



Annual B.C. Lee Lecture

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

The Heritage Foundation
Washington, DC
October 25, 2006

(1:30 p.m. EDT)

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much. It's always wonderful to be here at Heritage. Thank you, Ed, for your leadership of this fine organization and thank you for your friendship over the years. I want to thank the leadership, the board, the staff of The Heritage Foundation for the hard work and also for putting this together. I know that doing these lecture series is not an easy thing and thanks to all who've done the hard work.

I'd like to extend my gratitude to members of the Diplomatic Corps that I see here. And there's a veteran who used to work for me. Kim Holmes is here. Kim, we still miss you at the State Department. You're welcome back anytime.

A PARTICIPANT: (Inaudible).

SECRETARY RICE: (Laughter.) Thank you. And I want to thank you for inviting me to deliver the B. C. Lee Lecture here at Heritage this afternoon. This lecture is an opportunity to reflect on America's foreign policy toward the Asia Pacific region, a subject that has been very much on our minds lately. Today I want to speak with you about one of the most dynamic parts of Asia: Northeast Asia.

Among the major powers of this region, Japan, South Korea and China, along with the United States and Russia, both of whom are traditionally pacific nations, we see three of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, the world's three leading energy consumers and one of its largest energy suppliers. Together these five nations also account for over half of global GDP and one third of world trade. They encompass three of the world's five largest economies and three of the world's most important currencies.

Few parts of the world today are as promising and dynamic and strategically important as Northeast Asia. Yet, one of the main challenges is to build greater security in this region because historically Northeast Asia has never been fully at peace. Nowhere is this more apparent than on the Korean Peninsula, which remains tragically divided more than 50 years after the Korean war. There is a truce, an armistice line, but not of peace. North Korea still amasses its forces along the demilitarized zone. It still does not formally recognize the existence of South Korea. And as you know, earlier this month North Korea tested a nuclear weapon after having this summer tested several missiles. The response to the provocative act of the nuclear test has been quick and remarkable. The very next morning I was on a conference call with four other foreign ministers and we moved rapidly to plot a common approach. That same week, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1718 and three days later I traveled to the region where we coordinated a way forward with our partners in Tokyo, Seoul, Beijing and Moscow.

Just three years ago, it would have been nearly impossible to envision the major powers of Northeast Asia coming together so quickly and working so well together. And I would suggest to you, ladies and gentlemen, that this tremendous cooperation has been possible in large part because the United States has rallied the major powers of Northeast Asia around a regional, not a bilateral approach to the problem of North Korea.

Much attention has been paid to the threat posed by North Korea's nuclear test and rightly so. This afternoon, though, I would like to focus on our response and on the new patterns of cooperation that are emerging among the nations of Northeast Asia. First, however, let me step back a bit and offer some perspective on how we reached this point. For years North Korea publicly pledged not to build nuclear weapons. In 1985 it signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and in 1992 North Korea and South Korea agreed to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. But shortly thereafter, it came to light that North Korea was secretly trying to build nuclear weapons. To attempt to resolve this crisis, the United States reached a bilateral agreement with North Korea in 1994 designed to freeze and ultimately eliminate its nuclear weapons programs. This bilateral approach ultimately did not succeed.

As North Korea publicly froze its plutonium program, a program we believe that had already produced enough material for at least one weapon, the leaders in Pyongyang were secretly developing another program to build more weapons, this time using uranium enrichment and drawing support from the shadowy proliferation network of Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan. When confronted with these facts, North Korea initially acknowledged the existence of this program to their American counterparts. The government then unilaterally withdrew from the Nonproliferation Treaty and kicked international inspectors out of the country.

In response the United States created a diplomatic strategy to encourage North Korea to dismantle its nuclear programs completely, verifiably and irreversibly. To increase the chance of success, our strategy reflects the fundamental reality of the problem. North Korea's behavior poses a regional challenge and it must be addressed in a regional context. South Korea must be part of the solution as should Japan and China and Russia. These countries all share an interest in a denuclearized Korean Peninsula. They all have leverage to help bring it about and they must all accept their share of the responsibility to help. This is the strategic logic of the six-party talks and in this regional framework the United States is playing a full and active role.

The goal of our diplomacy is and must be to create an international environment that presses North Korea to make better decisions than it has made and that holds it fully accountable for the decisions that it takes.

