



Inter-Korean Relations and the Future of the Korean Peninsula

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Stanford University

President John Hennessy of Stanford University, Professor Gi-Wook Shin, Dr. William Perry, Mr. Shorenstein, and ladies and gentlemen!

It is an honor for me to have the opportunity to give a lecture at such a globally prestigious university as Stanford University, and would like to take this occasion to express my words of gratitude.

I would first like to address the issue of "Inter-Korean Relations and the Future of the Korean Peninsula", and I will be glad to answer your questions during the question-and-answer session.

The Inter-Korean Summit on June 15, 2000 was a historic moment that marked the first meeting of the heads of both the South and the North in the fifty-five years of division. At the summit, the South and the North agreed on the principles of the first stage of reunification, as well as to pursue exchange and cooperation in various areas and initiate the reunion of separated families. We also agreed to arrange a reciprocal visit of Chairman Kim Jong-il to Seoul. As a result of such agreements, warm rays of sunshine have shone down on the Korean Peninsula, replacing the icy winds of the Cold War and beginning the process of change.

Most of all, tensions have substantially eased on the Peninsula where the threat of war had always loomed in the past. Since the Inter-Korean Summit, more than one million people have traveled between the two Koreas by way of reunion of separated families, Mt. Kumgang tours and civilian exchanges. Exchange has been carried out in all areas such as economy, society, culture and sports. An industrial complex that was financed by South Korea has been built on North Korean land, and the factories there have already begun to produce goods. Roads and railroads are being constructed across borders to reconnect the Peninsula once again.

Distinguished guests!

The most significant change that we have witnessed is the change in public sentiment between the South and the North. North Korea had unilaterally taught its people that South Korea was a "puppet of the U.S. imperialism, trying to seize an opportunity to attack North Korea". Such propaganda had brainwashed the secluded North Korean people who had little to no outside contact. However my visit to North Korea and meeting with Chairman Kim was broadcasted in detail on North Korean television. When the two leaders' joint declaration at the summit meeting for the two Koreas to "coexist peacefully, carry out exchange and cooperation peacefully, and later on, pursue reunification peacefully" was made public, the public sentiment in North Korea began to change.



The most decisive factor, however, in change of perception of North Koreans has been the humanitarian and economic aid sent from the South to the North. South Korea has been sending an annual total of four hundred thousand tons of rice and more than two hundred thousand tons of fertilizers to North Korea since 2000. The food has been used to help feed people suffering from hunger and the fertilizers have contributed to significantly increasing the agricultural productivity of North Korea. The North Korean people have begun to understand that the South live prosperously and they have begun to feel gratitude for our help and even a certain kind of envy towards the South Korean people.

An interesting phenomenon has resulted from this aid. The millions of sacks carrying rice and fertilizers that are widely distributed in all parts of North Korea have labels stuck on the sacks indicating their place of origin. The South Korean labels on the sacks have begun to influence the thinking of the North Korean people. Now, the North Korean people are beginning to be open in their expressions of gratitude and appreciation towards the South. South Korean TV soap operas and pop music have been silently spread to all parts of the North, with the South Korean culture significantly influencing the North Korean people.

Meanwhile, the South Korean people's perceptions towards North Korea have also seen considerable change. In particular, the North Korean athletes, and cheering squads of beautiful young women that attended the Busan Asian Games in 2002 and Daegu Universiad Games in 2003 gained much attention from the South Koreans and favorably influenced their sentiments towards North Korea. This shows that although the Korean people opposed everything about communist North Korea in the past, now the South Koreans have begun to understand that opposing communism can be differentiated from having feelings of affection for our brethren in the North.

Such change in the sentiments of the people of the South and the North can be attributed in part to the resilience of the homogeneous Korean people who had been able to maintain a unified peninsula for more than 1,300 years. We were divided into two by the United States and the Soviet Union against our will in 1945 after the defeat of Japan in the Second World War. For the following sixty years, the Korean people have suffered and are still suffering. The tragedies of territorial division, war against our own brethren and being the last remnants of the Cold War are sufferings that we are still going through. As mentioned before, however, change is occurring in the South and the North. Once the North Korean nuclear issue is resolved and the U.S.-North Korean relations improve, I am confident that the inter-Korean relations will see rapid improvement towards reconciliation and cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen!

