

Asan Symposium 2022

“Celebrating Korea-US Relations: 140 Years and Beyond”

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That was a great speech by Park Jin. Thank you, Foreign Minister. Good morning and thank you all for attending the Asan Symposium to help celebrate the 140th anniversary of US diplomatic relations with Korea. As I mentioned, thank you to the foreign minister for his support of the conference and those great remarks that you just gave.

I also want to give a big thanks to my good friend Chairman Chung Mong Joon and the entire Asan Institute staff for putting together this amazing event. So, thank you.

I also want to give my sincere appreciation to all the distinguished guests that traveled here today to mark this special occasion. Today we will use the 140th anniversary to reflect how far we have come and actually look forward and see where we can go together in the future.

As Chairman Chung noted, the foundation that we laid back on May 22nd of 1882 has grown into a military alliance that provided a strong and stable base for the Korean people to create a new life in the years following the Korean War. On that rock-solid foundation, we built an entire network of economic and social ties to make sure future generations of Koreans and Americans enjoy even better opportunities than we do.

For decades, we have crafted one of the most steadfast, resilient, and robust alliances in the world. And now what do we do with it? Well, the answer is we continue to expand it and adapt it to address new challenges, and while at the same time using it as a force of good across the globe to improve the lives of others. To share the very security, prosperity, and freedom that we enjoy. And that is what I am here to talk about today.

So where do we start? Fortunately, we already have. There are existing roadmaps to guide us. Like the May 21 Joint Statement from a couple of weeks ago. It includes security cooperation, maintaining vigilance and readiness to combat known threats while anticipating and preparing for those on the horizon. Economic cooperation, building diverse and resilient supply chains, as well as expanding manufacturing capabilities to meet critical needs and create new jobs, and working together to promote human rights, democracy, good governance at home and abroad. So let me talk a little more about each of these. We often say America's commitment to Korea is ironclad, and our dedication to establishing sustainable, permanent peace on the Korean peninsula is unwavering. And that is because it is unwavering.

It has been that way for almost 70 years, since before most of us were born. And the United States' commitment to Korea will not change. Yet today we face unprecedented threats posed by authoritarian states like China, Russia, and North Korea.

We are redefining and reinforcing the future of our shared security with joint initiatives that are modern, forward-looking, and global. The bonds that we first forged during the Korean War will continue to make Koreans and Americans safer, incorporating every aspect of global security to include not only conventional defense but also economic security, cyber security, civil exploration and peaceful use of space, crisis management and emergency response, health security, climate change mitigation and much, much more.

Putting security first afforded the stability necessary for the Republic of Korea to become one of the world's largest economies. We want the United States to remain Korea's partner of choice for increased trade, investment, and joint innovation to ensure continued economic security and prosperity for all of us. America is among Korea's largest trading partner and investment partner because leaders in business and industry see the mutual benefit of our bilateral economic cooperation for American and Korean people, but also for others around the globe. Why? Because it is rooted in our shared values and commitment to transparency, the rule of law, and market principles, and ensuring we respect intellectual property rights and human rights in everything that we do.

Just a couple of months ago, we celebrated the 10th anniversary of KORUS, the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement. Ten years of strengthening our investment ties and expanding our export markets. Our bilateral trade is up nearly 68 percent and the United States is now the number one destination for Korean firms' overseas investments.

But our work isn't done. During President Biden's visit to Korea, Samsung and Hyundai committed tens of billions of dollars to joint ventures and investments in critical areas like semiconductors, high-capacity batteries, and the broader supply chain of materials, parts, and equipment for other key products. There is no better example of what we can accomplish together than Korean firms producing vaccines and test kits developed in the United States to fight COVID.

Continuing to work together on scientific advances will ensure that we serve both the citizens of our countries and the global good. Like you, we are first focused on joint research and development initiatives tied to critical and emerging technologies because we know America and Korea have a proven history of innovation excellence.

The world needs us to work together to lead progress in such areas as the digital economy, biotechnology, and the responsible use of artificial intelligence. We are natural partners in areas our people care most about, like clean energy technology, higher education, and sustainable agriculture.

Both Koreans and Americans care deeply about the future of our planet and what climate change means for future generations. The United States is committed to leading and combating climate change as well as Korea by vowing to cut greenhouse gas emissions drastically by the end of the next decade. To meet

such aggressive targets, we will need to work together with unprecedented determination and encourage others to do the same.

To ensure our security and to meet the shared goal economic goals I have outlined, we need to draw on the unique talents of people from every facet of our society. We can't leave anyone on the sidelines because of race, gender, national origin, disability status, or sexual orientation.

Both as historic allies and equal, like-minded partners, the Republic of Korea and the United States are uniquely positioned to work together to promote democratic values in ways that undermine the influence of authoritarian regimes across the region and globally.

In America, we often say that democracy is a work in progress. But we must continue to strive hand-in-hand to be a credible voice for promoting human rights and fundamental change abroad by modeling diversity, equality, and tolerance at home.

As I said in the beginning of my remarks, that history calls us to use this mighty, multifaceted alliance that we have built as a force of good across the globe. And we will do this through bilateral partnerships and through expanded collaboration with allies and multilateral institutions. Korea's rapidly expanding political, economic, and cultural influence gives Koreans a say in what happens in this world. And I know Korea clearly takes that responsibility very seriously.

At the recent summit between our two presidents, President Biden and President Yoon affirmed the importance of maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific and cooperating through the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. President Yoon also laid out his vision for the Republic of Korea as a global pivotal state, a GPS, and his commitment to take a leadership role in a Summit for Democracy.

The Biden-Yoon summit reflected our shared commitment to democratic principles and defending an international order firmly grounded in the rule of law, a system of norms that has maintained peace and allowed us all to thrive. It is no surprise that we both want this for others in the region as well.

What I have laid out for you today is an ambitious agenda. But the good news is we do not have to do it ourselves. Because the thing about being friends for nearly a century and a half is our people have been building ties for all those years in business and industry, civil society, between communities and between families.

Officials like me sometimes take the credit for those deep ties. But our respective governments are not at the heart of this relationship. The Korean and American people themselves are the central part of our ironclad, airtight alliance, and global partnership.

I leave you today with this thought, that all that our people have accomplished in the past 140 years, just imagine where we can be another 140 years as we continue to go further, faster, together.