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**The Chosun Ilbo**

**Boris Johnson**

**Introducer & Moderator: Professor Jung-Hoon Lee, Dean and Professor of International Relations, Yonsei University**

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**RT HON BORIS JOHNSON:** Thank you very much, Professor Lee. Good morning, everybody. It’s a fantastic honor to be here at the Asian Leadership Conference and to be one of Chosun Ilbo’s chosen few this morning at this famous and distinguished gathering. And great to be back in Korea after, frankly, too long an absence.

A dinner last night with President Yoon to the long, detailed dinner, whose details I must veil in obscurity, but it went on for a long time. And we discussed, amongst many other things, Korea’s status as a global pivotal state in the world’s pivotal region at a pivotal moment in the history of the early 21st century.

What do I mean when I say Korea is pivotal to the great debates of our time? It is obvious. Korea, here, this is where national destiny once turned on a coin, where choices were made in the decades after the Second World War that turned Korea into the powerhouse of today. The great K-pop inventing, Blackpink exporting, K-drama pioneering poster child for LCD.

What do I mean by LCD? What does LCD stands for? I don’t mean liquid crystal display.

By the way, can anybody see a liquid crystal display anywhere? I’ve never seen a liquid crystal display bigger than the one that Chosun Ilbo has provided. I think it may be the biggest in the world, and seems ,like virtually everything else that you can think of, that it was invented in Korea, along with the printing press, the machine gun, the trouser press. But I don’t mean a liquid crystal display. I mean, LCD, Liberal Capitalist Democracy.

Thank you. Let’s hear it for liberal capitalist democracy. Thank you, a small ripple.

The tragedy is that so many other countries at that time failed to make that choice, and they failed to pivot, like Korea in the 1950s, towards liberal capitalist democracy. Leave aside North Korea for a second. There are countries around the world that had the same per capita GDP as Korea in the 1950s. I’m far too polite, too diplomatic to mention them now, but they failed through lack of political leadership to make the brave choices for free markets and for democracy that have created the extraordinary Korea of today.

And this region, the Asia Pacific region is obviously pivotal to the future of the world, because this is where we can expect to see so much of the economic growth and the resulting tensions between the great powers in the decades to come, as the President of Chosun Ilbo pointed out in his earlier remarks.

And as Olena Zelenska has just reminded us, I’m afraid that this is also a pivotal moment, because in some ways, the world has gotten more tense and more dangerous since I was last in Seoul. It was back in 2009. I think it was the same hotel, actually, incredible place. And the speaker, the key speaker was Bill Clinton, who exercised an absolutely mesmeric effect on some of my staff.

And we then went up to the DMZ, and we looked out at that desolate landscape of the North. And we were told that people were eating grass to survive. And I, frankly, could not believe that a communist dictator would make good his threats to create a nuclear weapon. It, at that time, seemed outlandish, comical, like something out of *Team America*. And today, sadly, it has come to pass with detonations and missile tests that threaten the security of the whole world and the whole region.

I want to stress that the UK will always stand shoulder to shoulder with you, with the people of Korea in rejecting nuclear blackmail, in sanctioning North Korean putting pressure not just on Pyongyang, but on those whose indulgence makes this madness possible. And we must be frank about this. I speak as a Sinophile, a confirmed admirer of Chinese culture and civilization. But in the last 14 years, we’ve seen the emergence of a different China, more assertive, more ambitious, more challenging.

And today, the world seems divided between the democracies and the autocracies. We see an alignment between Russia, China, North Korea, and we see an alignment between the U.S. the UK, the EU, NATO countries, and of course, Korea, Japan, Australia. And I believe it was of immense significance that last June, President Yoon came to Madrid and became the first Korean president to attend a NATO summit.

And between those tectonic plates, between those two rival alignments of nations, smeared with blood in the sand of the global arena, we have the heroic people of Ukraine and their President Zelensky, fighting not just for their hearts and homes, but for freedom everywhere. And that is why the war in Ukraine is the pivotal conflict at the pivotal moment, because it is a symbol of the struggle that is now going on between two ideas of government, two ways of living, liberal capitalist democracy versus autocracy, a struggle that is taking place here in the Asia Pacific region, as much as in the borderlands of Eastern Europe.

