

Keynote Address: “Lasting Peace? Prospects for Peace on the Korean Peninsula and the State of the ROK- U.S. Alliance 65 years After the Armistice Agreement”
The Asan Institute | Wilson Center Conference
October 17, 2018
The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

- Thank you, President Harman, for your kind introduction. It’s great to see you again.

President Hahn, we very much appreciate the Asan Institute for Policy Studies allowing us to use your wonderful facility here.

- Most speakers use the brief moments that they are being introduced as the final opportunity to prepare themselves to face their audience – one last prayer, perhaps.
- I don’t do that. Instead, I force myself to listen very carefully to how I’m introduced.
- You see, Benjamin Franklin once concluded an introduction of our second President, John Adams, by saying:

“... always an honest man, often a wise one, but sometimes absolutely out of his senses.”

- So, I’m always in fear that if I don’t pay close attention, I’ll take the podium after an introduction like that, and the first words out of my mouth will be, “thank you for that very generous introduction.”

- I'd also like to thank Jean Lee from the Wilson Center and the support from Hyundai Motor-Korea Foundation Center for Korean History and Public Policy for helping make this event possible. And to all of you, thank you very much the opportunity be here this morning. It's a pleasure and an honor to speak with you today.
- With brevity in mind, I'd like to offer a big picture overview of U.S.-Korea relations as I see them today, and to also consider the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.
- There could not be a more dynamic place to serve as U.S. Ambassador, and there is no better partner for the United States, than the Republic of Korea. While the courage and sacrifices we endured together during the Korean War solidified our relationship, our deep friendship extends back much further, to at least 1882, when the United States and Korea established diplomatic relations under the Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce and Navigation.
- The first U.S. diplomatic envoy arrived in Korea only a year later in 1883. By the way, we actually maintain the original Legation House that King Kojong provided for that first envoy on the grounds of our Chief of Mission Residence, where my wife, Bruni, and I current live.
- Which reminds me of some interesting facts I learned about our history of diplomatic relations in Korea... that very first U.S. envoy to Korea – Lucius Foote – was quickly demoted from his position for not being able to maintain sufficient trade volume. His successor, William H. Parker – who, I might add, was also a Navy man – was kicked out of

the job for being a “hopeless drunkard.” I’ll take their stories as a cautionary tale for my own career here in country... and I promise that I’ll try to raise the bar a bit from our less-than-illustrious start in country.

- Thanks to a 40-year Navy career spent mostly in the Indo-Pacific and Middle East theaters, I’m no stranger to the “military” side of the “political-military” relationship between our countries. As Ambassador, it is my responsibility to look after all aspects of our bilateral relationship. That includes close coordination on diplomatic issues, promotion of trade and investment, and the nurturing of people-to-people ties.
- As you know, this year marks the official 65th anniversary of the U.S.–ROK alliance, an alliance that serves as the foundation for peace and security, not just here on the Korean Peninsula, but also throughout the region. Working together, we have built a multi-dimensional alliance upon that foundation that continues to expand.
- One of the most important dimensions of this relationship is our economic ties. The Republic of Korea remains the sixth-largest trading partner of the United States, accounting for over 155 billion dollars in two-way trade in goods and services in 2017.
- The basis for our vibrant economic relationship, of course, is the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, or KORUS. Over the last year, we worked with our ROK counterparts to amend the agreement, updating it and making it stronger. Last month, President Moon and President Trump reaffirmed our close alliance and the importance of maintaining strong,

mutually beneficial trade and economic ties between our peoples when then signed our newly concluded agreement in New York.

- The new KORUS agreement should further stimulate our booming bilateral trade and investment. Since 2012, U.S. investment in South Korea has increased over 20 percent, and Korean investment in the U.S. has increased over 60 percent. In fact, Korean foreign direct investment, totaling over \$40 billion, is already the second largest Asian source of investment in the United States.
- Our increasing volume of trade and investment translates to more jobs in both our countries. In Korea, profit and innovation from our economic relationship accounts for nearly half a million Korean jobs. Our economic relationship is a story of “wins” for both countries – more jobs, more profit, more diversification, and more innovation for future growth. It’s a story that is still being written, and one with many prosperous chapters awaiting us.
- It’s no secret that the Indo-Pacific region has experienced decades of relative peace, prosperity, and stability. This secure environment has facilitated tremendous economic growth and prosperity. I believe this success was made possible, in large part, by a rules-based security and economic regional architecture in which the U.S.-ROK alliance has played a key role.
- It will take our combined effort – from allies, from friends, from partners in the region – to maintain the security and stability needed to ensure prosperity and peace for the future.

