

## Summary of Keynote Speech on Diplomats' Roundtable in Jeju Forum 2014\*

# Trustpolitik and the Korean Peninsula

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## Security Environment surrounding the Korean Peninsula: Major Changes and Challenges

Today, Korea's diplomacy is being undertaken in the most serious and complex external security environment since the end of the Cold War. The Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) incident that occurred in the East China Sea late last year is a case in point. It was a very sensitive and complicated problem as the security and strategic interests of China which had unilaterally announced the ADIZ and those of Korea, Japan and the US were intertwined. Therefore, it was never easy for Korea to secure its national interests, while not undermining the cooperative relations with the countries involved. The ADIZ issue is only one example that symbolizes the challenges of our foreign policy. The important thing is to turn these challenges into opportunities with a wise and principled diplomacy. The major changes in the external security environment that pose both challenges and opportunities to Korea's foreign policy today can be epitomized into four: first, the rise of China, second, the historical revisionism in Japan, third, the return of assertive Russia, and fourth, an anachronistic North Korea with its nuclear ambitions.

### - The Rise of China

In 2010, China became the number two economy in the world. According to a recent report, China's

GDP surpassed that of the United States in terms of purchasing power parity. Based on this economic confidence, China is actively pursuing its foreign policy. The policy of the so-called ‘Tao Guang Yang Hui’ that had been in place from the Deng Xiaoping to Hu Jintao era seems to be transitioning to a policy that goes beyond ‘You Sou Zou Wei’, which means China is moving away from its discreet attitude of ‘waiting for the right time while building strength’ to one that is more proactive and assertive by ‘flexing its muscles, if and when it is necessary’. The so-called ‘New Type of Great Power Relationship’ that President Xi Jinping presented last year as the vision of the US-China relationship appears to be China’s response to the US policy toward the Asia Pacific. China’s new initiative taken at the 4th CICA Summit held in Shanghai last week to build a new Asia security order and develop CICA into a platform for security dialogue and cooperation for Asia can also be understood in this context. President Xi Jinping visited Russia as his first foreign trip, and demonstrated the solidarity between China and Russia by holding a summit meeting with President Putin at the margin of the CICA Summit. They even went further to carry out a large-scale joint military exercise in the East China Sea. China also appears to be taking bold steps to strengthen its position in Southeast Asia. China is now in a standoff with Vietnam over a Chinese oil rig in the water off the Paracel Island.

The rise of China has a great impact on Korea’s foreign policy, the backbone of which has been the Korea-US alliance. The Korea-US alliance, which celebrated its 60th anniversary last year, is stronger than ever. It not only became the linchpin for the peace and security in the Korean Peninsula, Northeast Asia and the Asia Pacific, but it has also developed into a comprehensive strategic partnership with the entry into force of the Korea-US FTA in 2012.

Marking the 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties two years ago, the Korea-China relationship has never been better. As Korea’s number one export market and investment destination, China has become Korea’s single most important economic partner. The strategic cooperative partnership between Korea and China will make another leap forward when the ongoing bilateral FTA negotiations are completed.

After taking office, President Park Geun-hye, by actively pursuing summit diplomacy during the past year, has built a deep personal trust with both President Obama and President Xi Jinping, and based on this, Korea’s relations with the US and China have been deepening and broadening. However, it won’t be an easy task to further strengthen the robust Korea-US alliance, while upgrading the strategic partnership with China in a balanced and harmonious way. This would demand of us a creative and strategic thinking as well as prudent policy judgments and decisions. It is indeed the most important yet difficult challenge facing Korea’s foreign policy today. By the same token, whether the strategic interests of the US and China in Northeast Asia collide or maintain harmony is probably the

most important factor that will define the external environment of Korea's foreign policy. If the relations between China and the US get more difficult, maneuvering room for Korea's diplomacy will grow smaller. However, if Korea is able to address this challenge wisely by building trust both with the US and China, then room for Korea's diplomacy will expand, which, in turn, will provide new opportunities for Korea to play a constructive role in the region. This is why I believe that the North Korean issue, including the nuclear problem, poses both challenges and opportunities to Korea's foreign policy.

