

APRIL 26, 2016

Distinguished guests and friends,

Good morning.

We gather at a critical time for Korea and the world.

Since the beginning of this year, North Korea has conducted 4th nuclear test and launched an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). Two days ago, North Korea tested a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM). As one expert said, North Korea's SLBM capability "has gone from a joke to something very serious." Many people predict a 5th nuclear test.

T.S. Eliot said, "Humankind cannot bear very much reality."

But this does not absolve our responsibility to face the reality.

Given the ever-increasing threat from North Korea, it is un-nerving to hear some of the national security debates coming from the U.S. Some accuse South Korea of free-riding on the U.S.

I am afraid, such statements reflect a recurring isolationist strain in the U.S.

On the face of it, it may seem unfair that the U.S. is paying for another country's defense. This is a superficial understanding of the reality.

The ROK-U.S. alliance was forged during the Korean War. The Korean War was not simply a war between the two Koreas. It was not a civil war, as some say.

In 1949, China became communist. In January 1950, the U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson left South Korea out of the "U.S. defense perimeter" in

the Asia-Pacific. In June 1950, North Korea launched the invasion supported by the Soviet Union and China. The U.S. quickly responded by sending troops even before the UN Security Council resolution. However, the primary reason for the quick U.S. response was to prevent Japan from being communized.

The Korean War was a war between the great powers, the U.S., the Soviet Union and China. It was a flash point in the global Cold War that was just beginning to emerge. The Korean people were the victims of Big Power rivalry.

At the height of the Korean War I was born in Busan. If it had not been for the U.S., I would not be here today. South Korea's prosperity has been built upon the security provided by the alliance. For this, Koreans are grateful.

South Korea is also proud to have played its part. We have made our share of sacrifices in sustaining this alliance. We are not free riders.

The ROK-U.S. alliance is an anchor for peace and stability in the region.

Six years ago, when I met Prime Minister Putin we discussed how to sell Siberian gas to South Korea. Then Prime Minister Putin told me about a plan to build gas-liquefying plants in Vladivostok and then shipping the LNG to South Korea. I suggested that it would be better if Russia could build a gas pipeline through North Korea all the way to South Korea. He wondered whether we could trust North Korea. I told him that to lower the risks, Russia could send half of the gas through the pipeline and the rest could be shipped.

A project like this would have a transformative effect on the security situation in Northeast Asia.

My parents came from North Korea. In 1989, my father visited his home town, in North Korea. It was his first homecoming in 60 years since running away from home when he was 16. When he woke up in the middle of the night during his stay in his hometown, his cousin pulled a blanket over both of them and whispered, "Please don't try to help, don't ask anything. Just go back as soon as you can."

I know that my father's spirit is with us today. He would have been grateful for all your concerns about North Korea. I thank you on his behalf.

Distinguished guests and friends,

They say, it is darkest right before dawn.

We have come a long way. The Republic of Korea has emerged as a prosperous and democratic nation.

It is my sincere hope that the gathering of great minds here today will provide us with the wisdom to sustain peace and prosperity in this part of the world.

Thank you very much.