

Center for Strategic and International Studies

Foreign Policy in a New Era: The ROK and U.S.

Keynote Conversation

Participants:

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VICTOR D. CHA: So, just to get us started, the – this – and I will introduce Secretary Albright in a minute – but this all came about because when President Moon came here, and the foreign minister accompanied him, Secretary Albright and Foreign Minister Kang were in the lobby. I think we were waiting for the president to arrive. And John Hamre said we have the two historic women here, both the first lead diplomats for their countries. And we said we have to have an event with the two of them together. And so that's how this all came about. And so you can see CSIS follows through on what we promise that we're going to do.

But in – but it's a true honor to have the foreign minister and Secretary Albright here on the stage. We've already introduced the foreign minister, but let me introduce someone who needs no introduction, really, but I will introduce her anyway. The honorable Madeleine Albright was the first woman to serve as America's top diplomat as the 64th U.S. secretary of state from 1997 to 2001. She served as the U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations from 1993 to 1997.

Currently Dr. Albright is chair of the Albright Stonebridge Group and chair of Albright Capital Management. She is also a professor in the practice of diplomacy at Georgetown University in the School of Foreign Service and is a member of the Defense Policy Board at the U.S. Department of Defense. Dr. Albright received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, in 2012.

So to begin the discussion, I thought I would ask Secretary Albright a question first. And given that, as Dr. Green mentioned, North Korea is so much the central issue – it was a topic, the lead topic, of the foreign minister's conversations in New York last week. You know, I think the foreign minister's remarks on the alliance were very reassuring about the solidarity of the alliance in the face of the challenges that are so obvious today. However, when it comes to North Korea, Secretary Albright, you were the last senior U.S. official to spend time in North Korea and, more importantly, to have direct contact with the North Korean leader.

And I guess the question is, based on your experience there, which is a unique and historic experience, what can you share from that experience that might help the rest of us in this room think about the problem today?

MADELEINE K. ALBRIGHT: Well, it's wonderful to be here with the first and with you, my colleague at Georgetown. So it's a very great occasion. Thanks for following through on this; delighted.

Well, let me say it's interesting that I was there in 2000. And that is the last – I was the highest-level – I'm still the highest-level sitting official to have spent time in Pyongyang.

And what I think is important for us to understand, this has not been an easy relationship all along. And when I was at the United Nations, the North Koreans were already threatening to pull out of the NPT. I remember this was just before my birthday, and I – the North Korean perm rep gave this unbelievable speech. And I was trying not to take the bait. But I said basically I would like to thank the North Korean representative for his speech and making me feel 40 years younger – (laughter) – with a speech out of the Cold War.

But we had begun to deal with a variety of issues and what they were doing in terms of their nuclear production. And Bob Gallucci is here, having negotiated the agreed framework, which I think was a very important step forward.

Now, I hold no brief for the North Koreans on anything that I'm saying. But one of the issues really was, were we delivering? Were the light-water reactors being built in a timely way? What were the – what were the South Koreans and the Japanese doing? And just generally how were we going?

So the situation deteriorated in a number of different ways. And the Clinton administration did a review of the whole policy. And what did happen that was very interesting, Vice Marshal Jo, the number two guy, came to the United States, and we, in fact, signed a no-hostile-intent agreement that I think was a very important part.

He had come in order to invite President Clinton to go to North Korea. President Clinton said, well, maybe at some point, but I have to send the secretary of state. So I am very glad I went. By the way, Dennis Rodman was all my fault, because the only thing that we knew about Kim Jong-il was that he liked basketball, and so – and Michael Jordan. So I took over an autographed basketball, which is in their holy of holies, which Kim Jong-un apparently saw.

So – but I do think that it was a very important discussion, because we were talking about fissile material, about missile limits, and really were in the middle of discussions that then the election of 2000 was confusing to many people. But the bottom line is that the policy that we were in the middle of working on did not get followed. Ambassador Sherman was with me. She – we actually were on a trip in South Africa. She was all set to go to the continuation of the talks in Kuala Lumpur, and all of a sudden that was all called off.