Let us be very clear, President Bush has said before, and I have said before, that the United States has no intention of attacking or invading North Korea. So the entire world should understand that North Korea's claims that our policies are hostile are simply excuses for the government's refusal to make constructive choices and to stick with them. To help elicit those constructive choices, the United States has a comprehensive policy. And on my trip last week we worked to advance it on a number of fronts.

First, we are strengthening our strategic relationships in Northeast Asia. I made it clear last week that the United States has both the will and the capability to meet the full range, and here I stress, the full range, of our security and deterrent commitments to allies like South Korea and Japan. We look to the day when all the countries of Northeast Asia are democratic and share our values. Today those countries are South Korea and Japan and it is very clear that our strongest and most reliable alliances are those that are indeed reinforced by common values.

Thus in Tokyo, I reaffirmed our commitment to the defense of Japan in accordance with all of our security arrangements, including the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1960. In Seoul, I reaffirmed that the United States is absolutely committed to our defense agreements in cooperation with South Korea and we are fully prepared to act on our obligations. In Seoul, I also joined my Korean and Japanese colleagues for a trilateral ministers meeting, the first of its kind in six years.

Ladies and gentlemen, our alliances are the strongest guarantee of peace and security in Northeast Asia. Under President Bush's leadership we are modernizing these alliances with both Japan and South Korea. And together, as allies, we are fully ready to meet the challenges and the threats of the 21st century.

My consultations in Tokyo and Seoul were a part of a broader discussion that continued in Beijing and Moscow. In both countries the main focus of our conversations was the same: How can we better secure our common interests both in Northeast Asia and beyond. And I found the leaders of China and Russia understanding of the importance of this work and willing to work toward this end in greater measure than ever before.

Second, as North Korea continues to threaten the community of nations, we are isolating North Korea from the benefits of participation in the international system. Unanimous passage of Resolution 1718 was an unprecedented step. It showed North Korea that the stakes of the game have fundamentally changed. For the first time ever the international community is requiring every country to deny North Korea access to major classes of military hardware as well as to the luxury goods which the North Korean regime uses to retain the loyalty of the elite.

Most importantly the resolution requires every member of state to cease all trade with North Korea in materials and technology that could be used for nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and for ballistic missiles. Every nation is now obligated to take the necessary actions to enforce these legitimate demands and they are free to supplement the resolution's requirements with additional measures that they deem appropriate.

I was pleased by the serious commitment that I found among our friends and allies for the full and effective implementation of Resolution 1718. It was not my intention to dictate the domestic policies of other states; rather, I asked them to take stock of what they can do to implement this resolution fully. Japan has responded boldly and quickly to meet its obligations, including taking steps of its own like banning North Korean ships from its ports. China has pledged to fully and effectively implement Resolution 1718. So has Russia and so has South Korea. And for our part, the United States is now obligated by law to adopt additional sanctions on North Korea under national legislation, including the Glenn Amendment.

Third, the United States and our friends and allies are expanding measures to defend against North Korea's proliferation efforts. In every capital that I visited last week, we held extensive discussions on how we can best implement Resolution 1718 and one tool is the Proliferation Security Initiative, or PSI, a voluntary partnership among nations to prevent the spread by air, by sea and by land of weapons of mass destruction and related materials.

To meet our shared goal, countries work in concert, contributing as their capabilities and their laws allow, to develop a full range of tools -- diplomatic, economic, intelligence, law enforcement and military. Eighty nations are now formally members -- endorsed members -- of the PSI and there are even more who are cooperating.

The main focus of this initiative is to share information and to help partner countries build their capacities to better police their own territories and waters. In an international context, the goal is to act on good intelligence and to enforce international law. And on this front, PSI has scored some major counterproliferation victories, the most significant of which was intercepting a cargo for Libya carrying parts for weapons of mass destruction. That discovery helped us to convince Libya once and for all to give up its weapons of mass destruction.

We are also looking to expand missile defense cooperation with Japan and other countries because missile defense can of course devalue and degrade any capability that North Korea might have. And we are rallying our partners to adopt financial measures that target the banks and front companies that facilitate North Korea's weapons programs.

Most importantly, when I was in Asia, I repeated President Bush's statement that the transfer of nuclear weapons or material by North Korea to any state or non-state entity would be considered a grave threat to the United States and we would hold North Korea fully accountable for the consequences of any such action. On this front, we are working with nations in the region to design a practical architecture for detection and screening of radioactive materials.

Fourth, the United States and our partners are joining together to preserve the continued vitality of the global regime to prevent and counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The nonproliferation regime is now under more strain than at any time since it was established over 40 years ago.

