

## UPF's Northeast Asian Peace Initiative on peaceful reunification on the Korean Peninsula

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*Dr. Victor Larin, a Russian university department head and Chinese language interpreter was among the highly qualified speakers at the conference*

UPF's May 29–31 international conference in Vladivostok, Russia, occurred within the framework of their Northeast Asian Peace Initiative, the main goal of which is "to contribute to peaceful reunification on the Korean Peninsula." UPF's consistent reunification efforts are important even in times such as these, when prospects for peace between the Koreas seem dim.

In the aftermath of the 1989–1990 reunification of Germany, South Koreans dared imagine that their dreams of one Korean nation might come true. Following True Parents' visit to Pyongyang in 1991, two summits took place, orchestrated by South Korean President Kim (2000) and President Roh (2007) momentarily raising expectations. Optimists hoped the summits would lead to greater interaction between the Koreas and encourage mutual trust resulting in economic benefits for North Korea, all of which would make future reintegration of North Korea more likely and less burdensome for South Korea.

Pessimists contend that the summits' true aims were to benefit the political parties of the presidents in South Korea and that the scant results (in terms of improved inter-Korean relations) have only compounded the South Korean public's general cynicism. On the other side of the fence, North Korea has been a belligerent neighbor throughout all the years since the nation was divided in 1946. In recent times, she has become a nuclear menace.

### **An Obstacle to Unification**

Even were North Korea to abandon all efforts to develop nuclear missiles, two major issues would still block the way toward Korean reunification. According to Jonathan D. Pollack and Chung Min Lee, authors of *Preparing for Unification: Scenarios and Implications*, these two issues are: Who would pay for unification, and toward what political power structure would a united Korea orient itself?

The latter question -- whether a reunited Korea would ally with China or the United States -- made this conference, which drew a hundred highly qualified participants, especially interesting. Currently, U.S. troops are stationed in South Korea near the North Korean border. Were those troops to remain at the northern border of a united Korea, they would be at China's doorstep. This would not be acceptable to China.

On the other hand, a united Korea within China's sphere of influence would be anathema to the United States. In 1997, Samuel Huntington, a renowned political scientist, called the emergence of China as an East Asian hegemon a long term threat to America's national interests, and he was only stating what others had been thinking for some time before then.

It would be pleasant if Korea could unite and choose her own allies as she wished afterward, but the fact that various countries would look at a Korea aligned with China or a Korea aligned with the U.S. as a threat to their national security, dampens enthusiasm for unification. UPF's International Conference in Vladivostok made this clear.



*The conference took place in Vladivostok, the capital of Primorskiy Territory, which borders the area of northeastern China once known as Manchuria and shares a short border with North Korea*

### **U.S. Insists on an Asian Role**

In the early days of the cold war, George Kennan, a career U.S. Foreign Service officer, wrote an article, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," for the magazine *Foreign Affairs*. His purpose was to explain to the American people that though Soviet Russia had been a World War II ally and a key force in defeating Germany and then a partner in creating the United Nations, her Communist essence meant that Soviet Russia should henceforth be regarded as an untrustable threat to the United States. Perhaps to draw more attention to the article or to himself, Kennan's name was not initially associated with the article; the writer's name was given merely as X.

Similarly, but under her own name, U. S. Secretary of State Clinton wrote an article, "America's Pacific Century," for the magazine *Foreign Policy* in October 2011 to explain the U.S. policy of "rebalancing" toward Asia. According to an architect of this policy, Kurt Campbell, then an assistant secretary of state, the article was not mainly to educate the U.S. public but to signal to China that the U. S. was committed to and would be investing in Asia for decades to come.

Dr. Campbell stated that China had misinterpreted U.S. severe economic difficulties at the time to mean that America would soon be too impoverished to maintain its involvement in faraway Asia. "Beginning about 2007 or 2008," he said, "the Chinese believed that the United States was in the beginning of a very profound decline, and we would be out of their region in just a little while."