### - Historical Revisionism in Japan

The historical revisionism that is emerging in Japan with the slogans of 'Normalization of the Country' and 'Proactive Contribution to Peace' under the Abe administration is deepening the tensions with neighboring countries, including China and Korea. It is making the political landscape of Northeast Asia more complex. This movement, which stems from the wrong perception of history and misguided nationalism of some politicians, is a problem not only for Northeast Asia but also for the international community as a whole. It is all the more so because behind this movement lies the intention of rewriting history and changing the post-war international order. Japan will become a normal country only when it follows Germany's example of earning trust by showing genuine remorse for its past mistakes and seeking forgiveness in earnest. On the issue of exercising the right to collective self-defense, too, the Abe government should first make efforts to earn the trust of the neighboring countries prior to pursuing substantive discussions. And the discussions should be conducted in a transparent and prudent manner given the concerns of the neighboring countries over historical issues.

Currently, the US is facing a serious dilemma due to the tension between Korea and Japan. Since Korea and Japan are the strongest allies of the US in this region, the deteriorating relations between the two are undermining US strategic interests in this region. The relationship between the Korea-US alliance and the Japan-US alliance is one of shared growth, not one of zero-sum. Therefore, it would be inconceivable for the US to sacrifice one for the other. We had hoped to see a new momentum to improve the Korea-Japan relations since the trilateral summit in The Hague. Unfortunately, however, we have yet to see the light at the end of the tunnel. As the main architect of the post-war regional order, I hope and expect that the US will play a more active role in preventing the resurrection of historical revisionism that can potentially undermine the stability in the region. Realistically speaking, it is only the US that holds the key to change Japan. However, we have seen a narrow window of opportunity for moving forward. After many ups and downs, Korea and Japan

agreed to hold bilateral meeting at the director-general level to address the so-called comfort women issue and two rounds of meeting have been held so far. I hope that Japan will address this important issue with sincerity at the forthcoming monthly meetings, so that it can pave the way for improving the Korea-Japan relations. By doing so, I hope that next year we can celebrate in good spirits the 50th anniversary of the normalization of our bilateral relations.

## - Return of Russia

Korea and Russia agreed to establish a strategic cooperative partnership in 2008, and it was only when new leaders took office in both Korea and Russia that a new momentum was created. Since then, the Korea-Russia relations have been making significant progress, especially in the aftermath of two summit meetings. The Look East Policy of President Putin and the Eurasia Initiative of President Park have come together for projects such as the Najin-Hasan logistics cooperation project to become a reality. However, the Korea-Russia relations are now facing new challenges due to the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis early this year. We are worried that the Ukraine crisis can send the wrong signal to Pyongyang when it comes to dealing with the North Korean nuclear issue. As Russia is an important partner for Korea not only to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue but also in our efforts to pursue Trustpolitik, it is critical to have an external security environment that is less-confrontational.

## - Anachronistic North Korea

The North Korean issue and its nuclear ambitions pose the biggest threat and challenge to the security on the Korean Peninsula. Notwithstanding the international community's united message that North Korea should give up its nuclear weapons program and walk on a path towards reform and openness, Kim Jong-un conducted the third nuclear test in February last year and, a month later, publicly announced the simultaneous pursuit of nuclear armament and economic development. In particular, after the execution of Jang Sung-taek last December, the growing volatility and uncertainty in North Korea has become a greater threat to the security in the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. Moreover, North Korea has continuously elevated the level of provocations by threatening to conduct an additional nuclear test and to launch ballistic missiles. It was against this backdrop that Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se visited New York earlier this month on the occasion of Korea's presidency of the UN Security Council for this month and gave a serious warning that if North Korea conducts another nuclear test, the regime would pay the heaviest price. This will entail stronger sanctions not

only from the UN Security Council but also from the individual countries.

Looking back upon the past, we come to realize that historical opportunities for transformational change in inter-Korean relationship arrived in the Korean Peninsula almost every two decades. In the 1970s, thanks to the East-West detente, the inter-Korean relations experienced a brief thawing period in the 1990s after the end of the Cold War, some progress was made in improving the relations, including the adoption of the Basic Agreement between North and South. But both failed to bring about a fundamental change in the inter-Korean relations. Rejecting the trend of the times, North Korea took a path towards a greater isolation especially after the death of Kim Il-sung. 20 years after the end of the Cold War, it appears that the Korean Peninsula is facing another historical era of transformation. In his recent speech, Foreign Minister Yun called this the third “tectonic shift.”