For our part, the United States is working to strengthen and renew this important pillar of international stability and to modernize it. We are bringing India from the outside to the inside of the nonproliferation regime for the first time, with a pioneering agreement between Prime Minister Singh and President Bush that gives India access to civil nuclear power and gives the International Atomic Energy Agency access to India's civil nuclear facilities.

We are rallying the nations of the world behind a UN Security Council resolution that requires all countries to criminalize proliferation activities. Along with Russia, we have launched a Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. The participants in that initiative will meet for the first time on Monday in Morocco.

We are also helping countries to acquire civil nuclear power without the need for enrichment and reprocessing facilities through the establishment, we believe, we hope, of an assured access to nuclear fuel and the development of new proliferation-resistant technologies under the President's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership.

Now, to be sure, the greatest challenge to the nonproliferation regime comes from countries that violate their responsibilities under the Nonproliferation Treaty. The North Korean Government has been one such case. So is Iran. The Iranian regime is watching how the world responds to North Korea's behavior and it can now see that the international community will confront this threat. Iran can see that the path North Korea is choosing is not leading to more prestige and more prosperity or more security; it's leading to just the opposite. And the United Nations Security Council is now working on an Iran sanctions resolution. For the international community to be credible, it must pass a resolution now that holds Iran accountable for its defiance.

Finally, I joined with each of our friends and allies last week to reaffirm that a positive path remains open to North Korea through the six-party talks. All of us are willing to return to the talks without precondition and we all agreed that if those talks resume, Resolution 1718 would remain in force until North Korea has made progress on denuclearization.

Yet we can make progress in the six-party talks if North Korea is ready to return and return seriously to them. Now, sometimes there is a tendency to think that international problems can always be traced back to questions of what America should do. We see this thinking in the current debate about North Korea. There are those who say that North Korea is behaving the way that it is because of something that America either did or did not do. That misses the point. Over the course of many years, and throughout many diplomatic initiatives with North Korea, there has been one constant. It is North Korea's leaders, not those in Washington, who have made the fundamental choices, really the tragic choices about the condition of their country. Those choices have led to deprivation and oppression and despair for the North Korean people and the North Korean people deserve better.

It is also a great myth that North Korea's choices are colored by America's refusal to talk to them. The United States sent a delegation to Pyongyang in 2002. In the regional context of the six-party talks, we have no problem talking directly to North Korea, and we've done so repeatedly. In fact, Ambassador Chris Hill, our lead negotiator, had dinner with his North Korean counterpart last year. Finding ways to talk to North Korea is not the issue. The real issue is what North Korea has to say and then what it will do.

We also hear that North Korea wants security guarantees and benefits from the international community. Well, there is a path to that future. North Korea should live up to its own international agreements to denuclearize, and it should pursue policies that are not hostile to its neighbors and hostile to international principles and norms of behavior.

Everything North Korea says that it seeks is on the table in the six-party talks. And in the agreed six-party joint statement of September 19th, 2005, the United States and our partners clearly showed North Korea what it stands to gain: humanitarian and development aid, energy assistance, respect for sovereignty, commitment to the principles of the UN charter, a permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula, the promise of, and I quote, "Joint efforts for lasting peace and stability in northeast Asia." Every country except for North Korea has shown that it is prepared to implement its responsibilities fully and unconditionally under the September agreement.

Ladies and Gentlemen, when we launched our current policy toward North Korea three years ago, the prospect of joint efforts for lasting peace and stability in northeast Asia may have seemed quite distant. Today, however, the patterns of cooperation that we and our partners have begun to establish over the past three years are creating a new opportunity not just to envision a future of greater security in northeast Asia but to realize it together.

And let's be clear about one thing, the unprecedented cooperation that is emerging among the countries of northeast Asia and the leverage that that cooperation provides would have been far, far less likely to emerge had the United States adopted a bilateral approach to North Korea. The cooperation provides our best chance to get North Korea to make the right choice and dismantle its nuclear programs.

The United States has played a leading role to help stabilize northeast Asia since the end of World War II. Now we are helping to foster new and better security relationships among the key states engaged in the region. Recently we have witnessed hopeful events. Earlier this month, Japanese Prime Minister Abe made historic visits to Beijing and Seoul where he eased anxieties and began to define expectations about the region's future. We applaud overtures like this and we stand ready to do whatever we can to support them.