Clinton also used the article to reassure Europeans that the U.S. would not be abandoning their continent. (Nevertheless, Europe requires less U.S. attention because the threat of Russia in any way preventing U.S. access to Europe and European markets no longer exists.)

Clinton's announcement of what became widely known as America's "pivot toward Asia" was a brash statement; many would call it hubristic. The reactions to her article that were voiced at UPF's International Conference in Vladivostok indicate that these power structures are real and for the U.S., for China and for all other nations in the region, the stakes are very high. Thus, not knowing which central nation a united Korea would orbit, China or the United States, is indeed a key demotivating factor for other nations to involve themselves in helping to unify Korea.

### **Russian–Chinese Cooperation**

Dr. Victor Larin, director of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of Peoples in the Far East at Far Eastern Federal University, spoke about the failure of the Six Party Talks to stem North Korea's nuclear ambitions but added that he feels the Six Party Talks are "the only pragmatic and effective solution to the Korean Peninsula's nuclear issue... All parties should do more for peace and stability in the region, and should work for a restart of the Six-Party Talks and for lasting peace." He sees America's pivot to Asia as interference in interstate conflicts such as between China and Japan, China and Vietnam and between the two Koreas. He expressed confidence in China as a leader and source of

security within the region and noted that Russia is supportive of Chinese initiatives in creating "a new world order" and new system of security. His Power-Point presentation includes a slide that states, "China and Russia are working together to construct a basis for a new regional security framework keeping the United States outside. This security vision also seeks to downplay the importance of regional military alliances, a major source of U.S. influence in Asia."

From the People's Republic of China came Dr. Ge Zhili, a professor, a business authority and an advisor to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Perhaps unintentionally, Dr. Ge's paper runs counter to the hopes for regional unity expressed by Dr. Larin. Dr. Ge covered the Tumen River Area Development Project, an undertaking that would allow the China, Russia, the two Koreas, Japan and Mongolia a much cheaper means of getting their products to the European market. Despite a good deal of money and two decades of effort having been invested in the project, it has yet to come on line.

The major obstacle, as one report stated it, is that "the countries involved are long-time adversaries and several wars have been fought in the region during the past one hundred years." Internal conflicts among Asian neighbors has stymied all efforts to get this mutually profitable venture off the ground.

Dr. Alexander Zhebin, director of the Center for Korean Studies at the Institute of Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Science in Moscow, stated that the U.S. view of the degree of threat posed by North Korea is not commensurate with North Korea's military capabilities.

"Actions of the U.S. and their allies, who have boycotted the negotiation process and at the same time are trying to use UN sanctions to paralyze North Korea's entire foreign trade and foreign economic affairs, provide reasons to believe that in line with their strategic plan, the U.S. is not interested in full and final settlement of the situation and disappearance of 'the North Korean threat' because it inevitably would reveal their true motives -- preserving the U.S. military presence in South Korea and Japan and the deployment of Theater Missile Defense in the region."

Finally, Ms. Tatyana Kim, apparently a Russian-Korean, is the director of a Korean cultural center in the territory that includes Vladivostok. She is an activist that has long been interested in Korean integration and an enthusiastic supporter of UPF's work.

As she expresses it, the Northeast Asian Peace Initiative opened a branch in Russia in 2009 and since then 'active work on the convergence of North Korea and South Korea is going on.'" Ms. Kim is a real treasure.

One could say that she represents NEAPI's ultimate target audience, North Koreans. "North Korea is a unique state," she wrote. "Impressions gained from visiting the country are not possible to compare with that from any other place on Earth. For many people born in the USSR, the trip to North Korea is a real journey back in time. This country of 'completely victorious socialism' lives by laws and regulations that are very different from most of the modern world." Let's hope that NEAPI is able to win the hearts of many more (approximately 24.8 million) like Tatyana Kim.

UPF has taken a great step in welcoming the views of those from the Far East. Greater exposure of these views to Western audiences is essential. (Apparently, Far East Asians are familiar with the message coming from the West.) Let us hope that empathy between East and West can develop and lead to enthusiastic support for Korean reintegration.