And let us be candid. You brought me all this way to be candid. There are many who think that this is turning into a struggle between two centers of global power. Leave aside for a second Moscow, London, Pyongyang, Seoul, Paris, Berlin, all the other capitals. Strip this down to its essentials, and they say it’s becoming a titanic arm wrestle between Washington and Beijing. That’s how it’s been presented.

And there is a school of thought, which holds we are witnessing the transition of empires. Remember the impacts. Remember, the (Translateo?) in Paris, the Persians gave way to the Greeks, the Greeks gave way to the Romans, and so on until the Second World War when the British, with pretty good grace, gave way to the Americans. And now the Americans, or so it is claimed, are about to give way to the Chinese.

And there are those who argue that such transitions never happened without conflict. It’s more than 10 years ago that an American professor called Graham T. Allison wrote a famous essay in which he explained the logic of this conflict by reference to the Peloponnesian War, the 5th century BC struggle between Athens and Sparta. He called it the Thucydides trap after the great Athenian historian of that war, and he quoted Thucydides’ observation on the origins of the conflict. “It was the rise of Athens and the fear that this instilled in Sparta that made war inevitable.”

And he postulated that a great hegemonic power is never able to let go easily. And he went through history, and he found plenty of examples that seem to bear out his argument, that when an existing or dominant hegemon is threatened by the rise of a new power, the old hegemon will attack, or at the very least, a conflict will be provoked with disastrous consequences.

And that argument that there is something inevitable about a conflict between the U.S. and China has been all too influential, both in Washington and in Beijing. And I’m here in Seoul today to disagree with a learned American professor.

I don’t believe there is anything inevitable about the so called Thucydides trap. I don’t believe in the inevitability of conflict. The risk, yes, but not inevitability. In fact, I don’t even believe in the transition of hegemonic power from America to China. America has got a lot of life in it, because I would go so far as to say that Professor Allison has missed the crucial point about the conflict between Athens and Sparta.

Can you remember the difference between those two societies? It’s perfectly true. I spent 20 years studying almost nothing except ancient Greek history, literature and philosophy. I have a slight advantage over you, but never mind. Can you remember the difference between Athens and Sparta?

Sparta, closed, racist, militaristic with a very peculiar education system. They drop their babies into vats of wine at birth. And if they cried too much, they decided they weren’t tough enough, for Spartans had a general preference for self-reliance over free trade, “autarkeia” being the places to Greek equivalent to Juche.

Contrast Athens, open, free trading, welcoming of talent from around the world, a place that gave birth to an amazing flowering of every art and science, and that produced architectural masterpieces that still dazzle new generations.

Can you think of any pair of countries – just seeing if you’re paying attention here – can you think of any pair of countries, also, as it happens, speaking the same language, that are a bit like Athens and Sparta today? I’ll give you a clue. They’re divided at the 38th parallel.

Sparta was the oligarchic dictatorship; Athens was the democracy. And the reason the Spartans had to spend such a huge proportion of their GDP on defense and military service, lodging, lasting from the ages of seven to 60 was because they were engaged in constant internal repression. They had a subject race of slaves called helots. And the reason the Spartans had to be so tough was that they kept the helots in place by continual warfare.

The first and most important lesson about the Thucydides trap is that the analogy is defective. The learned American professor has got it upside down. He says that America is Sparta, and China is Athens. And I say, I’m afraid that is utter rubbish.

All my life, it has been clear to me that America is the Athens of today. America is the great arsenal of democracies, and America’s allies are the great constellation of democracies. And it is precisely because we are democracies that we are going to prevail and thrive, culturally, morally, politically, and economically.

Why, after all, did Putin invade Ukraine? Why was he so mad as to violate international law and inflict so much suffering not just on Ukraine, but on so many Russians, who have now lost their lives in a pointless conflict? It was precisely because Ukraine has chosen to be a liberal capitalist democracy, precisely because the people of Ukraine have looked at Russia, a kind of kleptocratic oligarchy, and they’ve said, “No, we can do better than that.”

For the last 32 years, since Ukrainian independence, Putin has been seeing the growth of this young, beautiful country to the border on the south of Russia, growing more and more prosperous, more successful, more like the West. And he looks, by the way, at Poland. And don’t forget, the Poland and Ukraine are not just neighbors, but have a history that has been long intertwined.

And he sees Poland, now on course to become one of the largest economies in Europe, and Putin can see how this could well happen to Ukraine. And of course, he can’t tolerate it. He can’t tolerate the possibility of that success, because the real threat to him is that the people of Russia will look at Ukraine and say to Putin, why have you been stealing from us? And why have you been holding us back?

