

Think Tank 2022: Unfinished Business from the Twentieth Century

Christopher Hill

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US Ambassador to Serbia nominee

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It's a great privilege to have the opportunity to speak before the World Summit 2022. On this long-lasting, very difficult issue of finding peace on the Korean Peninsula. I would like to first thank Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon for her tireless efforts to find peace and to bring people together on the Korean Peninsula and see what can be done in the future.

There is no question this is a very difficult issue. It has been with us now for decades. In many respects, this residual problem represents the problems of the twentieth century now well projected into this twenty-first century. I think it behooves all of us who take part in this conference, but frankly the rest of the world as well, to look for ways to address this unfinished business of the twentieth century. Without question, it will be difficult, because many of the ideas have been discussed and here we are, decades later not having found the ultimate solution to them. I think it's very important to get different ideas, to get people with different perspectives on this. In that regard, I do want to thank the Washington Times Foundation for its efforts to bring people of different perspectives to try to find different ways to deal with this question.



I think we need to start with a proposition that although this issue was born in the difficult circumstances of the mid-twentieth century, the People's Republic of North Korea needs to get a little more serious about looking for ways to get through this.

North Korea, or the DPRK, has been trying to develop nuclear weapons and clearly they have made some headway in a process that will ultimately lead them nowhere. North Korea needs to join the family of countries around the world. North Korea needs to understand that its future is better protected by good relationships around the world than it is by weapons and certainly by weapons of mass destruction.

So I do hope that as this summit goes forward, the North Koreans will pay some attention to it and pay some attention to the fact that people from all over the world will be offering their perspective on how to do something about this problem. North Korea needs to understand that nobody supports their aspiration of nuclear weapons.

And the reason people do not support it is they understand that this will lead to no good. It will lead to no good for North Korea, for the Korean Peninsula, for Northeast Asia and frankly, for the world, because the world needs fewer such weapons, not more of them.

So we come back to the question of what to do about it. There have been all kinds of proposals. One is not to talk to the North Koreans, not to do anything with the North Koreans until they give up their

nuclear weapons. I think it's important to begin a process of dialogue, sustained dialogue. I think it's important to lay out a picture for North Korea on what their hopes and aspirations could be, what their possibilities could be if they can be dissuaded from developing these weapons. I think it's very clear as you listen to people, whether people in Latin America or Africa, Asia all over the world, North America, that they are prepared to work with North Korea in fact, to welcome North Korea into the family of nations. But North Korea needs to understand that they cannot pursue these kinds of weapons in this process. The Republic of Korea has made very clear over the years that it offers North Korea a hand and not a fist in terms of working together. They are, after all, the same Korean people and certainly there is an expectation that in this context of being the same Korean people, they can find a way forward.



Priorities

So I think it's important for a few things to happen. First of all, there needs to be a diplomatic track. There is no peace without diplomacy; diplomacy needs to go forward.

Second, there needs to be a sustained effort. By a sustained effort, I mean an effort that is not dissuaded by the inevitable setbacks. I have never heard of a diplomatic process that is always some kind of inexorable way forward. There will be setbacks; there will be ups and downs. So people need to accept the setbacks and continue to move forward. I think it's important to do it in a spirit of goodwill.

This is not a question of finding that the North Koreans don't want to do this. Of course, they don't want to do this.

They have never wanted a solution to the problem on the Korean Peninsula that puts aside nuclear weapons. They don't want to do that, but ultimately, they need to be persuaded to do it. I think peace processes, diplomatic processes are aided by a phenomenon of momentum.

Once they see momentum, once they see this as the inevitable path to a better future I think there will be more willingness to sustain this.

Of course, North Korea has many capable systems, many capable non-nuclear military systems and they worry about the non-nuclear military systems that the South Koreans have since the South Koreans are allies of the United States. North Korea needs to understand that the solution to this is not to build a military that's somehow more powerful, but rather to build a peace process that will somehow be more sustainable. I think a lot of what's needed is to sit down with the North Koreans and get them to understand that this is the direction we're looking at. So, as you get together at World Summit in 2022, I think it's important that you explore all avenues, but to understand clearly that ultimately this will be a far better world if we can get rid of nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula. I think that process starts with trying to sit down with the North Koreans and making them understand this will lead to a better future. Thank you very much, and I look forward to seeing what this world summit can come up with. I look forward to hearing further ideas and the continuation of this process. And I especially hope the North Koreans are listening and watching and thinking and thinking about how they can do a lot better in the future. Thank you very much.