

## Think Tank 2022: We face a geopolitical shift of power from the West to the East

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Let me say first how pleased I am to participate in World Summit 2022 addressing the important challenge of peace and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula under the auspices of UPF founder and host Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon with co-chairs Prime Minister Hun Sen of Cambodia and former secretary general of the UN, Ban Ki-moon. Our world is facing huge uncertainties and tensions because we are going through a massive transition, aggravated by the impact of the world pandemic.

We face a geopolitical transition with the shift of global power from the West to the East as shown by the historic rise of China. We also face a demographic challenge with the rising number of human beings likely to reach ten billion people by 2050. We face energy and climate concerns as the world is experiencing the consequences of global warming. Last but not least, we are going through a new technological revolution with a risk of confrontation and global fragmentation in the digital space. Never before has the risk of war been higher than today. We can see in the Middle-East a number of failed states (Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon, Libya...), spreading instability throughout the region and triggering the intervention of foreign forces like Turkish and Russian troops.

Risks are increasing in Africa, given the expansion of violent extremism in the Sahel fueled by Islamism. The risks are also tangible in Europe, especially in Ukraine with the deployment of Russian troops at the border. But the epicenter of the world's crisis is developing in Asia, seen as the front-line of the most powerful nations, the United States and China, competing for leadership, power and influence, while divided over the questions of Taiwan, Hong Kong, the South China Sea and Xinjiang.

Among the major threats, we have the danger of climate change putting humanity at risk on all the continents, but also terrorism as a universal source of instability from Afghanistan, South East Asia, the Middle-East and Africa. We should not forget the threat of nuclear proliferation becoming the major danger to international stability, as shown by the Iranian and North Korean crises.

In such matters, time is a key factor if we don't want things getting out of hand. After many hopes in 2018 and 2019 on the Korean Peninsula, North Korea decided to break off the talks. Then, after a long twenty-one-month pause due to the COVID crisis, escalation has restarted with the launch of seven missile tests this year, and new tests with a "hypersonic" gliding vehicle, which is much more difficult to intercept.

No wonder worries are rising. According to many estimates, North Korea could have between twenty and forty-five warheads, or even more. This is a long-term crisis. Together with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, this is the last crisis of the twentieth century, combining legacies of the colonial past, of the crisis of ultra-nationalism, of the Second World War and also of the Cold War.

It is a crisis of sovereignty and of independence which has been the constant preoccupation of both North Korea and South Korea, which are located among great empires, China, Japan and Russia. This can explain the Juche Ideology of the Kim dynasty. It is a crisis of nuclear proliferation which has switched after 1989 from a global balance of terror to the sum of regional imbalances of terror.

That's why we have to address these issues on a case by case basis, of course, but also in a systemic way. We need to reflect also on a larger array of proliferations, in AI or bioweapons for example, but at the same time on the changing nature of the international system and on the new phenomenon of the endless extension of warfare to all dimensions of international activity, economics, culture, law, finance. No sector is spared by this evolution.

What's the possible response?

### Dealing with the Korean conundrum

After the "strategic patience" of Obama and the "maximal pressure" of Donald Trump, followed by a spectacular policy of rapprochement in 2018, Joe Biden is looking for a new approach combining carrot and stick, sanctions and diplomacy. But while sanctions have proved not very effective in the past, Pyongyang can also count on the veto support of Russia and China on the UN Security Council. We are in a defining moment: South Korea is due to have presidential elections next March, the US is preparing their midterm elections, and the decisive 20th Chinese Party Congress will take place at the end of the year. In this context, the Korean Peninsula could be the place of an exemplary pathway to peace.

In 2018, the meeting between President Trump and Jong-un Kim took place without preconditions or any serious preparation, while it should have been the conclusion of the whole process. Many may think it is possible to bring the situation under control through a series of endless formal negotiations with cyclical outbursts. But this is not a solution. On the contrary it creates the conditions of an out-of-control proliferation crisis in a volatile global environment, with the China–US confrontation. In order to have a fruitful dialogue the strategy should be based on political, cultural and social interactions responding to the aspirations of both people and regimes.



Because of the tragic economic, social and health situation of North Korea, we know the needs are huge, but at the same time, we should not underestimate the resilience of the regime, obsessed with survival and prideful.

Therefore, accepting the principle of no regime change along with offering the perspective of a denuclearized Korean Peninsula, free of foreign troops, should be the main basis of a successful strategy.

Besides, we should agree on a road map, organizing the negotiations, step by step, in order to reach a peace treaty respectful of the Panmunjom Declaration. At each phase of these negotiations, it is important to put in place strong economic and security incentives with, for example, a progressive lift of sanctions and a double freeze of nuclear development and military exercises before any process of denuclearization. It is important to mobilize the international community and institutions in order to accompany, mediate and guarantee the talks as well as the commitments.

Involving regional and world players, China, the US Europe and Russia would of course reinforce the seriousness of the process.

I do believe that combining a road map with incentives and mechanisms enhancing economic cooperation and allowing family reunions as was a feature of the Sunshine policy started in 1998 with concrete impact like the united North–South ice hockey team in a previous winter Olympics. More globally, avoiding escalation implies the ability to mobilize all means to break the spiral of violence.

### **Step by step**

First, peace depends on the willingness for change; frozen conflicts as the status quo due to the lack of will power often pave the ground for endless wars, increasing anger, hatred and resentment inside societies. It is the case in the Israeli–Palestinian territories, Nagorno–Karabakh, Northern Africa as well as the Korean Peninsula. Second, peace depends on the willingness for cultural dialogue.

Peace-building makes it crucial to foster mutual understanding. That's why art, education, universities, foundations, churches, NGOs are necessary in facilitating cross-border exchanges. Third, peace also depends on the willingness to engage in economic cooperation. In this regard, companies, banks and entrepreneurs have a major role to play in ensuring prosperity and development. With determination, pragmatism and of course imagination, we might be able to take the lessons of the past and face the challenges of today's world, setting an example for the new generations. We have an opportunity today. We should seize it.

The world has been waiting for too long. The people of both Koreas, as well as our people, count on us. We should not let them down. Each one of us can and may contribute. This could be the starting point of a peaceful revolution, a renewed awareness of the global community finally taking into its hands its own destiny.