It wasn’t ever about NATO. There was never any realistic chance of Ukraine joining NATO, not until Putin invaded, that is. Ukrainian membership of NATO is now inevitable, by the way, because Putin has demolished the last argument against it. Putin invaded out of a revanchist desire to rebuild the old Soviet empire and to crush a nascent democracy, not because it was a military threat, but because it was a moral rebuke to Putinism.

He will fail; he will be defeated, because he has brilliantly managed to disprove his own ludicrous thesis about Ukraine. No one in history has done more to reveal the patriotism of the Ukrainians than Putin. No one has done more to intensify that spirit into an unconquerable national will for victory. And you can tell that Putin will fail, because his top aides are already quarreling, like rats in a sack. Was Prigogine really prepared to sell out the Russian army to prepare to protect the Wagner Group? Who knows? But the mere fact that this is plausible shows the decay of the morale in the Russian high command.

And I want to thank the Government of Korea. I want to thank President Yoon for the staunch support that Korea has given. And I can promise you, the world saw the position that Korea took, and the world saw that there were plenty of other countries that were not quite so brave or so principled. And I believe that what you’re doing is not just the right thing for Europe, but for the whole world.

When the Ukrainians win, and they will, the signal will be sent that you cannot use force to exert your will on your neighbors. And so, if it is true, and sometimes, I can hardly believe it, that Beijing really intends to use violence against Taiwan, and to launch a hugely risky, seaborne invasion of their islands, where, by the way, the people are also choosing a liberal, capitalist, democratic, free market future, and if the Chinese government had been secretly calculating, like Putin, that with their overwhelming numerical superiority, they will be able to achieve victory within days, then the war in Ukraine will have come as a devastating shock, a terrible lesson, just in time, of how badly things can go wrong.

Nobody expected the United States of America to give so much support to Ukraine. Nobody expected the British and other European countries to do so much and so fast. I’m proud of what we were able to do. And I believe that the sight of those Russian forces scuttling from Kyiv, scuttling from Kharkiv, from (Haisyn?) will have had a massive and salutary effect on the thinking of anyone planning an attack on peaceful and blameless Taiwan. And that, my friends is a good thing. That is a great outcome for peace and stability in this region, and around the world.

Most importantly, of all, of course, a Ukrainian victory means peace and freedom for Ukraine, freedom for an innocent European nation that had done nothing, nothing to deserve the barbarism of Putin’s attack. And I cannot think of a clearer case of right and wrong, good and evil.

I’m honored. I should repeat again, repeat, to be at this Chosun Ilbo conference with the president’s wife, Olena Zelenska. I just want to pay tribute to – I thought she spoke brilliantly just now. I want to pay tribute to her and her husband for their incredible fortitude, and for the leadership that they’ve given. And I just say to everybody, Slava Ukraini. Their fight is our fight. And I hope that they will, and I know that they will.

And when the Ukrainians win, they will show that after decades of drift and apathy, and being pushed around, frankly, that the West is willing to stand up for democracy and that we’re willing to defend it. And we don’t do it out of some abstract philosophical love of government, of the people, by the people for the people. I truly believe that it is the liberal capitalist democracies, the LCDs, that by and large produce more innovations, more Nobel Prizes, better restaurants with better food, more smash hit pop songs, more blockbuster global movies, more blockbuster global movies, more enduring works of literature than any alternative system.

And if you want proof, look at the music. It was true that a few years ago, I was said to have been caught dancing Gangnam Style at Chequers, which is the British Prime Minister’s country residence, with David Cameron, who was in Prime Minister. There’s no shortage of us ex-Tory Prime Ministers. We’ve emulated your *Squid Game* in our politics. It was embarrassing. My children thought it was lame.

But can you seriously believe that we would have been dancing to some North Korean tune, some Russian techno funk melody? Of course not. It’s totally inconceivable. It is the liberal capitalist democracies, the LCDs, that write the soundtrack of the world, just as it is the liberal capitalist democracies that produced the scientific breakthroughs.

There was one Cambridge college, I think it’s Trinity or it might be Kings. Trinity has more Nobel Prizes than Russia and China put together. I mean, not a point I used to make when I was Prime Minister, because I was too diplomatic, but I make it now.

