

PEACE AND SECURITY ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

■ One Voice Essential

I'll start off by giving you my conclusion, and my conclusion is that until and unless the United States and the Republic of Korea are capable of speaking firmly and credibly with one voice when dealing with North Korea we will be unable to solve the nuclear crisis and to bring about the compromise and cooperation we all desire.

The one thing that I have learned in looking at U.S.-ROK relations over the last 35 years is that relations are never as good as the two governments say they are and never as bad as the critics argue. Since I am not a government official, and am speaking on my own behalf, I don't have to pretend that things are going well -- on the other hand, I think that if we can better coordinate our efforts we can still come up with a good solution that will serve everyone's interest. I've been concerned with the lack of consistency both in Washington and in Seoul when it comes to trying to craft a policy and send a consistent, credible message to North Korea. That's what I would like to start off talking about this afternoon.

■ The Inability to Deal with One Another

We all know that in the United States democrats and republicans disagree and try to blame one another for what happens, and whoever is in power will be criticized by the party that is out of power. This is clearly also the case in Korea, and in most democracies. Normally this can be managed and people understand it. I think one of the minor problems we have in our two countries is that all too often the people who are in power in Korea tend to talk with and feel most comfortable with those who are out of power in the United States, and of course when they talk to one another they both quickly come to the same conclusion, that it's the Bush administration's fault. Meanwhile, the people in charge in Washington feel most comfortable with the people who are out of power in Korea, the conservatives, and they both immediately come to the conclusion that the big problem is President Roh. As a result we have the two governments both listening to and dealing with the opposition and not with one another, and I think this helps to create some of the confusion. At our institute we try to bring everyone involved, on both sides, into the dialog, and I understand that is done at this institute as well. We certainly need to do more of that.

■ Internal Debate: Internationalists vs. Neocons

While this is a problem, I think that the big problem is the disagreement not between democrats and republicans, or between conservatives and progressives, but disagreements that are going on today within both of our governments, within the administrations in both countries. In the United States it has been the debate between the internationalists within the Republican party against the so called neocons in the Republican party, and it is very difficult to get a straight policy line coming out of Washington because the two seem to be competing, and one seems to be trying to undercut the other. Those who support the internationalists -- and I will reveal my colors, that is certainly my preference -- feel that part of the problem has been that the neocons have made it very difficult to promote the dialog, to get the process going in Korea. Even when they have not been able to direct a contrary policy, they have at least had enough influence to prevent those people who want to do the right thing from doing the right thing, or what they perceive, what many of us perceive to be the right thing.

The bad news is that the number one internationalist, Colin Powell, has left the administration. I think that there are many people, not just in the United States but throughout the world, who were very sad to see him go, given the particular vision and particular approach he took toward foreign policy, something that was also endorsed by his assistant secretary for Asia, Jim Kelly. The good news is that I think their replacements are also by and large internationalists. I would not claim that Secretary Rice has the same type of vision and the same type of acceptability as Secretary Powell, on the other hand, she has much greater access, much greater influence over the president, quite frankly, than Secretary Powell. Again, being very blunt, the best advice in the world is useless if the boss doesn't take it, and I think we can all come up with lots of examples where this is true in the first four years of the Bush administration. I think that on the whole when I look at what Secretary Rice is trying to do and where she is coming from, her deputy, Bob Zoellick -- who I also think is very knowledgeable in Asia -- and finally, the person who is responsible for dealing with the Korean peninsula, Chris Hill -- who comes to the job from being ambassador to Korea -- I think that there is still a very positive team working on the Korean situation, and perhaps a team from whom the president might be more inclined to take advice from than he was in the previous administration.

■ Some Good News

I think the other piece of good news is that, when you take a look at the Bush administration policy toward North Korea, particularly in the last year, I would argue that it is not as bad as it sounds, or as it is being portrayed, and in fact the internationalists won the debate about a year ago when secretary Kelly finally, and long overdue, put a serious proposal on the table. Part of this was because the internationalists made a persuasive argument and part of it was election campaigning, which created a desire and a need to be a little more open. Part of it was Iraq and the mess the neocons made there, damaging their credibility. Also important was the lobbying of President Roh and most importantly by

Prime Minister Koizumi, who had a lot of influence with the president [Bush] and convinced him that he needed to be more forthcoming.

■ Multilateral Format the Right Way to Go

I would also argue that regardless of how long it took them to put the right things on the table and regardless of your disagreements with the Bush administration on other aspects of their policy, it was the right policy, the right decision, to insist that we have a multilateral format and that Korea and Japan and China be at the table. I think that is one of the lessons we learned in 1994 when we wanted to do this bilaterally and then handed Japan and Korea the bill. This was not the way to build alliances and build partnerships and that the multilateral approach has been and continues to be the right approach for dealing with this problem.

