



The United States and Korea: A Partnership for Progress

Mitchell B. Reiss, Director, Policy Planning Staff

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Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you Dr. Baek.

It's such a great pleasure to be here in Seoul and to be counted among the many distinguished speakers who have addressed the Sejong Institute. I've been a regular visitor to Korea since 1982. I'm fortunate in having many Koreans as my professional colleagues and personal friends. I also am among that very small group of Americans who have visited *both* North and South Korea.

Over the years, I have come to know this country well. I have an abiding appreciation of the ties that bind Americans and Koreans so closely together. Whatever one says about the issues that sometimes divide us, there is a vast depth of sentiment that has bound us across the thousands of miles of Pacific Ocean and which *continues* to bind us across the generations. From the booming heart of Koreatown in Los Angeles to the more than 80,000 Americans who reside here in South Korea, our two countries' encounter with one another remains extraordinarily close and vital. I have tried to teach my children something about that sentiment. I even brought my son--a passionate soccer player--to Seoul for the 2002 World Cup.

You don't have to study Korean history for very long to understand that the past century was not always pleasant for Korea. Colonization was succeeded by war and national division. National division, in turn, by more of the horrors of war and enormous pain for the Korean people. Families divided. Cities shattered. A nation divided against itself. Northerners moved south. Some southerners ended up in the North. A culture that dates back thousands of years was split apart amid the tragedy of national division.

Out of that legacy of tragedy has come an enormous yearning among the Korean people for reconciliation and, ultimately, for unity. Every Korean longs for the day when Korea will be whole, free, and at peace.

The United States supports that goal and, from President Bush on down, Americans admire the determination with which Koreans are seeking to achieve it.

We have been a proud alliance partner to the Korean people for over five decades. And we continue to support the aspiration of all Koreans for the peaceful reunification of their country.

Indeed, it is worth reflecting on America's long-standing involvement with Korea's search for peace, stability, and unity. What brought us together in the past century? Some may call it an accident. Others may call it fate. I prefer to call it destiny.

Our formal alliance was forged in blood, heartbreak, and sacrifice. We were a partner to the Republic of Korea in war: more than 38,000 Americans died in combat on the Korean Peninsula. But more: we also have been a partner for progress.

The United States is the Republic of Korea's seventh-largest merchandise trading partner. We are the number one foreign investor in Korea. American business has invested \$16.3 billion in Korea over the past 5 years.

We are partners in education, in travel, in scholarly exchanges and cultural programs. *P'ansori* and *taekwondo* classes are taught in Washington and all over America. American baseball has become a national pastime for millions of passionate Korean fans.

Americans have done--and will continue to do--their level best to help Korea realize its destiny: a destiny that took us from the ashes of a devastated Korean Peninsula to the Republic's place today as the world's 11th largest economy and 12th largest trading power in goods and services.

And so today, as your Republic assumes a global role and an ever-more important position in East Asia, we need to ask again: how do we achieve our common vision? How do we realize a Korea whole, free, and at peace, and a U.S.-Korea partnership that is a force for progress in Asia and the world?

Great things *are* possible. A Paris-to-Pusan railway. A Korea that is an economic hub in a thriving Northeast Asia. Joint efforts by Koreans and Americans to battle the transnational scourges that haunt our age: poverty and AIDS, environmental degradation and energy insecurity.

But to succeed, that vision must be built, first, on two key pillars:

- a prosperous and democratic South Korea; and
- a strong and balanced U.S.-ROK alliance.

And beyond that, while we *can* realize elements of this vision now, we certainly cannot realize its full potential so long as North Korea remains outside the community of nations. Tragically for this country and sadly for our alliance, North Korea remains an impediment to achieving the full promise of Korea and the highest aspirations of all Koreans.

So let me just speak briefly about each of these two pillars, and then about our common vision.

The Republic of Korea

As I mentioned at the outset, I first visited Korea in 1982, and I do not need to tell *any* citizen of South Korea just how extraordinary have been the changes in this country.

Yours is a thriving and immensely successful democracy. A model for the world. As a result, we are bound today not just by common interests, but by the common values shared by our governments and, more important, by individual Americans and Koreans.

We are partners in democracy. In law. In liberty. We place enormous value on freedom and on the dignity of each individual.

For both countries, that freedom has been hard-won. And so *all* Americans celebrate Korea's democracy. We honor your achievements and watch developments in this country with admiration and respect.

As my boss, Secretary of State Colin Powell, has said, we have opportunities unlike any the world has seen in a century. These "rest on a solid foundation of believing in democracy and pursuing democracy, of economic openness and freedom, and believing always--always--in the individual rights of every single man and woman on the face of this Earth to pursue their own dreams, limited only by their own ambition."

The Korean-American Alliance

Against this backdrop, is it any wonder that the U.S.-R.O.K. alliance has such great potential?