- As true global leaders, the United States and Korea collaborate to tackle some of the world's most pressing challenges, from combatting infectious disease threats to improving air quality and preserving our oceans. In fact, our relationship continues to grow, as demonstrated by our two presidents' commitment at their November 2017 summit to launch a new partnership in energy security, health, and women's economic empowerment.
- We have stood together, and continue to stand together, to face security challenges and threats to the erosion of international order. Our long history of supporting each other began in the Korean War and continued in Vietnam. More recently, we remember Korea's support for peacekeeping and reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan, and we honor those Koreans who gave their "last full measure there." I am confident we will maintain such mutual support in the future.
- Relationships are also about people, and our people have grown closer through immigration, economic activity, and cultural exchange. There are now over one million Americans of Korean descent, and more than two million South Koreans visiting, working, or living in the United States. On the other hand, over 200,000 U.S. citizens are visiting, working, or living in Korea right now, and in 2017 alone, over 600,000 Americans passed through Incheon Airport.
- As I'm sure many of you can attest, university years are some of the most formative, and we are both delighted and humbled that roughly 58,000 Korean students – with the approval of

over 100,000 parents! – are studying in the United States, making Korea the third-largest source of international students in the United States. Increasingly, many Americans are choosing to study in Korea, on their own or through the Fulbright Program, the Gilman Scholarship Program, or other U.S. government scholarship programs.

- We should also not ignore our increasingly deep cultural ties. Whether it is the Kenny Scharff exhibition at Lotte Tower, or the amazing cultural fusion of Sticky Ricky's gochujang chocolate ice cream (just trust me, try it), to the popularity of *kimchi* tacos at food trucks around America... not to mention the wild success of K-Pop bands like BTS in the United States... ours is increasingly a shared culture.
- With our strategies aligned, our democratic and economic principles resolute, and our ties closer than ever before, opportunities for continued growth and prosperity between our nations are boundless.
- Shifting gears a little bit, I'd like to address what is arguably one of the biggest foreign policy priorities of our current administration and definitely one that has profound effect on our bilateral alliance with South Korea – the topic of North Korea. As broad and as deep as our relationship with South Korea is, the situation with the DPRK and its nuclear program takes up a sizeable chunk of the bandwidth of our leadership in Washington and here in Korea.

- Earlier this year, President Trump and President Moon took bold and unprecedented steps to transform our respective relations with North Korea. Their willingness to do so has given us a unique opportunity to establish enduring peace on the Peninsula, and to achieve the final, fully verified denuclearization of the DPRK.
- A little over a week ago, Secretary Pompeo made his fourth visit to Pyongyang and again met with Chairman Kim Jong Un. He and Chairman Kim discussed the four elements contained in the U.S.-DPRK Singapore Summit Joint Statement signed by President Trump and Chairman Kim. They also discussed the upcoming second U.S.-DPRK summit, and agreed to instruct their respective working-level teams to meet soon to intensify discussions on denuclearization. In addition, Chairman Kim invited inspectors to visit the Punggye-ri nuclear test site and the Tongchang-ri missile engine test site.
- There of course remains a lot of work to be done, but I believe that if the United States and South Korea continue to approach North Korea with a common voice, we can turn the commitments that were made in Panmunjom, Pyongyang, and Singapore into reality.
- We are, of course, cognizant of the priority that President Moon and his administration have placed on improving South-North relations. I believe this inter-Korean dialogue must remain linked to denuclearization, and South Korea sync'd with the United States. Only in this way will the prospects of achieving our common goals with the North be their greatest.

- Of course, in the backdrop of all of this is the enduring strength of our Alliance, the reason you're all here this morning. You may have read in the press recently that the United States and the Republic of Korea are in the process of negotiating the 10th Special Measures Agreement on the burden sharing of the cost of stationing U.S. forces in Korea between our two governments.
- President Trump has emphasized the value the United States places on our Alliance, and insists that both governments work together to achieve a fair agreement.
- It is in both our countries' interests to conclude this negotiation quickly so that through our iron-clad Alliance we can focus on the important task of continuing to work hand-in-hand to achieve the denuclearization of North Korea.
- Let me close with these thoughts. Our nations continue to draw our strength from those who have served in the past... and those who are serving today. And our nations will continue to draw strength from those who will serve tomorrow... an unbroken chain, linking Americans and Koreans, generation to generation.
- Over the last 65 years, our two countries have laid a strong foundation upon which we constructed an alliance and myriad connections, once unimaginable. The coming decades will take us even further. In facing the threat posed by North Korea and many other challenges, our close cooperation and our shared values make us strong. Ours is a relationship with striking manifestations of military, economic, and scientific cooperation,

but most importantly, it is a relationship infused by deeply shared values and interests. As Ambassador, I will work hard to ensure our cooperation continues.

- Let me again thank all of you for your support and for your steadfast work to uphold and strengthen the U.S.-Korea relationship. We will continue to work with you, and with our friends and partners throughout the Republic of Korea, to achieve our common goals.
- Thank you again for allowing me to speak with you this morning, and I wish you all success for the rest of your conference. *Kam-sam-ni-da.*