

## Asan Plenum 2023

# “Alliance of 70 Years and Beyond”

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Thank you for the opportunity to address the Asan Institute, with which I have been meeting since its beginning years ago. MJ Chung, its founder and supporter, has been a great friend, and I thank him for the many acts of cooperation he has shown me and the many kindnesses on my visit to Korea and to the Asan Institute.

I have a special relationship to Korea, which grew when I visited Korea during the 1951 invasion from the North and I had the privilege of paying a visit to the first American division and its Korean associates in Uijungbu close to where the dividing line is today, on the Korean Peninsula. And the Korean War was sort of my first experience of the many forges that impinge on this dark, beautiful, strong, and dedicated country. At the time, the question was at first to prevent the success of the occupation, then to stop the Chinese counteroffensive that sought to thwart our victory, and it ended in 1953 with the settlement of that war. At that time, Seoul was a battered city. Its highest building was the remnant of the Japanese occupation and its economic prospects seemed very grave.

Due to the dedication of the Korean people and the support of its American allies, the recovery of the country was astonishing. When I had joined with President Ford decades later, the country was beginning to recover. And today, of course, it is one of the advanced industrial and economic countries, I believe number ten on the overall list. And the Republic of Korea has achieved a degree of security and stability, which were only visions when I first encountered it. In fact, Korea is now engaged globally and participates with other countries in international security issues.

In the meantime, all of Asia has become a teeming area of recovery pursued in various ways, but generally moving towards a greater role in international affairs. But as these countries develop, the most significant one, in terms of history and size, is China. But other countries, like Japan, are resuming its historic growth and in that manner, the security concerns of different countries have changed. And so, I see the impact on each other.

I believe that one fixed element needs to be a clear and unambiguous commitment by the United States to the defense of South Korea—because of its strategic importance, because of its historic role, because of the decades of cooperation which have expressed these facts. In this process, inevitably, all the countries involved are adjusting their defense policies to concrete circumstances. This is not the occasion to go into any detailed discussion except to point out that the United States should be open to Korean views of their necessities overhung that South Korea is by a dictatorial regime in North Korea that is developing weapons of mass destruction.

So, we should have discussions about this special case based on the solemn commitment the United States has made to defend South Korea. And we must be prepared to analyze this evolution and to respond to dangers in a way that meets the dangers and doesn't create new challenges. The Asan Institute is a wonderful institution to implement these tasks.

And I congratulate you for what has been achieved and for your future responsibilities and visions, to extend warm greetings to MJ Chung. Good wishes to all of you. And face in the indissoluble close relationship and defense partnership between my country and the great people of South Korea.

Thank you.