This emerging pattern of cooperation among the major powers of Northeast Asia will help us to meet the challenges of the 21st century particularly the proliferation of the world's most dangerous weapons and the means to deliver them. This cooperation is the outcome of a deliberate strategy that President Bush adopted to encourage all of the nations in the region to share the burdens as well as the benefits of our common security.

Habits of cooperation are growing. They can evolve and they can help Northeast Asia rise above old animosities and thereby form the foundation of a new and better future. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. FEULNER: The Secretary has agreed to take a few questions. Please identify yourself. When you ask a question wait for the microphone to get to you.

SECRETARY RICE: I see a gentleman right here.

QUESTION: Daniel Oliver, Madame Secretary. Charles Krauthammer wrote a column that I'm sure you saw last week about asking why we shouldn't encourage Japan to become a nuclear power. I won't rehearse the arguments. You can do it for this audience better than I can, but I'll ask his question.

SECRETARY RICE: Yes, thank you. Well, the first thing is -- and as I said to my colleagues in Asia -- the fact that this has even come up shows the potential instability that could be caused by a North Korean nuclear program and it's why we have to act on the North Korean program. But the Japanese have answered this question. Japanese Prime Minister Abe and the Foreign Secretary Aso have said that Japan does not intend to pursue an independent nuclear path.

I think it is extremely important that Japan knows that the United States is going to fully defend Japan and live up to the commitments that we have taken, beginning with the 1960 Mutual Defense Treaty; that we would use the full range of our capabilities to deter and defend attacks or threats against Japan. And I think that that gives Japan the confidence within the alliance to believe that its security needs can fully be met in that way without resort to an independent program.

It is also going to help the region to deal with the security concerns that arise from a North Korean nuclear program if we continue to get the kind of cooperation and the kind of commitment to Resolution 1718 that we are now seeing. Because the concern has to be in places that could be vulnerable to such threats that North Korea should have every incentive to abandon its nuclear weapons programs and that under any circumstance it should know that it could never benefit from them. And so I think we have the right answer and the right strategy to deal with the changed circumstances of a North Korean nuclear test. But it is really Japan that has spoken to its desire to pursue its security through its alliances rather than through another course, which I think everyone sees could have perhaps unforeseen consequences for a region that is already very difficult from a security environment.

Let's see, maybe go over to this side, the gentleman right over here.

QUESTION: Thank you. (Inaudible) a Korean newspaper. My understanding is that your government has until recently supported South Korea's engagement policy towards North Korea. But after North Korea's nuclear test and missile launch a lot of things have changed. So do you still support South Korean Government for -- is implementing Sunshine Policy? Thank you.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we've had discussions with our South Korean colleagues about the relationship with South Korea. Look, we understand that this is a complicated set of issues for South Korea: occupying the same Peninsula; North Korean forces in the hostile posture that they are; the desire to have families be able to contact one another. We fully understand all of the reasons and all of the impulses that lead to a desire for engagement with the North. We've only said, and it is up to South Korea to make a determination of what its policies are going to be. And I'll tell you, if ever there was good evidence that South Korea is a vibrant democracy, these issues are being debated in South Korea. The South Koreans don't need us to tell them what to do about their policies. There is a very active debate going on in South Korea about what South Korea's policy should be.

The only thing that we ask is that everyone remember, including South Korea, that the North Koreans have just set off a nuclear device in South Korea's backyard. That requires a strong response of the kind that Resolution 1718 is. It requires strong commitment by South Korea to the terms of that resolution and any activities need to be seen in the light of making certain to implement that resolution. And finally that the best answer ultimately on the Korean Peninsula is when we are able to see behavior in the North that does not create constant tension and friction on the Peninsula. And keeping those demands and those requirements in mind, I think the South Korean Government within its own democratic context will make choices about how to evaluate the future of its policies towards North Korea.

Maybe a couple more. Yes, right here.

QUESTION: Julie Donnelly, Channel News Asia. Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that he has concerns about painting North Korea into a corner. Can you respond to those comments and say how confident you are about Russian staying onboard?

SECRETARY RICE: Yes. Well, I had extensive discussions with -- not just President Putin but the Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov, the Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and several other of their security officials. And I -- it is true that people are concerned that North Korea have a path out if it decides to choose that path out. And I think we have established that there is indeed a path, which is the six-party talks that all North Korea needs to do is return to those and return to them seriously. We don't need to have another desultory set of debates about, you know, when one gets energy resources or so forth. We need a commitment to denuclearization.

