

**International Conference on the
“ROK-US Alliance: 60 Years of Evolution and the
Future” , September 27, 2013**

President 이호철,

President 함재봉,

Chairman 하영선,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are indeed momentous times. This year alone has borne witness to the idiosyncratic nature of our times as celebrations for the 60th anniversary of the ROK-US Alliance and the inauguration of the Park Geun-hye government were punctuated by ever-escalating threats and provocations from North Korea. As a result, it would be fair to say that we have gained an even deeper sense of the vital necessity of the ROK-US Alliance. In this vein, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Korean Association of International Studies and the Asan Institute for Policy Studies for jointly organizing this timely and meaningful conference to discuss the evolution and the future of the alliance. I am delighted to be able to share my thoughts with you today.

Distinguished Guests,

As you will all be well aware, a 60th anniversary holds a very special meaning unlike any other. In Korea, a couple that has enjoyed 60 years of marriage usually celebrate it by holding a second wedding ceremony known as "회혼식". Similarly, in Western culture the 60th anniversary is celebrated as a Diamond Jubilee. Indeed, a 60th anniversary is a time to cherish the conjugal ties and mark a new beginning of love for each other. In this light, it is only natural to entertain similar sentiments regarding the ROK-US Alliance.

"Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase"

So says the Bible in a verse that you will all be quite familiar with. These words of blessing came to mind when I was reflecting on the remarks on the ROK-US Alliance. Of course, it would be wholly inappropriate to talk about the alliance in a past tense as we still have plenty of mileage to clock up together. Even so, I believe that the Biblical passage cited above serves as an apt description of where we stand when we think about the beginning, the present and the future of the alliance.

The ROK-US Alliance was born to ensure the very survival of the Republic of Korea. For the last 60 years, the alliance has been the bedrock of security for the Republic of Korea amid incessant threats from North Korea and contributed immensely to peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and beyond.

As has been well documented, the Republic of Korea was one of the world's least developed countries at the time of the Korean War. However, a remarkable turnaround in the name of the 'Miracle on the Han River' saw a desperately poor country become a proud member of G20 in little over a half century. The British newspaper The Times once quipped, "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." Against all the odds, we now have a blossoming democracy in Korea that is regarded as one of the most dynamic in the world. Needless to say, the ROK-US Alliance has been a solid foundation for this spectacular success.

Moreover, by securing stability on the Korean Peninsula the ROK-US Alliance has served the role of an international public good in the sense that it has contributed not only to the prosperity of Korea but, more broadly, to the stability and development of neighboring countries in the region.

The ROK-US Alliance has now evolved from a security cooperation into a comprehensive strategic alliance of the 21st century, based on broad cooperation in the political, economic and cultural fields as well as people-to-people exchanges. The alliance rests on mutual trust and shared values such as freedom, democracy, and market economy, and is expanding its horizons towards becoming a truly global partnership.

Distinguished Guests,

On the firm foundations of trust, the ROK-US Alliance is now making a leap forward in the spirit of the "Joint Declaration in Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Alliance between the Republic of Korea and the United States of America" issued by the two Leaders on the occasion of President Park's visit to the US in May.

The Joint Declaration underscores the key point of the future vision as strengthening and adapting the alliance to ensure that it serves as a linchpin of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in the Asia-Pacific. In addition, the two Leaders declared that the ROK-US Alliance will become a cornerstone for peace on the Korean Peninsula, cooperation in Northeast Asia, and prosperity in the global village.

In this context, President Park outlined three elements of her vision for the ROK-US Alliance in her address to the joint meeting of Congress.

Firstly, it is a vision that seeks to lay the foundation for peaceful reunification through the 'Trust-building Process on the Korean Peninsula'. The core elements of the process are 'peace-keeping' through strong deterrence based on the ROK-US Alliance and 'peace-making' through active dialogue.

Secondly, it is a vision that seeks to establish a framework for lasting peace and cooperation in Northeast Asia. Starting with non-traditional security issues such as the environment and nuclear safety, the scope of the 'Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative' will be gradually expanded to embrace cooperation in other fields.

Thirdly, it is a vision that seeks to spread the universal values of freedom, human rights and the rule of law and jointly respond to global issues such as poverty reduction and climate change so as to contribute to the happiness of all humanity.

Distinguished Guests,

The ROK-US Alliance was formed in the aftermath of the Korean War and has since evolved into a comprehensive strategic alliance, a global partnership and an alliance firmly grounded in trust. Of course, we all know very well that it hasn't always been plain sailing. As encapsulated in the words of poetry "Even a flower which is now in bloom may once have been fluttered by cold winds and snow", the ROK-US Alliance has encountered many challenges and has weathered many storms.

However, as we mark this 60th anniversary, I believe that the alliance has reached the level of maturity termed "이순", a time when Confucius said that his ear was an obedient organ for the reception of truth. The ROK-US Alliance will build upon the achievements and the progress we have unearthed thus far to drive further forward to play a pivotal role for stability and peace on the Korean Peninsula, in Northeast Asia and in the whole world.

I truly hope that in ten years time when we celebrate the 70th anniversary, the alliance will have reached an even higher level of maturity in the name of "중심", whereby a man can follow what his heart desires without transgressing what is right. I also expect that the alliance will reach the level of "이심전심", which means that two sides have a perfect understanding of each other without the need for any words.

In this vein, I have no doubt that the valuable insights shared among all the participants today will go a long way in contributing to the ROK-US Alliance realizing this great vision. Thank you.

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