And as a result of those discussions, there was no new fissile material added. There are no ICBMs, no nuclear weapons. And so I think it was an important time. And I have to say you saved me on something that you may not even know. I was having dinner with Kim Jong-il, and we were talking about many things. And he, through an interpreter, kept saying things like what do you think of the Swedish model? And I was trying to figure out, model? Model? (Laughter.)

And then he asked me, through his interpreter, how does my interpreter compare with Kim Dae-jung's? And I thought, OK, I'm going to have this interpreter killed, but I – (laughter) – was able to say Kim Dae-jung has the best woman interpreter I have ever heard. (Laughter.) So we were connected very early. And it helped a lot, believe me.

But I do think that what is interesting is at that time they were prepared to have missile limits. And, by the way, Kim Jong-il said to me that we could keep our forces in South Korea; so any number of things. And I'm very sorry that we cut that off as a result of a change in policy where the Bush administration didn't believe in the sunshine policy.

So there has been a history of this. This is – and I think that we need to understand that this is an incredibly complex problem in every single way that has gotten more and more complicated and needs to be dealt with. We don't need to ramp up the rhetoric. We need to really work. And it would be great if we had an ambassador in Seoul. (Laughter.)

MR. CHA: OK. So – (laughter) – well, thank you, Madam Secretary.

So given what – (laughter) – Madam Secretary said, for Minister Kang, do you – I know it’s always difficult, but when you compare, do you feel like the situation today is different from the one that Secretary Albright faced? Do you see differences or similarities in the leadership today in North Korea compared to what Secretary Albright had to deal with, given the challenges that we have today?

MIN. KANG: Well, I would first of all like to completely agree with the final point.
(Laughter.)

But I think the nature of the regime at a fundamental level hasn’t changed. It is, in the end, a most closed, most repressive and insulated country. But certainly the leadership change from Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong-un has had some significant consequences. We’re talking about a leader now who has not met a single head of state or government, any foreign leader of any significance. And he’s – therefore, it makes him much more unpredictable. And his actions seem to indicate a preference for brinkmanship, and have used that to his advantage in a certain extent, in the sense that he has been able to make these advances in the nuclear-missiles technology.

But, of course, a huge difference now is that the regime, by these provocations, and going against the clear will of the global community, is now under the most harshest sanctions regime ever; the latest adopted just after the six nuclear explosions. So, you know, the sanctions, as I said, are, I mean, in response to the provocations. But the point is there cannot be funds going into the development of their missiles and nuclear-weapons program. And the regime needs to get the point that this is just absolutely unacceptable.

And in making that point, it is not just Korea and the U.S. and the surrounding. It is the whole of the international community through the U.N. Security Council, which has the authority – the one entity in the whole of the global community that has the ability and the authority to make decisions that are binding for all members of the international community.

So the point of the sanctions that it is binding on the whole of the international community, and therefore the implementation has to be the whole of the international community. So the global context surrounding the regime is a very, very different one than what it was prior to the sanctions kicking in.

MR. CHA: Thanks. As you mentioned in your speech, the focus seems to be right now on so-called maximum pressure and sanctions in the aftermath of the sixth nuclear test. This is really to both Secretary Albright and Foreign Minister Kang. I guess there are two questions. The first is, do you feel like this effort at sanctions is working? Do you feel like it is making progress? And then the second question is, even as those sanctions are making progress, do you still feel there is room for diplomacy? And under what conditions do you think that there is room for diplomacy?

MIN. KANG: The sanctions – if you look at the evolution of the sanctions regime until the fourth early last year, 2270 – I forget the numbers. But prior to the latest resolutions, the sanctions were really targeting just the WMD programs. Post the fourth nuclear test and the 2020 resolution, it’s an all-around pressure basically to ensure the economic pressure is all around and the funds really are dried up.

So, you know, the effect of that kind of an all-around sanction has, of course, time to see the effect. But I do believe, especially with the latest ones, which makes – you know, targets those areas that are particularly – you know, gets to the economic lifeline of the country, the 30 percent cut in the oil, refined oil products overall, the textile industry – coal has been cut off entirely – by some

estimates, this all will end up in a 90 percent drop in the revenue gains, a 90 percent drop in the resources that could somehow end up in their missiles and nuclear program.