You want the proof? Let me ask you. Has anybody here been vaccinated against COVID? Anybody in vaccinated against COVID? You’re very hardy people. I’ve been vaccinated. Come on, put your hands up, those of you who’s been vaccinated.

Right, okay. Well, how many of you had Sputnik, right? It was a very remarkable thing.

You had Sputnik. Okay. Well, there you go.

It was a very remarkable thing that the most efficacious vaccines were the ones that were produced by the great pharmaceutical companies of the liberal capitalist democracies. And there’s a reason for that, and the reason is it’s the LCDs that are open to talent that get the best scientists, the brilliant, the most imaginative minds that are the most free trading, and bring them together in great cities such as Seoul or London. And it has always been that way.

It’s a long time since I’ve mentioned Thucydides in this speech, so I’m going to drag you back to him. Some people like to argue with me, and they point back to the conflict between Athens and Sparta, democracy, remember versus on oligarchy, yeah? Open Athens, open, free trading, immigrant welcoming Athens, arts, culture, music, sport, you name it, everything happens. Sparta, nasty clothes, militaristic, dropping the babies in vats of wine, remember?

And they say, “Ah, yes, but the Spartans won.” People point out at this point in the argument that the Spartans won the Peloponnesian War and it’s true that after Pericles died, the Athenians made various terrible mistakes. And it’s true that they were defeated by Aegospotami in 404 BC.

But I ask you, have you ever read a work of Spartan history? Have you? Or Spartan philosophy? Or any Spartan scientific treatise? Have you studied any great Spartan sculpture or architecture? Have you studied any fantastic Spartan epic poem? Of course you haven’t. There aren’t any.

One of the many peculiarities of the Spartans is that they hardly ever said anything. They were ideal breakfast companions, I imagine. They believed in saying as little as possible.

And finally, have you ever been to Sparta? Have you been to Sparta? Has anybody been to see Sparta? Well, all you see, in my memory, is the wind blowing the dandelion seeds over a few formulas and illegible clumps of stone. It was the Athenians. It was the Democrats. It was the people who had a free and open society, a free people who indulged in – who allowed free speech, who constantly dare to challenge, and to debunk, and to mock and to satirize, always to come up with something new. It was the Athenians, whose legacy is everywhere in the culture and life of the modern world.

And the final proof, the knockdown argument in favor of liberal capitalist democracy, is here today in Seoul. It is the country in which we meet, which chose, as I said, all those years ago to be open, to be liberal, to be capitalist, and which has prospered so mightily as a result.

And I just want to say that I’m proud of everything that I’ve done as Mayor of London, Foreign Secretary, Prime Minister to deepen the historic partnership between the UK and Korea. I’m mindful of the sheer length of that partnership, more than 140 years. I’m mindful of the graves in Busan, the 886 members of British Armed Services, who fought for your freedom and for your democracy in that dreadful war.

And I believe now, that at this pivotal moment, we need to do more together, as I was saying, as President Yoon and I were saying last night, more on defense cooperation, more on green technology, more on nuclear power. Our trade is booming after the miseries of COVID. There was so many Bentley’s on the way in from the airport, I felt I was in Knightsbridge. And we’re obviously exporting some things to Korea, but there is so much more that we can do.

My friends, if we were the salesforce of some great UK, some great Korean Chaebol, some huge consortium, this is the moment when we have to get the salesforce together to get them to say that we have a market leading product. We have the thing that works, the thing that people actually want, the thing that has historically delivered peace and plenty to the people who adopt it. And all we need is to rediscover our confidence in this mighty brand.

It’s called liberal capitalist democracy, LCD. Let’s be strong together. Let’s defend it together. Let’s explain its advantages patiently and calmly to our friends, and let’s go out together and sell it around the world.

Thank you all very much for listening and for your kind attention this morning. Thank you.

**JUNG-HOON LEE:** Prime Minister Johnson, thank you so much for that powerful, and very straightforward and honest speech. And I’m so glad to hear you emphasize, over and over, the importance of the values that you call the LCD, the liberal capitalist democracy. I think it resonates almost perfectly was what Korean president, President Yoon Suk Yeol, is emphasizing. He’s been preaching over the past year on the importance of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, as he reiterated this morning, as well.

I think we stand hand in hand, or shoulder to shoulder in all fronts of global affairs, Britain and Korea. And I think, as you’ve rightfully pointed out, probably the front line of defending these values has to be Ukraine. And you’ve elaborated on this issue. Olena Zelenska gave a very heartwarming speech this morning, as well. And if I remember correctly that you’re the first Western political leader to give a speech at the Ukrainian parliament, and I believe that you’ve made three trips during your prime ministership to Ukraine. And as I was just wondering, what is it about this war that drives you to be so proactive?

