, suggesting details about the motivations of those who had treated me so harshly that were not part of my story. For example, he suggested that the most important group in the military opposing my ideas were those factions who were promoting “missile defense.” I had never advocated such an interpretation before.

After about 90 minutes, Bob announced that was about all that could be done that day, but that he would like to have me out again for another session soon. I told him that I looked forward to it, and we shook hands and parted. I think both of us were enjoying the conversation quite a bit at that point. Sadly, I would never see Bob again. I called up the CIA employment center a few weeks later to find out when I needed to come to Washington for the follow-up interview. The woman who answered the phone told me that I had successfully completed the interviews, and I should wait for a letter with my assignment.

I returned to the University of Illinois, and taught the rest of my last semester. I felt at peace with myself, but I was totally uncertain as to what the next step would be. One thing was certain: my relationship with the University of Illinois was completely over. Few people interacted with me at all, and I was a virtual stranger in my department. Perhaps it was not so much that I was being ostracized, as it was that other faculty members were worried that I might say something about this “matter that must never be mentioned” and place them in a difficult position.

As the semester came to a close, and I faced unemployment from January (with no savings and no prospects for work), I received a letter indicating that I had been approved for employment as an analyst at FBIS. The letter did not include a start date, and was clearly not a legally binding offer. It did suggest that I had passed the security test, and was in line for employment once the process was complete.
Although my wife and I disagreed with each other on just about everything, we did not disagree on what to do in this case. We both felt that we should sell the house, and just move to Washington with Benjamin, who was three at the time, and our daughter, Rachel, who had just been born in July of 2004. There were few prospects in Champaign for me. Illinois also included an assortment of racists who did not want me and my pro-Asian cooperation initiative to take root.

I thought that even if the FBIS offer did not pan out, if I spent a week pounding the pavement, meeting with the various people I had been introduced to, some sort of job would result from it, or at least my chances would be better.

We engaged the same real estate agent, Bob Waller, who had found the house on Church Street, to list it for sale. He was able to sell it quickly, and we made a small profit of a few thousand dollars. We could not match the timing of the sale of the house perfectly with our plans to move to Washington, so we decided to rent a small apartment on a monthly basis in the Orchard Downs faculty housing where we had lived when I first started teaching at the University of Illinois. It was a very simple two-room apartment, which, with two small children and lots of baggage, became rather crowded. The furniture that we had planned to take with us was placed in storage.

Fortunately, the children were too young to comprehend what was going on. Seung-Eun, and the fortune teller she so trusted, were perfectly content to believe that the FBIS job would be the start of a brilliant new career for me. She even had me call up her father in Mozambique (where he had recently opened a factory) to tell him about my new job. I felt rather uneasy about this move, and doubted that this offer would turn into anything at all, but I did think that there was some hope out there for the future. Although the United States under the second term of George W. Bush looked even more repressive and fascistic, there were at least a few positive signs. I was no longer being harassed in any way. People may have been reading my mail and listening to my phone calls, but they were not interfering with my daily life at all. I was also happy to be out of Champaign.

There was a small gathering at the Foreign Language Building right before Christmas for the members of our department that I attended, which gave me an opportunity to say goodbye. I did my best to look confident and even somewhat defiant among my colleagues. No one asked me any questions about what I was
going to do next, and for the most part, my colleagues avoided talking to me. Jerry Packard gave me a University of Illinois watch as a gift. I accepted it, and made a few remarks about how important the university had been for me (without saying what exactly had been so important). I do remember that Karen Kesley, a newly-hired junior faculty member who was to teach my classes, made some weird remark to me about how “you can’t win them all”, which struck me as particularly odd. But that last event ended painlessly enough, and I was glad to get back to my family.

In December 2004, we sent most of our possessions via a moving company to Washington D.C., where they were temporarily stored. We then put six-month-old Rachel and four-year-old Benjamin into our Ford Taurus, hitched up a small U-Haul trailer, and set out on our epic drive to Washington. We stopped at a hotel in Ohio, where we all slept together in one big bed. We arrived the following day, exhausted, but also oddly animated, and excited to be in an entirely new environment.

For all the risks involved in moving to an expensive city like Washington DC with no money and no certain prospects for employment, it was still a far better situation than being in Champaign, a small town with no options for making use of my skills. There was some hope that I could find some new prospects out there in Washington D.C.

Seung-Eun had told her sister, Young-Sook, who also lived in Washington, about my glorious new career, and everyone assumed that everything was set for us. But I had not received a final letter of confirmation. As I had seen just how firmly in control the Bush administration was after I arrived in Washington, and started meeting friends at various think tanks, I had pretty much given up all hope for the FBIS offer. Seung-Eun’s sister assumed that we would stay with them for a week, and then the money would come flowing in and we would purchase our own home.

This stay was made more painful because Young-sook had a large house in an expensive neighborhood in Northern Virginia, and lived quite comfortably. We, by contrast, had literally nothing at all, and, as far as I could tell, we were heading for financial disaster. The story that Seung-Eun told her sister, and her uncle, who lived nearby, about my new job did raise my status in their eyes.
I started contacting people from my many lists of Asia experts even before we set out on our drive, and I had lined up a series of interviews from the day after our arrival. I was to meet with think tank experts, lawyers, government officials, consultants, and even a few friends of my father’s that he had recommended to me. Although Seung-Eun was happy to sit in the kitchen with her sister and gossip about various family matters, and brag about her husband’s new career, I thought it was going to be a constant struggle for us to survive.

I received a very kind response to my emails from two of the foreign language interpreters at the State Department, which suggested that I might be able to find temporary work as an interpreter and translator for them. I arranged to go to the Foggy Bottom metro station the next morning for meetings with the top Chinese and Japanese interpreters at the State Department. I do not remember the name of the Chinese language interpreter. He was Chinese, but had lived in the United States for many years. The Japanese language interpreter was Charles Hershey, an extremely gifted man a few years younger than me who had been the highest level interpreter for the State Department for many years.

I visited the Chinese interpreter in his office, and we had a pleasant conversation over a cup of coffee about the realities of professional interpretation. I told him that I had no training whatsoever, but had a reasonable command of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. He immediately picked up a magazine and read an English passage aloud, and then asked me to translate it into Chinese. I tried as best I could, but it was a rather imperfect job. He looked at me skeptically, and noted that I had made some rather rudimentary mistakes in my translation. I could not disagree, but I thought the entire format for this surprise test was rather odd. The interview turned out to me rather similar to my previous experiences.

My meeting the following day with Charles Hershey was more substantial. We talked at length about our respective careers, and we identified common strands in our experiences that allowed for a deeper understanding. He promised that he would look into what opportunities there might be, and call me back within a few days.

Charles called me two days later, and we spoke for about forty minutes. After a few remarks about the sort of work that was available in Washington D.C. for someone working freelance, he also administered a short test for my benefit. It
was quite a show. Half of the test had him speaking in a Southern accent as if he were a rather ignorant politician who knew nothing about Japan. He threw in plenty of technical language, and gave me relatively little time to respond with my simultaneous translation.

I did my best at this rather impossible task. His listened politely and then remarked, “You clearly have a sophisticated knowledge of Japanese, but not much training in this sort of practical work.” I readily agreed with his assessment. He told me he would call me again if he had any ideas for work I might find. He never called again, but we did talk briefly when he served as the translator for Prime Minister Abe Shinzo when he delivered a talk at the Willard Hotel about a year later.

The people I met at think tanks and law firms were universally friendly and welcoming, oddly happy to have me in town. That kindness in itself was enough to keep me going, as a voice for sanity in a totally insane world. When I was not out pounding the pavement, I was forwarding my revised CV to people all over Washington, and setting up appointments.

Along the way, my good friend, Victor Mair, a professor of Chinese literature at the University of Pennsylvania, took up the rather complicated task of obtaining the status of visiting professor at his department for me for a term of one year. The position offered no income, but it gave me a formal position that I could put on a name card, and I was invited to visit once and deliver a lecture. I also had access to the University of Pennsylvania library, but I never had occasion to use it. This affiliation was finalized, and provided me with a means of not appearing to be unemployed.

After about 10 days at her sister’s house, Seung-Eun explained to me that we had outstayed our welcome, and needed to move on. Needless to say, this matter was more than a little irritating, as she had made no efforts to find a job herself, and she had deceived her family as to what our status was. But I also knew that Seung-Eun had been subjected to tremendous stress as well, and felt that I needed to be thankful that she had stuck with me at all. Many women would have simply walked away in such a case.
Considering the severity of our situation, this response by her sister seemed rather unfair, but there was no time to worry about that. I purchased tickets with what money remained for my family to return to Korea and stay with her mother. That would give them some stability, and put them at a distance from the nerve-wracking process of my job search in America. At the same time, I asked my cousin Manny whether I could stay with him for a few weeks while I looked for work. Manny readily agreed.

I spoke with my father by telephone about my situation. Although he obviously knew I had been in Washington, with no certain prospects for employment, along with my wife and two small children, he had not contacted me, and he had avoided any conversation concerning the central question: why exactly it was that his son, a well-known American expert on Asia was unable to find employment anywhere in the country doing anything at all. My father listened to my story without comment. At the end, after some silence, he agreed that he would send me $2,500 to help with my immediate financial problems. He told me that he could not do anything more to help me.

That response hurt me, and I started to detail for him what was actually going on in my life. I had already sent him a letter a few months before that summarized the primary issues in a few pages, but he had never responded. My father dismissed my “conspiracy theories” about being blacklisted, and he quickly ended the conversation. Although other members of my family would tell me later that my father had tried to help me as best he could, my impression was that he was not willing to take the slightest action to ascertain the facts, and was, essentially, actively participating in a criminal conspiracy against me. The same can be said, to greater or lesser degrees, about the rest of my family, and about my colleagues.

It was a difficult decision to send my family back to Korea, but it freed me up to earnestly work at trying to find some sort of a job. Within a few days, I was not only meeting lawyers and diplomats, but I was also meeting the managers of temporary employment agencies. They were not able to find me any work, either. I had decided, after some consideration, that it was better to focus on my strengths, and try to nail down a real job, rather than disappearing into a secretarial position from which I might never return to the light of day.
The stay with my cousin Manny Pastreich was also a fascinating experience. We were both named Emanuel after our paternal great-grandfather, Manny Cohan, who started the silver-plating business Cohan Epner with his son-and-law, and he had made good money during and after the second world war (although poor business decisions would later wipe that fortune out). Manny Cohan loved to have big family gatherings, to spoil his grandchildren, and he was remembered fondly by everyone in the family (although perhaps not so by the underpaid black workers who were employed in his factory).

My father named me Emanuel Pastreich in memory of his beloved grandfather. My mother, a European, agreed to this naming on the condition that I would be called Emanuel, not Manny. My father’s younger brother, Bill, who was deeply involved in organizing poor people and hospital workers in the 1970s, named his son Emanuel, as well, but that son went by the name Manny.

At some level, Emanuel and Manny embodied a slight family rivalry over whose son would be more successful. We both had our strengths, and both did well in school. Over time, we moved further and further apart. By the end, we were no longer competing, as we lived in different universes.

Manny went into organized labor, following his father’s lead. He took up a job at the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) as an organizer. Soon, he was in a desk job, bringing down a big salary far beyond what I had ever earned at the University of Illinois. He took few risks, and fell in line, in my opinion, with the rather reactionary SEIU position. His Facebook posts never mentioned anything about the efforts to investigate union corruption, and he ignored the strikes of prisoners and other inconvenient efforts by workers who did not toe the mainstream union line. I was so shocked by his silence on Facebook about the prison strikes that I wrote him an email. He responded that he did not know anything about it, and expressed no interested in doing so.

I think his mindset was influenced by his marriage to Melissa, a corporate lawyer in the healthcare field who earned a fat salary for her questionable work. He had a large house in a fashionable neighborhood on the north side of D.C., and his kids lived a pampered life. We had been close when we were growing up, and we
occasionally had had important exchanges over the years. He went to Harvard just a few years after I entered Yale, and we enjoyed each other’s company at family events.

The question was what Manny would do now that his cousin was in terrible political trouble for standing up for the rule of law, and for opposing militarism. What would he do now that his own cousin was clearly blacklisted, and unable to work in the United States, and subject to constant harassment for his efforts to restore sanity to US policy?

I did not feel entirely comfortable asking Manny if I could stay at his home, but I really had no choice at that point. I had almost no money, and my father had just only given me a small amount to tide me over. I also thought that perhaps during our stay, Manny would ask me about what had happened, and that when he learned the story, he would, through his extensive network, advocate for me at some level in Washington. That was a rather naïve assumption on my part.

During a conversation we had over the phone, Manny said he was happy to have me with him for a few weeks while I looked for a job, and his tone was quite welcoming. Within three days, my wife and children were on the plane to Korea, and I had settled down in a comfortable small room on the third floor of Manny and Melissa’s house.

It was a comfortable environment, and I had meals with Manny, Melissa, and their three kids, and then I hacked away at the computer until late at night trying to find a job. Writing emails to people all over the country, asking for introductions to people in D.C. who might be able to help me, and writing self-descriptions that would eventually form parts of articles on policy I started producing later in 2001 was a big job. And then there were the meetings with various insiders in Washington to ask for help.

The conversations with Manny and Melissa proved to be extremely limited in content. I did not push the narrative in the direction of my political problems. But I thought that, at a certain point, Manny would start to ask me some meaningful questions about what was going on, perhaps take me for a walk in the woods for a frank conversation, or otherwise express an interest in finding out what was going on, or simply how he could help. It never happened.
He was considerate, and told me how to get to where I needed to go. He was polite, and happy to provide me with clean towels and meals. He listened to me when I talked about possible job opportunities, but he studiously avoided any discussion about why I was unemployed, or why no one wanted to hire me, or what exactly I was trying to do.

Melissa was not all that different, although because she was not family, it was easier to talk with her. I did not try to tell her, or Manny, stories that they did not want to hear. I just kept meeting people in D.C., continued writing emails, and kept thinking about whether I might be able to move to Korea, or do something else that would get me out of that mess. I had explicitly made up my mind that if they asked me a question, I would answer it clearly.

I remember vividly two moments from a dinner we had with Bill and Anne, Manny’s parents. It was a big family dinner with members of both Manny and Melissa’s family, and some friends as well.

The dinner went well enough. Everyone gathered in the kitchen, and then we ate a delicious meal, buffet-style, in their spacious, wood floored, dining room.

The first moment was my short exchanges with Manny’s mother Anne. She showed visible irritation with me that stood in marked contrast to the close relationship we had had for decades previously.

I think that she felt that I should have done more to help with serving the dinner, and that I should have been more social and more humorous with the others present. I am certain that I was not amusing or easy to talk to. I was not sure what would happen to me next, or even if I would survive.

Her irritation seemed was based on the assumption that it was normal for me to be unemployed, to be forced to take refuge in my cousin’s house, and that there was no reason to show any understanding for my situation. Needless to say, Anne did not ask me any questions about what was going on in my life. She did not even ask about why my family had gone back to Korea. I was in no mood to accept her behavior towards me. It was literally the last time I exchanged any words with my aunt Anne, other than a brief greeting to her in San Francisco a few years later.
The second incident happened after dinner when we were sitting together in the living room. Uncle Bill remarked to me, offhand, “Why don’t you apply for unemployment?”

This comment was significant on several levels. To start with, it was good advice. I had been out of work for five weeks and I certainly should have applied for unemployment much earlier. It had not occurred to me to apply for unemployment, and I did not even ask at the University of Illinois about before moving to Washington D.C. That was not an indication of my incompetence, but rather because my attention was focused on simply staying alive, and on trying to find any sort of job. It was a mistake on my part, but it was a product of extraordinary circumstances.

for Bill to make this remark deeply irritated me. This comment suggested that the only responsibility he has was to give advice concerning my present condition, without any discussion about why I was unemployed. It was unfathomable that he, leftist organizer of poor people’s movements, was now playing stupid, being a willing fascist collaborator. The hypocrisy and dishonesty was too much for me. Unemployment coverage was the least of my problems. If he cared about me, he would have focused on my right to due process.

There was one other event from the stay at Manny’s that I remember. I had a short conversation with Melissa’s younger sister, whose name I forget, about her work when she came for dinner. She had worked for years for the Democratic Party, and she was taking a year off to work at a hedge fund company (presumably, so she could make a lot of money as a reward for her service to corporate interests). At the time, I still had friends in the Democratic Party back in Champaign who I thought there were fighting the good fight, so I had not yet developed the hostility to that institution that I later would have.

I asked her whether we could meet up sometime, and if I could visit the Democratic Party offices one day. She looked completely at a loss, as if I had asked her if I could borrow her car for a week. She then nervously glanced around to a friend of hers, then to Melissa, and, lastly, to Manny. She hesitated for a few more seconds. Finally, she said, “Sure, let’s meet up.” She scribbled down her phone number and email address for me on a piece of paper. I wrote her an email
the next day, and tried to call her, but there was no response. I was most definitely not someone she felt she was allowed to interact with.

So, although the stay with Manny was not unpleasant, and I enjoyed walking down the tree-lined street from their handsome home to the Metro stop, I felt daily that I was degraded by living there.

Several people have asked me why I am writing such a blunt record about those events of long ago, accounts that can be damaging and humiliating not only to myself, but also to other family members and colleagues. There are two answers to that question.

First, it is essential in this text to try, to the best of my ability, to capture the truth accurately. That approach is necessary because so many false narratives have been circulated about my actions, and about me, that are deeply misleading. I need to get the true story out. Although there are obviously details that I still do not understand about my case, I have a perspective on the course of events unlike anyone else, because I was in the middle of it. Even if CIA or FBI officers had pored over reports about my actions and my background, I seriously doubt that they could understand what was going on in my conversations with important figures in China, Korea, and Japan, or what my motivations were. I want this to be an objective account, including my obvious mistakes, even my arrogance, that would set the record straight.

Equally important is my assumption that I have no responsibility to protect or defend family members or colleagues. Dr. Alper, my former department head Jerry Packard, my father, mother, brother, or, for that matter, my cousin Manny and his wife Melissa, had multiple opportunities to help me in little ways, to find a way to ask me what was going on, or to try to find a solution to the serious problems I had faced. The political issues I dealt with were directly relevant to them. The refused to do so. They did what they did out of cowardice, and because of a selfish and narcissistic culture that possessed American elites.

I would even go as far as to say that the decision among the elite in the United States to bury my case, while making the Manning, Snowden, or Sterling cases so public, had an extremely negative effect (and there are obviously others like
me who suffered in silence). That decision created a deeply hypocritical posture among educated Americans towards the massive corruption of the time.

My case has become a form of unutterable truth known to an enormous number of people, but never discussed. The efforts of my family were a travesty and a farce, and I feel that they have an ethical responsibility to confront what they did.
Chapter 4

The Great Transformation

The only progress I made during my two months of unemployment in Washington D.C. (other than meeting many people) was my successful appointment as a visiting scholar at the University of Pennsylvania. The China scholar, Victor Mair, who had been a good friend from long before, made a special effort on my behalf. Although the position did not offer me any income, it did give me an affiliation, and it gave me access to the library. I was also invited to give a talk on my research at the University of Pennsylvania at the beginning of February that went quite well, and gave me a bit of a break from the Washington routine.

I had been corresponding with an obscure figure, Sangjoo Kim, who was the vice president of the Institute for Corean-American Studies. I still am not sure what this organization was, but it had regular seminars in Washington, to which major policy figures were invited. The offices of the Institute for Corean-American Studies are in Philadelphia, and I was able to meet up with Sangjoo Kim, with whom I had been corresponding for a few months, for a pleasant lunch when I visited the University of Pennsylvania.

Based on our conversation on Korean history, he sent me an email inviting me to an ICAS seminar to be held on February 24 at the Dirksen Senate Building. I am not sure why I was invited to be a speaker, but the event was clearly high-profile. Interestingly, the event took place almost exactly on the 4th anniversary of my placement on sick leave from the University of Illinois.

Here is the lineup for the event:

**2005 Winter Symposium: “Humanity, Peace and Security”**

U S Senate Dirksen Building, Washington D.C.
February 24, 2005

Speakers:

Patrick M. Cronin, Director of Research, U.S. Institute of Peace
“United States Foreign Policy in East Asia: The Korean Peninsula and Regional Stability”

Nicholas Eberstadt, Senior Researcher, American Enterprise Institute
“Where Is the Red Line with North Korea? What If Diplomacy Fails?”

Masataka Okano, Diplomat, Embassy of Japan
“Japan's Perspective: Challenges in East Asia”

Emanuel Pastreich, Visiting Scholar, University of Pennsylvania
“The Korean Peninsula and the Struggle between World Powers: 100 Years After the Taft-Katsura Agreement and The Portsmouth Treaty”

Evans J. R. Revere, Deputy Assistant Secretary, East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State
“A Road to Peace in the Korean Peninsula”

I spoke about the Taft-Katsura Agreement, a secret understanding between the United States and Japan by which Washington recognized Tokyo’s colonialization of Korea in the early 20th century, and Tokyo recognized
Washington’s colonization of the Philippines. That topic was assigned to me by Sangjoo Kim. I was happy to follow his request, in return for the opportunity to speak at such a forum. I also talked at length about the long-term historical development of Northeast Asia, something that none of the other speakers mentioned. I offered my own meditations on the nature of diplomacy, and the need for a long-term perspective. I think that the broad-stroke, reflective, and philosophical approach I took, was more akin to the Gettysburg Address than to the peppy speeches offered up by other think tank figures like Patrick M. Cronin. Such an approach was so alien to the culture of Washington D.C., and most likely appealed only to a small number of people in the audience.

Nicholas Eberstadt and Patrick M. Cronin are both likeable personalities who trot out establishment perspectives on Asia at numerous such events. The room was filled with policy watchers, staff from the Congress and from the State Department, as well as members of the media, especially from South Korea and Japan. It would be fair to say that the symposium was the only such high-profile event on policy that I have ever been invited to in the United States.

I spoke immediately before Evans Revere, then the acting deputy secretary of state for East Asia, and a senior diplomat. I would encounter Revere repeatedly thereafter, and, over time, I found that he had begun to accommodate the increasingly dangerous and criminal Bush policies. A product of Princeton, he had also learned Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, and I thought that we might hit it off, but I was wrong.

It was remarkable that I had been invited. Here I was, someone who had been turned down for secretarial work by employment agencies, and who had been unemployed for two months, showing up as a presenter at a significant Washington policy discussion. I interpret that moment, like the job offer for FBIS, as an effort by my supporters to show the world that I was not finished, and that neither were they. Ultimately, however, they were losing the battle, as was I, in Washington.

Many people came up to me after the talk and offered their comments, but the greatest enthusiasm was from diplomats and journalists from Japan and Korea, as opposed to Americans. When I followed up by email the next day on the business cards I had been given, a clear difference between Korea and Japan became clear.
Only one Japanese diplomat suggested that we have a cup of coffee (which we did that week in a rather forgettable manner).

When I returned home, however, I found a letter in my mailbox retracting my initial offer of employment at FBIS, CIA. The exact text was as follows:

Recruitment Center
L100-LF7
Washington, DC 20505

16 February, 2005

Dear Mr. Pastreich

This letter is in reference to your application for employment with the Central Intelligence Agency. Unfortunately, we have determined that you are unsuitable for Agency employment at this time. This decision was based on information that you provided or that was revealed during your processing. Based on this new information we must rescind our Conditional Offer of Employment dated 1 October 2004. There is no appeal of this decision.

Although we cannot provide you with the specific reasons for this decision, many situations or circumstances that cause a person to be determined as unsuitable for Agency employment may be mitigated by the passage of time. Therefore, you may reevaluate your situation after one year and consider reapplying to the Agency at that time.

Since this decision is based on your suitability for Agency employment, rather than security considerations, on future security applications and forms you may affirm, insofar as this decision is concerned, that you have never had a security clearance denied. We appreciate your interest in Agency employment and wish you well in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

Regan V. Daniels
It was a disappointment, although I had already anticipated such a result.

The enthusiasm and the commitment of the two Koreans I had met at this event was impressive. There was a diplomat from the Korean embassy in Washington, Kang Ikhyun, who seemed to have been personally touched by the effort I had made to explain Korea’s position in cultural and historical terms. We had a sushi lunch the following day, and he told me that he would see what he could do to raise awareness of my efforts both within the Korean Embassy, and within Korea itself. He wanted to help me in my search for work. We would later have numerous occasions to work together, and to discuss the rather complex relations between South Korea and the United States.

I also met the Korean journalist who had given me his business card, Kuk Kiyeon of the Segye Ilbo newspaper, that same day in the late afternoon. Kuk was the odd foreign correspondent who had stayed on in Washington D.C., raising his family there, and giving up on the fast track within the company. He had a certain progressive trend in his thinking, and immediately wanted to figure out a way to give more exposure to an American who actually understood Korea. He was more positive about the Roh Moohyun administration than most people in Washington.

Kuk had made up his mind to advocate for me, and he did so with a strong focus for about ten days. He arranged for me to be interviewed in Korean by KBS radio, and he also wrote an article about me for Segye Ilbo. He introduced me to mainstream Korean media, which would later be the source of my greatest successes in Korea. I had had many ideas about how I might become successful before that moment, but engagement with media had never been high on the list.

Most importantly, Kiyeon was a friend. He told me about himself, and his own personal concerns. He listened to me, and he did so carefully and considerately. Based on the process by which our conversations progressed, I honestly think he did not fully understand who I was when he had first met me. Along the way, he started asking me the right questions, and I responded frankly, if not in detail. He seemed a bit confused, but set out to find even more friends to advocate for me. After a few days, however, we met again, and he confessed that it looked like it would not be so easy. He did not give up, however, and called me regularly on the phone to make suggestions. He helped me to put together a Korean language CV, and suggested how I should introduce myself.
Personally, until that point, I did not have a particular bias towards Korea. I had spent the summer in Japan the year before, as Japan was my field of study, and I also had a research project with three Japanese scholars, that had been quite compelling for me over a period of a year. But there was no such enthusiasm for me among Japanese, or Chinese, or Americans, for that matter.

Kiyeon announced to me over the phone that he had made a date to meet with the newly-appointed Korean ambassador to the United States, Hong Seok Hyun. He told me that he had planned to make a personal appeal on my behalf. It sounded like a good idea, but did not seem all that different of an action compared to what he had done to that point.

Kiyeon called me on the phone about thirty minutes after the meeting with Ambassador Hong had concluded, and explained with excitement what had transpired. Ambassador Hong showed great interest in my case, and told Kiyeon that he thought it was a terrible waste for a Harvard Ph.D. who knew Korea that well to be so completely underutilized in Washington. Ambassador Hong took the matter personally, and he told Kiyeon that he would look into what might be possible.

Although it is true that I had closer connections with Japan, it is also true that I saw in the new Roh Moo hyun administration in South Korea some hope that I did not sense anywhere else around me.

Roh, the president of South Korea at that time, was a progressive lawyer who had started out his career battling against the military dictatorship. After various corruption scandals were revealed at the end of President Kim Daejung’s administration, and tensions increased with the United States under George W. Bush because of Kim’s drive to engage North Korea, it was widely assumed in the Western press that the conservatives would sweep back into power. But then there was an incident in 2002 in which two American soldiers driving a jeep ran over two Korean schoolgirls, killing them, and then drove off. A trial was held in a military court, and the criminality of the soldiers was passed over.

The event set off tremendous protests, and led to a deep questioning of the relationship between South Korea and the United States. That public debate was amplified by the emergence of online media, like OhMyNews, that gave Roh a
real audience, even when he was blocked by the mainstream. His fiery speeches were extremely effective, and, despite being more left than typical candidates, was able to win the election. Roh did not hesitate to condemn the government and the corporations for their irresponsibility, and he avoided all the traditional centers of political power. He never finished a four-year university degree program, routinely a prerequisite for power in Korean society. I had been impressed by his speeches, and felt, rightly or wrongly, a certain kinship as I fought against a military government in the US.

From the beginning, the Bush administration saw Roh as a serious problem, and they were plotting to undermine him, and to bring him down one way or another. But Roh, a man who had lived with death threats for years, was not easily intimidated. He was the only head of state from a major country at that time of grotesque obedience to the Bush cabal who had the will to speak frankly. He was not, however, a political radical, but rather someone searching for some sort of balance in a crazy world.