Then, how can we tackle the most imminent task of resolving the North Korean nuclear issue? Conflict has continued between North Korea and the other members of the six-party talks over the resumption of the six-party talks. However, the contents of the talks and the agreements that are made within them are of far more importance than the six-party talks themselves.



The resolution to the nuclear issue is quite simple depending on how one perceives it. First, North Korea must completely abandon its nuclear weapons program and agree to receive thorough inspections. The United States must provide security guarantees and lift the sanctions from the North Korean economy. Because the two countries distrust each other, the actions of both sides should be implemented simultaneously or in parallel. If North Korea does not comply with the agreements made at the six-party talks, the other members of the six-party framework may apply stronger measures against North Korea. I believe that this is the only way to resolve the issue. North Korea has said that it is willing to give up its nuclear weapons program. The United States should provide ensuing compensations they are willing to provide to the North as a way to seek resolutions of the issue.

During the four years of the first term of the Bush administration, the situation worsened without seeing any progress in U.S.-North Korean relations. North Korea withdrew from the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). It expelled the IAEA inspectors. Because of this, we now have no knowledge over the nuclear development situation in North Korea. Moreover, North Korea has announced that it has already developed nuclear weapons. Wasting more time will only aggravate the situation. Striking a comprehensive give-and-take deal to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue is crucial for maintaining peace on the Korean Peninsula and preventing the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries in Northeast Asia.

South Korea, Japan and even Taiwan might begin to harbor nuclear ambitions once North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons is actually confirmed. This will result in a nuclear land mine in the Northeast Asian region. We must make sure that this does not happen. The United States should make wise policy decisions to lead the six-party talks. There needs to be close coordination and cooperation between South Korea and the United States in this process.

Ladies and gentlemen!

Now, I would like to tell you a few points about the future of the Korean Peninsula. First, we must achieve denuclearization on the Peninsula to ensure peace and stability. It is very fortunate that all the members of the six-party talks have given their unanimous agreement on this point.

Second, even after the North Korean nuclear issue is resolved, the six-party format should be maintained as a permanent body to play a leading role in maintaining peace on the Korean Peninsula and stability in the whole of Northeast Asia. The six-party format is a successful accomplishment led by the United States.

Third, a strong ROK-U.S. alliance is crucial not only for the national interest of both South Korea and the United States but also for peace and the balance of power in Northeast Asia. The South Korean people sometimes criticize the policies of the United States but have no objections in maintaining a strong ROK-U.S. alliance. The U.S. military presence on the Korean Peninsula is a necessity for the future stability of the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. Even Chairman Kim Jong-il agreed to this during



the Inter-Korean Summit talks. The U.S. military presence on the Korean Peninsula is also important for the national interests of the United States.

Fourth, once the inter-Korean relations improve and the exchange and cooperation with North Korea go into full swing, trains departing from South Korea will run on the railroads through North Korea to the Chinese continent, Siberia, Central Asia and to Europe. The "Eurasian iron silk-road" will also improve the transportation of goods from Japan and other areas of the Pacific, also bringing benefit to U.S. companies in Northeast Asia. Transportation via train brings a 30 percent decrease in time and cost compared to transportation via ship. There is also no threat of attacks from pirates. When this is realized, the current "miracle of the Han River" of Seoul will lead to the "miracle of the Amnok (Yalu) River", the river running across the border of North Korea and China, serving as a driving force of prosperity for the whole of the Korean Peninsula.

Fifth, the most dearly aspired wish of the Korean people is reunification. We do not want a rapid reunification such as that of Germany. We will pursue reunification based on the three principles of peaceful coexistence, peaceful exchange and peaceful reunification, through three stages, first, South-North confederation, second, South-North federation, and lastly, complete reunification. This is the gist of the Sunshine Policy. Such reunification will be a blessing for the future of the Korean people. This will also enable Korea to share stability, peace and prosperity with all neighboring countries including the United States.

Distinguished guests!

The future of the inter-Korean relations depends on peace. Peaceful coexistence, peaceful exchange and peaceful reunification is the only path we should follow. It is the way to peacefully reunite our people. We hope that our friends around the world including the United States understand and support Korea in realizing the dream of the Korean people. I would like to ask for the support of everyone here today.

Thank you.