

Prospects of Economic Cooperation in N.E. Asia

Dr. Kim is the Secretary General of the East Asian Common Space Secretariat in Seoul, South Korea. He spoke to the Eurasian Land-Bridge panel on March 22.

I would like to thank the organizers of the Schiller Institute for having me again, to have this opportunity to say a few words to all of you. It's a very different setting from what I normally am used to: I'm used to sitting with diplomats, politicians, journalists. But, here, I see in this gathering, a group of people with like-minded visions of a better world, a noble cause, high moral standards for individuals. Therefore, I feel somewhat out of place. Because, I've heard what Mr. LaRouche had said yesterday, in his passionate speech; and to regard him as a politician is very unnatural. Because I've been in politics now for more than 10 years—I've been a member of Parliament in Korea, as well—and I find that, to be a noble and honest individual in politics, in the *real* world, is not necessarily a trait that benefits the individual.

While I was coming to Frankfurt, yesterday, on the plane, I had an opportunity to watch a movie, a video. It was called, *The Emperors Club*. It had some effect on me, briefly; but I would like to mention what happened in that movie, that I would like to tell you. In that movie, the teacher believed, that molding and forming character for the future—preparation of future leadership of great causes—was very necessary, and very important; because, “with great power comes great responsibility.”

But, he had found in a student of his—who comes from good family, where the father, a very successful politician, and he himself, is also aspiring to become a politician—said: The teacher lives in an imaginary world, unreal world. And the real world is: In order to achieve your object, if it's necessary, you'll lie, cheat, do whatever. And that gets things done. And, of course, the teacher was very disappointed, feeling that his life was a complete failure. But, what I liked about the movie, of course, was that the ending was not depressing. The ending was that, through his other students, he was able



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to see that certain qualities of human nature are always negative or bad.

The reason why I'm saying this, and taking this approach, is that, after a day—half a day and yesterday night—listening to what has been said here in this conference hall, and from the experiences that I've been encountering in what is happening in my part of world—the situation of development of the North Korean nuclear crisis, and how things are not working in the way we had first perceived it. Because when President Kim Dae-jung, the former President of South Korea, came into power, we saw, for the first time since the division of the country, a genuine possibility of North-South Korean reconciliation.

For 50 years, we've been separated. We had a war. We had been taught that the “other side” was our enemy, and that there is no possibility of peace or reunification. And, we believed that. We were living under the influence of the Cold War. And we certainly took the position of supporting our patron, the United States, which represented the Free World. And of course, North Korea took the position of supporting the Soviet Union, their patron. And we thought that that was how life would be, for Korea. But, since the inter-Korean summit, in June 2000, the unexpected happened. And again, we felt that it was now quite possible, that Koreans could determine the future of their fate. And, for the year 2000, we were very optimistic, upbeat, of the possible prospects. And, of course, things changed.

Impact of Bush Policies

The direct result of the U.S. Presidential election had had considerable effect. President Bush, once he came into power, the first thing that he did, of course, was to announce North Korea's leader to be one of the “axis of evil.” And, certainly, when he had his first summit with President Kim Dae-jung, he made it clear that he didn't like the North Korean leader, and that North Korea was a very terrible regime. That certainly changed the prospects for the Korean Peninsula. And then, of course, the Bush Administration postponed a North Korean policy for six months, making the North Koreans very anxious, and very concerned. And everything went downhill, since then.

Regardless of the efforts made by North and South Korea to improve relations—in its own way, they made progress; small steps, but progress: of separated families' reunions, and trying to link South and North Korea's railways, which was part of the grand vision that former President Kim Dae-jung had. He's the first Korean President ever to, officially, make, as policy, the concept of establishing an Iron Silk Road from Pusan to Paris. Of course, the new President, who has more or less stipulated that he would continue the policies in regards to North Korea, in regards to its foreign policies, has said that the new Northeast Asian prospects of economic cooperation will be even greater. And made recommendations to [Japanese] Prime Minister Koizumi, that they should build an underwater tunnel, so that Tokyo will be connected to the Eur-

asian railway system.

But, I must say, that whether or not real progress will be made, will depend on many things. And one of the main things, of course, is how the United States perceives this Land-Bridge, or this connection of Europe and Asia: whether it is perceived to be against the interest of the United States, or in the interest of the United States. So, if the United States perceives it to be against its interests, it will certainly not be an easy task to achieve, because we have experienced other incidents, where we found that it is not easy to actually accomplish things that the United States would sometimes not condone.