**RT HON BORIS JOHNSON:** Well, thank you, Professor Lee. The reason I got involved with Ukraine was because I became Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom in 2016. And I think my wonderful Foreign Office officials couldn’t work out what to do with me. And they said, “Go to Ukraine.” They said, “We’re worried that the French and the Germans are monopolizing the diplomatic engagement. Why don’t you go and spend some time there.” And I don’t think that the then-Prime Minister, Theresa May, was unhappy to see me out of London.

And I went and I spent some time there, and I came to admire the Ukrainian people. I went into various pubs and met some veterans of the conflict in the Donbass. And I understood what an amazing country it is. And when the ideas started to emerge towards the middle of 2021, that Putin was really serious about an invasion, I knew in my heart that this was a tragic mistake by this guy, because I knew that the Ukrainians would fight. And I just decided that it was the job of the UK to ensure that the Ukrainians had everything they need to win.

And they showed that they can win. And I think a lot of people wonder how they’re going to win, and they don’t understand how this can be done. And I just want to reassure you that it can be done, actually, quite simply, and it will be done. And I’ve no doubt that they’re preparing a big counter offensive.

Basically, all that they need to do is to smash through the land bridge to interdict, to stop Putin being able to reinforce Crimea from Russia, along the Sea of Azov. And they’ve won such a big tactical strategic victory that I think it’s very difficult for Putin to come back.

Everybody who’s fainthearted about this, who thinks it’s going to go on forever, I don’t think it’s going to go on forever. I think the Ukrainians have it in them to win this thing rapidly. What they need, and what Olena Zelenska was just saying, again, to us, to me, they need the kit to do it. And thank you, Korea, for what you’re doing at the moment. Thank you very much.

**JUNG-HOON LEE:** Thank you. Well, never mind how your interest originated. I think it’s the result of accounts. That said, with Ukraine and the Western commitment to Ukraine, and this goes for Korea as well, even in your country, in the UK, there’s been some naysayers, that there should be a greater emphasis on domestic issues, that Britain has enough domestic issues. Even Korea, we are, of course, providing humanitarian aid, but as we’ve heard from Olena Zelenska, that it’s beyond the humanitarian aid.

What they need is things to enhance and enlarge their military capability. And yet, the Russian influence is still quite formidable with its oil and gas. And we have many companies and countries that’s limiting our support to Ukraine.

I feel that if we’re able to cross that threshold, that the war can really turn around instead of being stalemated, as it is. How do we cross that threshold?

**RT HON BORIS JOHNSON:** Militarily?

**JUNG-HOON LEE:** In providing for Ukraine so that it can really push forth with the military effort.

**RT HON BORIS JOHNSON:** Okay, right. Look, I’m not a general, I’m not a military tactician. But what I understand is that they need the attackers, they need the long range missiles, they need air cover, and they need the means, basically, to drive towards the sea to push Putin out. And I’m sure they can do it. You’ve seen what they’ve done in the past.

And I know that beneath all this, because we worry here about irrational nuclear actors, right, people think, well, what if Putin, who, after all, has many, many nuclear warheads, decides to go crazy, and in his humiliation, decides to use a nuke. And we have to address this question, and then dismiss it, right?

Number one, he won’t do it. He won’t do it because he’d immediately lose his Chinese patrons. He’d lose the support of all the middle group of people. You mentioned them just now, Professor, the people who won’t come off the fence. There’s a huge number of countries, sadly, who haven’t been as clear as Korea. And they’re giving Putin too much the benefit of the doubt. You use a nuclear weapon, that’s over. You tender your resignation as a member of the human race. You do a terrible thing. So, he loses all those.

Plus, he terrifies his own country, terrifies the Russian population, who will be worried about reprisals. Last, it won’t even work. Even if he uses a battlefield tactical nuclear weapon, he won’t stop the Ukrainians. They will continue.

He’s not going to do it. He will be pushed out, and the key thing to understand is that he controls the organs of opinion in Russia. He will be able to explain virtually whatever has happened as a trial. He will say, the special military operation has been very special, and it’s concluded. And we’ve achieved X, Y, Z. We’ve de-Nazi-fied. He’ll say we’ve de-Nazi-fied Ukraine. We’ve got rid of all the Nazis. There never were any Nazis, but that’s what he’ll say, and he’ll find his own way of explaining it.