Ambassador Hong Seok Hyeon accepted the appointment as Korean ambassador to the United States from President Roh, much to the surprise of many of his conservative friends. But he shared Roh’s views on the need for a serious dialog with North Korea, and he was serious about his intentions to help in that mission. Hong arrived in Washington D.C. just a few days before his interview with Kiyeon concerning me. Hong had not been that close to Roh, but he was impressed by his powerful speeches, and his commitment to creating a more transparent society in Korea.

Ambassador Hong was the son of Hong Ki-jin, the founder of Korea’s major newspaper JoongAng Ilbo, and had grown up in a quite comfortable environment. Hong Ki-jin was a minister of law under Lee Seung-man, and was put in jail because he refused to carry out all of Lee’s demands for rounding up citizens. After his political career was finished, the elder Hong served served as advisor to Lee Byong-chul, the founder of the Samsung Group. As one of a handful of people who passed the the highest-level test for Japanese imperial civil service, he was highly educated and articulate, and was considered to be the brains behind Samsung’s rise. Later, Hong’s older sister married Lee Byong-chul’s son Lee Kun-hee, who was the chairman of Samsung.
Hong Seok-hyeon was generally perceived as a mainstream conservative business figure, and his decision to accept the position as ambassador during the Roh Moo Hyun administration seemed rather odd. After all, Roh’s blunt style, and his refusal to follow established political practice, had led even members of his own (original party) the Minju (Democratic) Party to join with conservatives in demanding his impeachment. Roh was portrayed in the media as a radical leftist (which I do not think he was) and he was widely criticized at Brookings Institute, and at CSIS, places where Hong Seok Hyun had cultivated close relations with major scholars for years.

But although Hong Seok Hyun was in many respects a conservative, and had maintained close ties with major political conservative figures in the United States and Japan, he had a certain bravery at moments, and he refused to compromise on his commitment to dialog with North Korea. It was a courageous decision on the part of Hong to accept the position of ambassador, and a gutsy decision to consider hiring me at the embassy at that moment.

I do not know what President Roh or Ambassador Hong did to facilitate my hiring at the Korean Embassy’s culture center. I would guess that the process was not simple, and probably involved them both. I also think that my hiring must have included a payment. It was not that easy to hire me. I also think that several Koreans thought I could be quite valuable as an American with an interest in Korean matters, as someone who knew Korean, and had a proven record of sophisticated political action. But I think the decision was ultimately less strategic, and more emotional. Many Koreans remembered vividly how they had been treated in the 1980s by the military government, and wanted to help. I think they also appreciated having an American in Washington, who had actually learned their language.

I have not necessarily been a rabid fan of Korea and its culture. There are many things that I have found difficult about working in Korea, and about Korean culture, especially at that time. But I think there is something distinctive about Korea. Koreans have been willing to listen to me in a manner that Japanese, Chinese, and Americans often have not. Some Koreans have sat down and simply listened to my advice, and taken it seriously.
It would have been entirely possible for some other embassy, like the Japanese embassy, to hire me, or for some American institution to take me onboard. After all, I had talked to many well-connected people during the two months I spent looking for work in D.C.

Probably something would have turned up somewhere, eventually, if the Korean embassy job had not worked out, but I might have ended up far deeper in debt. That part we will never know. What I can say is that the Koreans went out of their way to help me, and that decision was not made simply because I spoke Korean and was married to a Korean. Over the next thirteen years, many Koreans would, on occasion, prompt me to offer extremely frank and critical opinions, and always encouraged me to speak the truth. Sometimes those discussions were in extremely public and formal situations within government agencies. At some level, I have come to believe that Koreans had the greatest tolerance for my personality type of all the countries I have had relations with.

The administration of President Roh Moo Hyun, a progressive political group with little experience dealing with Washington, was completely unprepared for dealing with the Bush administration and his “axis of evil” speech, in which he labeled North Korea as an enemy. They had little sense of how the Bush administration worked, and they had no one in the entire think tank crowd with whom they could consult. I believe that Roh, or those around him, hoped to use me for such a purpose. Unfortunately, the bureaucracy within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was so hostile to such ideas, that I was not afforded the opportunity, and I never met President Roh, and met almost none of the high-ranking officials in his circle.

Five days later, Kuk Kiyeon came back to me with a concrete offer from the Korean Embassy for employment at the culture center. The salary was only $40,000 a year, and there were no health benefits or pension plan, but it was at least a job. I was expected to help in cultural outreach to Americans, and to edit publicity materials. I think the fact that the embassy was not legally US territory made it a bit easier to employ me.

I drafted a letter of interest in response to the advertised position immediately, even though it had essentially been promised to me already, and visited the
Korean Culture Center the next morning, where I met the diplomat in charge, Lee Hyun-pyo.

Lee Hyun-pyo was a German expert at the Foreign Ministry had spent many years as the head of the culture center in Berlin. He was less fluent in English than in German, and was a difficult personality. I suspected that he was appointed because he was loyal, perhaps overly so, to President Roh. He was quite talkative, and spoke with considerable confidence. He was constantly engaged in something or other, and was always in a hurry.

Lee was a difficult person to work for. He had flights of fancy about cultural outreach that he expected his staff to immediately embrace without any preparation. He yelled at staff over virtually nothing, often using insulting curses I had never heard uttered in an office.

I came to suspect that although he initially gave me a corporate card, and allowed me to take people out for lunch (for just the first two months), that he was just following orders, and that he would prefer that I did not get too much exposure or publicity.

That said, there were also times when he was quite kind, and even allowed me to go out with him and wander around Washington together. We attended some seminars at think tanks, and I tried to give him useful advice. Overall, however, I found him overbearing, and was happy when he left me alone. He also took clear steps to undermine my authority at points. This was not a political conspiracy. For most Korean diplomats, I was simply part of the embassy landscape. The high-tension political games within the United States that had dominated my life for the previous four years disappeared, and I was just an employee.

No American with any specialized skills had ever been hired as a full-time employee by the Korean embassy. As a full-time employee, I had full access to all the other diplomats at the embassy, and I managed, systematically, to meet every single one of them over the first three months. The Korean Embassy was what I was given, and I did my best to make good use of it. Some diplomats recognized my abilities, and invited me to lunch regularly. Others made assumptions about my social status based on my lowly position in the Korean Culture Center.
I called my wife in Korea after I had received the formal offer, and asked her to come back to Washington with the children. I did not know how we would be able to afford it, but I hoped we would find a way. The daughter of a friend of mine was a real estate agent, and she found us a tiny white house with a big green yard in Annandale, Virginia, very close to Korea Town. I moved some of our furniture from storage into the house, and tried to set up something that looked like a home before my wife and children returned.

I was glad to get out of my cousin Manny’s house, and was happy that I had a job with some income, so that I did not have to speak with family members anymore, or go around in a humiliating fashion groveling for a job.

The house in Annandale was a small tract house in the middle of a large yard. The neighborhood was quite pleasant, and one could easily walk over to Korea Town. In the early days living there with my family, I felt quite excited. I sensed that I was on the edge of some sort of major breakthrough, and that somehow the Koreans would do their best to help me, so that I could become a major figure in Washington D.C. In my meetings with Ambassador Hong, I had a sense that he saw me as potentially helpful to him. But not many diplomats were of that opinion, most not wanting to do anything that could jeopardize their interactions with the Bush administration.

At the start, I was invited to several high-profile events with Ambassador Hong, where I was able to interact with important figures in the military and with both American and Korean politicians. That process did not last long. Hong wanted me to play a significant role, but, unfortunately, he did not last long in Washington.

For the first six months, I had surprising access to many people in the embassy, including Ambassador Hong, and I was put on the list for many events. I also organized a few high-profile seminars at the Culture Center that were popular with Washington insiders. I felt quite comfortable visiting Ambassador Hong’s office, or the offices of Political Minister Wi Sung-rak (who later became a close friend). But in July of 2001, that honeymoon came to an end.

Out of the blue, MBC news in Seoul released tapes that had been made a decade before, which indicated that Hong had made illegal contributions to politicians.
The scandal was played up in the media daily, and, sure enough, calls were heard on TV for Hong’s resignation. Hong did not have a strong emotional commitment to the Roh administration. He stepped down within a few days, and was soon back in Seoul.

Although I have no doubt as to the legitimacy of the charges, I am quite skeptical about the timing. It seemed to me that Hong was intentionally taken down by various forces who did not want such an independent figure involved in Korea-US diplomatic relations. Because he had a Ph.D. from Stanford, spoke English with sophistication, and was widely read, Hong could argue for policy in an effective manner. He had his own extensive network among important figures at US think tanks, and elsewhere. He was capable of setting up meetings with people without the help of the State Department, or of the Korean Foreign Ministry. Moreover, Hong had his own ideas about unification, and about engagement with North Korea, and he had no intention of compromising on them. He felt that engagement with North Korea was critical, and he did not hesitate to say so.

He was a conservative by background, but argued against many standard lines regarding security. Although his relationship with George W. Bush was good, there were, no doubt, many figures in Washington D.C. who did not want an independent-minded person in such a high-profile position. The Roh administration also had people who found Hong to be too independent. I was quite happy to have such a prominent person in Korea who took me seriously.

Hong was replaced by Lee Daesik, a dull professional diplomat who did nothing original during his term, and who put the entire embassy to sleep. It was made clear to me that although I could meet with individual diplomats and help them to adjust to life in Washington, the embassy, at the highest level, was not interested in my opinions, and I never had a meaningful meeting with Ambassador Lee. I spoke on occasion with Minister Wi, but our friendship would develop long after we had both moved to Seoul.

My communication with people on the margins of American politics in opposition to the Bush takeover came to an end when I started working at the Korean Embassy. I may have been under surveillance, but there were no indications of anything unusual, and no efforts to consult with me. It would not be until the Trump era that I saw any sign of an effort to communicate with me.
via spam email, advertising in magazines, or other such methods. This silence suggested that what I thought had happened to me at the University of Illinois was not a figment of my imagination. I was not imagining all those hidden messages, because they ended quite dramatically.

The Korean Embassy is located up on Massachusetts Avenue, just a few blocks north of Sheridan Circle Park. I took the metro into Foggy Bottom every day, first from Annandale, and later from West Falls Church, after my wife found a larger apartment for us there. My routine was to walk up from Foggy Bottom station every morning past the beaux arts mansions of the early twentieth century that covered the sides of the hill. Occasionally, I would stop for a cup of coffee along the way, and prepare for the day’s work. It was a time for meditation, and, occasionally, it was a fearful trek, as Washington seemed to be on the edge of chaos. I took that route for two years.

This book is not meant to be a detailed autobiography, but, rather, a narration of my political struggle in a concise manner. Much of my work at the Korean Embassy, whether organizing a “Kimchi Day”, holding regular seminars, putting together a joint Japan-Korea exhibition on the World Cup of 2002, or setting up a film series that was held jointly between the embassies of France, Germany, and Italy with the embassies of China, Korea and Japan, was meaningful to me, but it had little to do with the struggle for accountability in the United States. In a sense, it was an acceptance of the status quo forced on me. Those activities, and others, would give me ideas that ended up as a series of articles a decade later in the Korean media about public diplomacy. I was thought of as a public diplomacy expert for a while, especially during the Park Geun-Hye administration, even though I personally did not have so much interest in the topic.

The culture center would fill my entire day sometimes with bureaucratic activities, but, at other times, I was essentially told to go out and meet people who might be helpful. I was free to meet American Asia experts, to visit the State Department, or to talk with journalists and professors, and I built up a sizeable network. I had a remarkable opportunity to wander around and learn how Washington D.C. works, for which I was extremely grateful.

The Korean Culture Center was a smallish building that was just a few houses down the hill from the Korean Embassy proper. It was a rather sleepy place,
manned by a staff of four long-term Korean local hires, three Korean diplomats, and various short-term interns (graduate students). The first floor had exhibition rooms that were rarely visited. The offices were to the back on the second floor. I worked on the second floor, at a desk with a view over Rock Creek. At the end of my tenure, as it became increasingly clear that the team working on cultural events and editing the journal, Dynamic Korea, did not want much help from me, I moved to a small office on the third floor, where I could work on my writings, and meet privately with people who came to visit.

There were times at which I was not clear exactly what I was supposed to be doing all day long. There was a Korean team in place, who edited the daily postings for Dynamic Korea, and by the end of 2005, they were becoming jealous of my work. I was asked to do a bit of editing, and they included my interviews with various figures in Washington in the journal, but they did not want me to play any role in the administration of the journal, or the development of its content.

Ultimately, my most important role at the embassy was one-on-one meetings, at people’s offices, in cafes, and over lunches and dinners with the diplomats and the representatives of each ministry who served in the Korean Embassy. I made an effort to introduce myself to every single government representative in the embassy, and I offered to help. Most did not need any specific help, but there were times when I could introduce them to their counterparts in the United States government, or find out information about how Washington worked that I could share with them.

I learned quickly that the diplomats took the overseas correspondents very seriously, and that those journalists, at times, had a better command of issues than those in the embassy. Several journalists quoted me in their articles, and started me down the path towards journalism, which would be even more pronounced after I arrived in Korea.

Ultimately, writing for the media became the most successful part of my career. Perhaps if I had known that would have been the case, I would have spent more time writing articles and books, and less time meeting people and talking about opportunities for projects and work (none of which amounted to anything). I wonder whether the classified documents limiting my activities may have specifically identified writing as a field in which I was able to act more freely. Of
course, my interactions with the mainstream media in the United States has always been deeply restricted. But I have, on many occasions, been permitted to write on extremely sensitive issues.

I first started writing articles for the media for the during my time at the Korean Embassy. It was not an activity that had interested me before, but I felt a serious need to get a larger audience in Washington, and my writing ability was one of my more important assets. Later, writing for newspapers would become central for my career, and mastering the editorial form was my primary means of expression after I moved to Korea. But the issue of writing was not a simple task for me. After all, I had essentially been blocked from all meaningful interactions with my intellectual peers while at the University of Illinois, and many other people, whether members of the Green Party of Champaign, or military officers at the armory, many of whom had no interest in academic discussions. I was repeatedly told I had to complete my book manuscript on classical Japanese literature, even though I had literally no interest in the topic anymore. I saw writing an academic book as the equivalent of a jail sentence. At some level, I hoped to escape into doing things, into the battle on policy, and leave behind my academic life.

But that was not the world that awaited me in Washington. I found extremely few people fighting the good fight, and was confronted by cheerleaders for free trade and traditional weapons systems at every turn. The embassy was a fascinating experience, but it was clearly not a career, and it seemed unlikely that the think tanks and universities around me would have any interest in someone like me.

Writing was clearly something that helped others in the think tank world to establish themselves, and after reading some of the jargon-laden crap handed out at seminars, I started to feel a certain degree of confidence.

My first stab was an article for *Japan Focus* (an academic journal on Asian affairs) about South Korean president Roh Moo-hyun that was entitled, “The Balancer: Roh Moo-hyun’s Vision of Korean Politics and the Future of Northeast Asia” (August 1, 2005). The article was widely read and commented on. Granted the complete absence of reporting about who Roh really was, my article filled a void.
There was real criticism of the article. First, I heard several people describe it as far too sympathetic to Roh, including Ted Osius on the Korea Desk of the State Department, with whom I had a good relationship. I did not think that my article was a defense of Roh at all, and I thought that if anything, the problem had been the way in which people tried to pigeonhole him as a leftist despite his clear efforts to find a middle path for South Korea.

And then there were accusations of conflict of interest. One scholar wrote to Japan Focus suggesting that since I was working at the Korean Embassy, the article was a puff piece to please my employer. Anyone who had taken the time to thoroughly read the article would have had trouble coming to that conclusion. My situation was so unusual, however, that it was not surprising that people had that opinion. I wanted to explain, of course, that I was working at the Korean Embassy because I had been illegally exiled from the United States for fighting for the rule of law, but decided that that campaign would have to wait.

And then there was criticism from my immediate boss, Lee Hyun-pyo, who scolded me for writing about the president without obtaining approval. I think he was just doing his job. In fact, he changed his tone within a day, when the Roh administration discovered that I was, in fact, the only one writing anything about Roh at all in a thoughtful manner. In fact, Lee would ask me to arrange to translate the articles into Japanese and Chinese for general distribution.

The next article was a comparison of the rivalry between the United States and China with that of the conflict between Great Britain and the United States in a previous era. The article, “Is China the Nemesis in a New Cold War?” released on March 6, 2006, was even more successful. It was first published in the Korean online newspaper, OhMyNEws, and then reprinted for broad distribution to policy makers in the Nautilus Institute’s NAPS Net list.

I argued that the competition between the United States and China was economic, cultural, and political in nature, and that although there were military aspects, that was perhaps not the most important element. Moreover, I suggested that the use of a “cold war” model in which the United States continued to be like the old United States, and China as the new Soviet Union was entirely off the mark. The article was widely read, and there was a follow-up involving a complex rebuttal by another scholar published in NAPS Net, and my response was also published.
The article was even mentioned in the Financial Times, one of the extremely rare moments in the previous 18 years where something about me had come up in the corporate media.

The most successful project at the embassy was the KORUS House seminar series that I was authorized to run, and given considerable leeway by Director Lee, in terms of who I invited and what we discussed. I feel that at its best it was a unique space for open discussion in Washington D.C., and we developed quite loyal members who came to every event. This lecture series was a concept cooked up by the Korean Culture Center’s director Lee Hyon-pyo. KORUS refers to the KORUS (Korea-US) Free Trade Agreement that was being negotiated at the time. It was proposed that I would organize various events at the culture center on economics, and on the benefits of free trade. I did so on several occasions, as instructed, but I did not enjoy it, because I was a strong opponent of so-called “free trade.” I knew the catastrophic impact of free trade on the environment, and communities, and I could repeat materials given to me, but I could not get behind the drive for free trade which had dominated the entire embassy.

Many seminars were on culture, economics (other than trade), climate change, society, and history. The speakers I invited included people who were extremely critical of US policy in Asia. The Koreans did not seem to be bothered at all when I invited people like John Feffer of Foreign Policy in Focus, or Donald Gregg, former ambassador to Korea, and a fierce critic of George W. Bush. Even General Bill Odom, who I met at the talk at the University of Illinois, and who had taken a strong interest in my work, agreed to come. I even invited the political scientist Chalmers Johnson, with whom I had become close through our email correspondence. Johnson told me that for health reasons he no longer travelled.

There was also a rather interesting series of conversations with the assistant to Madeline Albright, former Secretary of State under Bill Clinton, at her consulting firm. The assistant treated me with an undisguised contempt, as if it were rude and inappropriate for me to contact someone so lofty, when I was so lowly a creature. But the assistant did not give me a clear no, most likely because she hoped that the Korean Embassy would engage the firm in some consulting contract.
I ran into that expectation repeatedly. People who I had invited as part of an honest discussion of what the US role in Asia should be implied, or stated explicitly, that they wanted consulting contracts. In fact, there were some who were already engaged in consulting for the Korean Embassy who saw me as an implacable foe, not for ideological reasons, but because I offered competition. There were several tense occasions in which the Korea Economic Institute expressed irritation that I was treading on their territory. I tried to handle these matters diplomatically, but I did not dumb-down my KORUS House seminars. I was determined that our programs would be as significant and as competent as those presented at the famous think tanks in Washington D.C., and I think we often met that goal. At the same time, I concluded that my efforts were not welcome by the vast majority of Asia experts plying their trades in that corrupt town, and there was not a space for me in that environment, at least not unless I had a real position at a major institution.

From the spring of 2006, I started to teach again, part time. Personally, I wanted to leave academics forever. I had no desire to teach, and I had no desire to write academic papers again. I would have preferred to have had a more administrative job, which would have fit my interests and skills better. But I needed the additional income, and it was the only money I was able to earn to supplement my minuscule salary, which came without health insurance. The courses I taught at George Mason University, and later at George Washington University, gave me a chance to talk with young people, which helped me to understand the United States better, and which was a refreshing change from life at the Korean Embassy. Several students from George Washington University remained close to me in the following years.

Although my impact in the embassy after the departure of Ambassador Hong was diminished somewhat, and the establishment of an all-Korean staff to run Dynamic Korea, an online government-led branding campaign reduced my workload, Director Lee was happy to send me out to spend much of my day going from one seminar to another at CSIS, the Brookings Institution, The Wilson Center, the New American Foundation, the Heritage Foundation, and many other such institutions. I was on the mailing lists, and I had established close relations with much of the staff in a short period of time. The process of gathering business cards and organizing them, interviewing experts for Dynamic Korea, inviting
experts to talk at KORUS House, and occasional lunches and coffees, over which I offered to be helpful as best I could, added up over time into a meaningful network, even though I was never invited to the big events.

There were two significant study groups that played an important role in my life from the fall of 2005 onward. The first was a regular seminar series organized by Katy Oh of the Institute for Defense Analysis for young Korea experts at think tanks. Katy was also affiliated with Brookings Institution, and took a strong interest in me from the beginning. She went out of her way to make sure that I was recognized as someone of significance. She has continued to be a good friend and supporter ever since. A sweet woman with a certain love of sarcasm, she was capable of both speaking the “insiders peak” of DC think tanks about missile defense, the North Korea threat and free trade, while, at the same time, acknowledging that there was far more going on.

The other members of this seminar series were younger than me, and, in a sense, it was a bit odd that I was treated as a youngster, granted that I had been a professor for eight years already. Nevertheless, some of the other members grew to be good friends. Others took a certain pleasure in asserting their unique superiority and influence. I was not able to bridge worlds in the manner that Katy Oh had done. For me, many of the essential issues of the day, for example, climate change and the fragmentation of society, were so significant, that to leave them out of a discussion was simply dishonest. So, I could not blend in all that well. I do wonder, sometimes, that if my experience at Illinois had not been so traumatic and confrontational, perhaps there might have been some way for me to have made the transition.

The other group, which was larger and more significant, I developed together with David Steinberg of Georgetown University, and John Feffer of Foreign Policy in Focus; two men who ended up being close to me, even if we did disagree on fundamental issues on occasion.

David Steinberg was an expert on Burma, who also wrote extensively on Korean issues, and had a warm personality and an endless curiosity. He also had no ego to feed, and was willing to take me seriously from the very beginning. I would even say that David Steinberg was one of the very few people in Washington who thought that my command of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean was an asset. He
would invite me to the Cosmos Club for breakfast occasionally, and we discussed how something of the great tradition of Asian expertise, dating back to Fairbanks and Reischauer, could be reestablished. I think that because David was, at the time, one of the oldest people active in Asia policy, having had a long association with the Asia Foundation (from back when it had a broad and positive role) he had some appreciation for how I wanted to hark back to Roosevelt or Adlai Stevenson in what I said. He still remembered something of that lost tradition.

One day, I made the mistake of setting up an enormous Google group for all the people who regularly attended KORUS House events. I asked special permission from Google to set it up. I thought that it would be a great way for me to communicate about our events, and to get responses from those who were regular attendees. The total number of people was around 150. But once the Google group was set up, I discovered that any messages sent to me were also sent out to all other members. Within 20 minutes, there were multiple complaints about this system, all of which were duly circulated to all other members again, inspiring even more complaints. It took five hours to shut down the Google group, and I sent out multiple apologies.

That incident led to a longer discussion with David Steinberg, in which he suggested we could form our own independent group for regular discussions about East Asia among a core of open-minded individuals. With some help from John Feffer, we put together a regular series that drew between ten and twenty people, for lively and thoughtful discussions.

That series survived for some time after I left Washington, as did the short film festival that I organized between the Korean, Japanese, and Chinese embassies, as well as the French, German, and Italian embassies. Moreover, it was that group that invited me out for a quite memorable dinner to send me off when I left for Korea in February of 2007.

There are a few other key people who I would like to mention here, because they made a special effort on my behalf during those difficult two years.

The central figures in United States foreign policy at the time were Zbigniew Brzezinski (former national security advisor to Jimmy Carter and founding member of CSIS) and Henry Kissinger (former national security advisor to
Richard Nixon and another founding member of CSIS). Between the two of them, they formed overlapping, but distinct circles of influence. Brzezinski was very much an inside player, connected in the corporate world, and not without sin, but he was someone who perceived his role as professional and presented himself as a scholar and strategist, working ultimately for a higher cause. Kissinger, by contrast, was a businessman trying to siphon off federal money to his consulting firm, Kissinger and Associates (which is what Madeline Albright was imitating). Kissinger did more to degrade the nature of foreign policy in the United States than any one single person, especially through his advocacy for radical privatization.

I never met Henry Kissinger, and had had no interaction with him or the people around him in any way. But when I wrote to Brzezinski in 2006 to ask if he would be willing to speak at the KORUS House, he wrote me a detailed and carefully-written response. I would go as far as to say that he responded to me about the request with a seriousness that one might expect him to employ with a head of state, or a major intellectual. That letter deeply impressed me, and led me to think that Brzezinski had probably been one of the people advocating for me from the beginning, and who may even have played an important role in helping me out. He most certainly took me extremely seriously, given his meticulous responses to every single letter, even more than Chomsky, although Chomsky ended up being a pen pal for over more than 14 years, and our email exchanges numbered in the hundreds.

I had only met Brzezinski one time in person, at a CSIS seminar. I went up to him and shook his hand, but he made no comment at all. It was not as if he was being distant. Quite the opposite. I think that he was indicating that there was no need to suggest any closeness at a public event. Whatever Brzezinski’s responsibilities for the rise of extremism in Afghanistan, or the confrontation with Russia, I was impressed by what he did for me at a time when few wanted to speak with me at all.

But if it was true that Brzezinski was that enthusiastic about me, it suggests a ruthless environment for foreign policy. To think that I could have undergone that sort of treatment for that long, and the strong support of someone like Brzezinski,
and others, made little difference suggests that such policy intellectuals are no longer engaged in the decision-making process.

Joseph Nye, then professor in the Kennedy School at Harvard, is another person who went out of his way to help me. I met him when he visited the University of Illinois in 2003, and we had a chance to talk, and pursuant to that, we also had an extensive correspondence. He agreed to be interviewed by me on several occasions for articles which helped me to establish my credibility.

Although we spent relatively little time together, I came to feel quite close to Nye, and I remember distinctly when I delivered a talk at the Department of Comparative Literature at Harvard University in 2015 to a small group of students and faculty (after the Korea Institute refused to be a host), he made a point of coming to the talk, even though the topic had nothing to do with international relations.

There are a few other people in the international relations and security fields that I want to mention. I am not being naïve about the evils committed by the United States abroad. But I would suggest that, as odd as it may seem, the only ones willing to stand up and oppose the corruption of that period were often those who were in the military or intelligence. Not average people, but exceptional ones. By contrast, I was struck by the complete cowardice of the NGOs and leftist groups that I had encountered. I honestly believe that if my fate in Champaign had been in the hands of the Green Party or the various leftist activists, I would not have survived.

Richard Bush, the director of the Center for Northeast Asia Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution, also made great efforts to get me invited to events, and to simply sit down with me over coffee or lunch and discuss what was going on in Washington D.C. In some ways, he was one of the most important people, initially, in that he was not afraid to meet with me, or even to ask my advice. But we never discussed my case, and he never asked. I assumed from the start that he knew already more than enough.

He also was unable to invite me to speak at Brookings, although he tried. Even a decade later, when I had become a prominent figure in Korea, and someone entirely appropriate to have invited to a major event, it remained impossible.
I had also had good relations with the chairman, Strobe Talbott, who had been the speaker for my class at Yale, although we were not close. Clearly I was not going to be invited to Brookings, and I never was. Although I was allowed to speak at CSIS in 2010 at a seminar on renewable energy, by some miracle. Although I invited people from think tanks to talk at KORUS House, they never reciprocated. I think I remained blacklisted.

It took a year before I managed to get together with Larry Wilkerson for a cup of coffee, but we hit it off right away, and we have remained in correspondence ever since. He has a disarming and frank manner of speaking. I would not say that he was entirely forthright, but then again, at that time few felt that they could be.

I would not say that we were entirely on the same page, but it was clear that although we had never met, we had many friends in common. I obtained his email address from a friend, and wrote to him out of the blue. He responded within two hours, and we met up at a café in Foggy Bottom two days later. He was not afraid to discuss the political chaos of that time, and I remember clearly that he remarked to me that it was impressive that we had survived this long. I had often felt that way, although those around me acted as if everything was entirely normal. In that comment alone, Larry spoke with a seriousness I had heard from no one else in Washington. I tried repeatedly to involve him in various events, and would eventually get him to come to South Korea in 2013 for a conference, but in an odd way, although Larry was clearly financially far better off, and, apparently, not subject to the harassments that I was, his freedom of movement was more restricted than mine. The Korean government had brought me to promote their networking, and in that capacity, I was invited to events that Larry was not.