So there is a path out and I assured the Russians and others that the Resolution 1718 is not just for the sake of having a resolution nor is it for the sake of simply, as an end in itself, bringing pressure on the North Korean Government. The pressure on the North Korean Government is to both to show North Korea that its behavior in testing is unacceptable in the international community. That it will not be accepted as a nuclear state. And third that it ought to return to the table for talks. And so I don't read anything into concerns that you worry about North Korea being locked into a corner because everybody understands that they've got to implement the resolution.

I do think that it is important that we keep emphasizing that there is a path out should North Korea choose to take that path. I also know that there are those who say, well, perhaps the United States could do more to show the North Koreans that the United States is indeed serious about that path out. I'm here to say the United States is serious about that path out, but North Korea needs to be serious about it as well.

Maybe one more. Is there one other question? Yes, over here.

QUESTION: Josh Lynch with Senator Brownback. I was wondering if you could tell us how the United States position or relationship with Taiwan affects United States talks with North Korea, particularly how we negotiate with China and strategizing to put pressure on North Korea.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we've been very clear that U.S. policy on Taiwan is governed by our commitment to a "One China" policy and to the three communiqués. We've also been very clear that it is governed by our obligations under the Taiwan Relations Act, and that is that to help Taiwan defend itself. And I say to the Chinese all the time those are a package, they can't be separated out.

It means that we expect neither side -- Taiwan or China -- to engage in activities that would try to destabilize the status quo unilaterally to change the status quo. Now, in the context of Northeast Asia, it would obviously be a very good thing if the Chinese and Taiwan could engage in discussions about cross-straits issues. Sometimes those do take place in the economic context, but to lower the tensions and to keep any unforeseen or unwanted incidents from happening. It is a part of the picture of a broader, more secure Northeast Asia. But it is separate in that sense from the North Korean issue where we deal with China as the state holding the seat in the permanent -- as a permanent member of the Security Council and with certain powers and responsibilities then to act on behalf of UN Security Council resolutions.

I have time for one final question. I see a gentleman right in the middle.

QUESTION: Thank you, Madame Secretary. I would like to ask if you can please comment on Dr. ElBaradei made a comment yesterday, last night, on University of Maryland. He said with reliance on a nuclear weapon by some countries and resistant to bring Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty into force, the nuclear event test by North Korea was predictable.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I just met with Mohamed ElBaradei and what we talked about are ways to strengthen the nonproliferation regime, which clearly is under pressure. Now, I understand that there is under the nonproliferation regime an expectation that the nuclear states would begin to bring down their own nuclear capabilities, that that was a sort of understanding at the time that the Nonproliferation Treaty was signed. I would just ask people to look at, for instance, what's happening between the United States and Russia as a part of the Moscow Treaty as the number of deployed warheads is coming down dramatically after the Cold War.

But I don't really believe for one minute that North Korea is looking at the progress of the Moscow Treaty to decide whether or not to test the international system with a nuclear weapon. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe that's what they're doing. I just don't think so.

I think that North Korea and other states that are trying to break out of the -- that have signed the Nonproliferation Treaty and are violating it are doing it for reasons to try and gain advantage, and they simply have to be -- it has to be demonstrated to them that they cannot gain advantage.

Similarly, we along with others are observing a moratorium on the -- of tests rather than signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty because it is the position of the United States and the position of the President that if you have nuclear weapons you have an obligation to make sure that they are safe and reliable, and while we currently see no reason to test, we don't know that in some -- at some point in the future, for safety and reliability, it might be a necessity.

But I think we have to be very careful, very careful, not to fall into a kind of parallelism here. North Korea is an isolated regime that is in a state of war with its neighbor on the Korean Peninsula that has carried out hostile policies toward its neighbors and that signed a set of agreements saying that it would not pursue nuclear weapons and in fact would dismantle the nuclear programs that it had. It has not done that. And so the obligation of the international community is to make sure that it does.

I think a nuclear test by North Korea was not inevitable. The North Koreans could have made other choices. They had other choices before them. But now that they've made that choice, they've provoked a reaction in the international system that has been quite strong. They have, I think, perhaps realized that that reaction has been quite strong and I think it is everybody's hope that they're going to now, having seen what the international community's reaction has been to their behavior, that they're going to take another course. And it's a good course. It is a course that has everything that North Korea has said that it is looking for from the international system in order to dismantle its nuclear weapons, and all that it lacks at this particular point in time is a North Korean commitment to undertake those obligations.

Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause.)
2006/957

Released on October 25, 2006

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