

**SECURITY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS  
IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA  
by Ambassador Youn Tai Chi**

The security environment of the Pacific today can be characterized by two distinct forces: one, the aggressive communist expansionism led by the Soviet Union, North Korea, and Vietnam; and the other, the cooperative trend of peace-seeking nations that are determined to open a new era of prosperity along the Pacific rim.

In fact, many leaders of the world have recognized the importance of the region. President Ronald Reagan has frequently mentioned that the future of the United States as well as that of other nations lies in the Pacific. Also, President Chun Doo Hwan proposed periodic summit meetings of the Pacific rim nations to strengthen peace efforts and economic cooperation. Whatever form and direction the cooperation of Pacific rim nations may take, the role of the United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK) will be of crucial importance. The strengthening of cooperation between the two nations will significantly contribute to the security and progress of the region.

However, in order to ensure peace and prosperity, the threat of violence and aggression must be deterred. In particular, the constant military build-up of the Soviet Union and its proxies in Northeast Asia poses a special threat to the whole Pacific region. We are especially concerned about the growing military ties between the Soviet Union and North Korea, as evidenced by the North's acquisition of MIG-23s, calls of Soviet warships at North Korean ports, the Soviets' daily reconnaissance flights over North Korea and many other recent military movements. Moreover, despite the presence in the South of 40,000 U.S. troops, which plays a vital role in maintaining stability in the peninsula, the North has a significant military edge over the South. Such military imbalances coupled with Soviet expansionism have been the core of our security concerns.

It has been our consistent policy to avail ourselves of all possible means of preventing the recurrence of war and establishing lasting stability on the peninsula. Moreover, we have learned from

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experience that national goals can never be achieved without safeguarding our national security. In fact, many observers have noted that the next two or three years will be critically important to the long-term well-being of our nation. North Korea is expected to maintain its military superiority at least for the remainder of the decade; and it is quite feasible that North Koreans may instigate a major conflict, believing that it would be their last chance to gain control over the South.

To overcome this major threat, our Government will definitely continue strengthening its relationship with the United States, Japan, and other friendly nations. At the same time, we will try to promote better understanding of our peace-oriented initiatives in China and the Soviet Union. Accordingly, we are in favor of cross-recognition of South and North Korea by the major powers and simultaneous entry of two Koreas to the United Nations. Such steps could facilitate the process of ensuring peace and security in the peninsula.

Meanwhile, we will continue to pursue South-North dialogue with patience and sincerity. It has always been our basic policy to solve Korean problems through negotiation rather than military action. Thus, we are engaged in a dialogue to pave the way for peaceful reunification and to mitigate the level of tension between South and North. However, the process of dialogue has never been smooth. For example, last year's exchange of Red Cross visitors was finally worked out after fourteen years of sporadic discussions. However, North Korea's intransigence was evidenced once again this year as it unilaterally put off further rounds of talks on the pretext of the annual ROK-U.S. joint military exercise. We cannot predict when the North Koreans will return to the negotiating table. It is obvious that North Korea has been confronting many internal and external difficulties, including the succession problem of aging Kim Il Sung.

As the ROK becomes more prominent in the international arena with its thriving economy and hosting of the 1986 Asian Games and 1988 Olympics, North Korea's image remains tarnished by its acts of terrorism and its totalitarian, isolated government. The single most immediate issue that concerns us, however, is that North Korea may resort to naked force out of envy or frustration and launch another surprise attack against the South. In this respect, constant vigilance is required for Seoul and its allies.

North Korea is making every possible effort to undermine the international image of South Korea and to disrupt our international activities. At a recent mass rally in Pyongyang, Kim Il Sung stated that the North will not sit idly by during the Olympic Games. North Korea's criticism of the Seoul Olympic Games indicates that instituting necessary security measures in Northeast Asia will not be an easy task. Thus, continued reinforcement of the Mutual Defense Treaty with the U.S. will be essential. No matter how the situation changes, our mutual alliance will remain the most important factor in the peace effort.

Before concluding my remarks, please allow me to briefly touch on domestic issues which have drawn considerable attention from the American media in recent weeks.

Ever since the inception of the Fifth Republic in 1981, the Government has been pursuing the development of a viable democracy, the construction of a welfare state, and the realization of a just society. In accordance with these efforts, the majority Democratic Justice Party (DJP) has made significant contributions to political development and democratization.

With regard to the recent movement to revise the Constitution, we should first recognize that any constitution, including that of a developed nation, is subject to periodic amendments reflecting social, economic, and political developments. As the nation continues to make economic and social progress, the public may feel that constitutional revision is necessary to accommodate new realities. The DJP is acutely aware of such needs and has chosen to carefully work out the revision within the framework of the current Constitution, which stipulates that amendment procedures must originate from the National Assembly. Moreover, the DJP has formulated a policy that would study all possible alternatives of revision, while maintaining close coordination with the opposition parties. However, some members of the opposition group have demanded that the Constitution be revised immediately to adopt direct presidential elections. Moreover, they have been reluctant to participate in joint efforts to resolve the sensitive issue of Constitutional amendment in an orderly manner.

In reference to this issue, President Chun announced on April 30 that he would not be opposed to Constitutional revision before the close of his term in 1988 if the ruling and opposition parties agree on an amendment in the National Assembly. Such display of flexibility is an indication of the President's strong determination to resolve the current political problems. This presidential statement is also highly significant in the sense that it facilitates a climate in which the opposing parties could settle all pending problems through dialogue and compromise.

We believe that democracy should be established on a step-by-step basis. In moving further toward a viable democracy, we welcome any interest and comments expressed by our allies, to the extent that they do not excessively interfere with our domestic affairs.

One cannot over-emphasize that political and social stability is crucial to national security and economic prosperity. It should also be noted that the people's right to petition and to express their opinions is guaranteed by the Constitution, as long as it is exercised in a peaceful manner and without resort to violence or civil disorder.

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