Now, we do not always agree. And yes, some of the assumptions that underpinned the alliance in 1953 are being reexamined. But we fully share President Roh Moo-hyun's aspiration for a more mature and balanced relationship. And I am confident the changes we now are undergoing in our alliance ultimately will bring us even closer together.

The good news is that the U.S.-R.O.K. alliance is healthy and strong, no matter what the critics may tell you.

We have a vital security partnership, a robust economic relationship, and are cooperating in many of the transnational areas that define the great global challenges of our era.

Koreans stand alongside Americans as part of a great coalition against terrorism, and as a vital part of the coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq. We are enormously pleased and grateful for that support. And we lament the brutal murder of Kim Sun-il and grieve with the Korean people and, especially, with his family. His sacrifice will not be in vain.

We also thank you for Korea's \$260 million pledge of assistance to Iraq and your plan to disburse \$60 million of it this year. This is vital assistance for the Iraqi people, who are struggling to rebuild and to reemerge from decades of political darkness.

We are working to modernize our alliance through new strategic dialogues and the Security Policy Initiative. We seek to make U.S. forces in Korea more effective, while reducing the burden on local communities. The process of giving land formerly used by our forces back to the Korean people has begun, and it will continue. And while we reduce the number of U.S. forces in Korea, we also will spend some \$11 billion over the next 4 years to equip our forces in and around the Peninsula with the best technologies available, thus enhancing our deterrent capability and South Korea's security.

Above all, we want an alliance built on a *broad* foundation and *multiple* pillars. In 1953, a common approach to our security brought us together. But ours is--and must continue to be--far more than just a security alliance.

Korea is a leader in engineering. In the sciences. In breakthrough technologies that are changing the very face of our world. You have joined the ITER negotiations and are a pioneer in biomedicine. This is important not just because of what it says about Korea's achievements, but also because of what it means for our capacity to combine our power, skills, resources, and prestige in support of the greater global good.

Yesterday's traditional challenges are joined today to transnational ones. Globalization has brought new vulnerabilities along with new opportunities. It has shrunk the globe, spurred growth, spread wealth and capital, technology and skills. But it also has unleashed terrorism and proliferation, crime and cocaine, climate-destroying pollutants, and traffic in slaves and women.

Such problems make cooperation among nations more imperative, and the United States and Korea are well-positioned to contribute in so many of these pivotal areas. Working together and with other partners and friends, we can define our alliance as a force for progress--not just by our common approach to security, but by our enormous capacity to do good in the world.

Of course, there are differences and areas of concern. Not least of these is visas. We well understand the frustration of so many Koreans who seek to travel to the United States. We want to be as open as possible, especially to young Koreans who seek an education in our country. Last year, the American Embassy here in Seoul processed some 420,000 nonimmigrant visa applications, of which 95%--that is 19 out of every 20 applicants--were actually issued. But even our heroic consular staff cannot keep pace with demand. I want to assure you that we *are* making major efforts to further streamline the application process and make it more transparent.

North Korea

And then there is North Korea.

Do its leaders share our vision? Do they share the same set of interests and values that I mentioned at the outset of my speech?

The track record is not encouraging.

It's worth recalling that, in the 1960s, North and South Korea were economic peers. In fact, I believe North Korea may even have been slightly ahead of the South. It was an open question at the time which country would pull ahead of the other. And yet history has shown that the country that chose to join the international mainstream--the South--was the one that pulled itself up from poverty to wealth.

This same human potential resides inside *every* Korean, wherever they may live, in the north or in the south. The difference--and the key to South Korea's success--is whether the political system will allow the talents, skills and abilities of its people to flourish. The South made that choice long ago. It is time--actually, it is well past time--for North Korea to make the same choice and unleash the talents that reside within all Koreans.

The issues are well-known here in Seoul.

There is North Korea's nuclear weapons program and its reluctance to reengage in the Six-Party Talks. Its massive human rights violations against its own citizens. Its ballistic missile exports and the enormous conventional threat to South Korea, including thousands of long-range artillery pieces and hundreds of missiles targeted on you here in Seoul. There is its promotion of illegal activities. In fact, North Korea is a country that supports itself largely through counterfeiting, smuggling, trading in drugs, missiles, and other weapons.

Like you, we want the North to change its ways. We want to see Pyongyang transform its behavior and, thus, its relations with its neighbors. We most certainly do *not* want it to cling to an outdated, failed approach that can only deepen its self-isolation.

No one knows this sorry record better than the people of South Korea, whose generosity and boundless sense of optimism and hope repeatedly have been rebuffed and manipulated by the North.