A central figure in my later efforts to start an alternative policy discussion group in Washington was John Feffer, then director of Foreign Policy in Focus. We came from similar families, and he had a strong interest in literature (and had written several plays), just as I had an interest in foreign policy (as a professor of literature). We agreed on many, many issues, but we also occasionally disagreed, as well. John would later agree to be a fellow at the Asia Institute that I later established in Korea, and we wrote numerous articles together in the following years.
When I started to refine my concept of non-traditional security threats in the summer of 2005, and then drafted a proposal for a conference, John, David Steinberg, and Richard Bush were the first people that I turned to for advice.

I made repeated efforts to organize a conference, even just a small seminar, to discuss the serious security threats resulting from the shortage of water, and the degradation of the environment. I remember vividly the complete lack of interest by certain individuals in the policy world when I brought up the topic of “non-traditional threats”. Somehow, the greatest problem we faced just didn’t seem to be that important.

I had a discussion with the flashy, but not particularly effective journalist policy king, Steve Clemons (then at the New American Foundation), during which I presented my ideas for a seminar on security entitled, “Water: Worth more than Gold and Oil Combined.” Clemons responded that the topic was “amusing”, and maybe could be considered at “some future date.” I never heard back from him about it.

We did not get any funding whatsoever for the event. I told David Steinberg, “This is simply wrong. Do these people think that we will be able to respond to climate change or water shortages with aircraft carriers?”

But I was clearly in the wrong place. All these so-called security experts were not interested in security in any sense of the word. But I started to see this vision of identifying climate change as the primary threat, requiring that the entire military be reinvented to address this challenge directly. This was a valuable concept in itself, and I would develop this theme in greater detail. It would also become a source of substantial political problems later, when I had refined my message, but nothing on the scale of what we suffered through between 2001-2004.

There are many other people who helped me in Washington, or with whom I had important conversations, or who I had helped in my own way. There was the Democratic Party progressive activist Annabel Park, founder of the Coffee Party, the thoughtful lawyer Shirley Johnson and her sweet husband Charles who had us over to their house frequently, and there were many others.

The experience in Washington included enough content for a book, and in fact, much of the encounters I had there informed my later books on Korean culture
which were so successful after I moved to Seoul. For a while, I was considered an expert on public diplomacy, even though I had minimal interest in that topic. But those events were not directly related to this story, and I will leave them out.

It was most certainly true that I changed during that period. I met a range of people outside of academics, and learned to write in a journalistic manner. I worked with Koreans quite intimately, and found them often quite receptive. But more importantly, my ties with the United States had been weakened. I was afraid that I might be killed when I was at the University of Illinois, but I was clearly working with other Americans who were trying to restore the rule of law. I was very American, and I was at the center, I felt, of a struggle for America. But now I was surrounded by many who did not feel such passions and were more interested in contracts for services and political connections. After one year I concluded that I had not really made the transition. I was not becoming a policy insider in Washington D.C., and I felt repulsed by some basic patterns of behavior to a degree I had not anticipated. At the University of Illinois, I imagined myself to be quite practical, working with anyone for the cause. But I realized that the culture of Washington had no space for someone like me.

But at the same time, I clearly changed over the period from 2000-2007. What exactly happened is hard to pin down. The United States had become far more repressive and decadent, and a culture of denial had crept in. But I also became more aware of problems in the world, and in the United States, than I had before. I started to realize that things did not suddenly change in November 2000, but rather that the debacle of the educated classes playing stupid in the face of a political takeover was the product of a long process, and that there had been similar events in the past that I did not know about. I also started to think about questions like class and economic structures much more seriously than before. I was never much of a Marxist, but Marxist analysis of the relations of capital to class seemed to be the only way to explain certain odd phenomena that I had observed.

I met up with Woo Chan Lee, a former classmate from Yale, in Foggy Bottom for a cup of coffee around October 2006. I had not seen him for some eight years. Woo Chan and I had been both friends and, in an odd sense, rivals when we met first in 1987, at the time we had both registered to study Japanese at the
Interuniversity Center in Japan, and applied for the same scholarship (which Woo received and I did not). Woo Chan was Korean, quite capable in Japanese, and would later learn Chinese, as well. We were both quite ambitious in our plans for the future.

I had ended up as a professor, in part, by accident. Woo Chan eventually worked for the State Department for several years and then, about the time we met, left to work for the firm of the billionaire China investor, John Thornton, who had given so much to the Brookings Institution. He was well on his way to making a lot of money and living comfortably, now married to a Japanese woman. I had literally nothing in the bank, and was not sure whether my job would last for long.

He spoke at length about his new consulting work with Thornton, his relationship with Strobe Talbott, and other important issues. In contrast to my cup of coffee (at the same café) with Larry Wilkerson, a conversation in which we spoke at length about the institutional decay of Washington D.C., everything seemed just fine for Woo Chan.

One thing was sure, if you did not have a high income, and did not have close working relations with the super-rich, you were not all that successful in Woo Chan’s view. In part, I think he had changed as a result of his experiences in the State Department, and his networking efforts. But I had also changed quite drastically because of my own march. It was the last time I saw him.

Finally, I made the effort to write to my parents, siblings, and many others about what had happened to me back at the University of Illinois at that time. I put together a 5-page summary of the main points, which I printed up and mailed to them. I did not do so because they requested it of me.

I had two motivations for doing this. First, I wanted them to know what I thought had happened. After all, many rumors and half-truths had been circulated about me, and I could not be sure what they knew. I recalled how I had thought that Jerry Packard, my department head at Illinois, knew all about what had been done to me, but I learned later that other than knowing I was in some sort of deep political trouble, he did not know much of anything about what had happened.

The second motivation was that I did not want my family to have any excuses. I did not want them to feel that they could blithely explain that they had no idea
what had happened to Emanuel at some future date. I wanted to make it perfectly
clear that I had told them, in an unmistakable format, what had happened, had
asked for their help, and that they had done almost nothing in response (which is
accurate).

My father responded that the letter had helped him understand, but asked no more,
and did not even offer to listen further. At the end of 2006, I went for a walk with
him in San Francisco, and for about an hour, I tried to explain what the issues
were. He acted as if he had never heard anything before (in spite of the letter),
and while he listened, he asked no questions and made no suggestions.

Jamie, my stepmother, took the time to walk with me, and asked me the most
meaningful questions of any family member. She seemed willing to walk through
the tale and see how it held together, and what was irrefutable. She did nothing at
all, however.

My brother Michael came out to see me in 2006, and we also went for a long
walk. Like my father, he just listened and said little. He did refer to particular
events at the end of our conversation, suggesting he had taken what I had said
seriously. But he had no ideas, and was not interested in hearing more than he
had to. He would later backtrack, suggesting that he did not find my story credible.
But during that meeting, he came close to being willing to listen and understand.

My mother did not respond immediately, but she later made a serious effort to
engage me, granted that she seemed too frightened to do anything. And then there
were others who never responded. I would start another similar campaign in 2015,
as well, to try and force friends and family to at least discuss the issue, but I was
not particularly successful.

So, even against my will and my best judgment, palpable distance between me
and my family was growing, without exception, although overall relations with
my mother were tolerable, in that she asked genuine questions.
Chapter 5

The Move to Korea

I never intended to stay with the Korean Embassy very long. In fact, I assumed that within a short period of time, another more significant job would be found. But I suspect that from the moment of my dismissal from the University of Illinois, a letter had been inserted in my folder explicitly stating that I could not be employed within the United States. Since that time, although I was paid on a few occasions for talks delivered in the United States, I have literally not had a single offer of work in America, except for an offer from the Korea Society, which seemed as if it was never intended seriously.

I was invited to give a talk at the Korea Society in New York in 2006, along with several other Americans with a deep interest in Korean culture. To a large degree, the concept for the event was mine, and I wrote the initial proposal, although I had nothing to do with it after that. Director Lee of the Korea Culture Center was in contact with the Korea Society, and Donald Gregg, the chairman, was one person who took an interest in my case. If I remember correctly, my father had had a roommate at Yale who worked in business, and had some ties to the CIA. He knew the Korean crowd from the old days, especially former ambassador James Lilley (also from Yale) and Donald Gregg. I think that this friend also put in a good word for me. Zach Hall, also a Yale product, also knew Gregg’s family, I believe. Gregg was sympathetic with my case, granted the unfairness of what had been done, and was aware of the chaos in the country. I had no illusions about Gregg, the major player in the Reagan hostages for weapons deal, and a cynical player in CIA politics, but I personally sensed a certain sincerity in what he had said to me on certain occasions, and found him more thoughtful than most out there. Gregg would later take even stronger stands in criticism of US policy in Korea, going beyond what was acceptable for even the progressive media, so he had made up his mind to do something. He was clearly disgusted by the George W. Bush administration, and seemed to want to do something to help me.

He would stop responding to emails from me, however, after 2007.
My talk about Korean popular culture at the Korea Society was packed, and there was a clear buzz that even made its way back to Washington D.C. Gregg tried to find a way to hire me at the Korea Society, the one and only offer to me from within the United States for employment after 2004.

One of the staff of the Korea Society called me up two weeks later to offer me employment. I was anxious to get away from my ambiguous and unstable work (without benefits) at the Korean Embassy, so I expressed great interest. We had two phone conversations about the job and exchanged several emails, but it was not long before I realized that the offer was not a serious one. The salary offered, for working at the high-profile Korea Society office in Manhattan, was slightly less than my initial salary at the University of Illinois, and roughly equivalent to what the Korean Embassy was paying me. In retrospect, it made no sense at all. I had been a professor for eight years, had extensive experience, and was certainly qualified to hold a central position at the Korea Society, but I was treated as if I were a recent college graduate.

On the Korean side, many friends kept looking out for positions for me, with far greater enthusiasm than was shown by my American friends. It seemed as if we had had a breakthrough of sorts in the spring of 2006, when I was invited to fly to Korea and interview for a tenure-track position at Korea University. This proposal sounded like it might be something quite real, and a significant breakthrough for me. At the same time, I knew from the start that the offer was problematic. As part of a campus-wide effort to promote internationalization, the president of Korea University had been trying to hire more foreigners. This position, explicitly for a foreigner, was in the Department of Korean Literature. I prepared a talk, and flew out to Seoul for the interview. It was an odd experience.

Although I knew more than most anyone in the policy circuit of Washington D.C. about Korean literature, it was silly to interview me for a position in a Korean literature department. I had only read five or six Korean novels in my life and could not name more than a handful of modern authors. But I certainly thought that it would be possible for me to serve a meaningful role helping to introduce Korean literature in English if there was no one else to do it.
Actually, I did not really want to teach. I would rather have been an administrator at that point. Teaching had been a nightmare for me at the University of Illinois; something I did against my will.

I made a presentation in Korean on the novelist, Park Ji Won, before a group of about 14 professors of Korean literature for about 50 minutes. Some of the questions were thoughtful and intriguing. But there were two professors who tried to undermine me, grilling me to see if I knew the names of the major scholars on Park Ji Won, whether I knew the important research in this field. I was not interested in defending myself. I told them quite frankly that I was not qualified for the position, but suggested that if they hired me, I could help in their international outreach.

The questioning went on for ten minutes and then the meeting was concluded. I was asked to leave. It was the first job interview ever in which I gave a talk, but was not invited to dinner. Later, I spoke with one of the professors on the phone, and came to understand from what he said that the professors were not so much opposed to me (in fact they appreciated the effort I had made to learn Korean) but rather they resented that the president, as part of his internationalization project, had tried to force me on them.

I had the sense that this was also an interview set up to fail, but I must say I got much closer to success than I had previously. In the fall, there would be two real offers that were concrete, and, in a sense, offered me two very different futures.

One offer came to me through my friend, Bruce Bechtol, a retired marine teaching at the Marine War College whom I liked personally, and with whom I often talked late at night about what it was like to be married to a Korean, along with other matters. He was a buddy of sorts, and while I did not necessarily agree with what he had written about North Korea, I had the sense that he was basically a decent man.

It so happened that I was invited to be the graduation speaker for a class at the National Defense University in 2006. There had been a group in the military who had continued to meet me on occasion, and talk with me frankly. Personally, I preferred the military people I had met to those in the State Department, because
I had occasionally met those in the military who were actually willing to speak the truth, and few in the State Department had been capable of that.

It was in that context that Bruce told me there was a teaching position at the Marine War College, and that I had an excellent chance of getting it. I think that Larry Wilkerson may also have helped, but I do not remember.

I gave a talk about security in East Asia, which included much about climate change and contemporary politics. Some of them looked like hardcore military people deeply involved in the various dirty wars abroad. Yet they seemed quite welcoming to me, in a way those at think tanks often had not been. I will not speculate as to why it was the Marine War College that was ready to offer me a job, whereas no university or think tank, or NGO would. Most likely the situation was not unlike the job offer from the CIA, when I was unemployed for three months.

I did not see the position as a dream job, however. I recognized the need to work with those in the military in this battle, but I did not want to become part of the system if it could be avoided. However, it seemed like a better opportunity than the embassy job, which I doubted would last much longer. I believe they were ready to make me an offer, but I never found out, because I wrote to Bruce to inform him that I would take the other job offer in Korea.

One of my most loyal friends among Koreans in Washington D.C. in 2006 was Choi Minho, a senior official in the Ministry of the Interior. He was a thoughtful man, a few years older than me, who took the time not only to get to know me, but also to know my family. I introduced him to various people in Washington who I thought could be helpful, and he was most appreciative.

When Choi’s close friend from high school, Lee Wan-gu, was elected as governor of Chungnam Province in June of 2006, he suggested that I could work as an advisor. Moreover, as both had great ambitions and connections in Daejeon, they were determined to make it happen. Lee Wan-gu would rise to the level of prime minister for a short time, only to be forced to resign because of various scandals.

When I visited Seoul in the summer of 2006 to attend a conference on citizen journalism, Choi Minho insisted that I take the KTX down to Daejeon, a city I had never visited before, just for a short meeting with the governor elect Lee
Wan-gu. I agreed, and within three hours, we met at the front door of the Chungnam provincial offices in Daejeon, a Japanese colonial era building made of slabs of cut limestone. I sat down with Lee Wan-gu and Choi Minho in the spacious governor’s office, and we had quite an enjoyable conversation about the ambitious plans he had for a global Chungnam province. The two of them seemed to want me very much to come work with them as soon as possible.

It was the beginning of a period of some ten years that I had more interactions with Korean conservative politicians than with liberal ones. I do not pretend to know why this happened, but I will suggest that there were a few basic factors. First, conservatives are more practical in their thinking. They could have cared less about what political fights I had had for the rule of law in the United States. They wanted to use my name, my connections, and other intangibles to make things happen in Chungnam that would make them look good. Liberal politicians were much more hesitant to touch a possibly spoiled American who could get them in some trouble.

Liberal, progressive, politicians in Korea tend not to put much emphasis on networking activities. They want to focus on welfare and environmental issues. Foreigners in certain fields are often overpaid, and aimed at serving the interests of the elites. Although I did not see myself in that light, there were many aspects of the work that were by their nature rather elitist, and I later came to appreciate the hesitation of Koreans about this internationalization from above.

That said, at the time, I was trying to find some form of employment somewhere, and was not in a position to make demands. I think that if my wife had been equally committed, I would have been willing to take a low paying job, and just work for justice, but that was not an option. The question of the difference in values between my wife, my family, many close friends and I is perhaps that most painful part of this story; far worse than what was done to me by government operatives following orders.

Over the next six weeks Choi Minho tried to moderate the discussion about my position and the salary. It was no simple matter. To start with, there was not enough income from being an advisor to pay my bills. The governor put together a position for me as a professor at Woosong University in Daejeon at their new international school, “SolBridge.” I would later learn that I was lied to about the
professorship, and that although I was given a business card later that read “Professor and Dean”, I was in fact a lecturer.

The salary was twice what I had been paid in Washington D.C. (although they would keep me from receiving part of it, based on a technicality). We were given housing, and even an automobile to use. I was told that it would become a world-class international program, and I would be the head of it. Perhaps that was the plan, but I suspect that, in fact, they were fully aware that I was in no position to negotiate anything, and wanted to bring me in first so that they could attract someone even bigger by saying they had faculty trained at Harvard and Yale.

My wife did not want to leave Washington. Moreover, her fortune teller suggested that it was a mistake to go to Korea at that time. Choi then consulted with two fortune tellers, as well. One of them agreed that going to Korea would be a mistake, and the other said that it would be a good move.

By this time, I had seen my wife’s trusted fortune teller make wrong calls on so many things that I was not particularly intimidated. It was also quite clear that two years of sophisticated lobbying, and high-profile events in Washington had not even afforded me a serious offer appropriate to my skills and experience. I decided that I would go. If I had known that my status was not actually professor, that I would not get the full salary that they promised, perhaps I would have been more hesitant, but I suspect I would have taken the job in any case, because there was no future in Washington for me.

I went alone to work for a month, and see what the job would be like. They gave me a comfortable little apartment, and I split my time between the governor’s office and Woosong University. My wife did not want to come to Korea at all. Actually, I did not really want to spend more than a few years there myself, but the course of events was entirely out of my hands. My conclusion after a month was that there was more potential in Daejeon for me than in Washington, granted that I did not know Korean that well then, and did not have an extensive network in Korea.

But it was clear from the start that although there were limits on my activities in Korea (as would become clear over the next twelve years) I had far more freedom than I did in the United States. My mind was made up.
I will not describe in detail the painful process of leaving America, and the problems it created for me, my wife, and later, for my two children. Let me just say that the cost was great. Nor will I describe here the full range of my work at Woosong University (2007-2011), and later at Kyung Hee University (2011-2018), because most activities were related to teaching, to helping those universities in their administration, and international exchanges. I was successful in some respects, and not so successful in others. Relatively little of that work had to do with this book.

By April 2007 my wife, Seung-Eun, my son, Benjamin (six years old), and my daughter, Rachel (three years old), were with me in Daejeon, and I worked constantly to be helpful to Woosong University and to Chungnam Province. I took the bus down from our apartment on the north side of town every morning, and sat down in my large and empty office to help revise brochures, recruit faculty, make suggestions as to how the program might be run, and otherwise be helpful.

I think that the nature of SolBridge changed over the months that I was there. First, they decided that it would be a business school, rather than an international school. They kept talking about international relations, because two of the people they had hoped to recruit as presidents for SolBridge had a deep interest in international relations, but the decision was made early on, and it was clear that I had less to offer after that decision was made, in around May of 2007. I could not run a business school, nor was I qualified to teach in one, although I tried, despite having had a high level of hostility towards business in general.

The work for the governor was more interesting than the work helping to build SolBridge, but within six months, the chairman of Woosong University, Kim Seong-gyeong, a long-time supporter of the governor, made it quite clear that he wanted me working for the university primarily, and only occasionally for the governor’s office. So, after a very successful trip to Japan with the governor, various efforts to help with tourism and multicultural education, my role in the governor’s office was slowly reduced.

At the same time, I was called on to play a role in recruiting a new dean for SolBridge International School (later SolBridge International School of Business). For reasons I do not understand, Woosong had tried to attract two experts in security studies to head this school. They had contacted, through a headhunter,
the high-flying diplomat and professor, Robert Gallucci, a central figure in Clinton-era negotiations with North Korea. But Gallucci’s demands for going to an unknown school were quite high, and Woosong gave up. They then latched on to John Endicott, of Georgia Tech, an expert on Asian security who had made a thoughtful proposal for a nuclear-free zone in Northeast Asia, and who was married to a Japanese woman.

I had met Endicott several times before in Washington D.C., and had a very positive impression of him. We hit it off well at the beginning, and I did my best to persuade him to come to Woosong.

Not everything was easy in Korea. In a few weeks, I had recovered from the euphoria of being away from the oppressive environment of the embassy, and of Washington D.C. as a whole, and I started to make an effort to revive my connections with a variety of people. Several prominent academics were literally impossible to meet, even though I had had close exchanges with them in the past. I wrote them emails, called their offices, and talked to their research assistants, and I even wrote letters to them, but there was nothing doing. Some of them I would connect with years later, and others I would never speak with again.

There were so many opportunities that were proposed to me for consulting and moneymaking over those four years in Daejeon, that I would just as well leave that pathetic pile of fairy tales out of this story. Let me just say that there were literally hundreds of people who had come up to me with plans for how I would consult for a company owned by a friend, start a new company, help in bringing investment to Korea, or do some project or other. I guess that only about 5% of these leads resulted in my receiving anything other than a free cup of coffee, or sometimes a free meal.

At first, however, I honestly believed that things would be different in South Korea, and I put hundreds of hours into following up on these opportunities. I even made an effort to familiarize myself with how business was done, and what the needs were of possible investors in Korea (or Korean investors abroad). After three years or so, it became clear that there would be no career for me in business, and no way for me to make up for the tremendous losses I had suffered in the United States. I settled into writing and speaking, the two activities that I was able to engage in with relative freedom.
I believe that there are certain aspects of Korean society that make it difficult for one to engage in activities other than being a professor, but I was perfectly happy to give up being a professor forever at that point in my life, and I offered such a set of skills and connections that I do not believe that the problems I faced can be explained simply in terms of my inability to adjust to Korean society. Rather, I think there was both suspicion of me, and a high degree of blacklisting, as well, that made it impossible for me to do much of anything. The odd behavior of certain Koreans who went to great trouble to secure me an opportunity for consulting, and then suddenly withdraw the offer, suggested that advisories limiting my activities were on occasion employed in a quite explicit manner.

In retrospect, I should have started writing interesting books about Korea in English and Korean from the very beginning, but it took me three years to figure out that for all that was proposed, few things were actually implemented. The only thing I could do in Korea was write.

There were two short exceptions. There was a construction company that hired me as a consultant for their efforts to expand overseas, and they paid me a retainer of something like 2500 USD a month for six months. I think it was an effort arranged on the recommendation of a friend, which was made because I had been spending so much of my income trying to educate my son at the overpriced international school in Daejeon that he felt sorry for me. There was also a period of about nine months where I was paid a similar sum by Daedeok Innopolis, the organization handling the international endeavors of the Daedeok research cluster, for my help in their overseas expansion. That was the result of the special efforts of Kang Gyedu, the president at the time, and a former bureaucrat who had taken a strong interest in my case, and figured out a way to help me.

Once John Endicott was installed as president of Woosong University, and some initial institutional challenges were addressed, I had become far less important to them. They valued having me around, and would promote me as a Harvard and Yale graduate, but it was not important to have me at meetings, or to employ me to try to convince people to work at, or to study at, the new SolBridge Business School. I was happy to have more freedom. And there were some periods when the relationship worked out quite well, but there was also a certain tension. Some at Woosong University thought I was paid too much for someone who was not a
business school professor, and I felt that I was taken advantage of as someone who was not free to travel, or to find employment as he wished. So, they thought they were not getting enough value out of me, and I thought I was being ruthlessly exploited.

The reputation of Woosong University, in general, was as a rather miserly and small-minded institution; a private high school that had used profits made in land speculation to upgrade to a college, but lacked much in the way of a real commitment to education. But I came to appreciate the ordinary Korean students whom I taught there, students from working class backgrounds who studied railroad administration and engineering. I also made close friends with several of the international students that would last me for a lifetime. There were a few remarkable people I ran into. There were also some thoughtful professors who somehow ended up at SolBridge for the first couple of years of innovation.

Most importantly, the environment was relaxing for me. Unlike the University of Illinois, or Washington D.C., where my colleagues kept me at an arm’s length, because they were afraid my political problems could become their problems, at Woosong University, most people had no idea who I was, and treated me like just a normal person.

Of all my adventures in Daejeon, the most successful was my work with the Daedeok research cluster, with KAIST at its center. I tried to get to know people at the Yale Club of Seoul from the very beginning, even before I moved to Korea, and there were two active members who lived in Daejeon. Both of them worked in the Daedeok research cluster. One of them, Kim Wonjoon, was a professor in the field of technology innovation who was about my age, and made a special effort to sit down with me on several occasions, and explain how the research cluster was arranged.

It did not take me long to see that Daejeon potentially had a world-class research cluster that was not fully appreciated, and there was tremendous potential for me if I could be of help. It was the sort of project that I enjoyed, and it was slightly similar to the work I had done with the School of Engineering at the University of Illinois.
Kim Wonjoon introduced me to Kim Gyeongjae, a member of the staff at Daedeok Innopolis, and I made an appointment to have lunch with him the next week, near the end of winter, 2007. Kim Gyeongjae was a very decent and thoughtful man, and we maintained a close relationship the entire time I was in Daejeon. It became clear that Daedeok Innopolis had had government support to “internationalize”, and organize international conferences, but that the international exchanges for the research institutes and for KAIST were handled by those institutions themselves.

Kim Gyeongjae gave me a list with the vice presidents of all the government research institutes in the Daedeok research cluster, and I decided I would do my best. I wrote emails to all of them introducing myself, and saying I wanted to be helpful to them, and their research institute. Out of fifteen, six responded, and agreed to meet me. Four of those people pledged to work closely with me. Within a year, I had developed a substantial network with all the institutes, and systematically tried to learn what each one did, and who its administrators were.

It was clear that they needed help in their efforts at internationalization, and there was potential for funding to cover that work.

I was also proposed as a potential candidate for professor at KAIST University by the vice president at the time, Yang Jiwon, and a few other thoughtful faculty members. Although it was clear that I could do a lot to help KAIST in its internationalization, hiring someone like me who did not have a Ph.D. in the sciences was extremely difficult. Through various efforts, the first steps were taken to employ me at their tiny culture and technology department as a professor of humanities.

The attempt did not succeed, but I think that it could have. There were several challenges that had to be overcome, and they were not easy. First and foremost, I did not want to be a professor anymore. I had spent seven years as a professor, subjected to the worst forms of abuses, and ridiculously underpaid for my work in the United States. I felt strongly that there were lots of things that I could do that would be properly compensated for, and that the state of professor and the inane tenure pressures, was something I was subjected to against my will.
So, the job at KAIST was an interesting opportunity, but it was not the most important thing in my life. The faculty at KAIST saw things differently. They thought KAIST was the greatest engineering school in Korea, and that I should be grateful and fall all over myself to try to get this job. That was most definitely not my attitude, and I learned later that some professors had remarked after my job interview that I did not seem sufficiently interested in the position.

But there was more. KAIST would have meant starting all over on a tenure track, and being forced to write academic journal articles which I hoped I would never have to write again. They would be more demanding, seeing that they were a big and important school, and were entirely capable of denying me tenure if I did not conform. That sort of a work environment was unappealing to me.

When I learned that the salary and benefits offered would be less than those offered by Woosong, I lost my enthusiasm. I was supposed to follow up with them about the application, but I did not call them, and they did not call me.

In retrospect, if I had known at the time that I would have had no choice but to work primarily as a professor for my time in Korea, I think I would have done my best to get the job at KAIST, and used it as an opportunity to establish myself by getting the proper institutional credentials. At the time, I did not realize how important the ranking of universities is in Korea (much more so than in the United States or Japan). I would also have written a book about the Daedeok research cluster in English, and used it as a way to achieve national and international attention.

But I thought I could stop being a professor, and I wanted to run something, not simply write journal articles. It would take years before I was able to sit down and force myself to engage in academic writing again.

Woosong University did not support my interactions with Daedeok, in spite of the potential benefits for raising their legitimacy. It turned out that their main interest was in making money off tuition, and increasing the value of the real estate they held around the university. They had lots of money to spend, but quality of ties to other academic institutions was not a priority. Later, when John Endicott helped them enter into negotiations with Georgia Tech for a 2 + 2 joint degree program, that so captured their attention, that nothing else had much
appeal for them. Even high-profile activities that I had engaged in did not get chairman Kim Seonggyeong’s attention. It is important to note that Endicott would remain at Woosong for eleven years, and although the quality of the school did not improve dramatically, there was an Endicott School established, that hit the spot for him. That was a sort of game that had no interest for me. Although I continued to help Woosong University in various ways for the entire four years, the honeymoon was over when Endicott proved to be the asset that they were looking for. I personally thought he was more suitable, as well. He enjoyed the meet and greet activities, and as he had just retired from Georgia Tech, there was no need to plan for his future career.

Lee Myung Baek, former CEO of Hyundai Construction, became president in date, and rolled back many policies from the Roh administration. There were massive protests in the streets, but a large swath of Koreans was seduced by his pro-growth rhetoric. He put forth this term, “green growth”, early on, which suggested that an environmentally-friendly economic plan would be central to his administration. Although there were those in the first few years (including me at first) who took this initiative seriously, it ultimately decayed into a scheme to use tax dollars to fund massive construction of golf courses, and the pouring of concrete everywhere along rivers and streams to make a mess that still has not been undone.

