

## Hyun Jin Moon: Unification can be 'adrenaline' for economy

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*Chairman of Global Peace Foundation Hyun Jin Moon speaks during an interview Saturday. / Courtesy of GPF*

The age-old question of how to reunify the divided Korean Peninsula has been stalled by decades of debate surrounding what would inevitably be a long and drawn-out process, says one NGO director calling for a fresh look at the old issue.

"When top leaders of South Korea talk about unification, all they talk about is the process within the box of a Cold War paradigm," said Global Peace Foundation (GPF) Chairman Hyun Jin Moon .

"To address the unification issue, you have to identify what the goal is," said Moon during an interview with The Korea Times at the Hilton Hotel in Seoul on Saturday.

For Moon, 45, unification runs in the family. His grandfather was a prominent member of the Korean anti-colonial movement, for which he helped draft the Independence Declaration. His father, the late leader of the Unification Church, Sun Myung Moon, was engaged in North Korean business starting in 1991 when he first met the North's founding leader, Kim Il-sung, in Pyongyang.

"My family has been involved in unification ever since I can remember," he said. "I had firsthand exposure to what happened after 1991 when my father opened the door to North Korea."

After meeting Kim Il-sung, Moon's father established the international company Mt. Geumgang in 1994, launched tours of Mt. Geumgang in 1998, and the following year established Pyeonghwa Motors — a joint automobile venture between South and North Korea.

But for Moon, as he has embraced his father's legacy, the essence of unification lies in the two Koreas' shared spiritual identity and destiny. With this, Moon said, South and North Korea could build a common platform from which to move forward together.

"If one person dreams a dream, it is but a dream. But if everyone can dream the same dream, it can become a reality," Moon said, quoting Genghis Khan.

Moon, who was born in Korea but moved to the United States at the age of 4, established the GPF in 2009. Although he is known for his NGO work elsewhere, Korea is still at the forefront of his work, as is evident in his recently published book, "Korean Dream: A Vision for a Unified Korea."

"I think the unification process will start from the bottom up, instead of top down," said Moon. He argues

it is Korea's young people who need to take the lead.



*Chairman of the Global Peace Foundation Hyun Jin Moon , fourth from right in front row, poses with religious and academic leaders, and politicians during the closing ceremony of the Global Peace Leadership Conference at the Grand Hilton Hotel in Seoul, Sept. 29. / Courtesy of GPF*

"Unification really is a 'jackpot' like Geun Hye Park said. I'm sure young people today think that South Korea will maintain its trajectory and its standard of living. But they don't realize the fundamental weaknesses and flaws in the South Korean economy," Moon said.

Moon argues that North Korea's economy, with its young population and largely educated workers, will be an "injection of adrenaline" for the South Korean economy, which is struggling with an aging population and shrinking workforce.

But beneath this economic "jackpot" lies a cohesive unifying philosophy that is a genuinely shared national treasure between both Seoul and Pyongyang \_ the ancient Korean mantra that is devoted to "the welfare of mankind," or "hongik ingan," Moon said.

This year, South and North Korea mark 66 years as separate, postcolonial, countries. But later this week, Koreans will mark the 4,346th anniversary of ancient Korea's foundation, a celebration of the legendary arrival of King Tangun, credited with founding the country.

Tangun's father, so the story goes, came to this world to serve the people, not to rule over them or demand they respect or worship him. And it is the essence of this underlying cultural thrust that Moon said could bring the Koreas together.

"When you look at 'hongik ingan,' and the principles upon which that ideal is built, it resonates with fundamental freedom, and fundamental human rights," said Moon.

"There is no civilization that has such high-minded spiritual aspirations as its founding ideal to benefit humanity," he added.

If South and North Korea can build a common platform which centers on this ideal, unification will follow, Moon argues.

To many, especially the young, Moon's aspirational "Korean Dream" may sound vague, but it does include some practical elements that draw on current events.

"Many North Korean elites come to Mongolia and meet top officials and, in private, ask them about the

experience of transitioning from communism to democracy," Moon said, speaking as North Korea hosted a delegation of parliamentary officials from Mongolia.

China is no longer prepared to back North Korea, Moon said. Northeast Asia's geopolitical makeup has changed.

But Mongolia, a country with which Korea has ancient shared roots, managed to make a peaceful transition from Soviet-sponsored communism to democracy in the 1990s.

Ulaanbaatar's positive relations with both Seoul and Pyongyang make it a likely candidate to participate in unification talks on the Korean Peninsula, Moon said.

Yet in South Korea, the public and the thriving NGOs could do more in the quest for unification, Moon added.

To this end, Moon has sought to follow in his father's footsteps and do what he can to provide aid to the North Korean people.

He established an NGO, Action for Korea United (AKU) in 2012, and mounted a campaign that encouraged South Koreans to donate 1,000 won each — enough for three meals for a person in North Korea.

In 2012, he opened a factory in the North Korean town of Sariwon that produces enough bread to feed 5,000 people a day.

This week, GPF and AKU, Moon's NGOs, held a "global peace leadership" conference in Seoul with international academics, politicians and religious leaders, to share a "vision" for a unified Korea.

"This is the moment you need to become the owner of the Korean Peninsula," Moon said. "The Korean dream shouldn't be owned by one person. It should be owned by all."