Early this year, President Park Geun-hye compared reunification to winning the jackpot, and during her visit to Germany last month, she presented a vision of peaceful reunification in her Dresden speech. I believe this vision stems from her sense of historical mission as a leader standing at a critical time in history where we have to prepare for the future of the Peninsula. This vision did not come out of the blue. It is in line with the philosophy and vision of Trustpolitik that President Park has been advocating since even before she took office.

## Trustpolitik and the New Korean Peninsula

The fundamental reason behind the crisis in the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia lies in the deficit of trust among the countries in the region. Trust is an asset for cooperation and an indispensable element for prosperity. It is also a social capital that will eliminate the cost of mistrust and promote efficiency. The Trustpolitik of the Park Geun-hye government aims to build the infrastructure of trust among the countries in the region, and then based on this infrastructure, promote a high-quality cooperation.

We are already aware of many cases where by building trust, age-old conflicts were resolved or history changed its course of direction: the creation and development of the EU, the development of the US-China relations after establishing diplomatic ties, and the conclusion of the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel. Trustpolitik is based on a dispassionate assessment of the realities in the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia, as well as the unique historical experiences of Korea.

The basic thrust of Trustpolitik is to establish sustainable peace and cooperation in the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia by starting to build trust from the lower level. And the two main pillars of Trustpolitik are the ‘Korean Peninsula Trust-building Process’ and ‘Northeast Asia Peace and

Cooperation Initiative’ . The former aims to make peace in the Korean Peninsula by exercising strong pressure and persuasion, while keeping peace with a robust deterrence. On the other hand, the latter seeks to resolve what is called the Asia paradox, a phenomenon of increased conflicts over historical and territorial issues, despite the deepening economic interdependence in the region. To this end, the initiative aims to build an infrastructure of trust in Northeast Asia by accumulating habits of cooperation and dialogue starting from soft issues. The Eurasia Initiative, the other pillar of Trustpolitik, is a grand vision to restore Eurasia into ‘One Continent’ , which was divided in the Cold War period due to ideological barriers, and to a ‘Continent of Creation’ and a ‘Continent of Peace’ . More specifically, the initiative aspires to connect the Northern and Southern economies centering around the Korean Peninsula, by building a network of energy, transportation and logistics through, among others, strengthening the Korea-Russia relations, the trilateral cooperation among the two Koreas and Russia, as well as Korea’ s relations with Eurasian countries.

The ultimate goal of Trustpolitik is the reunification of the Korean Peninsula. Based on Trustpolitik, the Park Geun-hye government is committed to overcome the four major challenges I mentioned earlier, and proactively an environment conducive to the eventual unification of the two Koreas. This commitment is well reflected in the vision for a unified Korea that President Park laid out in her speech in Dresden that is, unification that will proceed in harmony with the interest of our neighbors, with the blessing of the international community and will contribute to the cause of humanity. In this speech, she also presented three proposals that put the lives of the North Korean people first, and can be immediately implemented if North Korea responds with sincerity. The proposals are aimed specifically to resolve humanitarian problems in North Korea to build infrastructure for the welfare of the people in the North and to promote integration of the people on both sides.

We know that the road to reunification will be long and bumpy. This is why, working together with the neighboring countries and the international community, we should start making preparations, and a platform and environment, for reunification. North Korea flatly rejected our genuine proposal denouncing it as an attempt for unification through absorption, and has vehemently responded by hurling insults to our leadership. But we will continue to seek ways to implement the proposals with patience and sincerity. For its own future, North Korea should make a strategic decision to give up its nuclear ambition and hold on to our hands.

Our generation is one that needs to live this era with the historical mission to prepare for the future of the Korean Peninsula. I am a firm believer that opportunities only come when we make change, instead of waiting for change, and that only those who are prepared can grasp such opportunities.

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*\* Jeju Forum 2014 was held in Jeju Special Self-Governing province, Republic of Korea, on 28-30 May.*

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