But the initial focus on “green growth” offered me an opportunity that turned into my first breakthrough of sorts in Korea. My friend, John Feffer, came to visit Daejeon just before the announcement of green growth, and we both wrote articles about the potential for Korea to embrace a green economy at that time. An article that I co-authored put forth a vision for how Daejeon could become a model ecocity, and do so by making use of the advanced technology and scientific research of the Daedeok research cluster.

Now, many years later, I think I was quite naïve about the potential of technology to help address environmental issues, and I did not understand how far away from the priorities of most researchers my idea was. But when the proposal came out in Korean, there was an extremely positive response from many, including some of the researchers that I already knew. With the help of Professor Yu Hyeok-jong of Woosong University, who had worked for many years in Daejeon City Hall,
we put together a group of researchers, government officials, and others, to form the Daejeon Environment Forum, later renamed the Daejeon Green Growth Forum, of which I was made co-head (along with Yang Jiwon, vice president of KAIST).

We received considerable attention in the media, had regular meetings to discuss how Daejeon could be made an environmentally-friendly city, and there was much exciting and grandiose talk. Ten years later, little has changed in Daejeon, and it certainly has not become a leading eco city. I once spoke with pride about that environment forum, but rarely mention it anymore. What the process did, however, was to give me some recognition, and connections that would be invaluable going forward.

For about six months, I received considerable attention, and it looked as if I was on the way to a breakthrough. However, the Lee Myungbak administration proved to be uninterested in any of the contents we proposed. The funding for future research went to KAIST, and other places, but nothing came to me. Moreover, although there were several high-profile conferences at which I was a guest speaker, there was no follow up at all. That was the general trend throughout my time in Korea. Short moments of attention in Korea (never in the United States) followed by complete inaction.

The most exciting part of the Daejeon Environment Forum was the proposal for an ecocity alliance between Daejeon, the Tsukuba Research cluster in Japan, the research cluster around Tsinghua University in Beijing, and Palo Alto and Stanford University. Although we had a positive response initially from Tsinghua and from Stanford (including visits to both locations by KAIST VP Yang and myself, ultimately, the agreement for cooperation was between Daejeon, Tsukuba, and Shenzhen, China. There were serious discussions about global collaboration (from which I was excluded), and three international seminars in Daejeon, Shenzhen, and Tsukuba. I was not invited to the events in Shenzhen and Tsukuba, and the project fizzled out from that point on. But, for a moment, it seemed as if we were on the edge of something big.

I was offered a job teaching at Busan National University in 2010, which I intended to take, but which would have torn me away from what looked like promising activities in Daejeon. Ultimately, I did not take the job, because my
wife did not want to move to Busan, and she still hoped that somehow I would be hired back in the United States.

I did find real opportunities for consulting work at research institutes in the Daedeok cluster, and could have done even more if it had not been for the general hostility of Woosong University toward my work with those research institutes. I thought at first that it would be a tremendous advantage for our students to have a chance to interact with those research institutes, and get practical advice for the simple reason that they were the only institutions in Daejeon that were first class, and, otherwise, our program had almost nothing to offer. I think that logic was entirely appropriate, but Woosong University had its own priorities, and creating a strong program was not one of them.

The first project I undertook was a year-long study of strategies for internationalization offered by KIRIBB (Korea Research Institute for Bioscience and Biotechnology). It was not by accident that I had been engaged. In 2008, KAIST had a new president from MIT, named Suh Nampyo, an extremely political, and corrupt, administrator whom I never got along with, although we occasionally had email exchanges involving our shared concern with making Daejeon a more livable city. Suh had backed my hire as a professor at KAIST, but the offer was so measly that it was clear I was not valued.

Suh became good buddies with President Lee Myungbak, and ended up spending more time in Seoul than in Daejeon. Along the way, he cooked up this idea that KAIST would simply acquire KIRIBB through a hostile M&A. The grounds for such a merger were rather dubious, and many experts opposed this move, but Suh used his connections in the Ministry of Science and Technology and in the Blue House to push forward, and was on the verge of being successful.

Liu Jang-ryol of KIRIBB had a deep interest in literature and art and he appreciated my work.

He asked for about how KIRIBB should respond to the KAIST takeover, and I offered my best advice. I also enlisted the help of Zach Hall, who appeared earlier in this story. Ultimately, we published several articles about KIRIBB, rallied support within Korea, and convinced enough people that this idea was not particularly solid.
Personally, I had no strong feelings about the M&A issue, but I was excited to be involved in an effort to assess what the true value of research institutes might be. My writings about KRIBB and biotechnology were sufficiently effective that I was offered a one-year research project at KRIBB on internationalization and strategies for publicity.

Over the following two years I received similar grants for research and development with KIGAM (Korea Institute for Geology and Materials), KRISS (Korean Research Institute for Standards and Science), KINS (Korea Institute for Nuclear Safety), and Seoul National University’s Graduate School of Convergence Technology. At Seoul National University, I ran a project directly with then dean, Ahn Chol-soo, who would go on to be a candidate for president.

These projects gave me budgets to hire research assistants, travel abroad, and engage in high-profile seminars in Seoul. In short, they offered me a legitimacy I could not find in Woosong University.

My work with the Daedeok research cluster began when a thoughtful government official by the name of Kang Gye-doo was appointed as the CEO of Daedeok Innopolis. We hit it off immediately, and coordinated closely on multiple projects. He made sure that I was given credit in a manner that had not been true before, and even insisted that I be paid for my work.

It was at this time that I set up a second conference, the Daedeok Convergence Forum, which considered how rapid technological change was causing different fields to converge. It was also given official government recognition, and it was equivalent in importance to the Daejeon Environment Forum. I was less enthusiastic this time, however, because I knew all too well how such a program could be used to exploit me.

The reign of Kang Gye-doo ended abruptly in the spring of 2011, because of rather obscure political fights. I was directly impacted. I lost all funding, and, for a while, all opportunities dried up for me. I think that perhaps Kang and I had become too influential in Daejeon, and certain factions wanted us out, but I do not know the details.

I learned from my time in Daejeon that writing was one of the only doors open to me, something in which I could engage in a steady manner, without radical ups
and downs, which helped to establish my reputation in Korea, and around the world. Moreover, it was journalistic writing that took off for me, followed by books, and allowed me to finally get the recognition I thought I required in order to set my career back on course. I was wrong, however, about the impact on income of my relative fame. The fact that I had three best-selling books, and one of the most-read columns in a major newspaper later in my stay in Korea did not help me that much to get the sort of job I had wanted, and certainly did not allow me to stop being a professor.

Clearly, there were extremely specific regulations in place concerning my actions in Korea which continued indefinitely.

In English, I wrote articles on international relations and climate change (which had become my focus) for the Nautilus Institute, Foreign Policy in Focus, and OhmyNews for the first few years. Some articles were well received, but the breakthrough was my articles in Korean for Daedeok Net on Korean science policy, environmental issues, and suggestions for the future of the city of Daejeon. Some of those articles, especially those related to Korea’s long-term policies for science, obtained broad audiences, especially after I became co-chairman of the Daejeon Environment Forum.

The result was an invitation in 2010 to become a contributor to Maekyung Economic Newspaper, a popular periodical that had considerable impact. I spent an enormous amount of time on these articles, and started to get invitations for talks at various economic forums, and occasionally at companies in Daejeon and Seoul.

Interestingly, although it was extremely unusual for a foreigner to write for an economic journal like Maekyung, Woosong University completely ignored this breakthrough, acting, for all intents and purposes, as if I did not exist. I had already decided that I would have to find a way to get out of Woosong University, and I threw even more effort into writing. Eventually, I was able to submit articles for a range of middle-tier newspapers that got me a lot of exposure. More importantly, I started accumulating hundreds of pages of original writing in Korean on foreign policy, technology regulation, culture, international relations, education, the environment, and numerous other topics that would be extremely helpful later when it came time to write books in Korean.
Later, after I had moved to Seoul, I had a breakthrough appointment to be a contributor to Korea’s leading newspaper, Chosun Ilbo. I wrote for this conservative journal for six months, and was able, not without some struggle, to land a position writing for JoongAng Ilbo that would last me for six years, and become an identifying badge.

But it was clear that I was not going anywhere in Korean society, and could easily grow old and die at Woosong, or maybe some even more obscure college, if I did not move fast. Woosong was not interested in promoting me, and Korean universities only cared about SSCI journal publications. Businesses and NGOs enjoyed my writings, and invited me to talk, but none wanted to actually hire me.

It is important to note that there were multiple reasons for me not writing SSCI journal articles. Not only did I not like the system for evaluating professors using this narrow set of journals, but I got no pleasure out of writing them. More importantly, I was no longer invited to any academic conferences in my original fields, or other academic fields, and therefore had no intellectual interaction with my colleagues that might have encouraged, or required me to write academic journal articles.

I made up my mind that the solution was for me to publish a book in Korean about my adventures in Korea, and my background in Asian studies, that would reach a large audience, and allow me to overcome my obvious limitations. It was clear by then that I was never going to make a living as a consultant, and I was never going to be hired by any organization other than a university. One of my classmates at Yale (whom I had never known directly) had become a Buddhist monk in Korea, and had written a book about his experiences there that had become a best seller (more than my book). He went by the name of Hyungak Sunim. We would eventually meet, and I would ask him to write the preface to my Korean book when it was finally published.

I wrote a detailed manuscript in English describing my childhood, the members of my family, my first experiences with Asia, my study of the Korean language, general studies in Korea, and my understanding of the Korean tradition. I also detailed my work in Daejeon. I then hired a young woman by the name of Lee Mi-seon to translate the manuscript into Korean for me, which I then double-
checked. By March of 2010, I had a significant manuscript in my hands, that I believed could be quite popular among young Koreans.

When I started talking to publishers, however, I discovered that there was zero interest. Nobody wanted to take on this project, and many did not even want to meet me in person. Eventually, however, I met an eccentric writer by the name of Lee San-ha, who agreed to publish the book after three rounds of makgeolli (a somewhat sweet Korean alcoholic beverage that could be considered a kind of rice beer). Lee San-ha was the old buddy of a certain businessman who came to Daejeon frequently with promises of big business opportunities that never worked out. But this introduction was valuable.

Lee San-ha had been a student activist who had been put in jail back in the 1980s for publishing poetry about the massacre of civilians by the Korean government in Jeju back in the 1940s. He was a widely-read, thoughtful, if flaky, intellectual who took a sincere interest in my case.

Eventually, he found an editor, a writer and teacher by the name of Gosan, who helped me to create a Korean manuscript out of my associated writings. Fortunately, I greatly enjoyed talking to Gosan and we became quite close friends. Although the process of finding a publisher had been difficult, working with Gosan was fun, and the manuscript, although not perfect, was ready by March of 2011 for publication by Lee San-ha’s publishing house, Nomad Books.

The book was successful as a cult publication, especially among young people, and I suspect that it sold at least 15,000 copies, or more. Lee San-ha, like other publishers later, was not honest about the number sold, and I received only a small part of the royalties.

But the book found me a broad audience across Korea, and served as an opportunity to express myself directly, talking about my true interests in culture, history, and contemporary society, and not merely doing the hard work of finding relevant things to say about science policy or research clusters.

But even as my book manuscript progressed, and I wrote for a larger national audience via major newspapers, and was invited to a broader range of events as a speaker in both Korean and English, my status as a professor became increasingly uncertain. I had been told by John Endicott, rather out of the blue, that my contract...
at Woosong University would not be renewed in the fall of 2010. Although I had applied for multiple jobs in Korea, Japan, and the United States, at universities and elsewhere, I was granted no interviews, and sat there awaiting unemployment in much the same way that I had done at the University of Illinois.

I do not know why I was suddenly let go (clearly, I had no job security as a professor). I wonder whether it may have had something to do with certain developments in Daedeok Valley that had taken place at this time that may have driven powerful forces there, and perhaps also in the Lee Myung-bak administration, to want me out.

I had worked hard on my ideas of promoting Daejeon as a city, and addressing not only research strategy, but also engaging in a broader consideration of tourism and image. I had engaged in activities such as creating a new logo for Daejeon, creating fun Daejeon T-shirts and buttons, and developing an artistic website, Daejeon Compass, that highlighted interesting places in Daejeon, including detailed descriptions in English.

I thought these efforts were quite successful, but there was a remarkable silence on the part of friends in the city government. Moreover, I found at that time that I was no longer invited to events as I had been before. A clear freeze had settled down on my activities in Daejeon. A friend later explained that I had become too big a fish in a small pond, which may have been true. But at the same time, my main patron, Kang Gye-doo, was unexpectedly dismissed from his position as CEO of Daedeok Innopolis in what was clearly a political move. But whether that battle was primarily among factions in Daejeon, or involved the Lee Myung-bak administration, I am not sure.

The next semester started in March 2011, but I had had no offers from any university, even as late as the beginning of February. I braced for another bout of unemployment. And then there were two breakthroughs. Kang Gye-doo was able to secure himself a position as vice-mayor of Gwangju, in Jollanam-do, a southern province. He, as one of the few true friends I had, went to work immediately to find me work, and obtained a promise from the president of Chosun University that I could teach there. Although not a famous university, and in a town that my wife was not all that interested in living in, it was at least a certain position.
The other opportunity was at Kyung Hee University, a well-established university that was ranked among the top ten, or even top seven in Korea. Lee San-ha was a graduate from there, and his advisor, the professor of English literature, Do Jong-il, had just started a program in the humanities for undergraduates, known as Humanitas College. Lee introduced me twice to Do Jong-il in the fall of 2010, and I later wrote to him about my work. At first, Professor Do expressed great interest. But when I contacted him up in January, he seemed rather irritated that I had called, and told me to stop pestering him.

Come February, I thought I was on my way to Chosun University, but I received an email at the last moment informing me that my application to Kyung Hee University had been accepted.

The job search in Korea took place at the same time that I made a bid once again for employment in the United States. I was writing for a business newspaper, I had been successful as a consultant for technology institutes planning to globalize, and I was being invited to mainstream corporate lectures. I decided that I should make a bid to enter the mainstream again, and see if perhaps I could find success in the United States once more. After all, my wife was complaining daily about living in Korea, and my son had enrolled in an overpriced international school in Daejeon that was eating up all of our remaining funds.

I took down a video I had posted on YouTube in which I described the dangers of militarism in the United States, I cleaned up my resume and emphasized recent consulting work, and asked for some professional advice. In short, I tried to go mainstream. I first contacted my Yale classmate Glenn Gutmacher, who worked as a corporate headhunter, and was an expert on the hiring process. He gave me some suggestions about the content of my CV. He also told me how to set myself up on LinkedIn and Facebook as a means of advertising myself. I also put together my blog, circlesandsquares.asia, in response to Glenn’s advice, and tried to create a group of followers for myself. Glenn also recommended that I contact someone by the name of Reo Hamel.

Reo was an elderly man living near Boston, who had taken up a side business of career consulting. I started seeking out his advice from 2010, with a focus on employment in the United States.
I met him only once, when I travelled to the United States in February 2011 for a visit to Yale and Harvard just a few weeks before my contract with Woosong University ended, and before my contract with Kyung Hee University was finalized. Reo made tremendous efforts on my behalf, and he taught me about how I was perceived by others. He greatly increased my sophistication, and set me on the track to becoming a far more political creature.

Reo passed away in September of 2013. His role in my life was short and quite limited, but he deeply touched me, and, honorably, he refused to take payment for his help after the first two months.

I applied to various academic jobs in 2010 and 2011 in the United States. None of them offered me an interview. That included many senior people at major universities that John Endicott had made a special effort to introduce to me.

There was one position that seemed more promising, and for a few months, I honestly thought I had a serious chance.

Yale University had decided to open a campus in Singapore, and several friends had suggested that this might be a good opportunity for me. I quickly linked up with one of the central figures on the committee discussing the initiative, Professor Haun Saussy. Haun was a professor of Chinese and comparative literature whom I had known for a long time, who had also studied with my advisor at Yale, Kang-I Chang. We hit it off immediately, and I was soon involved in a series of discussions with him about what Yale’s strategy in Singapore should be. I was soon corresponding with the other members of the committee, as well, and felt, literally, as if I had become a member of the committee myself. I went to visit Yale in February of 2011, to meet with the committee, to see other friends on campus and to meet with Henry Rosovsky, the former dean of Harvard’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences, whom I also had become quite close to through a lengthy correspondence.

Ultimately, I applied for a position at the Yale College campus in Singapore, but was ultimately not called for a job (no big surprise). The process did get me into direct contact with then Yale president, Richard Levine, who wrote to me numerous times, and whose acquaintance gave me the temporary illusion that I was going to be accepted back into the American mainstream.
In the years that followed, there was an upsurge in my relations with American institutions, and I stopped writing on the major institutional corruption in the United States. I was even invited to give talks at Yale and at Princeton in 2013, which seemed like a true breakthrough. I attended the Association for Asian Studies conferences twice (my first time since 2002), as part of an effort to get back into the field of Asian studies.

I think that the new confidence that I had about my relations with the United States (even if they only lasted a few years), made me far more attractive to Korean institutions, and the trip to Yale, and other activities, assured me the position at Kyung Hee University.
Chapter 6

Back into the mainstream, and then back out again

Kyung Hee University

There was considerable enthusiasm on the part of Cho Inwon, the president of Kyung Hee University, for my appointment to the new Humanitas College. I fit in well with his plans to develop a global program that would bring the best of American higher education to Korea, and forge close ties with Ivy League powerhouses. I was going to play the central role.

He agreed to give me a higher pay rate than was the case for my peers among associate professors (although I would argue that I should have been a full professor a long time before). This decision would produce broad resentment, which was counterproductive.

President Cho gave me a budget to run an interdisciplinary program, and a large office. I was also made the head of the summer program entitled, The Global Collaborative, that was the crown jewel of Kyung Hee University. Kyung Hee ran the program together with the University of Pennsylvania, and brought in leading professors from Yale, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, and elsewhere. In short, for a few brief months, I thought I had finally made it.

The expectation that I would help to push Kyung Hee to the next level as an international university, making use of my connections in the United States, and my proven ability to survive in Korean bureaucracies was not unfounded, but they underestimated the scale of the political obstacles that I faced in the United States. This effort was successful in specific instances, but ultimately, as result of resistance from faculty in the university who did not appreciate having a foreigner involved who was forced on them by the president, and some background low level interference from my antagonists in the US system of things, the impact was limited. I would last for eight years at Kyung Hee University before I felt that I had to move on.
The first two years at Kyung Hee University were spent at Humanitas College, the new liberal arts program set up by Professor Do Jong-il of the English department, and the last four years were spent at the College of International Studies, the only department willing to offer me a position as associate professor. Although I was qualified to be a full professor from the start, I was subject to a series of unnecessary uncertainties over those six years.

I was appointed advisor to the president, the head of the interdisciplinary institute, and director of the Global Collaborative program over the summer run by Kyung Hee in conjunction with the University of Pennsylvania. I was given an enormous room for my interdisciplinary center, but I was not provided with staff or furniture. All my requests for funding were politely refused. The administrators I worked with were kind to me, but they did nothing to support was I was assigned to do. The dean of Humanitas College also became a good friend, but it seemed as if his hands were tied when it came to funding anything. The president wanted me to do something big, but it was literally impossible.

Bit by bit, I was stripped of my responsibilities. My appointment as director of the Global Collaborative was cancelled, even though it was written in my contract, and I was never informed about the reasons for the change, or even given a written explanation of the change in my status. For a long period of time, I had little interaction with the administration, even though I was hired primarily to serve as an advisor to the president.

I do not know the reason for that strange state of affairs. Perhaps the professors were jealous of my role, or unhappy to have an outsider suddenly brought in. Or perhaps there were explicit orders from outside the university, even from the United States, to limit my role. I doubt we will ever know the reasons, and in fact, by that point, I no longer cared all that much. I was quite used to being tied down with invisible chains.

So, I just sat there alone in my study from March 2011, all day long, reading, writing, and occasionally meeting with other faculty. There were some who were very happy to have me at Kyung Hee University, and who saw in me a chance to recover something of the original commitment to peace and to the humanities of Kyung Hee University. My role at the beginning was extremely limited, in spite of all that had been promised. Serious restrictions on my actions were enforced.
I threw myself into my writing, and took advantage of the opportunity not only to write articles and books, but to learn how to write effectively. For example, I was able, after an eight-year psychological block, to start academic writing again. In six months, I had completely revised (with some help) my book manuscript on Japanese and Chinese novels of the pre-modern period, and published it with Seoul National University Press. I also revised my translations of the novels of Korean writer, Park Chiwon, and I also published them with Seoul National University Press.

My old friend, Sarah Liu, helped me with the editing, as well as a thoughtful woman named Melissa Pino, who was a graduate student at the department of English Literature at Harvard University. She provided me much help, even as her own health was faltering, and it sorrows me that I never had the chance to meet her in person.

I wrote numerous articles every month, even every week, for Korean newspapers. Many of those articles were widely read, and that process established me as an intellectual in Korea, even if I was not recognized in the mainstream, or invited to conferences on Asian studies. Because my activities were blocked outside of writing, I could not take the path to success of an American Asia expert. Yet the path I took helped me to learn how to write for a general Korean audience, and to develop a broad following that I would never have had otherwise.

Then my book about my life experience and my encounter with Korean culture, *Life is a Matter of Direction, Not Speed*, became something of a cult classic. Although it was put out by a tiny publisher, many people read it, and wrote me personal letters.

By 2012, I had started getting an unprecedented number of invitations to talk to NGO groups, businesses, and other organizations.

I wrote the manuscript for another book based on interviews with famous scholars such as Francis Fukuyama, and Noam Chomsky, in which I addressed the serious challenges that Korea faced. Although the book was well written, and came out in time for the election in 2013, it did not become an enormous hit. It did, however, contribute to my reputation in Korea as a whole, and set the stage for the next step.
The book did push me up the food chain in the media. I was offered a position as a columnist for the number three newspaper in South Korea, DongA Ilbo, in the spring of 2013. That appointment completely changed how I was perceived, and for a short period, I was treated like a mainstream figure (in South Korea and not in the United States). I was then appointed as columnist at Chosun Ilbo in the fall of 2013, the most broadly circulated newspaper in Korea. Chosun Ilbo is an extremely conservative newspaper, which was a total mismatch, but at that point, I was perceived as being a significant asset as an American who understood Korea.

The culmination of this process was my appointment as a permanent columnist at Joongang Ilbo, from the spring of 2014 until January 2019. Essentially, everyone in the mainstream was reading my editorials, and I put an enormous amount of effort into creating effective pieces on topics otherwise not well addressed in the media.

I had also found people over the years who could help me to translate my work into Korean, Chinese, or Japanese for a reasonable fee, so that there were no restrictions on how I could express myself, quickly. Moreover, I had journals that were willing to publish what I had written. Most importantly, I had a reputation for writing objective and relevant articles that were clearly not paid for by corporate sponsors.

But there was even one further step awaiting me. I asked my good friend, Wang Son-taek, a reporter for YTN, to help me edit the book, A Republic of Korea of Which Koreans are Ignorant. As a professional journalist with a deep understanding of Korean history, Wang was able to rework my writings in a manner that attracted broad appeal, and in 2014, the top publisher, 21st Century Books, released the book. This book eventually became a nation-wide best seller, hitting number eight nationally for a week. Although the publishers clearly did not pay me the royalties that I was entitled to, it did not matter. I managed to reach a new level of recognition. That part of the story will be covered in greater detail below.

As my profile in Korea rose with the publication of my second book in Korean, and with my selection as a contributor for Chosun Ilbo, and then JoongAng Ilbo, I started to gain more traction at Kyung Hee University. I was invited to join
various committees, and I was also asked to offer advice to the president, Cho In-Won, and to edit his speeches. I was no longer under complete lockdown.

When I took a trip to Princeton and Yale in October of 2012, where I delivered talks on classical literature that were well received, I was also able to connect with various figures, such as the associate director of the Institute for Advanced Studies, Michael Garrett, a man whom I had known from childhood. I met Yale’s associate provost for West Campus, and he agreed to visit Korea. I had quite an active dialog with the various faculty members at Yale who had attempted to help me with my attempt to find employment at the Singapore Campus.

I also convinced my friend, Michael Puett, expert in Chinese history teaching at Harvard, to come to Korea for the first time, and visit me at Kyung Hee. He eventually gave a talk with me and John Treat (Japanese literature at Yale), that led him to being invited as a visiting professor for a year. Although my overall influence on campus remained limited, I did have a few moments of considerable success.

Although Kyung Hee University did not provide me tenure, nor a large income, it did provide help with housing that made Seoul livable for me. In retrospect, that period of living in downtown Seoul was a stable and happy period in my life. My children prospered, and my wife was quite active and enthusiastic about her studies in the MA program in art history at Korea University.

After two years, it was determined that I must move from Humanitas College to an established department, and start up the tenure clock again. I learned that my position at Kyung Hee for the previous two years had not been considered to be on tenure track, and the two books that I published counted for nothing towards tenure.

In fact, I had not been allowed to be on a tenure track since 2004. I think that universities felt free to exploit my weak position, and they did.

Personally, I would just as well have left academics forever in 2002, but I had been forced to continue as professor. This time, as it was clear that I could not start my own business or get a job doing anything else in Korea, I had hoped that, somehow, returning to the mainstream definition of a professor would help me settle the otherwise insolvable problems I faced. I suspect that if all other factors
had been equal, being at Kyung Hee would have been a positive. But other political and social problems were getting rapidly worse, and they would eventually start to have a direct impact on my life and my thinking.

After various negotiations with departments, the university administration determined that I would move to the College for International Studies of Kyung Hee University, located far away in Suwon. The Chinese, Japanese, and Korean literature departments had made it clear that they did not want me.

This was an appointment that many Koreans thought I should be grateful for. But I was shocked that they still refused to give me tenure, unlike any of my colleagues from graduate school. But then again, I lacked many of the basic rights of others. To see it in a positive light, I was allowed to start the tenure track again after ten years in the wilderness, and there were several kind faculty members who tried to make my transition to the new program as smooth as possible.

Within the first few months at the College of International Studies, it became clear to me that I was not all that well suited to the program, and that the faculty there had not wanted me in the first place. I was the only person there with a humanities background. Most of the faculty were economics professors who embraced a neoliberal ideology that I could not stomach.

The fact that the courses were taught in English saved me time. And the relatively high ranking of the program gave me some leverage in Korean society, especially among establishment Koreans. I had several extremely capable students during that time, and was close to the staff in the office. I was never close to any of the professors in the department, and I found their conformism disturbing. It was a position with stature, however, and it opened certain doors. I am not sure, though, whether it was ultimately the best choice for me to try and rejoin the mainstream.

After a few years at the College of International Studies, the program became increasingly tedious for me. Not only was the approach to teaching dishonest, and the complete silence of faculty about the major issues of the age disturbing, but I also found the attitude of the faculty toward the staff and students to be demeaning. Perhaps I was becoming increasingly sympathetic to the plight of workers, or perhaps universities were becoming increasingly hierarchical, or perhaps both were true at the same time.
After eight years at Kyung Hee, I found that I preferred speaking with my students more than interacting with other faculty. I was not valued. I was expected to write academic journal articles that I felt had no social value, and little scholarly import. The department had less interest in my role than any department that I had been in for my entire career.

Already, in the fall of 2016, I was thinking seriously about leaving Kyung Hee University.

I had been excluded from the development of international exchanges at Kyung Hee, and could only deliver lectures and grade papers. I accepted this status, and focused by attention on my own writing (which was not academic), and on developing the Asia Institute. But the department would eventually delay (for no good reason) my renewal of contract, because I drifted away from the priorities that they had dictated to me.

There was also a general shift in the culture of Kyung Hee University that had to do with the death of the founder, Cho Young-shik, on February 18, 2012, almost exactly one year after I had been hired. I had never met Cho, but I felt his presence at the university even as he lay on his deathbed. A complex and strong-willed man, he had built up Kyung Hee University with equal streaks of authoritarianism and liberal internationalism. The school had a strong tradition of supporting the arts and humanities, as well as a commitment to the environment and world peace, and that was what had attracted me. Moreover, in the past, there had been many individuals who had been in political trouble who had found refuge at Kyung Hee.