I just want to reassure everybody here today, that you shouldn’t get locked into any kind of anxiety about Putin or his state of mind or his psychodrama. This is about Ukraine. Don’t think about Putin, think about helping the people of Ukraine.

**JUNG-HOON LEE:** Well, I’m very glad to hear your confidence, because I was going to ask that question, whether if push comes to shove, that Putin might resort to nuclear option. But you feel that he really doesn’t have that option. And that’s very reassuring.

Then what is your vision of the end state? How do you see this playing out? Do you think Crimea can be returned to Ukraine, at the end of the day?

**RT HON BORIS JOHNSON:** I think that the position has changed over the months. I think there’s no question that last year, I expect that President Zelensky, it’s possible that he might have settled for something that didn’t include Crimea. I think it’s very, very difficult to see how the Ukrainian people can now do a deal that does not encompass the entirety of the territory that voted for independence in 1991. I just don’t see how it works.

And I think morally, that has got to be the answer. And we’ve just got to stop worrying about the other side of the table and what Putin might think or do. He’s a grown up. It’s not up to us to worry about his political prospects. He has plenty of people who can advise them about that.

**JUNG-HOON LEE:** Can I now transition from one dictator to another, and talk about Kim Jong Un and the nuclear threat that South Korea faces? Well, not just South Korea, but the entire Northeast Asia. There are reports by a number of think tanks that project North Korea having as many as 200 to 250 nuclear warheads in five years’ time. That’s 2027. Even if it’s 2030, that’s quite significant. It will be almost equal to the nuclear arsenals of Britain and France, and so on. And we’re not even talking about China, because China is not going to sit idly by, and there are many projections that China will certainly go over 1,000, 1,500.

This is a very destabilizing time for Korea. And in that sense, the recent summit that our president had withs Joe Biden, the U.S. president, and the Washington Declaration that they’ve concluded, which is the first sort of written statement of the extended deterrence that is being promised by the U.S. Do you feel that this is sufficient to deter North Korea?

I mean, never mind the denuclearization, and maybe you can give your thoughts on whether that’s still a viable option. But we’re really being pushed to deter North Korea from ever expanding. What are your thoughts?

**RT HON BORIS JOHNSON:** First of all, I think that the recent trip by President Yoon to Washington was highly effective, in my view. And I think that the Washington Declaration clearly has some important substance in it. And it is clear, to me, at least, reading it, that Korea is under the U.S. nuclear umbrella. That’s the intention of the policy. That’s the intention of the agreement between the United States and Korea, and the Washington Declaration tries to flesh that out.

I think what we have to consider – and so, that should serve as a deterrent against the irrational or against the actions of Kim Jong Un. But the question is, how do we actually put the squeeze on that guy? And how do we really make him change his course of action? And you can see that it’s not easy. And Donald Trump had a go, and that didn’t work out. But we need to tighten the screw.

And I’ll get back to what I said earlier on. We cannot ignore the enablers, the people who are allowing this to happen. And it was Russia that set up, as far as I can remember – you know a million times more about it than I do, but – I think it was Russia that set up the North Korean nuclear program to begin with. It’s China that sustains North Korea in one way or another. Ultimately, these are two members of the P5 who committed to nonproliferation. It’s appalling what’s happening, and the pressure should be put on them not to allow this (client?) state to risk global security.

Again, just turn this on its head for a second. It’s actually an incredible thing, what, 80 years after the invention of or the discovery of atomic weapons, that so few countries actually deploy them. It’s astonishing, and that’s a tribute to the NPT, to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. And the answer, I’ll just say, is not for more countries to acquire nuclear weapons. The answer is to put the squeeze on North Korea and get them to stop being so utterly insane. I do not understand why these people do not come out of the hypnosis and realize what a tragedy is being inflicted upon them.

**JUNG-HOON LEE:** I mean, you speak of the tightening of the screw on North Korea. I think the United Nations and the global community continue with the resolutions and sanctions, and we keep tightening the screw. Unfortunately, China keeps loosening the (knob?). There are many loopholes to the sanctions, various economic sanctions on North Korea, which renders the sanctions very ineffective. Do you feel that there is a way to –

**RT HON BORIS JOHNSON:** I totally agree with that. I agree with your analysis, and I think the tragedy of the situation is that, as complex as China’s feelings may be towards North Korea, it kind of suits them to have the North Koreans being where they are. And I think they’d rather have North Korea than U.S. bases, or a U.S. influenced country. They are helping to enable and perpetuate the problem. And if we’re going to fix the problem with North Korea, we have to direct ourselves towards Beijing.