But I would also agree that within the multilateral context there is both room for and a need for direct bilateral negotiations among many of the parties, including the United States and the DPRK, and that Washington has been still in many cases very vague on its willingness to do this, although Ambassador Hill -- Secretary Hill now -- has in fact said that he is prepared, the United States is prepared to sit and seriously discuss issues bilaterally with North Korea within the six-party format, but they are not prepared, nor in my view should they be prepared, to abandon the six-party process and just have bilateral talks.

■ Internal Debate within the Roh Administration

If the internal debate within the Bush administration has made things more difficult than it needs to be, the same can be said, and perhaps its even more of a problem, within the Roh Moo Hyun administration. My favorite example of this happened just last week, so it has provided me with a very useful way of making my point. Last week the headline in the Reuters news service was that Korea is prepared to discuss bringing the North Koreans before the United Nations Security Council if North Korea continues to stonewall, continues to refuse to come to negotiations. This was based on a definitive statement by the foreign minister, who presumably speaks for South Korea when it comes to foreign policy and policy regarding North Korea. However, if you were reading the AP newswire instead of the Reuters newswire, you would have discovered that South Korea is adamantly opposed to going to the UN Security Council, completely rules it out, and this is based on a definitive statement from the minister of unification who is also the senior national security advisor to the president [Roh], presumably also speaking for the government of Roh Moo Hyun. It is my observation, and this might be a slight over-exaggeration, that every time the United States and the Republic of Korea jointly issue a strong statement regarding North Korea, within 12-24 hours, the Ministry of Unification will say the

exact opposite in order to make sure North Korea's feelings are not hurt by the United States and the Republic of Korea.

■ Wedges Being Driven

Of course it is impossible for the United States and the Republic of Korea to speak with one voice when dealing with North Korea when we are not capable of individually speaking with one voice about it. We're constantly -- in both capitals -- criticizing and reversing our own opinions, and I would argue with all due respect, that this has become a bigger problem in South Korea in the last year than it has been in Washington. If you are a North Korean, the most rational, most logical reaction to all of this, is to sit back, do nothing, and let us continue to argue with one another, because it's helping to drive a wedge between the United States and South Korea, it is also doing that between the United States and China, it's also doing that within South Korea between the conservatives and the progressives. All of which serves North Korea's purpose, and is, in fact, consistent with their strategy for the last 50 years, which is to play as many people against as many other people as they possibly can, and to divert attention away from themselves.

■ Denuclearization: A Common Objective

That's the problem; anyone can describe the problem. The real question is, 'what do we do about it?' How do we develop a joint strategy, how do we develop a joint approach that is going to help us reach our ultimate objective, which I believe that we both share, which is the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula? It is by removing nuclear weapons from North Korea. I caveat that by saying, "I believe." I hear some people in South Korea say that it is not such a bad idea for North Korea to have nuclear weapons, etc., etc. If we don't share that common objective, we are never going to be able to cooperate, but I take both governments at face value when they say this is a common objective, and one that the Chinese and the Russians and the Japanese all share, and should share.

■ Convincing North Korea of the Benefits of Cooperation

What I think we need to do is sit down and figure out what the North Koreans are up to and how we can convince them that it is in their benefit, it is to their advantage to cooperate rather than not cooperate, and that requires a somewhat complicated but hopefully not too convoluted cost-benefit analysis. I think that the first effort is that we have to convince North Korea that the benefits of cooperating outweigh the benefits of not cooperating. I think this is one area where we all seem to agree -- we may disagree on the timing but not on the ultimate objective -- that we have to essentially convince the North Koreans that there is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow; that if they cooperate

there are economic, political, and security benefits that will be gained: economic development, political recognition, security assurances -- these are the benefits of cooperating.

■ No Advance Payment

Here I think that the differences between us are more differences of timing than they are of intent. While the Bush administration keeps saying that they will not reward bad behavior, the reality is of course it will reward bad behavior, it's just not prepared to pay in advance. I've not met any serious American scholar, republican or democrat, liberal, progressive, etc., who would support paying North Korea in advance. In fact, this would be politically impossible for any president to do in the United States, so we need to kind of keep an eye on political realities as we chart the course forward. One of the problems of pursuing this course, however, is that the North Koreans, in my view, also see that there are a lot of benefits to not cooperating, one of which is that it gets South Korea and the United States fighting amongst themselves, and that serves North Korea's long term interests. They see a lot of benefits to not cooperating as well as benefits that they are promised if they cooperate.