Cho Young-shik was bed-ridden when I arrived, and I only knew of his ideas from what I had read in the library, and from my interactions with his son, the president of the school, Cho In-won. I served as his advisor for several years, and we became close. The professors and senior administrators who had been promoted in the previous generation by Cho Young-shik shared his vision for world peace, and they supported me. Another faction wanted to increase the ranking of the school through publications and other moves that were taking the university in a different direction. After the senior Cho’s death, SSCI articles and increasing teaching loads would become common.
Kyung Hee University was changing, and becoming less familiar, being transformed by market forces.

But those changes in the world were also transforming me. The university seemed less and less like a place for learning. And I was also increasingly aware of the collapse of the ecosystem. I could see that human extinction was written on the wall, so I started to reorder my values very rapidly. By 2015, it was clear that climate change was the central catastrophe. I felt compelled to write about it, and to take action at every turn, even though no one around me wanted to do so.

I also saw the increasing corruption in government, especially in the United States, but in South Korea as well, which had reached a level that demanded action. The entire economy was being defined in terms of the interests of investment banks. Nothing was more important than addressing the distortion of the economy, and the destruction of the climate. Writing SSCI journal articles meant nothing to me.

The concentration of wealth, and the death of the media, put me in much the same crisis mode I had been in back in 2001. The short vacation I had had during the Obama years was over, and I felt that sense of crisis. Moreover, casual conversations became harder and harder. I found it insufferable that other faculty talked about security and diplomacy, but avoided climate change, the concentration of wealth, or the impact of technology on society. Not only were they wrong, they were actively misleading their students about the world we lived in.

I could not focus on academic journal articles, and I organized events for students and citizens related to contemporary society which counted for nothing at the university.

Then there was the minor matter of promotion. It was clear that I was fully qualified to be a full professor from the start of my work at Kyung Hee in 2011. I knew that there were professors at Kyung Hee who had fewer publications than I did, who had been made full professors. But my status remained associate professor for seven years. When I was subject to a review in 2017 (not to promote me, but rather to give me another five years as associate professor) the department determined that I was slightly beneath the requirements for renewal of my
contract. But, in fact, I had published the exact number of articles that they had requested. The entire process was a sham.

For six months, it was left up in the air whether I would have my contract extended, let alone be made a full professor. In the end, it was agreed that my contract would be extended another four years. But my publications (including two books) counted for nothing. I was treated as if I were a new assistant professor.

That was not all. As soon as I knew that my contract had been extended, I asked again when I would have a semester off as a sabbatical to conduct my research. I was told that since I was behind in my publications, that I was no longer qualified to have a sabbatical (i.e., I would not be given time to write publications). The argument sounded ridiculous, and I doubt that the process was legal. In any case, I was not interested in arguing with the staff, who were clearly being forced to tell me these things. Clearly, something else was going on. Whether the senior faculty disliked me, or they had been given explicit orders to harass me by a third party, I do not know.

There were a few other issues that made me want to leave Kyung Hee University. I was increasingly concerned about my health, and the impact that my health might have on my work. I told the dean about the neurological problems I was suffering from, but he showed no concern. I had a letter to the dean written by a doctor at Hanyang University, that spelled out in detail exactly what was wrong with me. The dean never even recognized that he received that letter, let alone meet with me to discuss my health. I learned from a member of the office staff, however, that the dean had received the letter. They did nothing to help me at all. All they noted was that if I took two-thirds of my regular salary, I could have a semester of sick leave.

I suspect there were directives that limited the dean’s activities, and his ability to help me. The pressure in Korea to make things difficult for me was mounting, and it was starting to look like the University of Illinois all over again. The refusal of the dean to even engage with other faculty members in an open discussion concerning the validity of the demands made of me (which were clearly different from those made of others) suggested something deeply wrong. The entire process seemed so forced, so ridiculous, that it did not seem to me to be worth any effort to fight the system.
Perhaps the final straw that broke the camel’s back was the climate change course that I had designed, had applied for, and was granted funding for, with the encouragement of my dean. It was a unique course for the university, and for Korea, because I had narrated the entire story of climate change in detail, and planned to involve the students in extensive discussions about the enormity of the threat. I had also assigned readings about how fossil fuel companies, and other interest groups, underplayed climate change by bribing experts.

After all my preparations, I found there was a grand total of five students in class for the first session in September of 2017. In six years of teaching at Kyung Hee, I had never had an undergraduate class that was not full on the first day. This situation was deeply mysterious to me. I then received an email from the department secretary informing me that if I did not get at least ten students, the class would be cancelled, and my salary would be docked by 3 million won.

The entire process seemed ridiculous, and seemed to be a violation of my contract, which said nothing about docking my salary for not teaching classes that I was not allowed to teach.

But after a bit of investigation, I learned the truth. There had been a major restructuring at the university over the previous few months (kept secret from faculty), and certain classes had been made into required courses, while others had been designated as electives. Also, the university insisted that each professor teach five courses a year, instead of four, thereby creating a terrible glut.

My course had been designated an elective, and I learned that many of my students who wanted to take my class could not do so, because they were required to take economics classes, or other new mandatory courses. So, the lack of demand for my class was entirely manufactured. I had a meeting with the department head the next day to discuss the matter. I first told him that the whole process was a violation of my contract. He was silent.

I remained friendly, and suggested that we should just make my course on climate change a required course, and make economics an elective. He laughed. I was, however, not entirely joking. I then suggested we have a meeting with the faculty to discuss this new set of rules about teaching, and the issue of whether climate change should be treated as a minor. He refused to hold such a meeting.
I felt that Kyung Hee had been reduced to a for-profit corporation trying to shake down professors for more classes, at lower wages, and with less intellectual content, while demanding students pay higher tuition for classes because they had no choice if they wanted jobs. There was no value given to teaching or intellectual pursuit. I watched it happen over time, but that meeting with my department head brought it all home. I would tell him a few weeks later that I intended to leave, although I had already indicated such an intention before the problem with my class.

I was becoming a far less effective member of an elite university in Korea. I was able to contact professors at Harvard and Yale, and to help Kyung Hee on numerous fronts, but my heart was no longer in the project. I was increasingly concerned about the plight of ordinary kids, including my own students, who were being openly lied to about their futures and priorities by the university in general, and the professors in specific. No one was talking about war, climate change, or the concentration of wealth.

I was shocked at the length to which faculty went out of their away to not talk about anything substantial, let alone about the criminal actions undertaken in the United States. The seven-year program to get myself back into the mainstream had been moderately successful, but my mind was wandering in the other direction; toward a radical critique. There was no one to talk to at my department.

By 2017, I was getting most of my information about economics and politics from radically critical news sources. Whereas I would have often looked at the New York Times for information in 2007 (although I had lost trust in it from 2001), I literally never looked at it by 2017. Moreover, I was seeing profound social and political shifts taking place that could only have been explained in an economic and cultural critique such as that offered by Marx. I had never been a big fan of Marx, in that I found his analysis simplistic. But I thought many of his arguments about power and ideology were entirely accurate, and totally appropriate to what I was seeing in South Korea and the United States.

Whereas in 2001, I would even have thought that I could work in the US government, and there would be a space for me, by 2014 or so, but such work had little appeal, with the rise of Trump. Even working at an American university looked like it would be psychologically difficult.
My health was also an important factor behind the decision to leave Kyunghee University. As I mentioned, I had had brain surgery for a tumor in July of 1999. The tumor could not be completely removed, but basically, I was problem free for over a decade. I suffered no serious neurological problems. Around 2009, in Daejeon, however, I started to notice that there was a certain weakness in my left hand, and sometimes tingling (as in your foot falling asleep) on the left side of my body. I asked at the hospital about what might be wrong, and they told me it was to be expected. They suggested I could have an MRI, but they did not think it was that serious.

When I went for the visit to Yale University in the winter of 2011 to discuss the possibility of teaching at the new Singapore campus, I felt that the entire left side of my body was dragging, and I became increasingly worried that this was a serious situation, and getting worse rapidly. The truth is that the neurological condition would go through short periods of intensity, and long periods with minor problems.

I went to Mass General in Boston, and had an MRI conducted. Although terribly overcharged, I learned that there was virtually no change. But I was not entirely convinced that everything was ok.

Between 2011 and 2018, there was a clear degeneration in motor control. It took me much longer to do the dishes, more effort to put on my clothes, and even simple things like taking a notebook out of my pocket and writing something down became a chore. My typing slowed down, and I occasionally feared I might fall over when getting out of bed, or pulling on my clothes.

There was nothing that I could not do, but everything was more time-consuming. Later I had more trouble sleeping, often lying down for long periods of time with ringing in my ears. Kyung Hee was a high-stress environment, and the faculty there clearly did not care if I lived or died. It was a ruthless commute by bus to their Suwon campus, that I increasingly disliked. Part of that was due to my lack of sleep, my condition, and other concerns, but part of it was simple frustration with the culture there.

This situation was made worse because my wife was more irritable than before. I will not go into detail about her experiences. No doubt she also suffered a lot over
those 18 years. I will say that if we had not had to live under such difficult circumstances in Korea for that long, most likely much of the psychological strain could have been avoided.

There is also the question of whether my poor sleep patterns, and the ringing in my ears, was a result of harassment, using various beams of low-level energy to disrupt my sleep, and otherwise damage my nervous system over the long term. Documents have been declassified by the NSA about the current use of such weapons to attack people in the United States. My symptoms resembled similar harassment that has been documented, where the NSA has used such devices to harass and damage the health of citizens who have been targeted.

In addition to the documentation of such harassment I had seen years ago, there were also stories in American newspapers about how China was using high frequencies to attack Americans at US embassies. Such tales in the American press were not convincing, but they suggested that the US itself was engaged in such practices. Whether I was subject to this type of harassment, and to what degree, is impossible to know without access to classified documents. I did have several conversations with people who seemed to be aware that I had been subject to some sort of abuse that would damage my health.

I felt, subjectively, that I experienced some of the worst of the sleeplessness and ringing in the ears during the various efforts by America to start a war with Iran, and create problems with Korea, especially after 2016.

In any case, if I had been subjected to such harassment at that time, it would not have been easy for me to stop it from taking place. It is also possible that such a form of harassment was not so much an effort of those conducting it to hurt me, but rather a compromise of sorts to spare me from worse forms of punishment. The entire process of low-level harassment, intentional damage to my neurological state, and the natural results of a serious neurological condition over time in a stressful environment cannot be ultimately sorted out.
Writing for a Korean and a global audience

Let us go back to my career in Korea from 2011-2017. My biggest success in Korea during that period was as a writer. As I have suggested previously, I do not think that being a writer was my first choice for a career in Korea. I made numerous efforts to work as a consultant, and to make money as an advisor, but although I did such work well, I was rarely engaged for any serious payment, and it had never been a viable career for me.

I believe that there exists a classified advisory that explicitly limited my activities, but left teaching and writing open as a possible activity. In fact, I have been able to write even more bluntly about issues than just about anyone else in Korea, or in the world, and to get those articles published in mainstream corporate newspapers. Although I was not rich, and my wife, worn out by the life we had lived, was never able to get a job, I did have a few unique advantages.

While in Washington, I wrote for Foreign Policy in Focus, the Nautilus Institute, and some of my writings received attention.

After arriving in Daejeon, I did not want to write at all. I just wanted to do my work at SolBridge well. But along the way, I wrote articles for the local Daejeon Ilbo, and then moved up to Daedeok Net, a daily report on science and technology that was widely read. Some of my articles were circulated very broadly among technology experts and policy makers.

The big breakthrough when I was asked to be a columnist for the Maekyung Business Weekly in 2010. My articles were more interesting, and more intellectually complex than most of what they had featured. Eventually, I was able to write broadly for several major newspapers.

But it was only in 2013 when I started writing for Dong-A Ilbo, one of the top three commercial newspapers, that I was considered to have made it. Granted the various classified restrictions on my actions in place even in Korea, this was no small feat.

I started to make breakthroughs in Korea, because I had written hundreds of articles on diverse topics that started to get me a real audience. In the fall of 2013,
I was made a contributor to the Chosun Ilbo, a conservative newspaper with a broad circulation. It happened at the precise moment that my third book took off as a best seller.

I was invited to start writing for JoongAng Ilbo in the spring of 2014. I would write for six years on a monthly basis. My articles for Chosun Ilbo and for JoongAng Ilbo were widely read in Korea, and established a broad following for me among educated Koreans that I think would have been impossible otherwise. The fact that I was blocked from other media did not matter much. Of course, I would not have been that successful if I had not been willing to put that much time into crafting short articles on contemporary issues for newspapers, have them translated, edit them, and convince people to publish them. Getting established in Korea when the normal paths for a foreigner were blocked was no easy feat, but it had certain advantages.

I also published articles in Chinese, Japanese, and, of course, in English. After many hits and misses, I had the publishing process down to a well-oiled system. I knew how to write for each audience, and I had capable people who could translate and edit for me in the three languages at any time. I also had editors and important Korean, Japanese, or Chinese newspapers who were willing to publish my work. One or two articles does not make a big difference, but I have written hundreds in Korean, about 120 in Chinese, and 50 in Japanese.

I also started to improve as a writer, as a result. I learned how to write with some literary touches in a manner that was far more direct and brutal in its analysis than anything else available in Korea. I think that the combination of creativity and tough analysis established my reputation in Korea.

I also wrote a book in Chinese while working on books and articles in Korean. I started the manuscript in 2012, but it was not actually printed until 2015, and then published in Hong Kong at a major publisher in 2016. The book, entitled, Kuahai Qiuzhen (crossing the oceans in search of the truth), was part autobiography and part an assessment of China’s potential to contribute to the international community. Although I never sold many copies of the book, it was broadly circulated as a PDF, and I sent it as a gift to many leading scholars in China, many of whom wrote back to me. I think that, overall, the book was well received, and established me a visible figure working on Asia. As a book written in Chinese
and aimed at a Chinese audience, and one that was not at all concerned with sales, markets, or the opinion of the government, the book was unique.

The YTN reporter, Wang Seon-taek (who would become central to the Asia Institute), helped me enormously with my third book on the hidden potential of Korean culture. In this book, I assessed the potential of Korea’s cultural past to give direction to its future development. Moreover, I also argued that Korea was already a leading nation in many fields, without Koreans even being aware of the fact. The second part of the argument was popular with many Koreans, and Wang Seon-taek had the expertise and the insight to add many helpful examples that made my argument more powerful, and more impressive to Korean readers.

Although I did not feel any particular sympathy for the policies of Park Geun-hye, I had heard from multiple people that she was a considerate person, and had a sense of responsibility to the nation, even as she was surrounded by cynical political manipulators.

I first saw her when she had made remarks at the opening of a new anime film that I attended with my children. I was told that she had attended the same elementary school that my daughter Rachel was attending at that time. But we did not exchange words. I did note, however, that she had made an effort to look the children she had met in the eyes, and showed a certain empathy that went beyond what I had seen in many politicians.

A month before President Park planned her trip to the United States to meet Obama, in October 2015, I wrote an article in which I made suggestions as to what she should do in her meetings with the Americans. I received a call from a secretary at the Blue House about three days before the article was to be published, asking if I might be free to meet for a cup of coffee. I suspected that someone had seen the draft of my article, and thought to send someone to meet with me in person. It may well have been Park herself who had made that decision, as I learned later that she was quite fond of my articles.

I met with the secretary the next day, and we discussed the complexity of the visit. I made suggestions as to how President Park might be able to present Korea’s perspective in a manner that would establish a clear contrast with what the Shinzo
Abe administration in Japan was doing. I personally thought that her approach to that trip showed that she had followed the advice closely.

A month later, I received a call from the senior secretary for diplomacy and security, Joo Chul-gi, who invited me for lunch. A professional diplomat, Joo took an interest in what I was doing in Korea. I felt quite comfortable talking with him, even though I disagreed with most Park policies, and I found the administration to be unnecessarily inaccessible and secretive. We talked mainly about culture over the lunch, although we did discuss the complexities of current diplomacy. At the end of the meal, I presented him with a copy of my book, *A Different Republic of Korea that Koreans are Ignorant of*. He showed real interest in the book (which suggested that President Park had also shared that interest), and in my other writings.

I heard from a third party a few months later that Mr. Joo had given the book to Park Geun-hye when he returned to the Blue House, and that she sat down almost immediately and read it from cover to cover. Although she was aware of the book, and my writings, that reading led her to believe that my book offered a vision for Korea’s future.

A week later, I received another call from Mr. Joo, this time from his personal cell phone, and he asked if we could meet up at the Koreana Hotel for dinner that same night. It was a bit of a strain for me, but I got there by 8 PM. Joo explained to me that President Park had read my book with great interest, and that she had taken my proposals for what Korea could do very seriously. He said that she intended to take some concrete steps in the near future, and he asked for my support. It was not clear exactly what she had intended to do, but I was delighted to receive the attention.

The next day, I received a mysterious message on my phone from a journalist saying that included the words, “President Park mentioned you.” I was not sure what he was talking about. It was another five hours before I was able to get to a computer and to confirm what she had said.

Park had spoken at length about my book at the opening of a cabinet meeting, saying that it was her favorite book, and that it offered a vision for Korea. As
there was a tradition of Korean presidents identifying their favorite books in the past, the media was quick to pounce on this story.

I had never met a Korean president and, for all my success with editorials, I was rarely invited to any high-profile events. Today, looking back, I think it was a blessing that I did not waste my time meeting VIPs, and could rather focus on reading and writing, but at that moment I still saw a big breakthrough into the mainstream as a high priority. It was a tremendous step forward, granted for a limited period of time, and it established me as a major commentator on Korea, even if I was completely ignored outside of Korea.

When I was asked later by a member of the Blue House what I wanted to do, I replied that I wished to give talks to various parts of the government about my ideas.

I was immediately invited to give a series of lectures, culminating in a course of four talks for high-ranking officials, that were widely discussed within government. I also gave a talk for 60 high-ranking generals and admirals. I had spent many hours preparing and editing this speech, which talked at length about climate change, and other emerging threats. Other speeches followed for the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and many other institutions. I was allowed to talk about whatever I wanted to talk about, including economic injustice, and climate change. It was a rather amazing moment, considering that the regime was supposedly so conservative.

I was not welcome at the private think tanks, however. Significantly, not a single word was mentioned about this American whose book was recognized as the favorite of the President of Korea, and was engaged in this deep discussion about governance at every level in the foreign press. Well, there were small mentions in the Japanese press, and eventually the Korean Herald did a short interview with me, but a series of events that would normally get my considerable recognition globally was completely hushed over. That meant that Park’s influence, and Korea’s influence, remained extremely limited.

I had taken these talks very seriously. I had spent hours writing them out in a manner that made them accessible, yet serious; essays on the nature of governance, and the ethical imperative. When I had told friends I wanted to “write
like Lincoln”, I was not entirely joking. Looking back, I think the speeches were imperfect, stylistically, but that they stood out as not being merely predictable, feel-good talks. That fact, I suggest, made my writings stand out.

The talk for high-ranking government officials stressed the power of Korea’s tradition of good governance, and suggested how past examples could be used to shape Korea’s future. The talk for the military generals included an extensive discussion of the impact of climate change, and its centrality as a security issue of the day.

I was amazed that I had been given complete freedom to say whatever I wanted to say, and that Park did not seem to care at all about the fact that I openly opposed many of her administration’s policies. That alone suggested that she did not decide much of the policy. Such an interpretation flew in the face of the standard “progressive” interpretation.

I was also appointed to the Committee on Cultural Enrichment, which was officially headed by President Park. I attended several meetings, including one meeting that Park attended. I was seated next to her, and the photograph in the newspaper, which has since disappeared, placed me in the center. This committee later received much media attention, because of various financial scandals. The committee chair, Professor Kim Sangryol, of Sookmyung Women’s University, got into terrible trouble because of illegal dealings. I was called up later by a reporter from the Dong-A Ilbo newspaper, who asked me a series of questions about had happened in the committee meetings. When I told him that I was interested in traditional culture, and that I had made a presentation on cultural policy, he grew bored, and quickly ended the conversation. Clearly, I was completely left out of all the juicy business.

Although the story of my book’s success, which would rise to #8 on the nationwide bestseller list, was broadly reported in the Korean press, and I was interviewed several times on the TV news, the attention was limited to Korean language press. The selection of my book by President Park, and her subsequent comments about it at three other public functions, including a reception in New York, did nothing to get overseas media attention. There was one interview with me that came out in English in the Korea Herald, and another article that was featured in Korea Business months later. Not a single foreign-language journal
outside of Korea ever mentioned anything about this American who had written a book that was praised at length by the Korean president, and would go on to be a bestseller.

I can say with certainty that the complete block on overseas reporting on the topic was a result of various classified restrictions on what could be said about me. Nor did my success with the book translate into any long-term opportunities for consulting, or job offers, or support for my research in Korea. I made several applications to foundations, but I was only able to find work giving talks, and occasionally, working on short-term projects.

In any case, from 2012 until 2016, I was better positioned to establish ties with prominent institutions in the United States, and there were some high-profile scholars who had made efforts to help me. For example, Noam Chomsky had become a regular email pen pal, and he agreed to participate in two internet-based seminars with my students. I also interviewed him for my second book written in Korean. His support made a tremendous difference.

I would later write Chomsky a letter describing my case briefly. Although he never acknowledged receiving the letter, I think he had made some special efforts to help me after I had written to him.

I took several courses in 1992-1993 with Marc Shell, professor of English, after I had started the PhD. program at Harvard University. He communicated with me by email and telephone when I was in isolation at the University of Illinois, and he also came to Korea several times to deliver talks at the Asia Institute, which brought us considerable recognition. He had the patience to meet with numerous professors, and other figures like Seoul Mayor Park Won Soon, to discuss future cooperation. He even arranged for Jung Woo-jin of the Asia Institute to visit Harvard as a visiting scholar for one year. Those interactions established me in Korea in the mainstream, in a manner I could never have achieved otherwise.

Francis Fukuyama agreed to do several interviews with me, that helped me to make it into the Korean mainstream in a way that I had not thought possible. He even invited me to be a discussant at a seminar he held in Seoul in 2015, although I could not attend, because of a conflict in my schedule. I think that these people were aware that there was something seriously wrong with my situation.
After a quiet first year, the Asia Institute held frequent seminars, around twice a month, and we developed a loyal following, which peaked around 2015. We covered numerous topics, from culture and history, to nonproliferation, climate change, and technological evolution. I think we established ourselves firmly as a place for meaningful discussions, although we were never recognized on any official lists of think tanks, because we did not have major funding. At our height, we had crowds of 40-50 for our events. The focus was never on getting large participation, but rather on focusing on important issues.

At first, we ran programs at the Kyung Hee University Alumni Hall. The effort was quite successful, but the administrators at Kyung Hee felt it was too much trouble to support the effort, as we had no budget to compensate them. We then ran programs at W Space, an open forum run by an NGO, that had been established by Hong Seok-hyun. Later, we held seminars at Kyung Hee University and Sookmyung Women’s University, but they were not as well attended, because of the inconvenient location. Finally, in 2018, we started a program at the Commons Foundation, a new platform set up by a Bitcoin millionaire, that we continue to run today.

We received modest amounts of funding for small research projects, although none of them were as large as those the Asia Institute had received back in Daejeon from research institutes. But I did receive funding that covered travel on occasion, and opportunities for seminars with government organizations that raised our profile. I increased the number of scholars affiliated with the Asia Institute from around the world. Some close friends, like John Feffer, have been loyal supporters of our programs over the years.

Professor Kim Hyungyul, of Sookmyung Women’s University, became a good friend, and he tried both to understand my situation, and make sure that I was treated properly. His constant efforts between 2014 and 2018 (when the illness of his parents made it impossible for him to play a role) were decisive in putting the Asia Institute on the map, granted that we still never received any significant funding.

Kim Hyungyul introduced me to other professors at Sookmyung who supported the Asia Institute, and met regularly with friends of mine who had backed it. Those meetings established a strong consensus that we should be legally
incorporated. Thanks to the hard work of Professor Kim, and Chung Yoojin, a thoughtful young woman who had recently returned to Korea from the United States, we were formally incorporated with the Department of Education of the Seoul Metropolitan City in 2015.

From the end of 2016, however, a certain distance started to develop between myself and some of the most ardent supporters of the Asia Institute. I had essentially reached the end of the line with regard to the mainstream view of the world, and my writings became much more critical. I continued to give talks for corporations and government, and I continued to write articles for the mainstream media, but my writings for The Korea Times were increasingly strident in denouncing the corruption in the United State, the rise of militarism, and the overwhelming threat of climate change.

For me, the massive fraud of covering up climate change, ignoring the growing inequity in society, and of the rise of militarism was unbearable, and I felt it was our duty to confront this ugly truth. The range of my friendships narrowed as a result, and I think that certain relations broke down altogether. For example, I did a series of very successful TV broadcasts for JoongAng Ilbo, but it was clear that my statements were too far away from the perspective they were promoting.

I started to lose much of my general base in South Korea in 2018, and saw a noticeable drop in media coverage and invitations to events. In 2019, I was openly critical of the overtly anti-Japanese rhetoric in South Korea, and was perhaps overly forceful in my opposition to the new normal. It was not so much that I felt Japan was a perfect country, but rather, that I could not stand to see the South Korean embrace of the United States, which was engaged in even worse activities by the so-called progressive administration. The appeal of living in South Korea was diminished, and the possibility of returning to the United States seemed possible again.
Exchanges with Japan

Although my primary breakthroughs were in South Korea, there were occasional moments of success and meaningful discourse with Japan and China, and even new opportunities in the United States.

In the case of Japan, the depth of exchanges was reduced after I started to work at the Korean Embassy from 2005. Before that, I had been invited to conduct research in Japan for a few months, and even to participate in conferences. Also, few of my Japanese friends responded to my emails. In the old days, when I had sent new year’s greetings out, I would receive dozens of responses. Now, I would get only two or three.

However, after a few years of working in Daejeon, my friend, Honda Hirokuni, invited me to attend two conferences in Japan. I was most grateful, but I never got in the circuit. Perhaps part of the problem was that my thinking was less and less like an academic.

As a result of my work on science policy in Daejeon, I was invited to attend events in Japan from 2009 on, and I met frequently with the science attaché at the Japanese embassy in Seoul. I became a regular guest at the massive STS Forum in Kyoto for three years, a well-funded event that was attended by scientists and science policy makers from Japan, the United States, and from other advanced nations. I had the occasion to meet the founder of the STS Forum, the former minister, Omi Koji, several times, and he agreed to invite me. For a moment, I thought there might be a road forward for me related to science and technology, but ultimately not even one of the connections made turned into anything lasting.

In addition, my father’s friend, Zach Hall, arranged for me to visit the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology as part of my research project on biotechnology policy in 2009. Although I did not have a strong science background, I was starting to play a real role in Korean science policy as a result of my frequent writings in both Korean and English. It seemed logical to expand to Japan at the time, and I was even invited to a seminar on science policy by high-ranking bureaucrats under the Hatoyama administration.
The most critical turn in my relationship with Japan was the decision of JoongAng Ilbo to translate many of my monthly submissions into Japanese, for a period of about three years. The articles covered topics in culture, science policy, diplomacy, security, and education, and because I had approached the topics in a more scientific manner than most of the articles available in the popular media, I started to get a significant Japanese readership.

Seeing as I had put many hours into drafting these articles after I realized their potential to have broad impact, many of those Japanese articles were widely circulated. Some of them were picked up by Yahoo Japan. I also was able to find a place as a blogger on Huffington Post Japan in 2013, and had written dozens of in-depth reports until they shut down their open blog in December of 2018. Those posts were written with valuable editorial input from Huffington Post, and formed some of my best work.

Perhaps the high point of my writing career in Japan was when I was given an invitation to write an article for one of Japan’s most widely read journals, Sekai (meaning, “world”), in December 2015. I spoke of the Japanese peace constitution as a harbinger of the future of security, rather than a lingering mistake from the past. I made this argument in the context of the response to climate change. This article would become the core of my Japanese book.

Facebook also helped me to reestablish myself in Japan. Although I was not invited to talk in Japan frequently, I linked up with a strong network of Japanese, including academics, journalists, and government officials who took my writing seriously, and those on-line discussions offered me a chance to learn from them, and to engage. I developed a significant network of Japanese with whom I corresponded in Japanese about contemporary issues.