I think, together with our U.S. colleagues, there is still room for diplomacy. And you can – in the lines of the statements that the North Koreans themselves make, they're not quite there yet, but certainly time is running out. They are, as I said, fast approaching. And I think we need to make sure, therefore, that the sanctions are implemented in a unified, concerted manner. It's hugely important that we have China and Russia on board. I think China is on board, and we continue to make sure that they, as not just members of the Security Council but the two biggest neighbors of North Korea, which basically with controls over the trade going in and out of the country. So the continued engagement with China and Russia is a very, very integral part of this endeavor.

MS. ALBRIGHT: I very much agree. I think part of the issue here is to get multilateral help. And one of the things that happened for the agreed framework was the Japanese were involved with us working on all of that. And you were talking about kind of not just the region but generally. And so having the Security Council resolution with the Chinese and Russians participating in it, I think, is very important.

I think the issue is that sanctions always take a little while to take their effect. And this set of them are complicated in terms of secondary aspects to them with the banking sector, in a variety of ways, of trying to get complete action on them.

But part of the issue here is to cut off money to the North Korean regime, because they actually need it in order to get the various component parts of this organized, and also to get them isolated. And so I think that we need to pursue that in a very big way.

I also do think that this has to be a whole-of-government thing from both our countries and that it isn't just the diplomacy or just the sanctions. But I do think that we need to be very firm in a variety of different ways with our governments and recognize what we're dealing with.

I mean, the Chinese, I think, are now participating, but they don't want to make it seem as though we are telling them what to do. And I think that it's important that it has been a Security Council resolution.

And so – and the other part that I think is truly important is to kind of lower the temperature, because I'm kind of concerned about accidents of some kind that might happen. And so we need to be very clear about what is going on. And I know nothing beyond what I read in the papers. But I certainly hope that there's some secret channel going on, because I do think that there need to be discussions and an understanding.

And I am really sorry, frankly, it was called the Albright-Jo agreement, which is why it was canceled. But basically it was a no hostile intent. And I think it's very clear that that was something that had an important role or potentially an important role to play. But this does have to be global, and I do think that your statements are just right on.

MR. CHA: All right, thank you.

So I'd like to switch topics now, if that's OK. I think everybody here – we talk North Korea all the time, so – and what I wanted to shift to was actually to talk – to ask Secretary Albright and the

foreign minister, so as we mentioned at the outset, I mean, both of you are historic figures in that you are two women who have led your countries' foreign policies.

And I guess the question really is, do you think that there are additional burdens or expectations or considerations, being the top diplomats for your countries, that come with the job in this respect, of being these historic diplomats? I mean, are there things that you feel that some of us, like, in this room don't understand that come with – (laughter) – the job of being the top diplomat in your countries? And how do you manage those expectations or burdens?

MS. ALBRIGHT: Well, I have to say it was kind of strange being – I am historic because I'm so old. (Laughter.) But the bottom line is that it seems so unusual. So, for instance, when my name first came up, people said a woman couldn't be secretary of state because Arab countries would not deal with a woman. (Laughter.)

So then what happened, the Arab ambassadors at the U.N. kind of got together and put out an informal statement that said we have no problems with Ambassador Albright, so we wouldn't have any problems with Secretary Albright.

MIN. KANG: (Laughs.)

MS. ALBRIGHT: And then somebody said, yeah, Madeleine's on the list, but she's second tier. So, anyway, I ultimately did get to be secretary of state. And I actually had no problems when I went to foreign countries. I came in a very large plane that said United States of America, and everybody knew that if they were going to have a foreign-policy discussion, they had to have it with me.

I had more problems with the men in our own government – (laughter) – and partially because they couldn't figure out how I got to be secretary of state when they should be secretary of state. (Laughter.) And they had also known me so long, they knew me as the carpool mother or – you actually had a real career. I mean, I – so what happened – you know, and somebody who made dinner and made a lot of coffee for them. And I had been a staffer on the Hill, so that was part of the issue.