**JUNG-HOON LEE:** Speaking of China, and you’ve mentioned in your speech as well that you don’t believe in the power transition, that there is a transition taking place.

**RT HON BORIS JOHNSON:** Well, it does happen. I mean, I’m saying that the Empires do rise and fall? I mean, the Brits, definitely, we did have a big empire, and we don’t anymore. That’s obvious, and the Americans did become the world’s number one power, but we didn’t attack the Americans. Just going back to that Thucydides trap point, we never – well, we burned down the White House in 1812, but that was a long time ago.

But look, I think, on America and China, and where it’s all going, I’m not as China skeptic. I love China, and I think China is an incredible country. We all need to be doing huge amounts of business with China. We just have to be very careful about China.

I think America, however, is still in its economic infancy. And I think American hegemony is going to continue for a very long time. I’ll tell you why I think this. I’ve been spending a bit of time flying around the world, and I’ve been flying over America. I’ve been relieved of the cares of office by my colleagues.

And America, you fly over America, it is huge, it is temperate. It is cultivable, and it is virtually, I mean by comparison with China, or certainly, by comparison with India, it is very underpopulated. The population densities is very low in America, relatively, and it’s growing richer the whole time. And it has a huge number of highly successful university cities that are constantly innovating.

I mean, the other day, here, I’ll tell you why I believe in America. I was trying to get the Internet in my house in Oxfordshire, and I’ve spent a lot of effort, as Prime Minister, to get gigabit broadband put into every house. And it went up; I’m proud to say went up from 7% to 70% of the country got gigabit broadband, but I couldn’t get it into my new house in Oxfordshire. And they said the only way I could get really high speed Internet fast was to pay Elon Musk. (Laughter.) And I had to do that. I’ve paid him. He’s got enough money already, but I paid him for his machine. All the Brits are buying these American electric cars.

I think America has got a lot of life in it yet as an economy. And I think that it’s going to be offering global leadership, and long may do so, I think, certainly for my lifetime.

**JUNG-HOON LEE:** Well, that’s a very strong endorsement for American leadership. But if you look at, historically, in the immediate post-war period, in terms of the China policy, the U.S.’s approach and Britain’s approach were slightly different. In fact, Britain was one of the very first Western powers to recognize China, PRC, as opposed to ROC. Do you feel that after all these years, seven decades, that now the U.S. and Britain see eye to eye when it comes to China?

**RT HON BORIS JOHNSON:** I think in many ways, we do. I’ve said what I’ve said about Taiwan, and I hope very much that that can be sorted out and that there will be absolutely no question of any kind of military incursion, or military solution in Taiwan. I’ve given the reasons why I think that would be insane, and the strategic ambiguity from the point of view of Beijing must now be overwhelming. What is going to happen? Does anybody seriously believe that America will do nothing, and the pressure on the UK will be huge? I think all that has changed radically.

But it’s very important not to demonize China or to push China into a corner. Nobody wants a cold war with China. That’s crazy. China is a massive trading partner of the UK, a massive trading partner of Korea, I think probably your biggest trading partner. And I remember that the graph of UK/China trade just goes up and up at 45 degrees.

We all need a relationship and a good relationship with China. The question is, do you let China run your critical national infrastructure? Do you let China run your nuclear power stations, your 5G? And I think the answer to that is no, and that’s why I’m so pleased that we’ve got Samsung. (Laughter.) I was talking to the head of Samsung, who seems confident that we can do it without – it’s very expensive. We’re having to get the Huawei stuff out, and we’re putting the Samsung stuff in.

**JUNG-HOON LEE:** Well, I was told by the organizers that the session is till 12 o’clock, so I’m (crosstalk/inaudible). Yeah, I’m actually going to allow maybe couple of questions from the audience to Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

**RT HON BORIS JOHNSON:** That’s very, very risky, Professor Lee. (Laughter.) I think we’ve almost got to the end without any serious upset. Are we really going to try and risk audience participation in this delicate stage?