Another important milestone was my article “Peer-to-Peer Science: The Century-Long Challenge to Respond to Fukushima” (September 3, 2013), written with Layne Hartsell, concerning the response to the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

This article, which was one of the ten most popular articles in Foreign Policy in Focus for the year, described how P2P approaches could be used to enlist people from around the world to respond effectively to the environmental crisis caused by the Fukushima disaster. For a short period of time, after the article had come
out in Japanese, I received numerous messages from Japanese people whom I had never met, and even got an invitation to a government-academic committee on the response to Fukushima, at which I gave a presentation of my opinions. But again, the communications died off, and I have lost touch with most of those involved. However, I did meet Kawanaka Yoh, a young Japanese woman with considerable energy and commitment, who would later help out with numerous Asia Institute projects.

I visited Fukushima for several days at my own expense, and put together a program for exchanges between youth in Fukushima and Seoul. Although my daughter’s school refused the initial proposal, I found enough students to make a collection of small works of art that we sent to an elementary school near the site of the accident. I met a student from Fukushima, Honda Nika, at Kyung Hee University who helped me with these efforts.

Personally, I think there was a hidden hand behind the end of my interactions with those working on the Fukushima issue in Japan. I was coming into prominence when (as had happened so many times before after 2000) suddenly all communications came to a sudden stop.

A breakthrough came in 2015, when I started to correspond with a thoughtful young man by the name of Nakafuji Hirohiko, a scholar with a Ph.D. from Kyung Hee University, who had ambitions of becoming a politician in Japan. He was deeply committed to creating a viable political order in northeast Asia, and the productive correspondence via email between us led him to invite me to a lunch with a politician from Fukui Province named Inobe Kota. That lunch was quite successful, and led to two trips to Fukui, and eventually to the founding of an Asia Institute of Japan with an office in Fukui in December 2018.

It was a breakthrough, but the process was complex. Although we did tremendous work to promote the Asia Institute, and to put together a viable program for Japan, we did not get any funding, and, ultimately, as of May 2019, the funding for the Asia Institute of Japan remained zero. Nevertheless, setting the Asia Institute up as an NGO in Japan was a considerable achievement.

On August 4, 2017, the Asia Institute held a seminar on climate change, and the potential for Korea-Japan cooperation at the Diet in Tokyo, which was widely
attended and advertised to all parliamentarians, heightened. It was the first time I had had the opportunity to interact directly with Japanese politicians since 2003.

I suspect that the Asia Institute in Japan was appealing for Japanese, in that we discussed real issues otherwise never covered. What I can say is that the combination of that event at the Diet, and the publication of my articles in the Japanese media, meant that a significant group of Japanese were aware of my work, even if they did not interact with me.

Along the way, I lost Honda Hiroaki, the professor who had befriended me at the University of Illinois, and helped me on several occasions to visit Japan. I had brought up the issue of what had happened to me during a conversation in Japan in 2016, and he expressed little interest. I gave him a short version of the story, and we corresponded and spoke on the phone. But ultimately, he told me he did not want me to mention the matter again. I made no effort to converse with him again.

I also met the Osaka politician, Hattori Ryoichi, through the introduction of a student whom I had helped with several projects, Yamamoto Hojo. Hattori gave me several valuable introductions to people in Osaka, and he arranged for me to deliver a public speech in 2017 with Magosaki Ukeru, a former director of the Foreign Ministry, which had a large audience. Hattori helped me with other small projects thereafter, and continued to take a serious interest in honest exchanges between China, Japan, Korea, and the United States.

Hattori also introduced me to the editor, Kawase Hideyuki, whom I had met repeatedly in Seoul, and also in Japan. I started to work together with Kawase on a book manuscript for what would become A Farewell to Arms: The Crisis of Climate Change and Japan’s Peace Constitution, which was published July 25, 2019. This book would have considerable impact on my relations with Japan, and, in some respects, bring Japan back into my life to a degree that had not been true since 2004, or before. I was still limited in terms of which Japanese wanted to work with me, but the book was covered in the Japanese media, for sale in major bookshops, and was taken seriously by a wide range of people, including many in government.
The success of my book was paired with the establishment of the Asia Institute as an incorporated NGO in Fukui, complete with an office. Suddenly, I found that we were being viewed sincerely again. This shift may have been related to the rise of a new generation of activists in Japan, notably those in Reiwa Sinsen Gumi, whom the Asia Institute researcher, and close friend, Kawanaka Yo, had engaged with. Moreover, I had had several opportunities to work with Extinction Rebellion Japan, that inspired me to take Japan more seriously, and to try to write more for a Japanese audience, even if I could no longer write for Huffington Post Japan.

After my aforementioned book was published, I made a successful tour of Japan with my daughter for a series of talks about my vision for a Japan that would play a positive role in the international community. Although many conservative politicians may have disliked the book’s content, there was great sympathy for my argument among many in government and industry, and an increase in my exchanges with Japan, granted nothing like what I had had before 2001.

**Exchanges with China**

The progress in China was also quite slow and painful. At the start, I had much more success in Japan than in China. But I had serious Chinese students at SolBridge and Kyung Hee who had kept me engaged. There were no Japanese like that around me in Korea. Writing in Chinese for a Chinese audience remained extremely important to me, and I sought out opportunities to speak in Chinese with Chinese students and professors in Korea, and I found occasional chances to visit China.

I had not finished my autobiographical book, *Life is a Matter of Direction, not Speed*, which was written in Korean, when it occurred to me that I should try to publish the book in Chinese. Although I knew that such a project would be quite difficult, I had a passionate and intelligent student at SolBridge by the name of Qian Menglun, who helped me at the start to organize the manuscript.
I continued to work on the Chinese book on and off for three years. The project was not simple, because not a single Korean was interested in my work on China, and I had to support my family. The book cost me money. But I had a bit of cash from the books I had sold in Korea, and I printed up a version of the Chinese book in 2014, that I sent out to several hundred people in China, and elsewhere, whom I thought might be sympathetic. The book was entitled *Kuahai Qiuzhen* (meaning, “crossing the ocean in search of the truth”) and it related my childhood experiences, my first encounters with Chinese culture, and my perspectives as an American on China’s potential role in the future. Most of the material was original, although some of the sections about my childhood were also in my Korean writings.

I believe that this book gained for me a small, but significant group of people who had taken my writings in Chinese seriously. In some cases, the professors I had sent the books to were also people that I had worked with in my efforts for internet education back in 2000. I received some thoughtful letters from scholars, and I was interviewed by a few newspapers, but there was no big breakthrough in the relationship with China. There were occasional invitations to conferences, and constant correspondence with friends in China. Perhaps most importantly, the editor for the book, Wang Ping, became a close friend, and we were able to coordinate our work easily.

I do not think I could have had the impact that I had if I had not been willing to spend large amounts of my own money sending the book to prominent professors, and searching online to get the contact information of people that I thought I should write to.

There was a short period in 2016 when I was a columnist for the popular Korean newspaper, Asia Today. At the time, Asia Today had just entered into an agreement with the Chinese search engine, Baidu, whereby many of its articles, especially mine, and my broadcasts in Chinese, were made broadly available in China through Baidu. In the case of my article advocating for the “Republic of Facebook,” it had garnered hundreds of thousands of hits in China. I was told that Baidu had considered shutting down the post, but that it had decided to keep the articles up after all, because of the valuable content. My writings for Baidu, coupled with those in Chinese for JoongAng Ilbo, established me as a writer of
controversial topics who was tolerated to a large degree. These articles were not in the mainstream media, necessarily, but the readership was significant, perhaps surpassing my readership in Korea, on occasion.

There were two articles of mine with considerable import that were published on the Chinese blog, Guanchazhe (meaning, “The Observer”), a reflective website run by an up-and-coming figure in the communist party, Eric Li. I met Eric once in Shanghai, and we had quite an enjoyable conversation.

The first article was on the massive Chinese infrastructure project, “One Belt, One Road” (Yidaiyilu), that I published on Guanchazhe on September 28, 2016, entitled, “The China Dream, Westernization or Transformation? The Key to the Transformation of the Global Economy and the Solution of the Environmental Crisis can be Found in China’s Past”.

This article proposed a new vision for this project that was grounded in sustainable development, and the response to climate change. I suggested that China’s tradition of sustainability was far more valuable to the future of One Belt, One Road than the catastrophic petroleum-based consumption economy of the West. The article was often cited in China, and did more to establish me than anything else I had written. Moreover, after this article was published in Guanchazhe, more of my articles started to appear in large numbers in online searches.

The second article, “Rather Than Imitate the West, Chinese Think Tanks Should Value Their Own Tradition”, was published in Guanchazhe on February 3, 2018, right after I had spoken at an international think tank conference in Beijing. I had described the tremendous potential for China to develop think tanks, if they were to avoid the mistakes made by American ones, and made best use of the long Chinese tradition of think tanks in the form of the academies (shuyuan) that dated back to the Han Dynasty.

I was also approached by Duowei News afterward, who made me a regular columnist, and they made it possible for me to publish for a Chinese audience at any time (if I was willing to pay for the cost of translation). Of course, it may seem rather irrational that I had spent that much time writing and rewriting articles, and then having them published without any pay. But my assumption,
right or wrong, was that if I were able to get a sufficient following in China, other opportunities would follow.

I also put effort into publishing my second book in China. After multiple trips to meet with potential publishers, which amounted to nothing, I gave up on the idea of publishing the book in China, and just printed up 300 copies under the name of the Asia Institute. After I had mailed those books to various scholars and public figures in China in November, 2018, I received a very positive response from several people, including some major figures, and eventually I was given a contract for publication by Xiandai Wenhua Publishers in March, 2019. The final manuscript was titled Weilai Zhongguo Guanyu Renlei Yu Diqu Mingyun (meaning, “Future China: Humanity and the Earth’s Fate”), which was well received.

By that time, I had an extremely powerful editorial team in China, consisting of my friend, Wang Ping, with whom I had worked for eleven years, and his friend in Heilongjiang, Cai Xin. They were excellent translators and editors, and Wang Ping was also capable of undertaking the layout for my books. This book manuscript was exceptionally well written, even without any help from professional publishers. It included many essays that offered a fresh perspective on contemporary Chinese issues, but that did not fall back on Western standards.

I was invited to several conferences in China in 2018, and it seemed as if I had moved up significantly, when I was invited to address a seminar entitled, “Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations”, which was held on May 15th-16th, 2019, at the Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS). I was also invited to several other major conferences in Beijing in October and November, which, unfortunately, I could not attend. It seemed that although I did not appear in the Chinese media as a major figure, I was nevertheless mentioned on occasion, and was slowly moving up to being recognized as an important figure. I was still not given the occasion to stay for more than a week in China, or to have any long-term opportunities for joint research.

My articles in Duowei News found a broad readership, and I had established myself as a commentator. I never became a prominent foreigner in China, however, and never made any significant money there. Writing for China fell off
after 2019, however, and my exchanges with Chinese were reduced to a handful of people.

**Progress in the United States**

Engagement with the United States also had clear limitations, even after my breakthrough talks at Yale and Princeton in 2015. I did reestablish some relations, but I was not invited to any conferences, and inquiries about possible employment were not even followed up on. I appeared to be just as blocked as before, but an exception had been made for a certain engagement (much as had been true in 2001, when I gave a talk at Harvard). The Asia Institute did run a program with the United States embassy in Seoul that was quite successful, and I was invited to talk at a few embassy-related events. But I was clearly not about to be welcomed back into the club. In fact, I had had better ties with Yale when I first arrived in 2007 than I had in 2019 when I returned to the United States.

The passage of time made my relations with my colleagues at American universities, and with my family members, worse, not better. It might seem natural that over time, the painful memories of how they had lied to me, actively participated in a massive criminal conspiracy to impugn me, and agreed to falsely accuse me of mental illness would fade away. But for me, the longer they went without saying a word about what had happened, the more grotesque it felt.

My family continued to avoid any discussion about what had been done to me. After such a long period of time, I felt it had gone too far, and I started a campaign to try and open up a discussion on the question of what had happened to me. This policy, perhaps a result of national security letters, or other texts threatening them with jail time and fines for engaging me, became intolerable over time, and I was determined that it had to end. Starting this manuscript was, in part, my response to the silence of family and colleagues about this crisis.

I started a large-scale truth and reconciliation campaign in 2014-2015 to address the issues that had been completely ignored by family and friends in my previous struggles. My first truth campaign took the form of a series of letters to family
members, and a few friends, in 2004, in which I described in about four pages what I thought had happened to me. I did not provide much detail, but the scale of the criminality was quite clear.

Most family members never responded to those letters at all, and avoided any discussions with me when we met. My father said that he had received the letter, but never asked about the content. I did have a conversation with him once in 2006, as well as with my brother, during which time they listened to me for a while as I told some parts of the story. They did not offer any opinions, or ask any meaningful questions. They did not say anything about what should be done. My mother was literally the only family member who was not afraid to listen, although she, too, was quite hesitant to ask very much.

My father had insisted in numerous conversations (although I am sure that he did not really believe it) that my lack of resources was a result of my choosing to be an academic. Such arguments were irritating, and obviously untrue. But by 2016, they were insufferable, and I preferred not to see him at all.

But I did continue to make efforts to engage my family. When my stepmother, Jamie, suggested that my sister, Anna, had not responded to my letter because I had not shown sufficient interest in her life, I spent hours speaking to her on the phone about her life, and showing as much interest as possible in her concerns. It did not matter. She made no effort to understand anything about what had happened to me at all, let alone do anything.

And when Anna and my brother, Michael, started telling my son, Benjamin, in 2017, that I was suffering from mental illness, I had had enough with such blatantly illegal and unethical behavior.

Not only was there not a trace of any evidence for mental illness, but they told these lies to my son without giving me a chance to respond. In effect, it was clear that my family members were part of the conspiracy. I had given them some sixteen years to figure out a way to communicate the truth to me, but they would not budge.

I did not have the patience anymore. My family members, friends, and colleagues had engaged in cooperation with a criminal conspiracy for approximately twenty years. If they had been served with letters telling them that they could not help
me, or even that they had to work to undermine me, I could have tolerated that. All that was needed was for them to find some way to go for a walk with me in the woods and tell me this fact. But for decades they had engaged in a clearly criminal and unethical manner toward me, and never admitted there was anything unusual. By 2016, I felt it was time to both make formal requests of them, for the historical record, and start to put together a complete record, which would eventually result in this manuscript.

The campaign of 2014-2015 was on a far larger scale that what I had attempted in 2004. I wrote letters to prominent scholars, journalists, and other prominent figures like Naomi Klein and Cornell West, in which I explained what had happened to me, and asked explicitly for their help. I want it to be clear, for the record, that they had purposely refused my request.

I also wrote to several organizations like Amnesty International about my case. I received literally no responses from any of the prominent figures I had written to. In the case of Naomi Klein, her secretary told me that she had passed it on to her. For all her progressive credentials, she never tried to contact me.

I also wrote to many academics, including colleagues at the University of Illinois, asking for their help and advice. Out of about 120 such letters mailed, I received answers from about six people. The answers that I did receive were serious, in a sense, but all of them told me to forget about the past, and to move on. I will not copy those letters here, but I was shocked at the degree to which my colleagues were willing to pretend that nothing had ever happened. The ridiculousness of the arguments adduced in the responses that I received were far better than the ugly silence of most to my unambiguous letters.

None of my colleagues who had written me back were willing to discuss whether I was entitled to anything for having suffered such treatment, and none of them were willing to discuss why this action might have been taken against me.

My mother had spoken with me with some honesty on several occasions, and I felt that she had at least made an effort to listen. Her husband, Paul, had also listened and spoken frankly on several occasions. But I felt, considering the gravity of the situation, and the importance of the issues (like saying no to militarism and demanding a focus on climate change), that it was just wrong to
avoid this topic. I also felt that even in the most impossible situation, that five or ten years of lobbying and persuasion could turn things around. But my mother was little different from the entire class of upper-middle class intellectuals in America that had produced me. As much as she loved me, she was caught up in that web of lies.

I did have a few American friends with whom I could speak frankly, and even a few who had tried to help me, but they were few and far between. After I stopped my efforts to cultivate relations with Yale and Harvard, I was not invited to speak in the United States again. I was also not invited to talk in Japan after 2015, although we were able to create opportunities through the Asia Institute, and later through the University of Brain Education. But my ties with Japanese academics were basically severed. Considering how central Japanese faculty members had once been in my life, this was extremely unnatural, and a bit sad.

My father came to visit our family in January of 2017 in Seoul. He did so despite my request that he postpone his visit. He was less willing to discuss what had happened than he had been five years before. He showed no interest in understanding the difficulties that I had faced, or that of my wife and children. When it came to the stress that my son Benjamin had dealt with, he went out of his way to suggest that Benjamin should see a therapist, without making any effort to understand what he had suffered through.

I had reached my limit. My father clearly was willing to do just about anything to avoid facing his criminal actions against me. He had no plan whatsoever to help resolve the problem. Finally, I felt that he would do just about anything to me and my family to avoid inconvenience to himself. I could not trust him at all.

We continued to have extremely limited interactions on the phone. I also talked occasionally with my brother, Michael. It was important for my children to maintain some sort of relationship. But the blatant criminality of my family’s actions bothered me more than ever before.

For the first time, I took the position that my family was engaged in criminal actions against me, and that they should cease and desist from such behavior immediately. The fact that they had engaged in such actions due to secret law, or advisories, was no longer an excuse, because they continued to deny that this was
the case. I had no intention of living my entire life in an enormous lie, watching my family act as if I did not have money just because I was an academic, and ignoring all my very real achievements. I was willing to take risks (like writing this narrative), and to cut off ties, rather than indulge in this travesty.

When my father wrote me in November of 2018, asking me various questions about my family, I wrote back to him and said that I would be happy to tell him about my work, but that I wanted him to answer the questions I had asked concerning his secret interactions with my immediate supervisor at the University of Illinois, and the process by which my mental illness had been discussed with various experts without my consent. My father did not respond at all. I decided that things had gone too far. I cut back exchanges to an absolute minimum, and moved to push the discussion into the public domain.

I decided that it was a waste of time to correspond with my father, and that the next step would be to get the entire story out, and force some sort of a larger national discussion.

Although I had been essentially locked out of the United States media, and excluded from any activities in American academics, I continued to write for Foreign Policy in Focus, and some of those articles garnered broader attention.

An article that had considerable impact was one I had written together with John Feffer for Foreign Policy in Focus, entitled, “From Pacific Pivot to Green Revolution” (October 4, 2012). We argued that the then recently-proposed military “pivot to Asia”, which had been rubber stamped by the Obama administration, should be entirely reinvented. It was an exclusive focus on the response to climate change. We went as far as to say that the entire military should get out of the war business, and restructure itself so as to focus on efforts at mitigation and adaptation globally. The article was inspired by a correspondence that I had had with Noam Chomsky earlier in 2012, in which I suggested that we could completely redefine the role of the military, and the term “security”, so as to radically alter the current discussion, and then current budgets. Chomsky replied, “Well, it might be worth a try.”

I then penned an article that described a new concept of the military, in which the air force no longer used fighter planes, but was concerned with stopping air
pollution, the navy dedicated to ending pollution of the oceans, and the army concerned with preserving soil. The concept was quite original, and I think it was no accident that this article was literally never cited by third parties, in spite of its broad audience.

I published a more detailed article in Truthout, published on March 7, 2013 entitled, “On Climate, Defense Could Preserve and Protect, Rather Than Kill and Destroy”. This article reached an even wider audience, and offered more concrete proposals. I was contacted by several people within the military and diplomacy directly about the article. There were several proposals for cooperation, none of which panned out. I was fortunate enough to get a kind note from a former diplomat named Daniel Garrett, who would eventually become a member of the Asia Institute. Interestingly, and by no means by coincidence, Admiral Samuel J. Locklear III, then head of the Pacific Command, visited Harvard and Tufts the day after my article was published. He gave an interview with the Boston Globe in which, for the first time ever, a top-ranked military officer explicitly stated the warming planet “is probably the most likely thing that is going to happen . . . that will cripple the security environment, probably more likely than the other scenarios we all often talk about.”

This statement reflected a conversation taking place within the military at the time, as documented by Professor Andrew Dewitt, about the need for a meaningful response to climate change. The timing of the statement, and the replacement of Locklear by the militarist Harry Harris soon after, precisely because of the perceived threat of a shift to climate change, suggests that what I was writing (not only in English, but in Japanese, Korean, and Chinese) was having a sweeping impact.

Another article that gained a large readership (written with John Feffer) was, “America’s Homegrown Terror” (April 7, 2014, Foreign Policy in Focus), in which we discussed the crumbling of the American infrastructure, and the potential that this situation would eventually bring the United States to its knees.

However, the response I received when I had tried to publish my two academic books on classical Asian literature with academic publishers in the United States was so overwhelmingly negative that I gave up. I published both books with Seoul National University Press, and I never made an effort to publish a book in
the United States again. I think there is plenty of reason to believe that it was not possible, because of secret law, for me to publish a book in the United States.

It was clear by 2014 that I was not going to be permitted to administer anything in Korea, or in the United States, and that I was not going to be able to start a company, either. Countless hours had been wasted in efforts to start an organization. The Asia Institute, with occasional seminars, and no other activities, was the best response.

Writing was the one domain in which I was relatively free. In some respects, I was freer than many others, even those in high places. Writing became my main activity over time, with much of my important writing on politics, security, and economics published by JoongAng Daily, and later by The Korea Times. Ironically, after a decade trying to become an administrator, I learned that my niche would be as an author, granted not for academic articles.

After July 2017, The Korea Times became my main opportunity to publish articles, and they allowed me to write virtually whatever I wanted, and I received a broad readership for what I wrote. My articles about the profound corruption surrounding figures like former director for Asian affairs at the National Security Council, Victor Cha, former American ambassador to Korea, Harry Harris, and former Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo were published without redaction by them. I doubt that such articles could have been published in the United States, or for that matter, anywhere.

My analysis of corruption in the United States was far more systematic than that found in the so-called “progressive” media, which tends to highlight bad guys, and avoid analysis of how things really work. I still do not know how The Korea Times was able to let me publish such blunt articles like, “Inconvenient Parallels Between Responses to the Holocaust and to Climate Change” (with Alexander Krabbe), in which I compare the denial of climate change with the denial of the Holocaust in Europe in the 1940s, arguing that this denial was even more criminal, or "How to Put an End to America's Peculiar Institution of Death: Fossil Fuels", in which I made a powerful analogy between the institutional criminality of slavery and that of fossil fuels.

My article, “An American Psychopathocracy”, (February 2, 2019) describes the broad political corruption in the Republican and Democratic parties, and was
published at exactly the moment that the US government was trying to sell the weak reforms of the Democrats as some sort of revolution. None of the other progressive media in the United States offered such analysis. I honestly believe there must have been an extremely brave and committed bunch of people in Korea who supported my work at considerable risk to make those articles possible.

Along the way, low-level harassment (as noted above) had started up again. I do not know the source, but I can guess. I wrote an article for Chosun ilbo, “The new role for the United States in Asia” (January 1, 2014), in which I strongly advocated that the United States’ role in Korea must be fundamentally changed, and that if the focus for security of the United States was not on climate change, that our role was not sustainable. The fact that a conservative Korean newspaper published the article suggests something of the deep sympathy in Korea for my perspective.

Immediately after publication, however, I received odd emails from various Americans, and also rather threatening comments from Koreans. That process suggested we were looking at another campaign similar to what was waged against me from 2000 to 2003. The harassment increased somewhat after Trump took power in 2016, and the far-right, active under Bush, returned to power. My attitude towards Trump would go back and forth during his 4 years in office. At times he seemed extremely dangerous, at times offering an anti-globalist critique.

**Leaving Kyung Hee University**

It was a considerable shock for many at Kyung Hee University when I announced in November of 2017 my intention to leave that distinguished institution, and to join the virtually unknown University of Brain Education in Cheonan.

My move to this unknown university was the culmination of a long process of alienation within Kyung Hee University.
After the death of its founder, Kyung Hee University focused increasingly on income from tuition, publications in SSCI journals selected by corporations, and other distorted signs of success. It had become a ruthless corporation, and the economics and international relations courses looked increasingly like indoctrination in a false ideology, rather than the pursuit of truth. None of the critical issues, from climate change and militarism to the concentration of wealth, or the impact of technology on society were even touched upon in their classes, let alone in conferences or conversations between professors.

For my part, I was becoming increasingly radicalized, as I observed the growing dangers posed by climate change, nuclear war, and by fascistic politics in the United States, and globally. I was also increasingly disgusted by the silence of other intellectuals concerning such threats.

In a sense, I was going back to the more radical posture against militarism that I had adopted back in 2004 to 2006. My short time back in the mainstream in Korea was coming to an end. But the truth was that I could never truly rejoin the mainstream. I was skeptical of the value of such compromise and there were in place classified directives that limited my activities.

I did not enjoy teaching at Kyung Hee anymore, and when the department head moved to shut down my course on climate change, I had had enough of it. I brought up with our dean, and in faculty meetings, critical issues such as climate change, the role of intellectuals in society, and the manner in which professors are evaluated. I suggested we should have a meeting to discuss such matters. The department head refused to allow such a meeting, and other faculty members were silent.

I started looking into other teaching jobs in Korea from 2016, aiming for relatively unknown institutions that would allow me to conduct my research. But in spite of multiple efforts, I was not able to find a single position. There was ultimately only one institution that was willing to offer me a position, the University of Brain Education.

The University of Brain Education was founded by the mediation master and spiritual leader, Ilchi Lee. A thoughtful, but complex figure, Ilchi Lee was subjected to a constant attack by Christians, because his statements went against
certain key Korean Christian principles. He was not that popular with Buddhists, either. He was deeply committed to increasing spirituality in society through syncretic approaches, and was both extremely hard working and creative.

I did not completely agree with his approach, or his methodology, but he offered me an opportunity to focus entirely on climate change and the environment in my teaching and my work.

Ilchi Lee supported me, my work on climate change, and my efforts to mobilize people around the world in response. He appreciated my writings, and he was able to offer me the position of full professor, an equivalent salary, and most importantly, a real position in an active community. Not only was there not any other university or organization interested in hiring me, I had come to see that the larger umbrella organization behind University of Brain Education, Dahn World, had a vitality and a decency that was hard to find elsewhere. That opportunity was real, but things did not work out quite that easily, most likely due to behind-the-scenes interference by right-wing powers.

I had met Ilchi Lee in 2015, when he invited me to his Institute of National Studies (Kukhakwon) to deliver a talk on my book, *A Republic of Korea of which Koreans are Ignorant*. He immediately offered me a job. That was something that had almost never happened to me in Korea. I did not forget what he had said.

I practiced yoga at Dahn World back in 1997, right before I got married, and I had been impressed by their program then. Moreover, I started to practice again at their Gyeongbokgung Center in Seoul after my talk, and I found the exercises extremely helpful for me. My wife also started exercising again, and for a while, she was even more enthusiastic than I was.

I started teaching at University of Brain Education from March 2018, and had an extremely positive relationship with the students. I taught in the graduate program, and for the first time, had the chance to work with my own graduate students. I was aware that it would be hard to place these students in teaching positions at mainstream universities in Korea, but there were numerous proposals for citizen education programs that had great appeal for me.

I received broad support within the school to write and give talks on a variety of topics (especially climate change), and felt much more comfortable than at Kyung
Hee. It was not always a perfect match, however, as spiritual enlightenment, physical exercise, and meditation was not necessarily my highest priority. I had clear goals related to climate change and international relations, and I felt I should pursue them, even to the detriment of my health (whether physical violence, or long-term harassment, or poor living conditions).

The problem was that we were back under an extremist administration in the United States. The world was quickly spinning out of control.

Not only was I no longer invited to US embassy events (after the appointment of the war criminal Harry Harris as ambassador), but I no longer enjoyed talking with US diplomats.

Moreover, I found that increasingly I had trouble talking to mainstream groups in Korea. I will not list the various middle-of-the-road figures and organizations who had decided to stop cooperating with me, but the number was significant. At the same time, my own tone had become sharper, and I felt far less compromising.

The stress impacted my health, and that of my wife. The financial and political burdens were considerable, but it did not seem like there was any alternative but to take a stand.

I would go on to write another successful Korean book, *A Greater Republic of Korea*, in 2017, that talked explicitly about technology, and about Korea’s challenges. Soon after, I started work on a book about Korean unification with the reporter, Huh Jaehyun. We also started a YouTube broadcast program from February 2019. Finally, I decided I should investigate employment opportunities in the United States again.
Chapter 7

To Washington and back to Korea

I returned to the United States to live with my entire family in August 2019. My wife and children had wanted to move in America for twelve years, and although I thought there was some risk in this move, I was not certain that being in Seoul was necessarily better granted the recent problems I had encountered.