And – but it did work. And it worked because President Clinton wanted me there. And I think that is the part that makes a difference in terms of how the president treats the secretary of state or the foreign minister, and having friends. Now, one of the things that happened was when I got to the United Nations first in '93, it was one of the first times I didn't have to cook lunch myself. So I asked my assistant to invite the other women permanent representatives.

So I get to my residence and there are six other women there out of 183 members at the time. And it was Philippines, Kazakhstan, Canada, Trinidad-Tobago, Jamaica and Lichtenstein. So being the American, I created a caucus, and we called ourselves the G-7. (Laughter.) And we lobbied on behalf of having women judges on the war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, because most of the crimes had been committed against women.

Then when I became secretary, I made the – had the same thing with women foreign ministers and established the fact that we would get together. And you said you've just had a meeting in New York.

MIN. KANG: It continues.

MS. ALBRIGHT: Yeah. So the more of us that there are, the better it is. And we are able to support each other. But – and I think it's great jobs for women and men. By the way, my youngest granddaughter seven years ago said, so what's the big deal about Grandma Maddie being secretary of state? Only girls are secretary of state. And she had seen Condi and Hillary. And I now think, you know, men are probably encouraged by John Kerry and Tillerson. (Laughter.)

MR. CHA: Foreign Minister.

MIN. KANG: Well, I think the 64th – I'm the first and the 38th foreign minister in the 70 years, the history of my country. So in a way it's historical, but I think it's also a response to the times. I think the appointment was very refreshing. The process through the parliamentary hearing was gruesome, but revealed a lot of existing stereotypes and social expectations about women and women leaders. But whenever there was remarks that reflected that old way of thinking, there was immediate pushback from women's groups and young women against that.

So, yeah, I had to defend myself in the parliamentary – (inaudible) – but there was a lot of social debate going on in these online communications, the pros and cons, bad things and good things. And it was – it became almost a social phenomenon and the society coming to terms with the fact that, yes, it's about time that we had a woman at this important government position.

I don't think the president himself expected that. I think he took me on because of my experience of being in the foreign ministry for many years at a key post and being in the U.N. for 10 years and having observed the countries in that global scheme of things. He does want a foreign-policy outlook that is much broader than the traditional one of very much focused on the immediate neighborhood and dipping into other parts of the region whenever we can. He really is about diversifying the country's profile in the larger global scheme of things. And I think he really thought that I would be able to bring that profile in.

But it became – it became a social – I can't tell you how famous I am. (Laughter.) It's really – I can't walk the streets because everybody recognizes me. But as Madeleine says, the men in the country, many of them are not yet ready. So last – two weeks ago, when I went to Parliament to – you know, this is the season. We – there's a part where all the ministers go and respond to questions from members of Parliament. And one elderly lawmaker stood up on the podium and started the question by commenting on my hair. (Laughs.) That triggered a huge controversy on the floor between women parliamentarians and himself. And therefore, we didn't have time to – for the question and answer – (laughter) – which I thought was a shame and what a waste of valuable time.

So these things happen. But I think with every incident like that that was so publicly played out on the media, these people learned. At least he would have learned. I don't think he would ever question – (laughs) – my hair again in such a public setting. (Laughter.)

But I do feel that the establishment, whether it's the foreign-ministry bureaucracy or the government establishment in general, is fully comfortable with gender equality, even though we have 60, 70 percent women coming at the entry level. The culture of the ministry is still not that friendly to women or to families. And so women have to work doubly hard to keep the balance between work and family going.

And so one of my – and I understand that, because I have – I’ve managed to have a career with three kids. And they’re all young adults now. So there – there are concrete things that can be done to ensure that the foreign service is really welcoming of these huge numbers of young women who want to become diplomats.

MR. CHA: Yes, we – we have visits from the Korean National Diplomatic Academy to CSIS, and they bring the class over. And I’m always astounded that the vast majority of these first-year foreign-service officer candidates from Korea are all women. And they’re much smarter than the men. (Laughter.)

The – so I wanted to give you a chance to not just talk to me but talk to each other. And this will be the last question. The – and I guess, for Secretary Albright, I mean, you know, we’re both at Georgetown. You teach this great class that all my students want to get into about the national security and diplomacy toolbox. You’ve had great experience in this area, both at the U.N. and as the secretary of state.

