UPF and IAED Europe and Middle East: Lessons from the Eurotunnel

Ole Toresen
April 26, 2021

London, United Kingdom - A proposed Japan-Korea tunnel may join the ranks of the world's most famous tunnels.

"Toward an Undersea Tunnel Connecting Japan and Korea: Lessons from the Eurotunnel and the Marmaray Tunnel" was the title of an online conference held by the Europe and Middle East branch of UPF and its International Association for Peace and Economic Development (IAED).

Approximately 300 participants attended the webinar, which was held on April 26, 2021, as one of the sessions of the International Leadership Conference being held simultaneously in different regions of the world from April 26 to May 1.


Mr. Robin Marsh, Secretary General, UPF United Kingdom

The moderator, Robin Marsh, secretary general of UPF-United Kingdom, said that a tunnel between Korea and Japan would profoundly affect East Asian peace and prosperity.

Mr. Masayoshi Kajikuri, Chairman, International Highway Construction Foundation; Chairman, UPF Japan

Masayoshi Kajikuri, the chair of the International Highway Construction Foundation and the chair of UPF-Japan, offered introductory remarks. He explained that in 1981, at the 10th International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences convened in Seoul, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, the founder of UPF, proposed the International Peace Highway Project. In his vision, the Japan-Korea Undersea Tunnel would be the terminal of this international highway.

At a summit of Japan and South Korea in 2010, the two governments agreed on a Joint Project toward a New Era of Japan and Korea, and the promotion of the Japan-Korea Undersea Tunnel was included among the 21 agendas of the summit. The next step, Mr. Kajikuri said, is to establish a bilateral agreement between Japan and South Korea on the tunnel project with support from many members of parliament. Support from citizens and authorities of both countries is needed, he said.

A short video was shown to illustrate the project. When in 2013 the Marmaray Tunnel opened, connecting Asia and Europe at Istanbul, Turkey, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said, "Now let's all dream of a bullet train that departs from Tokyo to Istanbul, and from Istanbul to London!"

Dr. Yoshimitsu Nishikawa, Professor, Faculty of Regional Development Studies, Toyo University, Japan

Dr. Yoshimitsu Nishikawa, a research fellow at the Institute of Social Sciences, Toyo University, Japan, explained that the Japan-Korea tunnel, which will be over 230 kilometers (over 140 miles) in length, will connect the Japanese island of Kyushu with the South Korean city of Busan.

Professor Nishikawa argued that an undersea tunnel will have a great effect on the economic development of the two countries. At present, Japanese companies provide parts to Korea, and Korean companies assemble them and export finished products to the world.

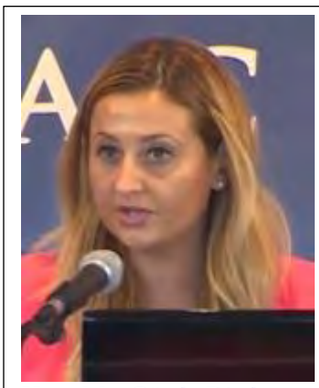
Transportation of tourists also will become easier, he said. The number of Japanese and Korean tourists who travel between the two countries exceeds 10 million a year.

If a transmission line passes through the tunnel, a mutual exchange of energy between Japan and Korea will become possible.

Building this tunnel also will have a political effect, as it will bring the two countries closer together. The spirit of cooperation could contribute to peace and stability in Northeast Asia.

At a time when anti-globalism is on the rise, it is necessary to take measures to enhance cross-border interaction, such as the Japan-Korea Undersea Tunnel, Professor Nishikawa said.

The cost of constructing this world's longest undersea tunnel is estimated to be around $100 billion and the construction period about 10 years. Based on high-level technology, construction of a Japan-Korea Undersea Tunnel is technically feasible.



Hon. Ms. Gözde Dizdar, Vice President, Centrist Asia Pacific Democrats International

Gözde Dizdar, the vice president of Centrist Asia Pacific Democrats International, then explained about the Marmaray Tunnel. It is the deepest immersed tube tunnel in the world with a depth of 60 meters, connecting the European and Asian sides of Istanbul. A big challenge for construction was the seismic design of the immersed tunnels with an earthquake resistance of 7.5 Richter. Other challenges were working in an area with high ship traffic (50,000 ships a year), archeological findings and political pressures.