I had a group of friends in Korea, Japan, and the United States who had helped me to put together an consulting company known as Asia Partners that had the potential to be viable. The publication of book in Japanese in August, 2018 brought me a wide Japanese audience for the first time in over 15 years. When I visited DC in February of 2019, the reception I received was quite warm and I convinced myself that there might be some opportunities after all these years.

But in Korea I was no longer a contributor for Joong Ang newspaper, and the various talks that had provided income for me had dried up. I was also coming to believe that my future would lead me out beyond just Korea, and extend my work to Japan and China. Developments in Japan and China over the previous few years had led me to this interpretation—which was ultimately mistaken.

I was deeply grateful for how South Koreans had offered me employment, and tried to help me. I was touched by the efforts of some of the progressives around Roh Moohyun. But the crowd in 2019 was quite different. The Moon administration purposely opposed any serious debate on climate change (which I believed to be the greatest threat to Korea), and disliked people like me who questioned the politics of the United States, which they had embraced. Moreover, a new generation of progressives in Japan had made a deep impression on me. And for all its sluggishness, China was tackling climate change on a scale beyond either Korea or Japan, and engaging in a real discussion on global governance.

The climate crisis was a critical part of the shift in my thinking. At the end of 2018, I happened to see an interview on the internet with Roger Hallam, one of
the cofounders of Extinction Rebellion, the aggressive NGO that was holding effective protests against climate change in Great Britain.

I sympathized with his positions, and felt that even though it was not what most of my supporters in Korea wanted from me, being part of some sort of direct action on climate change was my calling. After sending a few messages on Facebook, I managed to reach Roger, and we held a long interview that was broadcast to a wide audience. I started working more closely with Extinction Rebellion in Korea, organizing several protests in Gwanghwamun Square for them. I started to wonder whether there might be some career hidden away in Extinction Rebellion for me. In a sense, though, working with them was not a strategically smart move.

After great enthusiasm about my work, Extinction Rebellion backed away from me, and offered me literally no support. I could no longer reach their people. I suspect that they were not permitted to work with me, as had happened too frequently.

Many friends in Korea, as well as in Japan, Vietnam, and China suggested that I should seek out opportunities in the US. I started to think that a few years in the United States might be the best way to get back to Asia in a better position. I thought to myself that the chaos of Trump might well offer me a true opportunity.

We rented a house in Mclean, Virginia, not far from the Metro that could take me into Washington DC, in August of 2019. My wife chose it because of the school district. We were reunited as a family in the United States. I had a series of meetings with old friends, and within a few weeks I had some leads for possible work. But it was a gamble. I had money given to me by two Koreans and earnings from my book I published in China and even some support from Japan, but it was not a lot.

My wife suffered a serious mental breakdown on repeated occasions soon after our arrival, including a period when she was speaking with a shaman in Korea who seems to have been feeding her ominous stories in an effort to blackmail her into giving money. For a month, she was terrified that we were being poisoned because of what they said. She threw away all food, and drank only a certain type
of bottled water. These hidden threats were so distressing to her that she collapsed, and had to be hospitalized. We do not know who was behind that.

It was not really about shamans, however. My wife simply could not take the tremendous pressure that we faced, and it was about to get far worse.

Yet things at the end of 2019 seemed to be heading in a positive direction. We had three major Asia Institute seminars that drew considerable attention, third of which drew as large a crowd as most events at major think tanks.

The Korean ambassador, Lee Soo-hyuk expressed interest in hiring me at the Korean Embassy again, this time in a better paid position. I met with the minister for public diplomacy, Hong seok-in, repeatedly who confirmed, along with his assistant, that I would start work from January, 2020.

Another friend of mine came to Washington from Seoul to discuss my new position and asked me for a report describing what exactly I would do. I presented him a six-page report which was passed up successfully.

Everything started to fall apart from the end of December, precisely as the COVID-19 operation was launched. There is no doubt now that I was thrown out of Washington D.C. in 2020 precisely because they did not want someone around who was capable of organizing opposition to the globalist agenda.

Even as the environment in Washington DC became more inhospitable from December, 2019, I kept writing articles, meeting people, looking for work (even translation or editing) and trying to articulate a positive vision for the role of the United States in East Asia, and also how governance could be restored in Washington D.C. I had a broad range of people, from Japanese military officers, to American lobbyists and government officials, who seemed to want to work with me. But almost nothing was coming through any more in terms of payment. The opportunities from the Korean Embassy and the Korean Economic Institute dried up completely.

By January, 2020, I had literally no income at all and was forced into credit card debt. Seung-Eun’s emotional breakdown did not help and she ran up even more debt without my knowledge.
My brother, my father, my mother, and my cousin Manny were fully aware of my situation. I took the time to speak with my brother Michael and my cousin Manny, for several hours to explain what was happening. They listened, but offered no opinion, or support of any kind.

There was a bit of progress with the Asia institute. We held extremely successful seminars that gained attention. Andrew Hyde helped me organize several events that drew important figures from Korea. Mindy Kotler, director of the think tank Asia Policy Point, allowed us to share their office, and to hold events together.

My tolerance for the feigned ignorance of my friends and family was not what it was in 2001. We were now twenty years along in this struggle, and I could not tolerate that they were not willing to discuss what had happened, or what was happening.

By the beginning of February, 2020, we debt was piling up and I could not find any source of payment anywhere. I was invited to give talks in Seoul and Tokyo (February 18-27) and had a ticket to travel. Already there was ominous discussion of quarantine for COVID-19 being discussed that suggested to me the launch of a world war.

My brother Michael invited me to have a cup of coffee around February 12. He told me that I could not work in the United States and I should just go back to Korea and find work there. He also said that my children, Rachel and Benjamin, could live with him for the time being.

It was a bizarre discussion. The assumption was not that I needed to find work in the United States, but that I had to leave the country immediately. It sounded like a political order, not honest advice. I told him I would seriously consider this matter during my trip to Asia.

If my brother was saying something to me as nonsensical as that, it suggested that the political environment in Washington was that serious, that dangerous. I felt I had to take him seriously and prepare for a very unpleasant change of conditions.

The talk I had scheduled in Shanghai was cancelled. I arrived to Seoul for a talk to introduce my new book in Korean, but that event was cancelled the day before
because of “COVID-19.” I met a few friends and explained to them just how serious the situation was.

I was able to travel to Tokyo and deliver a talk on environmental policy for a group of Japanese youth without any problem. Japan seemed a bit freer than the US and Korea. I saw a few Japanese friends, and also a Japanese diplomat while staying at an inexpensive hotel in Shibuya.

I asked around about possible employment in Japan without any positive responses.

I was set to return to Washington D.C. on February 22, 2020, but granted that I had no employment opportunities in the US at all, and there was nothing available in Japan either, I decided to cancel that flight and employ my remaining money to return to Seoul where I had the promise from a friend of a room I could live in for the next few weeks.

I had a friend Na Young-chol who took a deep interest in Korean traditional culture and had invited me to several fascinating discussions over the years. For that moment he was the only one in Korea ready to help me out. He came to get me at the airport and drove me to a room attached to the garage of a mansion up in the hills of Pyangchang-dong to the north of Seoul. The room was next to a small apartment that belonged to a Korean shaman (male) who promised I could stay as long as I needed to. The room was cold and took a while to heat up. The bathroom was next door through a freezing gate and there was no way to cook, and no stores around.

But the neighborhood was quite pleasant and I came to enjoy the thirty-minute walk down to the train station. I had some needed time by myself to think about this new crisis—one that was shaping up to be something on the scale of 2001.

I learned about the disasters that came to pass for my family back in Washington D.C. through conversations with my children and my brother thereafter.

We were 20,000 dollars in credit card debt and my wife, a psychological mess, continued to spend money. My brother was happy to let her suffer and threatened to call the police on her if she did not leave the house immediately (rather than seeking psychological help for her).
Michael took in Rachel and Benjamin, but refused to let them meet their mother at his house. He eventually would force her to fly back to Korea, against her will, through a series of threats. Needless to say, Michael was not interested in discussing what was really going on and why suddenly at the start of COVID-19, I was suddenly thrown out of the country.

Back in Korea, there was something refreshing about having no money, no possessions and time alone. The cleanness that came with my expulsion gave me a certain clarity and confidence. A few conversations with Koreans as I looked for work revealed that my story was already well known.

I was able to make some money from a few talks that Na Young-cheol arranged and sent the money back to the United States.

But it did not help much. My wife was so dysfunctional that she could not clean the house before leaving it, and through her actions cost us three month’s rent. We ended up with increasing debt as she simply charged everything to the credit card.

My children stayed with my brother in his spacious home in a wealthy neighborhood in Chevy Chase. I did not like this solution at all, but I had no money and the children did not want to come to Korea.

For my part, however, I felt the situation was so dangerous that I wanted them with me so I could watch out for them. I did not assume that Korea was safer, but that granted the institutional collapse taking place in the United States there might at least be some chance to find stability here.

My wife arrived in Seoul in March 2021. She had been forced to take the plane by my brother, who had used threats and intimidation to force her out of the country. She arrived in Korea, exhausted and ill. She had no work, no health insurance, and no one was willing to talk with her honestly about the situation.

I also found her much changed and difficult to communicate with.

It seemed that the best solution would be for her to stay with some Buddhist monks at a temple where she could pray and meditate until she recovered from the trauma. Buddhism had worked for her before. The Buddhist monk that she was close to told me that it would be difficult to stay with her, but I was able to
get a space for her and me at the Mihwangsa temple, near Mokpo, in Chollanamdo in the south. In unexpected contrast to most everyone else around me, the abbot told me that we could stay there as long as we wanted.

We were set to take the train to Mokpo the next day. When I went to see Seung Eun, she told me that she did not want to go. She insisted on staying at her mother’s home. I could not take her to the hospital for treatment without help from her family and now she refused to come live with me. Not knowing what to do, I decided to go to the Mihwangsa temple by myself first, and wait for her to join me later. Said she would come soon over the phone. I went to Seoul twice thereafter to try to convince her to come down. Ultimately, however, she never came.

I stayed for over a month at the temple. During that time, I wrote more speeches for my presidential campaign, articles on contemporary affairs, attended the temple masses in the early morning and evening. I also discussed my ideas about my future work with the abbot. Most importantly, I spent time trying to reimagine myself to match with the new environment.

Because I had nothing, it was helpful, to be surrounded by monks who had also given up all possessions. Being at the temple also corresponded well with Korean culture in which figures in political trouble often take shelter in temples. This temple was close to the island of Jindo where the admiral Yi Sunsin had bravely fought against the invading Japanese in the 1590s. A short trip to Jindo during my stay deeply inspired me and I began to read more about Yi Sunshin.

Several friends called me up suggesting that I needed to get back to Seoul and that there would be opportunities for me again. Although I had assumed I would be in exile for years, they started to sound more convincing. A Korean friend, also a shaman, arranged for me to stay in an apartment for two weeks in Seoul from April. I decided to go back.

Over the next year, I would move nine times. Sometimes between rooms that people let me live in for a few weeks, sometimes between cheap rooms at boarding houses. Life was rather instable and uncertain, but there was also a certain freedom as well. My wife refused to talk to me. My children did talk to me, but they were far away and there was little I could do to help them. What
possessions I had (some were shipped to me by my brother from the US, some came from the old office I had had at the University of Brain education) were all put in storage.

For a while, my wife seemed to be stable, living with her mother, but in May she started to send out irrational messages to friends and family that were so hurtful, and such a loss of face, for her family, that they decided that they would try to help for the first time and overcame their selfishness and indifference.

It was no easy task to get her committed to a mental hospital for treatment. After several tries, she was at last admitted and would spend a total of six months there for treatment.

Without any doubt, her condition was in part induced by the tremendous stress to which she was subject. She got better, and would leave the hospital and start living with her mother, and later live with me for three months, but our relationship was permanently altered.

By June, I reached a new level of stability in this completely instable world. A friend of mine, Choi Jaejeong, helped me to get a job at a research institute, the Institute for Future Urban Environments. This job combined with other work, offered me equivalent salary (without benefits) to being a professor.

I suspect that there were many others hard at word behind the scenes to get me that position. It was not the job that I wanted, and often the work was far from what I was concerned with, but I had enough time to do my own work as well and I was treated well.

With some income at last, I was able to pay off all credit card debt and even started saving money by the end of the year.

The cost of my wife’s hospitalization, however, was considerable, and her family did nothing to help.
Candidacy for the Presidency, and beyond

The idea of running for office, and even for senator or president of the United States had been in my mind for years. I had first thought of being a candidate for public office in 1999. It was politics, not diplomacy, that interested me at the start in Illinois.

When I observed COVID-19 fascism and the breakdown of American institutions in January, 2020, I thought that the risks were so high that I might as well try for president.

Moreover, I felt that granted the obvious political persecution of me that started in January, 2020, that running for president might be the only thing that would save me--if I could get enough attention from those around me.

Obviously, there was no chance for me to enter American politics through criminal syndicates like the Democratic or Republican parties, but I thought that if I could receive sufficient attention as a candidate, giving carefully crafted speeches and making honest proposals that the other candidates were incapable of making, I could make myself visible in the United States, and around the world, in spite of the classified advisories limiting my activities.

I also thought that if the powers that be went too far in unfairly blocking my campaign, that the operation against someone with nothing but his good will and commitment would backfire.

I was partially successful in this plan.

I put many hours into the drafting and reciting my speeches for the campaign. There could be no doubt that I was the only serious candidate for president.

I had declared myself as a candidate for president of Facebook in an article I wrote for the Huffington Post in 2017. That humorous article suggested that Facebook should be run as a democratic republic, not a corporation, and that Facebook did not belong to the CEO of the corporation, but rather to its users.

I wrote the initial declaration of candidacy for president in early February while still in Washington, along with a platform consisting of seventeen planks. I sent
that version to a handful of friends in Washington D.C. in the days before I was forced to leave for Korea on February 17, 2020.

I later polished the first speech and published my declaration of candidacy on Medium (February 23, 2020) once in Korea.

After a few weeks in Korea, I was at last able to deliver a few talks that gave me enough income to live on. There was a small group, including Na Young-cheol, who took a real interest in the potential of my bid to run as an independent for president of the United States. A long-term political player in the (Korean) Democratic Party, Moon Il-seok, arranged for me to introduce my presidential platform to Koreans in English and Korean through a series of articles and videos published at the popular site Break News. Park Dae-seok, a reporter conducted a lengthy interview with me as well.

This coverage was a major breakthrough that I had been waiting and I had some real visibility for a few months.

This interview was posted in English and Korean on April 7, 2020. That posting drew an enormous audience in Korea.

Writing and delivering speeches about all aspects of American society became my main manner of expression for five months, and for the next two years, speeches that I carefully crafted and then delivered as a video became my primary activity—as opposed to writing articles or books. I wrote numerous drafts for each speech, then read them aloud to myself to get the wording right.

I recorded videos for each speech, sometimes repeatedly, edited them, and then and posted them on YouTube for a broad audience. YouTube registered only 50 or 60 viewings for speech, but this was clearly far more than that.

I wanted the speeches to be polished, inspiring and accessible to the common man in America trying to make sense of the current crisis.

I wanted to speak like Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, Robert Kennedy, or Martin Luther King. Granted the limits on my time, and my complete isolation from others, I think was successful in reaching an effective combination of vision, rhetoric, and attention to actually policy.
It was impossible for me to get coverage in the American media, and I was never invited to address any groups there. Searches on Google, however, showed most of my speeches and I received many notes from those who had read what I had written.

My decision to call for a scientific investigation of the 9/11 incident, for example, in my platform also set me apart from any other candidate, as did my refusal to buy into the bogus narrative about Covid-19. I was set on being an outlier because if the election produced no legitimate president (which would be the case) I would be as entitled to be president as anyone.

If the US were to decline into an even deeper state of institutional decay, I reasoned, my declaration of candidacy could make me a leader in the eyes of some. It did not matter how many people supported me at the start.

A friend posted my original declaration of candidacy on Salon, a discussion run by the diplomat Chas Freeman. Without any doubt, it was read by many government officials and policy makers in D.C.

Na Young-chul introduced me to a variety of people in Korea who were interested in helping me in my campaign after April 2020. I had a substantial group of supporters by May, although most of them would disappear after July.

We had a dinner with eight people who were going to be my team. Needless to say, that never came to pass. The stakes were too high and most people ran away.

One of them, however, Lee Chunyoung, remained faithful for years, and helped me to earn a bit of income.

A few articles over the next month in other news sources referred to me. Among them, a short article in Yonhap News was the most widely read.

I gave a passionate speech in front of the US Embassy in Seoul on June 8 that was written up in several blogs.

The high point of my campaign in Seoul was my formal declaration of candidacy at the Seoul Foreign Correspondents Club on June 15, an event that drew a substantial crowd, including a few Americans. It was no easy matter to reserve
that space for a declaration of candidacy and there can be no doubt that the effort was supported at a high level.

Lee Buyoung, the former head of the National Assembly, introduced me before my speech. I did my best to sound convincing and committed. I think it was a success, although my voice is a bit high. I would improve with time.

I was joined by a distinguished panel for a discussion on policy after the speech, which included a former minister of the interior.

We had posters made up for the event that were hung on the walls behind me: “Make America Green Again”, “Make America Great for the First Time”, and “Pursuing Truth; Protecting Freedom.”

I produced a book based on those speeches entitled “I Shall Fear No Evil: Why we Need a Truly Independent Presidential Candidate” in August. The book was released through an online publisher in PDF format in September. I sent about 150 copies to those I thought would appreciate it in the United States with the help of a friend.

A small publishing house run by a friend agreed to publish the Korean translation of my book—at my expense. I would give hundreds of copies of that book to people I thought might support me.

I was also able to, with the help of the Mexican Ambassador to Korea, get the book translated into Spanish and published in Mexico. For a period of three months the Mexican President Obrador seems to have taken a personal interest in my campaign—although that was later overwhelmed by other factors.

I also ordered translations of the book into Chinese and Vietnamese in July, 2020. Vietnamese took considerable interest in me for a few months. In fact, the only time I was interviewed by a major newspaper was in Vietnam.

When I had enough money to publish the English version in November 2020, I sent 80 copies to prominent people in the United States, those whom I was certain would take an interest in might cause. Almost no one acknowledged that they had received the book.
A graduate student in France whom I had helped previously with his research, Riyad, volunteered to translate one of my speeches, and then all of my speeches, into flawless French. More than that, he helped me develop a sophisticated website for my campaign www.emanuelprez.com and even found people to design additions to the site, and to translate my speeches into other languages.

I decided that this campaign, now global in scope, would make or break me and I paid what little money I had to have the book translated into German, Turkish, Hebrew, Farsi, Romanian, Polish, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, and French. Eventually I had customized prefaces for the book that addressed the concerns of specific nations translated into 38 languages.

It was a campaign like none other. We will never know how many people read my speeches, but I am certain the numbers were considerable.

My campaign for US president while living in Korea became enmeshed in Korean domestic politics from July, 2021. I came across a group of Koreans protesting against vaccines, 5G and militarism by accident and I immediately joined them in their efforts.

I had never seen such a group in Korea previously and I thought that Koreans were no naïve as to be incapable of such analysis. But this group, later known as the Pandemic Investigation Committee, contained some bright thinkers.

One of them, the “truth musician” Xeno Shin, interviewed me about operation COVID-19 and I gave a short presentation on the geopolitical factors behind the shifts taking place.

Shin edited the video with great care and it immediately went viral on YouTube. It was soon after deleted, reposted, then deleted again. Section of the video, and transcripts of the video, were posted on so many blogs that it can be found easily even today.

At the time, there was no voice in Korean giving that sort of geopolitical and economic analysis of COVID-19.

In the days after the video was posted, political operatives attacked me as being a right wing nut critical of the Moon Jae-in administration. Several people told
me about those postings, but they disappeared soon after and I never saw any of
them.

What was clear was that my critique, although focused on class issues, received
the strongest support from conservative and Christian groups. That turn led to
some unexpected friendships such as my being invited to a gathering of Park
Geun-hye supporters in Daegu where I gave a speech denouncing vaccines.

The election in the United States decided nothing for me. I gave a speech soon
after entitled, “I Love a Good Puppet Show”, in which I called for a fair election
in January, and explained concretely why neither Trump, nor Biden was qualified
to be president. In other words, I refused to recognize the election results.

That speech was followed by one on the occasion of the inauguration on January
20, 2021, in which I condemned the occupation of Washington D.C. by
international finance and the super-rich, and made it clear that I would not
recognize either Biden as a legitimate president. Such writings were ignored, at
first, but later they found a broad audience, including among Trump supporters.

From early 2021, starting with my detailed “In Defense of Donald Trump” many
of my articles were featured in Global Research, a brave and fiercely critical blog
that had the reputation as a leader in the alternative news. For a year it became
my primary means of communicating with the world, in addition to my
presidential campaign site.

My work with activists against the Covid-19 vaccine regime in Korea, combined
with my writings in English, gave me a new audience, although it was again
different. Many of those who had supported me in my campaign in March, 2020,
backed away as COVID-19 became central to my message.

The number of friends I could talk to in Korea, let alone in DC, was drastically
reduced. Most professors and public officials would not even answer my emails
or phone calls. It was starting to feel like 2001 all over again.

I met an interesting man by the name of Woo Byeoksong in December, 2020
through my friends in the Pandemic Investigation Committee who was willing to
work closely with me for a period of about six months—and then suddenly
disappeared without a trace. Although he was not a political genius, and had
certain clear limitations, he was sincere in his desire to help me get something off the ground in Korea beyond my campaign for president of the United States.

I had talked with friends about forming a political party in Korea before, and had even made up a logo for a “Revolutionary Party” in October, 2020. It was just a concept, however.

With Woo Byeok-song’s help, however, we started to gather a group together to create a real political party committed to opposing the COVID-19 mandate. I was amazed how far we got.

We produced some powerful speeches and declarations together, and designed an attractive website. The name was changed to “A Better Party” (Deo naeun dang) to please those who were allergic to the word “revolutionary.”

From February of 2021, however, dark clouds formed over this great idea. Although we needed only 300 people to sign up as supporters in order to get through the first stage for registering as a political party, we could only get about 60. It did not make that much sense. I felt increasingly that we had been targeted and were being undermined.

That was not the first time I had had such an experience. But I did not want to waste my time trying to please moderates if there was no institutional progress. When Woo suddenly disappeared in March, 2021. I went back to my United States campaign and writing speeches in English.

I had heard about, however, another Korean who had similar thinking to mine and whom many thought that I should meet. Although I went the Saturday protests against COVID-19, I never managed ran into him until the end of June, 2021.

His name was Choi Seongnyeon and he had caused great controversy when he launched a “Khan Communist Party” in Korea in 2018. Actually, it was not a big political crisis, but various right-wing political pundits had great fun attacking him.

When we met, we discovered that we had much in common, despite some superficial similarities. He was also committed to action, to building real institutions and to revolution. He was open to a free exchange of ideas, as was I,
and we were able to easily come up with plans for the launch of a new political party.

Choi embraced the name Revolutionary Party, but suggested adding “international” in front to distinguish it from other right-wing groups that had adopted the term “revolutionary party” already. I readily agreed.

Within a few weeks, we were producing numerous videos, speeches and policy pronouncements and had gathered a considerable following. The approach was entirely different. We did not accept the legitimacy of the government of the Republic of Korea at all and we had no interest in registering for anything. This gave us enormous freedom and I think it was the wisest move. The core of the party was the two of us, later joined by Park Kyung-ho, who worked all the time on a real response to the massive criminality in Korea.

My campaign in the United States took a significant turn in May 25, 2021 when I declared the launch of a United States Provisional Government with myself as acting president located in Korea. The concept had been in my mind from the moment I was forced to leave Washington D.C. for Seoul, but this time I was making it my explicit position through a series of speeches.

I had a website up for USPROVGOV.ASIA by June and posted numerous policy decisions for the world from that site. Global Research would publish my proposal for a provisional government and cite USPROVGOV as the source for those speeches that they published.

I eventually was putting more work into the provisional government writings than my campaign for president, although I felt that I should continue to do both simultaneously. As the United States descended deeper in to a totalitarian fog, I felt that a provisional government was the only alternative and I guessed that enough people would be sympathetic as to keep me afloat—which was the case.

Rather than writing speeches for my presidential campaign, I started writing and delivering speeches for the USPROVGOV which I posted on that site and that, when picked up by Global Research, received broad circulation. No one ever said I was not the acting president of a provisional government and no one ever told me to stop.
I, for my part, took this USPROVGOV seriously, although I also knew it could not be taken seriously unless I had broad support. What broad support would mean, however, was not clear. In the case of my activities in 2001, I never received direct recognition at all, and that may be the reason I was successful.

Living in Seoul was increasingly a challenge. It was more oppressive, people wore masks, and openly embraced the vaccine regime. I started to imagine a scenario in which I would survive by disappearing into the countryside and living on nothing but the handouts from farmers for a few years.

This scenario became increasingly vivid and formed the basis for my strategy between June, 2021 and January, 2022.

I started living together with my wife from May, 2022, with relative success. But our perspective on what was happening in the world was simply impossible to bridge. It was, however, possible, to work something out, I felt.

There were other factors, however.

I was informed in July, 2021 that I had been dismissed from my job at the research institute—without warning. I was without any source of income and few people were willing to talk to me about this effort. I was offered two possibilities for work translating that were unexpectedly cancelled at the last moment.

I told my wife that I would leave for the countryside and find a place where we could live without masks, without vaccines and if necessary get basic food from farmers whom we befriended.

She did not take my suggestion seriously and ultimately decided to go back to living with her mother in Bundang (south of Seoul) if I left for the countryside in August. That is what she did ultimately. In fact, her sisters were so critical of me and my decision that she did not feel comfortable writing or talking to me until January, 2022.

I had already started close work with Choe Sungnyeon, including a series of broadcasts outlining the position of our party. When I suggested we should move to the countryside and set up an independent base, he fully agreed.
His friend was willing to sell us an old minivan that loaded up with our possessions and took off for Jeonju on August 2. As much of my clothing had been lost, and the few of my books remaining were in storage in Ilsan at the factory of a friend of Yi Yanghaeng, I could travel light.

A friend from Dahn was able to find a place for a few weeks for us in Jeonju were we stayed as we thought out what our next move should be.

We were invited to Uiryeong, in Gyeongsang namdo to live in an old house in the countryside that belonged to an old man whom my friend knew well.

The village was attractive and the inhabitants welcoming to us. We spent the day cleaning up the house where we would live.

It was the home of a Confucian scholar that dated back several centuries and I learned that there had been a solid tradition of learning in the region in the past that had been destroyed by urbanization.

Just at the moment that we had finished cleaning our new home, and were settling down for dinner, however, a local police officer visited the own man along with the old man’s son.

He was told that we had to wear masks if we were going to live in that village and that we were not appropriate.

I do not know exactly what they discussed. But suddenly everything changed. The old man came to us and told us we could not use the kitchen, that we had to wash outside of the bathroom and that we had to wear masks all the time.

An hour later, the neighbor came by to tell us that we could not stay in the house we had spent the last two days cleaning—after she had been so friendly just a few hours before.

For the old man the whole show was a tremendous loss of face. I could see how it pained him to see us leave the next day.

There really was no doubt as to where we would go next.

I had considered moving to the countryside in March, 2021 and stayed for a week with Tibor, a fascinating man from the Czech Republic who lived in a small house
in the countryside with his two children. A devoted follower of the old Unification Church of Rev. Sunmyung Moon and a fiery independent spirit who refused to have anything to do with the COVID-19 scam, I had been impressed by Timor’s bravery and commitment. He also had managed to raise two children who stood with him in the opposition to COVID-19—something I had not been able to do myself.

Tibor hit it off with Choe Sungnyun, and although he was not interested in our International Revolutionist Party, he supported many of our policies—granted he also lectured us on Unification Church philosophy more than we would have wanted. Park Kyungho also came down to visit several times and joined our party, bringing the number of central people to three.

Although Tibor’s house was small, we managed to live there for almost a month, and to engage in far-reaching discussions concerning our response in Korea, and globally, to COVID-19 regime.

We spent a month looking for a place to live and were turned down at every turn. Suddenly, in September, we found a small room in a house in the old city which the landlord was enthusiastic about renting to us. She was an active member of a local church which also seemed to support us.