There was President Kim Dae-jung's "sunshine" policy, which the North was slow to follow up. There was President Kim's historic visit to North Korea, a visit that Pyongyang has yet to reciprocate. North Korea has cruelly manipulated family reunions. It violates South Korea's own laws with its wide array of illegal activities. It broke the 1992 North-South denuclearization agreement, which included explicit promises to South Korea not to possess nuclear reprocessing or uranium enrichment facilities.

Is this a regime that shares the same vision for the future of the Korean Peninsula as we do? Do the two Koreas really share the same destiny? How can America and Korea work together in the face of North Korean intransigence?

To achieve our common vision, to build the Korea that *all* Koreans--and all Americans, for that matter--so fervently hope for, we are going to need to build upon a few core principles:

First, we need to see clearly the nature of the problem North Korea presents.

It should be clear that North Korea's own actions repeatedly have made its self-isolation more severe. The North likes to loudly declare that it is the United States--or Japan, or South Korea, or even the United Nations--that makes things hard for North Korea. But the leaders of North Korea need look no further than their own choices to understand how they came to their current predicament. They have cheated on agreements. Missed opportunities. Failed to reciprocate the goodwill and generosity of the South, their neighbors, and the world.

Second, Koreans and Americans need to remain vigilant as long as North Korea harbors "hostile intent" against us. While we have held out the prospect of cooperation and coexistence to North Korea, it is North Korea whose track record does not inspire confidence. It is North Korea that is refusing to reengage in the Six-Party Talks. It is North Korea that aims thousands of artillery pieces and hundreds of missiles at Seoul. It is North Korea that violated the 1994 Agreed Framework nuclear deal. And it is North Korea that abducted Japanese citizens and broke faith with South Korea and the United States.

Third, we need to encourage North Korea to play by the rules. To respect the rights of their own people. To honor international agreements, such as the NPT and its safeguards agreement with the IAEA. To cease threatening neighbors. And to engage in *legal* trade, not the illegal activity that violates your law, American law, and even international law. North Korea cannot expect to be treated as a "normal" state unless and until it behaves like one, across the board.

To some ears, these words may sound harsh. But we cannot build a better future for all the Korean people--we cannot fool ourselves--by pretending that Pyongyang shares the same aspirations as we do. That it shares the same destiny. As much as we might wish it were so, the record simply does not support this.

We need North Korea to reform itself--to join the international community--because it is, quite simply, the only way to achieve our common vision.

No one, not least the United States, has closed the door to a better relationship with the DPRK.

Coexistence remains possible, as does the prospect of contributions by the international community, including the other members of the Six-Party Talks, to improvements in the lives of the people of North Korea

And we have every reason to seek a North Korea that joins in the mainstream of the region. After all, not only has South Korea made extraordinary strides, so too has Northeast Asia. There are six countries in the Six-Party Talks, and *five* of them are bound together in an expanding web of trade, capital, technology, investment, and people crossing borders. The face of this region is changing, from Beijing to Busan, Vladivostok to Seoul.

Only one country--North Korea--has failed to join the historic progress. *We*--the Republic of Korea and the United States--have a vision of a brighter future for this region. What is North Korea's vision of the future? Muddling through on the kindness of strangers? North Korea has yet to demonstrate that it has *any* vision, much less one that embraces the aspirations of all the Korean people.

Our vision seeks to capture the promise of cooperation among the region's major powers. Whether it is energy security or environmental pollution, disease control or financial stability, a web of shared transnational and economic interests increasingly binds at least five of Northeast Asia's major states together. If the 20th century was marked by the struggles among the powers, we have an opportunity to define a new pattern of cooperation in Northeast Asia to meet common challenges.

And so North Korea really does have a choice.

It can try to cling to its nuclear weapons programs and old ways of doing business, or it can seize the historic opportunity we are offering it to transform its relations with the outside world and set itself onto a new--and more beneficial--course.

Conclusion

Whatever North Korea's choice, it is important for the United States and the Republic of Korea to remain united in working toward a shared vision of a Korea whole, free, and at peace, and a U.S.-Korea partnership that is a force for progress in Asia and the world.

We share a common commitment to the peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue with the D.P.R.K.

Our shared position is that patient multilateral diplomacy--in the form of the Six-Party Talks--remains the best way to resolve this thorny problem.

We stand at a remarkable moment of change and opportunity. In Asia, but also around the world. Our alliance *is* strong. The bonds that tie individual Americans to individual Koreans remain deep. Our governments are in regular communication. Our disagreements do not prevent cooperation in the many, many areas where we agree.

In fact, there really is no limit to what Americans and Koreans can do together. We have proved it more than once. In war and in peace. In diplomacy and in trade. We have weathered much adversity. And we have survived--and prospered--because we stood together.

So let us affirmatively recommit to the relationship established with the treaty of peace and amity in 1882, and then again to the vital alliance established in 1953. Let us work together to forge a brighter tomorrow. Thank you very much.

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