The contract was given to a consortium of Japanese and Turkish contractors. Project risk management at every level is very important in such projects, Ms. Dizdar said. These immersed tube tunnels are 1.4 km long as they cross the Bosporus Strait, but they are connected to tunnels on both sides, 12 km bored tunnels in total. In addition, a 63 km commuter rail system was upgraded, a new third rail track for an inter-city railway system was added, and train stations were upgraded.

The tunnel construction started in 2004, but finishing the project was delayed for four years (2009 to

2013) due to discovering an archeological site in the sea. In March 2019 the overground part of the Marmaray project was completed and normal train traffic started to run through the tunnel.

Ms. Dizdar said the project provides a long-term sustainable solution to Istanbul's transportation problems. It decreases travel time for more than one million people every day. It reduces congestion on the existing Bosporus Strait bridges, and it reduces the traffic in the historic peninsula and thereby decreases pollution and carbon dioxide release.

Professor Roger Vickerman, MA, DPhil, Dr h.c., FAcSS, FRSA, FCILT, FeRSA, Emeritus Professor of European Economics, University of Kent, United Kingdom

Professor Roger Vickerman, emeritus professor of European Economics, University of Kent, United Kingdom, explained that the construction of the present Channel Tunnel began in 1987 and the tunnel opened in 1994. It is a 50km tunnel system comprising two running tunnels and a linked service tunnel. This provides two types of service: shuttle trains for cars and trucks between terminals, and through rail services. For passengers, Eurostar high-speed trains link London to Paris and Brussels. Limited through freight services are also provided.

The tunnel was a purely privately financed project, Professor Vickerman said. But there were public commitments to both road and rail improvements linking the tunnel into national transport networks. A consortium of construction companies and banks was responsible for the construction and has a 99-year concession to run the tunnel.

Tunnels are expensive to build, and especially the cost of undersea tunnels is unpredictable, Professor Vickerman said. The Channel Tunnel had to be refinanced several times, as the total cost escalated from the 1985 estimate of around £6 billion to double that amount when it opened. Probably considering both private and public funding would be more appropriate, he said.

Competition in the cross-Channel market became stronger than anticipated, both from ferry companies and from the growth of low-cost airlines, Professor Vickerman said. Rail freight was not as foreseen, but truck traffic increased considerably. Effective writing off of the initial construction debt became necessary.

Professor Vickerman asked, "Was building the Channel Tunnel a mistake?" His answer was that initial investors lost; equity holders had equity diluted. However, despite not being able to meet the original forecasts, Eurotunnel has managed to increase its revenues and become a commercially viable business.

Questions and answers:

Professor Vickerman, asked to give advice to the Japanese colleagues, said it is important to have clear support from a range of stakeholders, both nationally and locally, to build consensus. Also environmental concerns are important.

Answering a question about funding, Professor Vickerman said such a project involves much risk. Therefore, there should be both equity and loan financing.

Professor Nishikawa was asked when the building of the Japan-Korea tunnel can start. He said there is a question how the cost should be shared. It will take at least 10 years to get consensus on this project, he said.

M. Jacques Marion, Co-Chair, UPF Europe and Middle East, France

In his closing remarks, Jacques Marion, the co-chair of UPF for Europe and the Middle East, said that the Japan-Korea tunnel is meant to be the first link of a Great International Highway that would run through China to the west and Russia to the north, helping to create a prosperous East Asian Economic Zone. It would then reach out to Western Europe on one hand, and to the United States and Canada on the other hand, by means of an undersea tunnel at the Bering Strait.

Two specific challenges in this grand project underscore the name "Highway for Peace," Mr. Marion said. One is a tunnel between Japan and Korea; the second the tunnel connecting Russia and the United States at the Bering Strait. In both cases, the project implies overcoming decades of hostility inherited from 20th century conflicts between these nations.

Another key obstacle, he said, is the current division of the Korean

Peninsula.

Mr. Marion thanked the participants for the valuable information they provided.

Professor Roger Vickerman, emeritus professor of European Economics, University of Kent, United Kingdom