

Despite the pandemic the work of UPF continues, that is a credit to Dr. Moon

Dick Cheney
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Hello Ladies and Gentlemen and thanks for the chance to join in today's discussions. As always, the Universal Peace Federation has brought together an impressive collection of representatives, heads of state, and other leaders from around the world. It is a real privilege to be invited, and of course, we all hope that the next gathering will bring everyone together in person.

The global pandemic has put every country to the test with disruptive consequences for practically every organization yet the work of UPF continues, and that is a credit to the energy in the dedication of Dr. Moon. Since founding UPF 15 years ago, she has assembled a broad diverse network of leaders and concerned citizens and made it a respected influence for the good. I am most familiar with Dr. Moon and her late husband's influence as a reader for many years of the Washington Times. It has also been regular reading for presidents I have known starting with Ronald Reagan, and it remains a vital and well-regarded newspaper to this day.

When I traveled to Seoul in 2019, none of us at that Gathering could have imagined all of the challenges that would unfold in 2020. The COVID-19 crisis is one of those before and after events that will shape our thinking and policies for decades.

For a very good reason governments of the world have had to focus on containing the virus, protecting public health, and stabilizing their economies. Yet, the test of leadership does not end there, least of all when it comes to the global security environment. Even now the best leaders will be thinking to the day when this pandemic is behind us.

From a security standpoint one constant for American leadership is the critical importance of keeping strong partnerships in the Pacific region. In my time as Secretary of Defense in the 1990s and later as vice-president I passed through Seoul on a number of occasions and no matter how far the journey, it always felt good to stand on the firm ground of the dependable American friend and ally.

Here is one thing I have learned in forty-plus years of dealing in foreign policy and security matters. Against any set of challenges events will always go better when free and democratic governments work

together. I have learned as well to have no illusions about some regimes in this world. Try as we might to operate within a rule-based system of good faith dealing and honored promises, there will always be those that do not respond on time. The last World War began because the worst of such regimes were allowed for too long to work their will.

What followed in the post-war years was an entirely new approach under American leadership designed to deter threats with a resolved and unified action. We can all look back on that post-war era today with admiration for how much was achieved.

For generations, from one end of the map to the other, humanity has been benefited from the protective influence of the United States and our allies working together. Diplomatic engagement, military strength, coordinated intelligence these and more have made all the difference for our security, for our freedom, and for the progress we have enjoyed. A related asset and security policy is credibility. As secretary of defense and as vice president, I had the advantage of representing presidents whose consistency of word and action was a given. It is a short step from credibility to another key element of security policy which is our clarity of purpose.

There are times when a lot rides on our focus and determination and sheer perseverance in pursuing vital objectives. An obvious case and point concerns North Korea and the all-important goal of denuclearization. All of us can recall the sense of anticipation last year as the US and North Korea prepared for a second Summit meeting. And all of us share the same disappointment that those diplomatic efforts came to nothing. It was not for lack of trying on our side; our negotiator simply ran up against a familiar obstacle. The reality is that the regime in the North has its own agenda, part of which has always been to buy time and extract concessions while giving nothing meaningful in return. Accepting that unfortunate reality is certainly better than chasing after false hopes. And whatever future efforts might be made, we have to stay absolutely fixed on our security objectives with every incentive that can help, but no backing down on the denuclearization.

It should always be clear as well that our security commitments to friends and their region are unbreakable. Among the many reasons for that are the values that hold us together as allies. It is our purpose in this world.

After all, it has set us apart from other powers and always have in the post-war era. America and our friends stand for the independence of nations, for the self-determination of peoples, and for justice under the rule of law. Those are ideals that always need defending, and we should do so with confidence that they speak to everyone in every culture and every part of the world. That is certainly the spirit of this online gathering, and I am honored you asked me to be a part of it. My good wishes to everyone watching worldwide and my thanks for your kind attention.