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'아산 플래넘 2024' 환영사

- 정몽준 아산정책연구원 명예이사장 -

아산정책연구원(이사장 윤영관)은 2024년 5월 14일(화) 그랜드 하얏트 서울에서 '아시아의 미래: 번영과 안보(Future of Asia: Prosperity and Security)'라는 주제로 '아산 플래넘 2024'를 개최했다. 올해 아산 플래넘을 통해 참가자들은 북한 핵문제, 2024년 미국 대선, 지역 군비경쟁 등으로 인해 격변하고 있는 아시아 지역의 안보환경을 평가하고, 당면한 과제와 도전에 대한 논의를 통해 해결방안을 제안하는 기회를 가졌다.

아산 플래넘 환영사를 통해 정몽준 명예이사장은 오늘날 아시아가 번영을 이룩했지만 평화를 이루었는가는 되돌아볼 필요가 있다고 하면서, 안전과 평화에 대한 최대 위협을 북한 핵으로 꼽았다. 우리 국민들은 한미동맹의 확장억제 강화를 구체화한 '워싱턴선언'을 환영하지만, 이제는 전술핵 재배치를 위한 기초를 마련해야 할 시기라는 점을 강조했다.

정 명예이사장은 아시아의 미래를 논의하기 위해서는 먼저 과거로부터의 교훈을 되새길 필요가 있다면서 19세기 아시아를 대상으로 이루어진 열강들의 각축과 아시아 국가들의 식민지화, 20세기 2차세계대전과 그 이후의 냉전, 그리고 공산주의 팽창 등 아시아가 겪은 고난에 대해 언급했다. 정 명예이사장은 아시아 국가들의 역사적 고난을 상징하는 대표적인 사건이 6.25 전쟁이라면서, 유라시아 대륙의 지정학적 중요성을 감안할 때 한국이 자유민주주의 국가로 현존하는 것은 기적이고 이 기적은 아직도 진행중이라고 했다.

정 명예이사장은 아시아가 세계의 중심으로 변모하고 있으며 차세대 산업 혁명을 선도하고 있지만, 경제적 번영과는 달리 안정적인 지역질서와 평화 가 확립되지 않았고 미중 전략경쟁, 북-중-러의 전략적 연대 등으로 인해 아시아에서 군사적 충돌의 위험은 사라지지 않았고 오히려 증가했다고 평가했다.

정 명예이사장은 아시아에 대한 많은 예측들이 빗나갔는데, 북한의 핵개발은 그 대표적 사례라고 언급하고, 북한은 이습 우화에 나오는 전갈과 같은 본성을 지니고 있다는 점을 알아야 한다고 강조했다. 정 명예이사장은 세계에서 가장 가난하고 억압받는 체제인 북한에게는 자유롭고 풍요로운 대한민국의 존재 자체가 정치적 위협이기 때문에 적화통일을 추구하는 것이고, 우리가 이를 저지하기 위해서는 전술핵 재배치와 같은 강력한 수단이 필요하다고 주장했다.

***별첨: 정몽준 아산정책연구원 명예이사장 환영사 전문**

Asan Plenum 2024 Welcoming Remarks

Dr. MJ Chung

Founder and Honorary Chairman

The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Good morning, dear friends, ladies, and gentlemen.

Welcome to the Asan Plenum 2024.

The theme of this year's Plenum is the "Future of Asia: Prosperity and Security."

Before talking about Asia's future, I want to reflect on important lessons from Asia's past.

For most of human history, Asia has been the driving force of cultural development and technological innovation. In the beginning of human history, civilizations flourished along the banks of the Yangtze, Ganges, and Euphrates rivers.

For more than fifteen hundred years up to the 16th century, merchants, pilgrims, and warriors traveled the Silk Road. They brought with them four Chinese inventions: papermaking, the compass, gunpowder, and printing.

As history unfolded, in the modern era, Asians experienced severe hardships. In the 19th century, Asia became a battleground for Western powers. Western powers colonized much of Asia. The British colonized India. The French took Indochina. The Dutch controlled Indonesia.

The British sold Indian opium in China. The Chinese burned the opium and the Opium Wars started. China lost the wars and China was forced to sign the unequal treaties.

In the 20th century, the situation did not improve. Asia was the major battlefield between the Allied Powers and the Axis Powers during the Second World War. Around 30 million Asian people died.

Post-war liberation did not produce prosperity and security for Asians.

After Japan's surrender in 1945, Mao Zedong's Communists and Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists resumed fighting in China. The Communists won in 1949 and the Kuomintang retreated to Taiwan. 10 million people were killed in the Chinese Civil War.

Korea was a part of Asia's hardships. In 1945, Korea was liberated and divided between North and South. In January 1950, U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson made a mistake of excluding South Korea from the U.S. defense perimeter in the Far East. Six months later in June 1950, with the Soviet Union's support, North Korea invaded South Korea.

Within one month of the invasion, North Korea occupied most of South Korea, except the southern port city of Busan. Under the banner of the United Nations Command, sixteen countries sent combat forces and six countries contributed medical units.

I was born in Busan during the Korean War in 1951. I was fortunate to survive the war. After three years of war, the Armistice Agreement was signed in 1953. During the Korean War, one million South Korean civilians, 140,000 South Korean soldiers, and 40,000 UN soldiers lost their lives.

