

Hak Ja Han Moon's peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula Rally in Seoul

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SEOUL — The risk is higher today than ever that threatening rhetoric between the U.S. and [North Korea](#) could spiral toward war, says a former [CIA](#) director who joined a massive rally here of religious leaders from around the world on Saturday in call for peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

“The danger of harsh talk slipping suddenly into all out war is much greater today than it has ever been,” [James Woolsey](#) told the crowd of some 60,000 inside Seoul’s World Cup soccer stadium, just days after President Trump also embraced a softer-than-usual tone toward Pyongyang on his own visit to [South Korea](#).

[Mr. Woolsey](#)’s appearance raised eyebrows at Saturday’s rally, a gathering that was unique for the sheer diversity of faiths represented, featuring prayers and speeches by prominent figures from Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Sikhism, Shintoism, Jainism and Bahaism.



The event was organized by the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification. It was headlined with a speech from Hak Ja Han Moon, widow of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon and the leader of the Unification movement that grew from the Unification Church the Rev. Moon founded in 1954 — a year after war between North and [South Korea](#) was frozen by an U.S.-backed armistice.

“What do you hope to see?” Mrs. Moon asked the crowd. “It must be to see North and [South Korea](#) become one, and to live in that peaceful unified country.”

Her remarks drew a roar from those in the stands, an audience that also included tens of thousands of young and old from across [South Korea](#), who’d weathered the cool November temperatures to attend the rally at the vast outdoor stadium.

Mrs. Moon has led the Unification movement since a few years before the 2012 death of the Rev. Moon, whose ministry grew from a tiny, embattled church in his native [South Korea](#) to a global spiritual

movement and an affiliated commercial empire comprising real estate, manufacturing and agricultural operations, and media properties including The Washington Times.

[Mr. Woolsey](#), 76, referenced the newspaper in his own remarks. “I’m here in part because The Washington Times’ hard hitting news and commentary is strengthening the resolve of America’s leaders to achieve peace and — God willing in time — freedom as well for the entire Korean Peninsula,” he said.

“We never forget that what divides North and South in this country is an artificial and arbitrary political wall of tyranny. All the men women and children of the Korean Peninsula are one people and they have been for some 4,000 years,” [Mr. Woolsey](#) said. “You have existed as one family since the dawn of recorded history and you will continue as one family for millennia to come.”

While he headed the [CIA](#) during the Bill Clinton administration from 1993 to 1995, [Mr. Woolsey](#) had a more recent influential role in Washington as an advisor Mr. Trump’s presidential 2016 campaign.

His comments followed a stop Mr. Trump made to Seoul as part of the president’s ongoing tour of East Asian nations. Nerves were on edge surrounding the visit by Mr. Trump, who made global headlines in August by threatening to “rain fire and fury like the world has never seen” on [North Korea](#) in response to Pyongyang’s increased missile tests and nuclear provocations.

However, the president took a far more nuanced approach in a speech to South Korea’s National Assembly on Wednesday, drawing repeated applause by praising the freedom that has allowed [South Korea](#) to flourish politically and economically and criticizing the “horror” being inflicted on North Koreans by the authoritarian dictatorship ruling Pyongyang.

While Mr. Trump’s rhetoric was notably softer, his military resolve appears to have grown more shrewd. In what military officials describe as a clear warning to [North Korea](#), Saturday saw U.S. and South Korean forces open their largest scale joint naval exercises in the region in nearly a decade.

Officials said the battle groups of the USS Ronald Reagan, the Theodore Roosevelt and the Nimitz are successively entering the exercises that will run until Tuesday, and will involve 11 U.S. ships equipped with Aegis missile defense technology, as well as seven South Korean naval vessels, including two Aegis ships.

The drills mark the first time since a 2007 exercise near Guam that three U.S. carrier strike groups are operating together in the Western Pacific, according to the U.S. Navy’s 7th Fleet. Japan’s Maritime Self-Defense Force said the U.S. carriers will also participate in separate exercises with three Japanese destroyers on Sunday, according to The Associated Press.

The sudden military activity seemed to underscore a feeling of urgency at Saturday’s rally in Seoul, titled the “2017 Global Rally for the Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula.”

The event coincided with a special Unification movement-backed “Interreligious Leadership Conference” being attended in the South Korean capital by more than 200 religious and political leaders, scholars and freedom advocates from more than 100 nations this week.

The conference has featured interfaith discussions and seminars. Several of those attending it spoke at Saturday’s rally, including many Americans, such as Bishop Don D. Meares of the Evangel Cathedral in Upper Marlboro, MD.

“We ask for peace and not for the ravages of war between north and [South Korea](#), as Korea is a nation flourishing with the Christian faith and all of God’s people while demonstrating respect and cooperation with all faiths,” Bishop Meares told the crowd. “We faith leaders from America and every corner of the world join in support of [South Korea](#). We proclaim that we commit ourselves to God’s spirit of unity and prayer for the peaceful reunification of Korea.”

Despite the sober nature of the remarks, the mood was festive inside the stadium. Jewish leaders could be seen exchanging ideas with Muslims. Buddhist and Hindu priests snacked on cookies in a V.I.P. area beneath the stands, where Christians of various denominations mingled with each other.

Many wore traditional religious outfits, including turbans and robes.

A particular high-point came when tens of thousands suddenly broke into dance to the thumping performance of American Gospel singer Bishop Hezekiah Walker’s “Every Praise” by Bishop Walker and the joint choir of the American Clergy Leadership Conference. “The Muslims were dancing to it too!” someone was overheard saying joyously afterwards.

Some in attendance wondered aloud how the festivities might be perceived by the government in [North Korea](#), where the freedom of religion does not exist.

“Religious and political leaders, public opinion makers and social celebrities together from more than 100 countries, representing all major religions, came together here today to express wholehearted support for the peaceful reunification. That’s a powerful message that the world community is sending to the two Koreas,” said Alexandre Mansourov, who was there as part of a delegation of East Asia scholars and former U.S. officials.

“This spectacular event could put a lot of pressure on the North Korean authorities in the race for competitive legitimization on the peninsula,” Mr. Mansourov said. “The North Koreans may feel hard pressed to put together an event as representative and powerful as this if they want to send their own message to convince the world that they have a better vision for Korean reunification.”

[Mr. Woolsey](#), meanwhile, embraced a faith-filled tone. “God is checking us to see if the men and women of God have the strength of faith to pull together to unite as one to rally together, not for ourselves or what we will get out of it, but unselfishly for the peace, prosperity and freedom of both South and [North Korea](#),” he said.

The reason heated rhetoric between the United States and [North Korea](#) is so dangerous today stems from the reality that “the speed at which information, misunderstandings and events move in the world of advanced technology is unprecedented,” [Mr. Woolsey](#) said.

The former [CIA](#) director also expressed concern of the potential for an non-conventional attack by [North Korea](#). “Now that the North has successfully put satellites into orbit and has successfully tested nuclear weapons, they have the technology needed to launch an Electromagnetic Pulse attack against the South or against Japan or against the U.S.” he said. “Such an attack could destroy the attack area’s electric grid, putting us instantly back into the 19th Century and leaving our cities with no way to communicate or to get food and water.”

“The world came to Korea at one time to protect this country and the world has once again gathered together on this sacred ground,” [Mr. Woolsey](#) said. “May God bless all of us and fulfill the dream of a unified and free Korean Peninsula.”