■ Costs of Cooperating and Multilateral Security Assurances

I think everyone but the most diehard neocons or conservatives would also acknowledge that North Korea sees that there are some costs to cooperating, particularly in giving up the only leverage that they have, which is nuclear weapons. North Korea's main export for the last ten years has been threats. If you take away that export, that leverage, it makes things very difficult, so there is a cost involved to them in cooperating. Obviously, at least from the point of view of the others, multilateral security assurances are part of how you help them overcome those costs, and if we were not prepared to give those then I don't think we could ever see a solution. We still have a problem defining what these security assurances are, but in principle I think we all agree that part of the package has to be security assurances to reduce the cost of cooperation for the North Koreans.

■ Receiving Benefits, But Not Cooperating

That brings us to the category where I think we have the most trouble, the most disagreement with the United States and Japan on one side and South Korea and China on the other side. That is in discussing the costs of not cooperating. I would argue right now that there are none, or certainly very little from a North Korean perspective. Right now North Korea is clearly, in my view, not cooperating, but it is still receiving quite a few benefits; it is still receiving a lot of support from Korea, China, and elsewhere. There is still an awful lot going on, and I think that this is where our cooperation breaks down. What makes it particularly frustrating to me is that if you believe South Korean stated policy,

we would be approaching this differently.

■ Roh's Choice to North Korea: Nukes or Economic Cooperation

I was very impressed two years ago when I sat out in the freezing cold section of the audience listening to President Roh's inauguration address, and having him say that North Korea had to make a choice; it either pursued international cooperation and gained all of the benefits that came with that cooperation, or it went down the road of nuclear weapons and faced a cut-off of all of the economic and political benefits that it was getting. He made it very clear in that speech and he has made it very clear, I think, politically, rhetorically, since then, that it is an either-or situation, the North Koreans can't have it both ways. They either pursue nuclear weapons or they pursue economic and political cooperation, the 'peace and prosperity policy' of the Roh administration.

■ Choice Made

I am not a diplomat, so excuse me if I can't come up with a diplomatic way to say what I'm about to say, but in my view, on February 10 -- if not three or four times before that -- the North Koreans made it very clear what path they were choosing. They said, "We are a nuclear power. We insist on being treated like a nuclear power. We want disarmament talks with the United States, as if we were the Soviet Union. We are a nuclear power, we have nuclear weapons, we are building more, etc., etc." This was to me, and it's been repeated on March 3 and several other times, a very clear declaration by North Korea that it had made a choice, and it chose a path of nuclear weapons.

■ Is North Korea Bluffing?

Did they mean it? Were they bluffing? I don't know. I know that if I am a U.S. military planner, if I'm a national security planner anywhere, I have to assume that this is possible and I have to take the worst-case scenario into account, and if I'm concerned about proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or fissile material getting into the hands of terrorists, North Korea is a problem and I have to assume that there is a possibility that what they are saying is right, even though I don't know if they are bluffing or not.

■ North Korea Calls Roh's Bluff

But while we don't know whether North Korea is bluffing, North Korea now knows that South Korea was bluffing. That President Roh was not serious when he said 'you can't have it both ways' because North Korea has said that 'we have gone in the nuclear direction' and South Korean response has been

that 'maybe they didn't really mean it, we'll have to wait and see.' North Korea has, in my view, called South Korea's bluff, and you have said, 'you can have it both ways. You can say that you are a nuclear power, that you have nuclear weapons, and we are still going to give you everything that we would have given you if you had taken the other course.' Why should North Korea cooperate, when you have just told them that you are bluffing, that they can have it both ways?

■ Reestablishing One Voice

Now, it seems to me that in the last couple of days Secretary Hill and Foreign Minister Ban Ki Moon have been trying to once again get us to speak with one voice, and today's newspapers have the stories of a very firm statement by South Korea saying that North Korea will not get any more concessions until it comes to the table, we're not going to negotiate in the press. In fact, they are exactly the same words that Secretary Powell used here about six months ago when he was told, 'you have got to give more to the North Koreans.' The good news is that once again, today we have tried to speak with one voice, to tell the North Koreans that the time for playing games is over, that they have to come to the table or there may in fact be consequences. Of course, my 24-hour clock has now started ticking, and I'm waiting for the Minister of Unification to correct, or to change the story, but who knows? Maybe this time it won't happen and then maybe we can convince the North Koreans and convince the Chinese to convince the North Koreans that we are serious.

■ China's Role: South Korea Needs to Ask

Let me just end with one quick sentence about China's role and how we get China to be more cooperative. I just ran a conference last week in Honolulu, our annual U.S.-Korea conference, and at this meeting we invited both Japanese and Chinese security specialists and we had people from the think-tank world of China and also from the PLA [People's Liberation Army], and we asked the question, "How do we get China to be tougher on North Korea?" and the answer was, "South Korea needs to ask us to do it." / Ralph A. Cossa (Pacific Forum CSIS)

< 출처 : 경남대 극동문제연구소 IFES 포럼 2005. 5. 4 >