This was the price that we paid for freedom. Korea remained the last bastion of the defense of liberal democracy.

Dear Friends, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

This may sound like a depressing way to open a conference titled the "Future of Asia." But we better not forget the past if we are to build a better future.

At the end of the Korean War, General Douglas MacArthur, the commander of the UN Forces, said, "It will take them 100 years to recover from the devastation." In 1951, during the Korean War, the British newspaper, *The Times*, ran a condescending editorial, saying that, "It would be more reasonable to expect to find roses growing on a garbage heap than a healthy democracy rising out of the ruins of Korea."

But both predictions were proven wrong.

In 1988, only 30 years after the end of the Korean War, we hosted the Seoul Summer Olympics and in 2002 we co-hosted the FIFA World Cup Football Tournament with Japan.

If we look at the sheer magnitude of the geopolitics of the vast Eurasian continent, a fact that a small country like South Korea, located at the tip of the continent, remains a free democracy, is a miracle, a miracle in progress.

Asia is becoming the world's center of gravity. Today it accounts for over 40% of the world's GDP and is expected to grow to 60% by 2050.

Major countries in Asia are leading the next industrial revolution. They are developing the technologies of the future such as semiconductors, quantum computing, and biotechnology.

Today Asia is prospering. But the question is whether Asia is at peace.

Our concern is that we still do not have a stable regional order. Prosperity without peace is fragile.

We understand that the United States and China are in a New Cold War.

In political rhetoric, President Biden said that "competition should not veer into conflict" and President Xi said that "Planet Earth is big enough

for the two countries to succeed.” However, in reality, both countries are resorting to protectionism and unilateralism. “Buy American” or “Made in China” are the slogans of the two superpowers.

The competition between democratic and autocratic coalitions is also intensifying. American Senator Marsha Blackburn called the alignment between China, Russia and North Korea a new “Axis of Evil.” Meanwhile, others accuse U.S. alliances and new minilateral partnerships like the Quad and AUKUS of seeking containment of China.

The dangers of a military clash in Asia have rather increased. My dear friend, the late Dr. Henry Kissinger, dedicated his life to averting a Third World War. He achieved détente with the Soviet Union and diplomatic rapprochement with China. Today, we need that kind of leadership to prevent tensions from leading to a war.

Dear Friends, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

Predicting the future of Asia is not easy.

In 1969, President Nixon announced that he wanted Asian allies to bear more responsibility for their own defense. In 1971, the U.S. pulled out one infantry division from South Korea. In 1975, the U.S. withdrew from Vietnam. Many predicted that the United States would withdraw from Asia.

In 1989, some predicted that China and Russia would soon embrace

liberal democracy as their economies opened up and developed into market economies.

But these predictions were wrong.

I want to remind you another issue that many people have predicted wrong: North Korea and its nuclear weapons.

15 years ago, Rupert Murdoch, the founder of News Corporation, asked me, "Do you know what the biggest news in the world is today?" The answer, he said, was "Iran's nuclear program." The international community underestimated North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

While Iran has not developed a nuclear bomb, North Korea has built nuclear weapons. The international community failed to stop North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

I have been calling for measures to deter North Korea's nuclear threat for many years.

In 2011, I delivered a speech in the South Korean National Assembly calling for the re-introduction of tactical nuclear weapons which were withdrawn from South Korea in 1991.

North Korea's nuclear developments have been the clear violation of its commitments to the 1992 Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

We had spent decades attempting engagement. The “Sunshine Policy” had tried to persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear ambitions in exchange for economic assistance.

Today, as we face a regime of hereditary dictatorship of three generations, we came to a different conclusion about the nature of the North Korean regime.

The analogy of the scorpion and the frog of the Aesop’s fable makes us think of the hidden nature of North Korea.

As George F. Kennan once wrote of the Soviet Union, it is “Impervious to logic of reason, and it is highly sensitive to logic of force.”

North Korea used to describe itself “A Paradise on Earth.” But North Korea’s GDP per capita is \$600, the lowest in the world.

South Korea’s GDP per capita is \$32,000, 50 times larger than that of North Korea. For North Korea, the very existence of free and prosperous South Korea is the political threat. For the survival of its regime, North Korea thinks it needs the reunification of the Korean Peninsula under the communist flag.

Dear Friends, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

We, South Koreans, support the ROK-U.S. alliance. We welcomed the 2023 Washington Declaration to enhance extended deterrence.

We better begin laying the groundwork for the redeployment of tactical nuclear weapons.

This is the same logic that the United States continues to station tactical nuclear weapons in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, and Turkey today.

We also need to continue dialogue with Asia's major powers like China and Russia who have responsibilities and roles to play as permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Dear Friends, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

Abraham Lincoln once said that "The Best Way to Predict the Future is to Create it."

I believe that the Republic of Korea will do its part to ensure that the Future of Asia is peaceful and prosperous for all.

I hope that North Korea abandons its futile quest for nuclear weapons and seek engagement with the outside world.

I hope that Asia can build a stable regional order where all countries can enjoy prosperity and security.

Thank you very much for sharing your insight and wisdom.