We spent a few days cleaning up the rather filthy, but inexpensive, house. Choe Sungnyeon occupied the second floor and I the first. We had meetings to discuss policy and activities on the first floor which was slightly larger.

The International Revolutionary Party and the United States Provisional Government websites became my primary means of reaching out to the world after September, 2021. I lost an even larger chunk of friends, but gained new supporters—many of whom never made their presence felt.

I could tell that since Korean government officials, and then American government officials after December, 2021, were willing to meet me and even to comment positively on my extremely critical writings, that I had a substantial following.

We made formal protests in Korean against government policies, held rallies, candlelight vigils for those killed by vaccines, and handed out a sophisticated new
introduction to the IRP in two pages to those interested in Yeosu. Although our actions were limited because of our small size, we had an audience—in part because of our willingness to work for nothing, and work all the time.

January 2022 looked extremely grim. I imagined a moment when we would no longer be able to obtain food, even become homeless, because of our activities. The mandatory vaccine regime had been accepted to a disturbing degree, vaccine passports had been implemented in part in Seoul, and also increasingly in Yeosu, and the risks kept rising.

And yet, in the midst of this, I was invited to several important seminars, found a real friend at the US embassy for the first time in 10 years, and found new opportunities to reach a Korean and international audience. Global Research, which stopped publishing me in October, 2021, suddenly took a strong interest in my writings in January, 2021. My speech in February responding to Vladimir Putin’s speech concerning Ukraine reached a broad audience, especially when put out with subtitles on Ukrainian and stressing a strong commitment to self-determination. My refusal to buy into either the American-German, or the Russian positions got be attention again. But the growing risk of world war, and the spread of fascism suggested that this time around, now at the age of almost 57, I would have many more challenges than had been the case twenty years earlier. The struggle, however, was essentially the same.

The last twenty pages of this novel were composed soon after the events narrated and therefore I did not have the luxury of editing out false leads and misinformation because not enough time had passed. I still felt that it was important to bring the novel up to the present for the sake of the readers.
Conclusion

The writing and the editing of this novel has been a difficult process. It would have been great if I had had the financial support to hire a professional editor. Yet I am not sure that course of action would have been entirely a positive, as such editorializing might have covered up, or rationalized, the rawness of the narrative, and contradictions in my own attitude that are an essential part of this work, and an essential part of who I was, and who I am. Some parts of the move back and forth between highly organized institutions and radical rebellions does not make sense to me. I doubt I fully understand the pressures and the resulting psychology.

It is a fact that I went alternated between a desire to be a part of the system and to achieve change through institutions, and I simultaneously felt that I had to oppose everything in that system and to take up a radical agenda. I do not try to paper over these contradictions in my personality.

So, as great as the temptation to rewrite the entire book, and impose a unity of tone and style, I have not done so. I went through many phases in my experiences over eighteen years that were contradictory, and that cannot be explained away. It would be nice to say that I was a radical rebel from the beginning, and justify all my actions accordingly, so as to support some such a revolutionary agenda. That was not who I was.

On multiple occasions, I tried to rejoin the mainstream, only to be pushed away. I was willing to work with many people whom I did not particularly respect, or care for, because I felt that it was a practical necessity that I be engaged. Some of those actions clearly were mistakes.

Perhaps it is best to leave this novel as my contribution to the future writing of a history of the period that I lived through, especially the critical time from November 2001 until 2020.

Although one can trace the origins of the problems that the United States faced back to the Kennedy assassination, or even before then, I felt that the major shift in all aspects of American society had started in December of 2000, as the new
Bush administration enlisted various criminal elements to shut down the United States government.

If the materials presented seem raw and poorly edited, that also serves to permit third parties to see me as I was, not as I wished to be perceived, nor as the political straw man that others made me into.

After all, the ultimate history cannot be, should not be, written by me.

Exactly what should be included in this novel is also a problem. This book is not supposed to be autobiographical, and it is not meant to describe everything that I did over that period of 18 years. The novel also mentions relatively little about what I did before 2000, even though that part might be quite helpful to some people when trying to piece together this narrative.

The point of the novel is to focus on what was done to me, and why exactly it was done to me, after I returned from a trip to East Asia in July 2000 to discuss online academic collaboration.

There will likely be some readers who will feel that the novel drifts away from the original topic. Others have already complained that the narrative is too long, compared with the four-page summary I had written previously. That is perhaps inevitable, as the judgment as to what is relevant is determined by the interest of the reader. Some will want far more detail about the context, about my daily life, while others might be happy with the summary I put in front. I realize that some of the detail will cause great pain to friends and family. At this point, however, I feel I am left with no choice. All I can do is to claim that the entire novel is fictional.

As I have remarked to several readers, the novel is open-ended, for the simple reason that I am still alive. One could say that the conclusion should be written, posthumously, by a third party. That is not to assume that I will die tomorrow, although that is always possible, but rather to suggest that the story may not end in any simple manner. I have often felt that the combination of climate change and world war could mean that the story will in fact never be told.

There is still a possibility that the entire story will be treated by others in a serious manner within my lifetime, and that we will find some sort of resolution, or at
some least partial “truth and reconciliation” in the near future. Such a desire on my part is a natural one. I would love to find a way to establish normal relations with family and friends; basically, everyone who was once close to me.

Although we do not know the true stories of Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning, John Kiriakou, Jeffery Sterling, and others, we do know that my story has been entirely off the record, placed in the “it never happened” file.

That is the case, despite the fact that hundreds of thousands of people know what happened at some level. The references to that tale in the movie, A Beautiful Mind, are just too obvious to pretend it never took place.

I know that my case is not the only one that has never been covered by the media, or subject to an open discussion. Yet there are egregious aspects to my story. Therefore, it was absolutely necessary to write this narrative.

Numerous false stories have been circulated about my bout with “mental illness,” about my fights with my department head and my dean, about my unsocial personality, and about my work for the CIA.

I am shocked that friends and family do not feel that there is any need to set the record straight, even in private conversations with me, and even in the face of all these obvious falsehoods that have been planted. Somehow, many people who know this story think that it is fine for me to be deprived of all due process, and to be subjected to all sorts of damaging rumors that they would find unacceptable in any other context.

The choice of the term “fiction”

The decision to use the term “novel”, and to claim that this narrative is entirely fictional requires explanation.

I chose to present the materials as a ‘fictional novel”, because I felt that this approach would give me the most flexibility in presenting the truth, and that I would be able to tell what had happened without the limitations often artificially
imposed by the strict demand for complete and verifiable evidence. If this “novel” inspires third parties to engage in their own investigations, that will be a success.

Anyone with any familiarity with this case, or who knows about even a few of the events touched upon, will quickly grasp that this text is not fictional, but relates events that took place in the United States that even conspiracy blogs will not touch.

Calling it a fictional novel is also a means of responding in advance to the unlikely scenario that I might be accused of leaking classified material. Of course, because I was never granted a clearance, and no one ever told me what facts were, or were not, classified, it would be hard to make such a legal case. That said, it is possible I may be even further harassed in such a manner in the future. So, part of the burden for the reader could be that she or he might worry that these are matters that are not supposed to be discussed. Adopting the position that everything is fictional can help to address this problem.

Moreover, in order to make this narrative effective, it has been necessary to weave together information that varies in quality. I must put together facts that are definitive, with explanations from third parties whose names I do not know, with inferences to form a whole.

This is not supposed to be a peer-reviewed article in Nature. It is supposed to get people thinking for a moment about a complex social and political phenomenon. A novel is the best way to do so.

To get the ball rolling, I had to put some meat on the bones, much as a paleontologist puts muscles and skin on dinosaur bones to reconstruct the original morphology. It is a creative act, but the purpose is entirely scientific.

If I had stuck only to documents that have been released, and 100% certified as accurate, I could not have put an effective narrative together, even though there exists more than enough convincing evidence already out there. Sticking only to what a court would accept would be a massive distortion of the tale.

Moreover, since no one in the US (as of May 2019) wanted to join me in demanding an inquiry into the actions of the federal Government, the state of Illinois, or the University of Illinois, in any form, I have decided to limit my own
actions at the start of this process. I have decided that I will not request documents until others involved break their unethical, hypocritical, and illegal vow of silence on this case.

Once people are ready to do that, I am ready to go forward to the next step.

**What is truth?**

I could write at great length about the relationship between fiction and truth, as a former professor of literature. I will spare you that. What I will say here is that most of the so-called “true” stories we find in the media, in non-fiction books, and other places, are so blatantly false as to be comical. The entire system by which we calculate our economic growth, and our security, is also similarly ridiculous. Therefore, everyone should approach truth with an open mind.

Let me explain the sources upon which I have relied in writing in this novel.

I have related many events that can be readily documented, and for which there have been multiple eyewitnesses. There is more than enough that can be reviewed through official records to prove that a massive illegal conspiracy took place. All that is required is such a demand. The only thing that I have done is put off such an appeal until I have a third party willing to support such an inquiry.

That is to say that even if we do not have access to the documentation describing how the criminal conspiracy was carried out (internal FBI or CIA reports), we can clearly show that some such operation must have been undertaken, and that its restrictions remain largely in effect today.

The story of my mental illness, which resulted in me being put on medical leave for a year, is so full of holes, even looking at medical records alone, as to sound like a Monty Python skit. Even the most elementary set of interviews with key figures would reveal a coordinated conspiracy.

I was on good terms with my members of my department until I was suddenly accused of being mentally ill, and forced to stop interacting with them in February 2001, then put on medical leave without any medical evaluation. I was then
ordered to conduct my classes while on medical leave, and not allowed to teach
the next semester, even though there was not a single complaint or concern about
my teaching during my supposed time on “sick leave.” When I was dismissed
from Illinois in 2004, the only institution in the world that could offer me a job
was not a university, or community college, or even a temporary work service,
but rather the CIA. All of this can be proven.

Other materials included in the novel are contextual, and would require some
work to demonstrate their significance. Moreover, the damning correspondence
with Joseph Alper that I had saved on my hard drive mysteriously vanished two
years ago. I must rely on memory to reconstruct some parts of the story. But still
there is plenty of material that remains on my hard drive, or in other open sources,
which is clear in its implications, but that would require some serious analysis to
make sense of.

The novel refers to events that I have witnessed, but for which there are no third
parties available to document or confirm. Those events were critical in this tale.
To leave them out because of a lack of evidence would be a disservice to readers
and to the public.

There were odd coincidences and other strange behavior by others at the
University of Illinois, and elsewhere, that can only be explained as a systematic
effort to undermine my career. I tried to explain what I think that effort was in
this text, but I lack proof for this part. Nevertheless, to leave that out would
deprive the reader of critical material.

Other explanations are possible, but I think anyone looking at the facts would
have to conclude that the intentions were clear; the only uncertainty is to the exact
motivations. There are parts of the story to which I was not a witness. Those parts
I have put together based on the stories told to me by others whom I trusted. But
I did not see documentation. I included those narratives because they made sense
when I had heard them.

There were also parts of the story that were told to me by other people whom I
did not completely trust, such as “Bob” at the CIA headquarters. Yet the content
of those comments was compelling enough to lead me to develop a more refined
model for the nature of the conspiracy. Those tales, sometimes in the form of allegories, play an important role in this novel.

There are parts of the story in which I speculate concerning events of which I have no direct knowledge at all. For example, third parties suggested to me that the greed about possible money to be made from distance learning was one of the reasons that I had to be so completely crushed in 2001. For this reason, I describe a meeting of investment bankers in which I suggest that they concluded that I must be eliminated from distance education permanently. I do not have any evidence that such a meeting took place, and perhaps it never did take place. I feel that the probability is high that this meeting did occur, granted similar actions by bankers in American history. I do not expect that part of the novel to ever be documented. But to leave it out would be a disservice to the reader.

Finally, I read the newspapers very carefully between 2001 and 2005, and I interpolated much from what I read there, or did not read there, about what had happened in the United States at the time. Some parts of what I thought had happened were later confirmed to be true by others in private conversation. Other parts have never been confirmed, but seem to be likely to me. We can look forward to a date at which the veracity of my story can be judged through an honest investigation of the events of that period. Until that time, we must rely on fictional novels.
Appendix

Distance learning proposal

University of Illinois, University of Tokyo, Seoul National University, and Peking University

June 2000

University of Illinois as a World University:

The Marriage of High Technology and Liberal Arts in the Field of East Asian Studies

Emanuel Pastreich

The first steps towards a program for joint instruction between the University of Illinois, University of Tokyo, Seoul National University, and Peking University, using advanced computer-guided video-conferencing technology and internet communications.

Short Term Goal:

Over the next two years, a set of critical courses in the humanities at the University of Illinois, University of Tokyo, Seoul National University, and Peking University, will be open to students and faculty of all four participating
schools, using advanced computer technology provided by the Office of Instructional Resources. Taking advantage of its world-class program in computer engineering and computer science, as well as advanced internet capability, the University of Illinois will be the first institution in the world to offer a program whereby courses taught in English as well as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, at four separate institutions in different countries, will be available to our students.

Although the use of such international links will eventually transform the entire university, it will be primarily in the humanities, and specifically in East Asian studies, that we will begin this program. After a short pilot program limited to several focused seminars conducted entirely in English, a full program offering a wide variety of courses, first to graduate students in East Asian Studies, will be set up. Many courses will be offered that would otherwise be unavailable anywhere in the United States.

By dint of the overwhelming advantages that the University of Illinois holds in the computer sciences, the humanities program at the University of Illinois will be transformed. We will have a program in East Asian studies that will be the envy of schools in the United States, and throughout the world. We will be able to promise within liberal arts and sciences a group of scholars second to none, because of the participation of those at universities in East Asia and elsewhere, which would turn our program in East Asian studies, and other departments soon thereafter, into courses that could compete with any academic program in the country.

Whereas a private university such as Harvard can hire one or two outstanding teachers in any particular field of East Asian studies, we would be able to offer access to courses at three major East Asian institutions, thereby making ourselves an international center. Eventually, our advantages in computer science will make the University of Illinois a vital center for studies in the humanities throughout the world.

Moreover, the University of Illinois would not only offer courses in English in conjunction with the University of Tokyo, Seoul National University, and Peking University, it would also take on the role of a transfer point, through which courses shared via videoconferencing between
those three universities would be routed, even in such cases as courses for which there was not great demand at the University of Illinois. The university could promise to act as the hub for videoconferencing and internet instruction, and eventually define the world standards for international education.

Long-term goal

The United States continues to have closer economic and political ties with East Asia every day. Already, the United States has considerably greater economic relationships with East Asia than with Europe. After Mexico and Canada, which are essentially part of the domestic economy, the major trade partners are Japan, China, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Korea. At the current rate of change, China, Japan, and Korea may well become the top three in the next five years. Moreover, from electronics, to software, and daily consumables, East Asia has an immense impact on current manufacturing and technology. Our applied sciences are increasingly working in cooperation with East Asian academic institutions and private corporations. We have a large number of graduate students and faculty from East Asia. And yet East Asian Studies has not received the attention it deserves on our campus. A strong East Asian studies program with a reputation as strong as our E.C.E. and computer science departments is essential to the well-being of University of Illinois.

This project in international internet instruction will not only make the University of Illinois the primary center for East Asian studies, but it will also make it a presence in East Asia, as well. Subsequently, the reputation of the University of Illinois within the humanities will increase. An outstanding program in East Asian studies will make all the difference as East Asian culture becomes more mainstream in the United States, and the command of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean becomes more important in high technology fields. Already, multi-Asian language word processing is becoming an immense field in the computer industry.

No one has any doubt that we will need specialists in the future, not only in the humanities, but also in technical fields, who have an outstanding ability in
those languages. Access to instruction in the original language at universities in East Asia would make all the difference.

There is an absolute limit to what the University of Illinois can be as an international university, unless its program in the humanities has at least as great a reputation as the sciences. This program will allow us to use our advantages in computer technology to catapult our program in the humanities to the top. Cooperation will extend into the applied sciences, as well, allowing for joint laboratories and programs in science and technology.

The program in connection with the University of Tokyo, Seoul National University, and Peking University, would establish the University of Illinois as a major center in East Asian studies. Eventually, courses would be shared with universities in countries all over the world, so that students at the University of Illinois would be able to access classes that would otherwise be unavailable. Likewise, our faculty could offer courses for a collection of students at different institutions that they would otherwise not be able to find a sufficient audience for.

**Benefits to be Obtained from This Program of Study**

So much of our computer-related research, interaction with high-tech corporations, and future markets for our graduates involve East Asia. Whereas a university like Harvard or Princeton has great advantages in terms of the financial backing for studies in the humanities, they are, in fact, limited in faculty to a few well-known professors. By setting up a lattice of courses of instruction available to students at the University of Illinois, University of Tokyo, Seoul National University, and Peking University, that is administered by the University of Illinois, we will be able to offer a breadth of courses that cannot be matched by any other university. We will not only level the playing field, but we will also make our technological advantage the key to our program in the humanities.

There remains considerable sensitivity between China, Japan, and Korea at an institutional level, even as the three countries are drawn together by economic, technical, and cultural ties with the United States and each other. For this reason, the University of Illinois is in the unique position of being able to act
as a conduit for intellectual exchange between the three Asian countries which will dominate the economy and culture of the 21st century.

It would be far easier for a student at the University of Tokyo to take courses at Peking University through our program, than to work through the complex bureaucracy surrounding such study in Japan or China.

The University of Illinois program in international videoconferencing and internet instruction could become a major institution within East Asia, and as East Asia increases in importance, so will the University of Illinois.

Our program would be extended into the sciences, as well, thereby allowing cooperation on scientific projects between the four institutions at a level of complexity and immediacy previously unimaginable. If the University of Illinois acts quickly, it could seize the lead in what would be an inevitable revolution in higher education.

Although initial instruction will focus on East Asia, once the system is in place, courses at universities in France, Germany, Italy, Turkey, or elsewhere will also be handled. Specialized courses that could not be offered before, due to low appeal to the overall student body, would then be available. Problems concerning visas for students and visiting faculty would cease to be a concern.

The disadvantages of the University of Illinois’ location would be completely offset by this program, and the flexibility of the university in engaging in this project would soon make it a rival with major Ivy League universities. We might not have the endowments that those universities have, but we would be able to match their offerings, their foreign programs, and their faculty. The University of Illinois would become the conduit for this new network of international scholarly exchange, and if we do it quickly, we would have the chance to jump to the forefront of the academic world.

Steps involved:
A) A series of focused academic conferences on set topics involving the University of Illinois, the University of Tokyo, Seoul National University, and Peking University. A conference on a subject such as modern Chinese history would include scholars from each participating university, and allow us to employ the new medium. Such academic events would make the power of this new approach quite clear to all involved.

B) Discussions with the University of Tokyo, Seoul National University, and Peking University concerning the administration of a trial run of the videoconferencing instruction program. Must make sure that video conferencing facilities are available at the appropriate time at all four campuses, and that their software is mutually compatible. First trial will be courses that are conducted entirely in English, 2000-2001. Either an ISDN or I.P. line, or the new Access Grid of Electronic Visualization Lab would be employed. The times for classes would be China time 8 AM - 11:30 AM; Seoul/Tokyo 9 AM - 12:30 PM; Champaign-Urbana 6-9:30 PM.

C) Set up small administration for the trial program.

D) Arrange for a set of classes at each university to be available via videoconferencing to students at all four of the universities on a regular basis. Set up a unified format for the videoconferencing, and internet components of these courses. Set up a system for organizing the courses, and allowing courses to be available not only to students from the University of Illinois, but also to students at the other three campuses simultaneously. Thus, a course on Japanese history at the University of Illinois, for example, would be attended by students from Beijing, Tokyo, and Seoul. The first run would be courses conducted in English in the humanities of East Asian studies at each institution, that would then be available at all four universities for real time participation (available at the University of Illinois from 6-9 PM). Other courses would be taped from all four universities, and be made available on the web to a limited number of students at all four campuses. Online, asynchronous discussions would supplement the occasional video conferences.
At first, a pilot program limited to four seminars (one at each campus) conducted entirely in English will be undertaken.

Eventually, a specially-outfitted room, or series of rooms at each respective campus, complete with a life-size transmitter screen, a simultaneous electronic writing board, instantaneous interactive pads for each student, and complete internet and e-mail capabilities for interaction in English, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean would be set up at each campus.

D) Set up a program for granting credit for the courses offered between the four universities.

E) Put together a database of all faculty at each of the participating institutions that could be readily adjusted later, so that scholars covering similar subjects could easily communicate with each other.

F) Run a set of courses for which credit is granted between all four universities.

G) Expand that set of courses from one humanities course for each university, to include courses in both the humanities and the sciences. Also, arrange for videoconferencing between the seven universities as part of joint research in the humanities and the sciences.

H) Arrange for the use of such videoconferencing to set up joint laboratories in the sciences between Asia, Europe, and the University of Illinois. Expand the range of the technology quickly to make the University of Illinois a clear world leader in education.

**BASIC APPROACHES**
1) Lectures from designated classes that would be recorded on video and made available at the other campuses. Students would watch the lectures, then compose e-mail format responses (or postings on a webpage) that would be responded to by teaching assistants at the campus from which the lecture originated. The video recordings of lectures would be divided into two different categories: videotapes of lectures that could be kept permanently on file, and those that could be shown only one time and then be destroyed.

2) E-mail address exchanges between students at each university studying similar subjects. The students would carry out an extended dialog via e-mail, or postings at a common webpage for the course of a semester; perhaps working on projects together. After a month or so, there would be a video conference discussion between students on topics they had previously investigated.

3) Extended academic videoconferencing on set topics for professors and researchers. Scholars working on a similar topic would meet to discuss a topic of common interest via videoconference. They would first exchange comments on set topics via postings on a common webpage (in whichever language was most appropriate: English, Chines, Japanese, or Korean). As scholars would not have to pay for travel, and eventually be able to carry out such academic conferences from their home computers, international conferencing would become far, far easier.

4)
Occasional meetings via videoconference for students taking similar courses at all four universities. Faculty members would also be present for these non-credit intellectual exchanges.

5)  
Selected seminars conducted entirely via videoconference including students from all four campuses (conducted in a language appropriate to the subject). These seminars would be conducted largely via daily posting at common websites, with an actual videoconference once a week, or perhaps once every two weeks (alternating with a meeting of students at the local campus). Papers would be sent via e-mail for grading, but require a special code to identify them as original. The grade received by a student would be, in all cases, at his or her own institution, so there would be no problem with credit for the course attended.

6)  
Joint webpages between administrators at each institution that would be accessible only by code. These webpages would allow the presidents of each institution, for example, to share valuable information or tips for future cooperation, without that information becoming public. It would make it simple for a dean, for example, to figure out who the person of equivalent rank was in the other three institutions.

7)  
Joint webpages shared by scholars in similar fields. Thereby, professors in Chinese studies, for instance, could easily go to webpages on which all scholars working on China at all four institutions would be listed. They could then proceed to arrange scholarly exchanges on their own.
8) 50-minute multimedia class modules on a set topic prepared for viewing via internet at each university. Each module would consist of A) a spoken lecture by a professor; B) a set of images related to the topic; C) a set of relevant texts illustrating the issues concerned; D) recordings of the Chinese pronunciation. So, a 50-minute module on Chinese poetry would consist of selections from a lecture on the topic by a professor, images of Chinese landscape and traditional clothing, selections from Chinese poems in the original language and in translation, and a recording of a poet reciting his or her own composition. After observing the entire module, the student would respond to various topics, and engage in an e-mail discussion with students at his campus, as well as the other three campuses. The student would also have to respond to the teaching assistant, who would grade the comments.

9) Massively parallel research laboratories. Scholars conducting research on a specialized topic, say chip fabrication, would be connected via a dense tissue of videoconferencing, sophisticated shared webpages, mutual databases, and systematically coordinated planning. Therefore, massively parallel research laboratories could be created between the four universities, in which faculty and facilities could be massed, and complex tasks partitioned and assigned, so as to avoid duplication. The result would be a new level of speed and sophistication.

10) Immigration has become an issue, and the governments of Korea, Japan, and the United States have made it more difficult for Chinese students to obtain visas recently. Although such policies are often unfair, immigration is a serious issue to take into account. If Chinese students and scholars can participate completely in the universities of Korea, Japan, and the United States via internet and videoconferencing, however, they can make a full contribution without leaving China. After they have finished their studies, they can work for international
companies, and make a significant contribution to the world economy, while remaining in China and using such internet, shared database, and video conferencing technology.

11) ASYNCHRONOUS SYMPOSIUM:

The asynchronous symposium would be an innovative format in Internet communication, designed to allow intellectual discourse between individuals with similar fields of expertise, who otherwise would never have any contact for reasons of culture. In a nutshell, there would be four parallel webpages representing a basic chat room, on which participants could post their responses to a given topic. In this first experiment, English, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean are suggested, although there would be no limit as to the number of languages possible. The responses posted by scholars on each of the four parallel webpages would then translated into the other three languages, and posted for the participants to read. The first asynchronous symposium would discuss the broad issue of technology and globalization. Once the webpages have been developed, and translators are found, any number of subjects could be brought up.

THE ASYNCHRONOUS SYMPOSIUM WOULD BE CONDUCTED EMPLOYING FOUR PARALLEL WEBPAGES.

The asynchronous symposium would be conducted over four parallel (but linked) webpages. One page each would be set for input in English, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. A set of questions or topics would be posted at the top of each webpage in the four languages. Scholars (or experts) would post their responses to the given subject at the webpage set for their own language. Thus, a Chinese scholar would merely compose in Chinese. Graduate students (or professional translators) would be paid to translate the postings into the other three languages from each webpage every twelve hours. Therefore, a scholar reading the postings in any one of the four languages could have a discussion with others with similar
interests, but who are unable to express themselves in a foreign language. A special code would be required to log on to a page.

This format would support meaningful dialogs between individuals who would otherwise never communicate. Even if they met, they would most likely feel ill-at-ease, or inarticulate. The cost of paying graduate students to do the translation is minimal, compared with the costs of putting together an international conference, although the relationships established by these asynchronous exchanges may lead to further projects. Moreover, the results of such an asynchronous symposium would most likely be worthy of publication in a magazine or newspaper.

Major intellectuals or government officials in China, Japan, or Korea may well get in the habit of logging on to this informal discussion when they grow tired of their work late at night. We may well get insights otherwise unavailable.

Underlying Principles for the University

I

The next generation of the internet will bring far more reliable and user-friendly means of communicating information. As a result, a thick binding tissue will develop between institutions involved in the systematic application of internet connections. The implication is that the effectiveness of one's hierarchy of connections, and its user-friendliness, will determine the status of the university more than actual physical installations on campus. The internet and videoconferencing ties to other universities of scale abroad will make the difference to the university. This truth has not yet been realized, but it will soon become apparent.
II

When we visualize the university, we should imagine a mirror that has been broken into hundreds of shards, lying spread across the floor. Each splinter shines brightly, and the total is most impressive. The important point, I feel, is what can be achieved if each of the fragments of glass is tilted ever so slightly. Each fragment does not have to actually be moved, or transplanted, but just propped up in one direction or another. Once this process is achieved, the light reflected from each piece will converge on a single point; a single goal. Then, the light reflected by those many fragments will be powerful enough to vaporize the dense stone. Imagine if we could add the light reflected by fragments from other institutions to that beam.

III

There are figures who have made great fortunes in real estate by pursuing the following strategy. They looked at maps of the city over a period of twenty or thirty years, figured out where the business and residential centers were, then interpolated as to how the city would expand and transform over the next five to ten years. Once they had mapped out their speculations as to what would happen to the population in the near future, they bought farmland in those areas that looked like they were going to be marked for development. Once the farmland was bought, it could be rented back to farmers, and the proper moment was awaited. We should plan for the university in precisely this manner.

IV

Videoconferencing will make teaching over the internet far more legitimate and convincing in the next few years. Internet technology is rapidly moving toward a "just like actually being there" state. It is not there yet, but this is the time to approach the technology systematically. Videoconferencing will also become a central part of the internet, as well, during that period. This moment is the best moment to enter the field in a systematic manner.
V

Time zones could be a problem, but asynchronous learning could be as effective, or more effective, than live teaching. Asynchronous discussions punctuated with live videoconferencing could achieve all required goals. Written responses could be far better than classroom comments. It is just a matter of refining the technique.

VII

Internet connections can be viewed as connective fiber tying together institutions. Pairing up specialists at different universities as that connective fiber grows thicker could lead to a unique international academic community.

Webpage for Concept:

www.staff.uiuc.edu/~epast