

인용시 ‘아산정책연구원’ 제공이라고 적시 해 주시기 바랍니다.

Robert Menendez

Q&A

Questions

Dr. Park Jin

Former Chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Trade Committee in the Korean National Assembly

Welcome to Korea, and thank you for your insightful speech this morning. I have two brief questions. One is about the challenge of a rising China in Asia. You mentioned the cooperative and conflicting relationship with China in the areas of security, trade, human rights and intellectual properties. Can you briefly explain the future of US-China relationship under the new American internationalism? What kind of US-China relationship do you see unfolding in the future? My second question is about Japan. As you know, the Korea-Japan relationship is at a dangerously low level, largely because of the voices of the retrogressive nationalists and the historical distortions made by the Japanese political elites. What role can the US play to improve the relationship between Korea and Japan, both allies to the United States?

Karl Friedhoff

The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

I have a question about the Special Measures Agreement—the negotiations currently ongoing to raise the percentage that Korea’s paying for the basing of US troops here. Looking at this from the perspective of public opinion, it has a couple of elements that could make this a dangerous negotiation in terms of the latent nationalism among South Koreans as well as the way in which the US handled the negotiations with Japan. There are also the ongoing financial constraints in Korea—I know everyone looks at Korea and sees that it has weathered the financial crisis fairly well, but with welfare pledges going and the inability to raise taxes, Korea is also facing its own financial constraints. How hard is the US willing to push on the Special Measures Agreement and does it have a specific percentage in mind? Is it a threshold of 50% or is it going to be lower than that?

Leif-Eric Easley

*Professor at Ewha Women’s University;
The Asan Institute for Policy Studies*

I’d like to commend you on your remarks recently made in Taipei, and I was wondering if you could please compare some of your observations during your trips to Taiwan and to South Korea, particularly in terms of how these partners fit into the US rebalance to the region.

Response

Robert Menendez

Let me go through the questions in the order they were asked.

With reference to China’s rise and our relationship, I think President Obama has made it clear, and I certainly view it as the chairman of the committee, that our rebalancing here to Asia is not a challenge to China. It is an engagement of the region. It is a hope to bring all the countries of the region, including China, into a rules-based regime in which international order, economic opportunity, peace and prosperity can be promoted. So our goal is not to challenge China, it is to engage it. To the extent that your government and your president have had engagements, such as the very recent visit to China, we welcome those engagements. There are some who

suggest that such engagements mean a drifting away from the United States. I do not believe that is the case. This is an effort to create a region of greater peace and security. We recognize there are differences between the US and China, but our effort is to create an internationally institutionalized order in which differences can be resolved. And so it is in that respect that we see China as a global power which we hope will play an increasingly constructive role. In the interim, we will continue to work on both economic and security issues that exist within the region.

Now with reference to Japan, I believe the relationships are very important, specifically from a strategic defense perspective. I applaud the government of South Korea for engaging in trilateral exercises in order to promote combined security interests. I think they have sent strong messages to all other players in the region. I do believe historical issues need to be met and healed. Nations are liberated when they recognize their past. In the United States, in a different context but by way of example, slavery was our original sin. And we did not become as great a country until we ended the shackles of slavery, recognized the abuses that had taken place, and moved forward. Then we became a much stronger country as a result. So meeting the challenges of history is important to create relationships. By the same token, there has to be a willingness to receive efforts to overcome those historical challenges. If such an environment can be created, it would be good for all the people.

With reference to your question on the Special Measures Agreement and the challenges, we honor our history together. We honor the sons and daughters of Korea and the sons and daughters of America who sacrificed their lives in order to promote peace, prosperity and freedom in the region. Sixty years later, we continue to honor that reality. Our challenge, of course, in both countries is economic in nature. To my knowledge, we do not have a specific percentage that we are looking at, but we are obviously looking to create security through strength. From my own perspective, the way in which you deter, in addition to our international sanctions and our isolation of North Korea, is through strength here in South Korea in combination with our partnership.

When I was in Japan I raised questions about Okinawa. As we seek to reduce the footprint in Okinawa, I believe we still need to maintain presence in Okinawa. That has consequences and costs to it, especially as we transition our air forces to Guam. It is in the national security interest of the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. There are some strategic defensive investments that must be made in order to achieve transfer of operational control. We will send a message to North Korea and others in the region that any consideration of aggression against the South has real consequences. So those are the challenges that all countries face. We will work in good faith to try to strike a right balance.

Professor Easley, with reference to your question, let me just say first of all, since you said that you are a Korean American, that I am very proud of the Korean-American community in my home state and in the United States of America. They have shown themselves to be smart, industrious, entrepreneurial, and have helped rebuild communities that were sometimes significantly in decline. They have traditions of faith, family, hard work and love for the country, so I certainly applaud their history in our country.

As it relates to your question, I think I have touched upon some of it in both my remarks and answers here, but let me just say, what I have seen in Taiwan is that it is pursuing cross-strait relationships in a way that promotes peace and stability for the Taiwanese, but still preserves that ability for them to conduct their affairs in a manner they see fit. We welcome their engagement with China, as we welcome your government's engagement with China to pursue greater peace and stability in the region. When I say we welcome those efforts, it should be a clear signal that our rebalancing to Asia is not a challenge to China but an engagement with it. We do not seek for countries *not* to engage with China, we actually embrace those efforts, and we think it is important in creating an environment within the Asia-Pacific region to ultimately achieve all of our mutual goals.

Having said that, let me also add that—and this is now my own view, speaking for no one else other than myself as the chairman of the committee—I will continue to pursue assistance under the Taiwan Relations Act to provide defensive abilities to Taiwan. I will continue to pursue the umbrella that we have with the Republic of Korea and hopefully see the Republic of Korea make some of the critical investments that I mentioned before in terms of own strategic defensive capabilities. I will continue to advocate the deepening of economic ties with both those two countries and other countries within the region and to pursue security initiatives that create peace and stability. So this is a welcoming of engagement with China, both by the United States and our partners and allies in the region.