**JUNG-HOON LEE:** If you do, please raise your hand and make it very short, and just a couple of you. And then I will take the questions in English or Korean and then if it’s in Korean, I will let Prime Minister Johnson know of the question, then have Prime Minister respond to those questions.

Please raise your hand, identify yourself and make your questions short.

(Break for direction.)

**QUESTION:** My name is Gigi Wang, and I teach at UC Berkeley. And I’m from Taiwan, so I’m covered by one of your countries. And I’ve been many times to Ukraine, and very much support Ukraine. My question is, and this is one I’ve been thinking about, is, yes, Ukraine is going to win. But how could it be resolved in such a way that Putin isn’t going to step down if he can’t lose, if he has to lose his face? Make sense? How can it be resolved in such a way that Putin can save face, but Ukraine stays free?

**JUNG-HOON LEE:** Okay, thank you for the question. We’ll take one more question before having Prime Minister respond. Yes.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Prime Minister, welcome to Korea. I would like to ask you a very personal, very light question. You’re like popstar of Korea. You’re very, very popular. And whenever you show up in screen, everybody watched you. And now, you are not engaged in day-to-day politics. Are you going to come back to politics? I think it is good for Great Britain’s number of tourists to visit in your country. Thank you.

**JUNG-HOON LEE:** Okay. Shall I take just one final question, and then we’ll get to our prime minister?

**QUESTION:** Hello, Prime Minister. I’m (inaudible) a university student in Hungary, where they (inaudible) Hungary University of Foreign Studies. What I’m going to question is, as a student, I feel this is very hard time for being a student in Korea, because there are a lot of inflation and economy crisis and job, like unemployment, right? In that situation, what attitude do you think I have to have about these situations? Could we (inaudible) amazing, the idea or just a (cringe?) and (assess?) the situation?

**JUNG-HOON LEE:** Okay, thank you.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**RT HON BORIS JOHNSON:** Well, thank you so much. Well, listen, folks, I really enjoyed the session very much. Just on the question from Gigi Wang about how do we help Putin save face, look, I’ve got to say, I don’t think we should worry about him saving face. That’s for him. Let’s stop worrying about Putin’s career. He’s more than capable of sorting something out, making up some story, explaining it to the Russian people. Let’s leave that to him.

The crucial thing, the much, much, much more important thing is giving the Ukrainians what they need to win. And Korea is doing a wonderful job in helping. We’ve just got to keep doing that and forget about Putin for the time being.

And then, (inaudible), your point about the tough life that that students have, well, I had it so easy when I was a student. The whole thing was paid for by the government, I think by the Inner London Educational Authority, now I come to think of it, Ken Livingston, in those days. And it’s much, much tougher. And I think it’s tough for students around the world. I think the costs are very high.

What I would recommend, obviously, is that when you’ve done your course here, which I’m sure is terrific, you should go do post-grad immediately in the UK, where it is the – I talked about the Athens of the global economy. London, the UK is the university capital of the world. We have more top 100 universities than any other country in the world. Get to the UK, and you’ll have a fantastic time as a student, very safe country, too, very safe, beautiful, as green as Korean, almost as green as Korea. Korean is beautiful, but UK is also quite beautiful.

And then the final, lovely. Thank you very much for that question saying that I should go back into politics, if only as a tourist attraction. (Laughter.) That is, by far, the best and most original justification that I’ve heard so far. I don’t think it’s one that’s likely to commend itself to people just yet. I think the best thing I can do is… well, I’m very lucky to have distinguished former prime ministers in this audience, John Howard, Maddy Muhammad and others. They know how difficult it is. Anything you say gets misrepresented. And I just kind of want to levitate above it in a sort of Buddhist way, if that’s what Buddhists do.

But thank you. Thank you for the kind thought. What I am doing is I’m writing a lot, and I shall certainly be writing about this, this wonderful conference. Thank you very much. Thank you.

**JUNG-HOON LEE:** Well, Prime Minister Johnson, you’re an iconic political figure with a very large and popular personality. Whether you return to 10 Downing Street or not, I hope you’ll continue to use all your charms and influence to reach out to those in need, such as in Ukraine, but also in many parts of Asia, namely Myanmar, China, and last but not least, North Korea.

Thank you so much, Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Let’s give him a nice warm round of applause.

**ANNOUNCER:** Thank you, Your Excellency, and Professor Jung-Hoon Lee for sharing your valuable insight with us. (Speaks Korean.)

(Break for direction.)

END