Is there any advice or is there, like, a cheat sheet that you give to Foreign Minister Kang to help her to succeed?

MS. ALBRIGHT: OK. (Laughter.) Let me just say – and you’ve said a lot of it and talk about what it was like – I think the best advice that I can give is, first of all – I don’t have to even tell you this – is you have to know what you’re talking about. And I think that you have to speak early in the meeting.

MIN. KANG: (Laughs.)

MS. ALBRIGHT: You have to interrupt if the men are talking over you. But I really do think that the most important part is to understand the breadth of what you’re involved in, which is what is so interesting, because national security and foreign policy, I think, is definitely a growth industry in terms of the various subjects that are out there and in terms of being foreign minister of things that are – go beyond just the national-security issues, but in terms of talking about climate and health and having a scientific base. And if you can’t do it yourself, then you get people around you that know how to do that.

And the other part that I would say – I think I was probably a bureaucratic disaster, so I shouldn’t tell you this – but I was not real good about going through the chain of command. I wanted to talk to people that were actually doing the work, the desk officers and people that were – really understood the very great details.

And then the other thing that I liked was to have people argue in front of me.

And then the last thing was, because of my academic life, what I tried to do was what I called no-fault dinners, which meant that I’d bring outsiders in. And it wasn’t that they were afraid to say something to me but that what would get out were the questions that I was asking, because I didn’t want that to indicate some direction that I was going in. But I do think it’s a good idea to bring outsiders in in some way and really get a feeling for what the sense is out in the academic – one of the hard parts, frankly – and I do teach the practice of diplomacy – is really the kind of – the academy and the practitioners don’t always connect. And so there are an awful lot of good ideas that are in the academy or out that need to be brought in.

MIN. KANG: Well, I completely take on board all of that. And I think I'm already implementing some of that. I'm trying to introduce a program of reform in the ministry. The ministry has for – rightly or wrongly has always been criticized as being too insular. I myself was a special recruit. I joined the ministry mid-career. And that was such a rare exception. The ministry, it has been traditionally staffed by people who came through the Wemugoshi (ph).

That has slightly changed but is still the same mode. So, you know, it's revamping the way we recruit, changing working methods that make it less bureaucratic and more streamlined; so all kinds of things that – little changes can be catalytic.

So – but what I wanted to ask you, Madeleine, is sometimes it feels very lonely. And how do you manage that loneliness?

MS. ALBRIGHT: Well, it is lonely. And so, first of all, it's important to get the best women you can around you.

One of the things that I have to tell you is I brought Wendy Sherman in as counselor because I wanted – we had known each other for a very long time. You get criticized because when you bring in a woman they say she's afraid of strong men. I mean, it's kind of hard to, you know, ever get it exactly right. But I do think that what is important is to bring people around you that you don't feel lonely. But the decisions are lonely in the end, I think.

There was one thing I forgot to advise you on, which is we have – in our system there's the principals committee, where you argue about things before you take them to the president. And one of the things – I was actually on it when I was ambassador at the United Nations. And I felt very strongly about the fact that we needed to do more things in Bosnia. And so I would argue. And invariably one of the men would say don't be so emotional. And so the – I learned to argue differently. And I think that that's a very important part. And then also what I think is very important is never let them see you be angry.

But I do think the loneliness is something, which is actually why it's nice to have a family, because I have three kids. We kind of reversed roles. My – one of my daughters was in charge of my account life, and she'd call me up and she'd say, mom, did you really need those shoes? (Laughter.) Or when I was in Bosnia and I was subjected to stones being thrown at me and CNN said Albright stoned in Bosnia, and so my daughter called. And she called the State Department and she called the operations center. Have you heard from our mother? They said no. So I came home. She said don't ever do that to us again. You can't make us worry about you. (Laughter.) So we reversed roles. So your family is what gives you stability.

MIN. KANG: I think so, yes.

MR. CHA: Well, I mean, so I want to thank both of you for taking the time to engage in this discussion. I found it fascinating. I learned a lot.

Ladies and gentlemen, please thank the foreign minister and the secretary. (Applause.)

(END)