For instance, when we had the “Asian financial crisis” in 1997, we found that the financial system that was dominated by the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the World Bank, did not really provide the necessary support, nor the solutions to overcome the crisis. So, Japan had advocated to create an Asian Monetary Fund, but it was quickly rejected by the United States, because it might weaken the IMF and the World Bank, and the economic system that we have now. So, that was quickly dropped.

So, we see the limitations of what the rest of the world can do, in light of the strong influence and opposition of the United States. We could say, here, that that is wrong. The United States shouldn't do this. It goes against all the interests of the rest of the world. But, whether or not we will be able to prevent these things from actually happening, is another matter. We've now experienced this first hand, with the attack on Iraq. And, this is why it gives me some displeasure, in standing here and addressing you, in a more or less pessimistic or negative way. Because I should be here, trying to rally the forces that are against this kinds of unilateralism that goes against international cooperation.

Northeast Asia's Prospect

I just want to point out, that we live in a world, that is very gray; it is not black and white. Sometimes that makes things quite difficult to actually ascertain. Because, it will be quite easy to look at the situation, “good versus evil,” or “black and white.” But, there are certain points, that make the situation a little more blurry. For instance, it is true that Saddam Hussein is a terrible leader. It is true that his regime has done and committed quite serious atrocities against its own people. It is also true that North Korea's Kim Jong-il, the leader, is also a terrible leader; and that, it is doing things to its people that we certainly would not condone, in the normal circumstances.

But, because we do the best we can, under the circumstances in the situation we have, I do think that we have to address these issues, and try to find a middle way out of the situation. For instance, Northeast Asian cooperation is something that we really need to work at, but there are other factors that are at play, that make that difficult as well. For instance, we just do not look at the Northeast Asian economic cooperation aspect; but we look at the security and the military alli-

ance in the region, as well. We know that the United States regards Japan as its Northeast Asian ally, and that it will strengthen that alliance, which will certainly make China feel very uneasy and uncomfortable in the future. And Korea, of course, is not a major player in the region, because Northeast Asia is a region which has all the great powers of the world involved, and certainly playing for their national interests. And it will be a very difficult region in which to reach a kind of consensus.

But, looking at the situation under the rather more complex circumstances, I feel that still—regardless of all that—there is a genuine prospect for improving and developing the region as a whole. The process that has been started by the ASEAN countries, in 1999: ASEAN consists of 10 Southeast Asian countries, which are not considered to be very important countries, in the sense of economic might, nor military might. It is developing countries. But still, it has been able to achieve a certain sense of unity and cooperation, since 1967, which now looks at a possible common market and common currency. And it has initiated, to the greater powers in the region—namely, China and Japan—a framework, that enables these three countries to have regular summits, in the forum of the ASEAN+3. It's a very unnatural title, because, although the initiation and the leadership is seemingly provided by ASEAN, certainly, of course, China and Japan would be regarded as the real powers behind this framework. Nevertheless, Japan and China were not able to really have a consistent, regular, cooperative relationship—because of past history, because of their rivalry, and because of the regional nature of the relationship, geographical relationship in Northeast Asia.

I think that has somewhat been alleviated through this process of having regular meetings, and also providing a venue for the leadership to sit down and talk about positive cooperation between their countries.

Not just because of Iraq, but certainly because of the prospects of what might happen on the Korean Peninsula, and because the U.S. Bush Administration has taken a very different approach from its normal U.S. position—in other words, defying the multilateral system of the United Nations—by pre-emptive attack on a country, just because it feels that it serves the interests of the United States. [This] has now created a precedent; very scary. And, whether or not the United States, the only superpower in the world—in the true sense, militarily as well as economically—will continue to take this attitude of unilateralism; certainly it will spill over to other countries, as well.

The prospects are gloomy, but at the same time, it also does tend to give us more reason, for trying to work out a peaceful solution, and finding the kind of future that Mr. LaRouche and others have conveyed during the conference. And therefore, I hope the Schiller Institute and the people involved in this Institute continue the struggle, and power to you. And hopefully, you will succeed in your endeavor. Thank you.