

We need to look at the problems of North Korea giving up their nuclear weapons

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Congratulatory remarks on World Summit 2020



Let me join Dr. Walsh in expressing my deep gratitude to be part of this summit and to talk to you about some things that are very dear to my heart, the principles of peace. There is no question that the world has talked about these issues for many years. We understand the importance of it, yet peace and prosperity and universal values have indeed been elusive concepts for many years. So it is altogether fitting that we should come together and discuss these to see what has gone wrong and to see what we have done right and in a spirit of optimism and common purpose, to come together and push forward.

This year, 2020, is a year of anniversaries. We have discussed some of those. It is also a year of some anniversaries that we have not addressed. One of those, of course, is the seventy-fifth anniversary of a Korea that has been so brutally and so wrongfully divided. This was not something that the Korean people wanted. Indeed the division of their peninsula was not something they had much to do with at all. It happened as a result, at the end of World War II, of a particularly tragic series of events for humankind. The end of World War II has much unfinished business attached to it. One of the aspects of it has been the continued division on the Korean Peninsula.

Moving downhill

But even though we thought for some time that it could not be worse than to have the Korean Peninsula so brutally divided, it has become worse since those terrible days in the 1950s. Because, what we have on the northern half of the Korean Peninsula is a country that has not dedicated itself to interdependence, not dedicated itself to mutual prosperity, or to universal values. Rather, we have a country in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula that has dedicated itself to the fabrication and the capacity to deliver nuclear weapons.

I don't have to tell anybody about what a terrible prospect this is when countries try to develop nuclear weapons as a means to intimidate their neighbors and to somehow get their way in the world through this most terrible technology, but that is indeed what we have in North Korea. The United States has taken part in efforts, with other countries, to try to deal with this, and I believe the United States will continue to persist, but I also believe it is not just the responsibility of the United States to deal with North Korea's nuclear ambitions. Rather, it should be all of our common purpose, in the context of these values that we are discussing, to understand that we must, in some way, persuade North Korea of the need to do away with these nuclear weapons.

The need to persuade North Korea

There are those who say this cannot be done peacefully, that somehow more violence would be necessary to convince the North Koreans. I disagree with that, and I think to use those means is probably to end up with a situation that could be even worse than the one that we have today. I think it is the purpose of all of us to convince North Korea that they could have better prospects, a better future, without nuclear weapons

than with nuclear weapons.

This was certainly the animating concept of President Trump's meeting with the North Korean leader back in Singapore, a year and a half ago, to convince the North Korean leader that we are prepared to work with North Korea in the future in an ideal way that will be positive for them and positive for the rest of us. In a way, to say that if North Korea is prepared to go away from this path and join a path of interdependence, mutual prosperity, a path that shares our values, we are prepared to stay with North Korea and work with them. But there must be one very fundamental commitment, and that is to do away with these nuclear weapons and these plans for nuclear weapons.

North Korea needs to understand that the United States is extremely proud of the relationship that we have with the Republic of Korea, a relationship that is really a sharing of, to be sure, our prosperity and certainly a sense of our interdependence, but also of course of our values. It is truly one of the best relationships the United States has in the world, and it will not be shaken. It will not be broken by North Korean efforts to intimidate either the United States or the Republic of Korea.



The scourge of nuclear weapons

I think we need to look at the problems, the difficulty, of getting North Korea to give up their nuclear weapons as an opportunity to spread the values of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values. I think everybody, not just the United States' president, but rather all of us, should understand the role that everybody has in making sure that we do not see these weapons of mass destruction replicated in more countries. North Korea should come to understand that they could have a better future without them than they do with them.

We need to do this with a hand of friendship. We need to do this through peaceful means, but we cannot do this if what we say to the North Koreans [includes that] somehow we can accept some nuclear weapons or some part of their nuclear weapons program. To open your hand in friendship, to do so in a peaceful manner, does not mean to give up your values. If North Korea is accepted as a nuclear weapon state, who is next?

I suspect that this problem will go on and on as long as there is a perception that we are not serious about dealing with it. I hope that as we go through this seventy-fifth year of the division on the Korean Peninsula, it will come to light that there is some end to this, that the Korean people do have the prospect of coming together, even if the arrangements are just devised and developed by the Korean people, not by the rest of us. But with one very fundamental point: that we cannot accept the fabrication, the construction, of deliverable nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula. The US and the Korean people have come a long way in our capacities to understand each other, to work with each other, and to dedicate a common future to each other. We are prepared to do this with the North Koreans provided they understand that their nuclear weapons ambitions are an impediment, that the North Koreans come to understand that they must give up those weapons.

We must take responsibility

President Trump has engaged on this, his predecessors have been engaged on this, and when President Trump leaves office, his successor, no doubt, will also be engaged on this. We have many options for dealing with this problem. We do not have the option of walking away. We will continue to be very much fixated on the need to prevent other countries from becoming nuclear-weapon states, and then address the possibility that those of us who already have nuclear weapons will ultimately be able to give those up. We can look forward to the dream of a nuclear-weapon's free world.

Finally, I would like to say that as this World Peace Summit meets in 2020, we understand that great challenges are ahead. I think, realistically speaking, we understand that we cannot solve all the problems in one year and certainly not in one meeting. But I think we need to rededicate ourselves to the task of going forward, to the task of trying to put our petty differences behind us and to the task of coming together and doing so around certain values -- around the idea that we are one world, a very small world, in the overall universe -- and to understand that there are certain things that we must deal with and we must take on and we must be courageous about, that we must never turn away from.