

## **The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Canada-Korea Dialogue Series on the Hill**

- Dr. Brian Lee Crowley

Last September, Dr. Crowley visited South Korea on an official visit. One of the enduring impressions he took away from the visit was the gratitude of South Koreans on his father's service in the Korean War. Koreans understand that without the United Nation intervention, there would be no South Korea today.

One of the reasons of why the memory of the international community's assistance in the Korean War is so poignant today is this: South Korea is at one of the most uncomfortable places in the world, at the intersection of two of the world's simmering conflicts that unless well managed, could easily spiral out of control.

Korea is at the frontline of these conflicts but is only a middle power. Therefore, Korea is looking to see who its friends are in its efforts to resolve these conflicts in a civilized behavior. Canada is one of the places Korea is looking for reassurance.

Two conflicts Dr. Crowley is referring to are North Korea's nuclear brinkmanship, and the rise of China as a regional power and global superpower.

China's revisionist view of the world is exemplified its behavior in the South China Sea. South China Sea is not some obscure waterway, but 5 trillion dollars of goods cross the sea every year.

China has unilaterally built islands on the seven reefs and has used these islands for military purposes already. Chinese have also proclaimed that they will not respect the forthcoming ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration brought by the Philippines, which is expected to find that China has no legal basis of its territorial claims.

Sino-Japanese conflict of the Senkakou is another long game China is willing to play to hinder US navy operation in the East and West South China Seas.

Like Canada, Korea feels on the horns of the dilemma regarding China. On the one hand, closer economic ties to China have powered Korea's rise as an economic power. On the other hand, Korea looks to the US to counterbalance Chinese power.

The current US administration has been preoccupied elsewhere, most notably in the Middle East and Iran. At the same time, world's assessments of protect and defend post World War order is at low ebb.

Result has been that American guarantees are not worth what they once were.

This has unleashed flurry of military preparations worldwide, including projected increase in military spending by countries in the South China Sea region. Increase of 100 billion dollars a year by 2020 is projected.

Japan's move to reinterpret its defense provisions of its post-war Pacifist Constitution is driven by Japan's dwindling confidence in US leadership if a conflict were to arise with China.

President Trump will push the countries to a greater extent to increase their military capabilities. It will also push the countries to realize the need for greater military cooperation across the region, ranging from India all the way to Korea and Japan.

Western-led multilateralism will cause many more resources to be devoted to military preparedness in the region and heightened risk of confrontation.

China wishes to discourage multilateralism because it understands the strategic advantage of dealing with its neighbors on a one on one way. It understands that it draws an advantage of dealing with its neighbors on a one on one basis, since its power always exceeds that of a neighbor individually.

Those countries that prize democracy, the rule of law, western military alliance, and freedom of the seas will increasingly find it indispensable to work together.

TPP sought to cement the liberal trade norms in the Pacific through collaboration of like-minded countries before China became so powerful it could dictate its own terms unilaterally.

South Korea's non-participation in TPP shows a missed opportunity to partake in implicit multilateral action.

Canada should do all it can to secure its own TPP agreement and to welcome in other like-minded countries, like Korea and Taiwan.

Collaboration will become every more important in the increase of Chinese bad action.

Even it is not our immediate neighborhood, it applies to Canada's direct interest as well. Only concerted international action will have a chance to easing China into acceptance of international norms and away from it seeking its goals through intimidation and bullying.

Time will come when Canada will have to choose between having good economic relations with China, or calling for Chinese to behave in a civilized way. So far, Canada has largely kept its head down.

China is brilliant at exploiting conflict and frictions between Western allied countries.

Exploits shared anti-Japanese sentiment with Koreans to maximize Beijing's bargaining power.

Beijing has also played the North Korea card in its relations with South Korea.

President Clinton negotiated a nuclear pact with North Korea while ago. He promised that North Korea will freeze and dismantle its nuclear program, and any developments will be closely monitored.

North Korea regularly detonates nuclear weapons, whenever the regime cannot resolve its problems. North is also opening seeking ICBM and submarine technology to project its nuclear threats far beyond its immediate neighbors. It now seems likely that North Korea will deploy direct nuclear missile to North American west coast.

Extent to which the North's destabilizing behavior is made possible by Beijing's continued patronage to North Korea.

Beijing is embarrassed of Kim's asinine behavior but the embrassement is a small price to pay in exchange for maintaining the bargaining chip for unification in case Beijing wants to drive another wedge between countries of its periphery.

The situation in the North is very unstable and would not take much to tip it into dysfunction and failure.

There is an assumption, shared by many, that in the collapse of the North, South Korea will step in.

However, one of the observation Dr. Crowley made during his trip to South Korea is that there exists deep deep divisions in the society to own up to the North Korea problem. These divisions are intergenerational, with the young being deeply skeptical. As the population ages, they do not wish to be saddled with the North Korean problem.

South Korea is ill prepared to manage the transition into something new and more positive in the North. Canada should begin now to think about how such demise of North will impact our interests.

In summary, the new government's desire to be on good terms with every nation in the world has not yet been tested by confrontation with any of the major powers who do not care for good opinion of Canada or the world community.

Time will come when we have to choose sides.

Circumstances will make good will and neutrality irrelevant and actively destructive, because they will give comfort to regimes.

South Korea and Canada as middle powers with wide range of shared values and interests are the kind of countries, which may be expected to merge along in the next few years.

Canada could build closer economic ties with China, without compromising on our core interests. We should not be dazzled by China's commercial potential that we forget to counterbalance Chinese power. We will want lots of like-minded friends and if we neglect these friends until we need them, it may be too late.