

opinion and prospect on the future of the Korea-U.S. FTA?

And my second question is about Libya and North Korea. In Libya, there was a people's uprising, and they changed their Government. And do you think such an event will be possible in North Korea in the near future? Thank you.

President Obama. Well, first of all, President Lee assures me that the KORUS FTA will pass through the National Assembly. I have great confidence in his leadership, and my expectation is that it will get done, because it's good for both countries. And businesses will be able to prosper here in the United States as a consequence of lowering many of these trade barriers; the same will be true in Korea. Our workers will benefit, and we can learn from each other. And I think this is one more sign of the close cooperation and friendship between our two peoples.

You're absolutely right that what we've seen in the Arab Spring—in Libya, in Tunisia, in Egypt—is this deep longing on the part of people for freedom and opportunity. And although the path from dictatorship to democracy is always uncertain and fraught with danger, what we've seen also is that human spirit eventually will defeat repressive governments.

So I don't want to predict when that might happen. I think that obviously the people of North Korea have been suffering under repressive policies for a very long time, and none of us can look at a crystal ball and know when suddenly, that type of government collapses on itself.

What we know though is, is that what people everywhere—whether it's in Korea or the

United States or Libya or Africa, what people everywhere are looking for is the ability to determine their own destiny, to know that if they work hard that they will be able to be rewarded, that they can speak their mind, they can practice their religion in freedom, that they can enjoy the free flow of information that increasingly characterizes the 21st century. And I don't think that the people of North Korea are any exception.

And I think when they see the extraordinary success and progress that's been made in South Korea, I think inevitably that leads them to recognize that a system of markets and democracy and freedom is going to give their children and their grandchildren more opportunity than the system that they're currently under.

All right, thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:22 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, President Obama referred to Kim Yoon-ok, wife of President Lee; Republican Presidential candidate W. Mitt Romney; and Mansoor Arbarian, a U.S. citizen charged with participating in an alleged Iranian-backed plot to assassinate Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to the U.S. Adil al-Ahmad al-Jubayr. Reporters referred to Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea; and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei and President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran. President Lee and a reporter spoke in Korean, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at a State Dinner Honoring President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea October 13, 2011

[*President Obama's remarks were joined in progress.*]

President Obama. —representing one of America's strongest allies and global partners, the Republic of Korea.

I also want to acknowledge two guests in particular: another son of Korea dedicated to

peace and security, the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, is here; and our first Korean American Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, confirmed by the Senate today, Ambassador Sung Kim.

Now, I'm going to be very brief tonight because President Lee has had a very full day and a very wet day—[*laughter*—]as well as extended

meetings and press conferences, a State Department banquet, and an address to the Congress, which I understand went extraordinarily well. There is a reason why people call him the Bulldozer. He is unstoppable. [Laughter]

Mr. President, today you have spoken with great eloquence about what America and our alliance has meant in your life and the life of your country. This evening I want you and your countrymen to know what Korea and its people have meant to America.

The essence of our alliance, I think, is embodied in a concept that is uniquely Korean. It doesn't translate that easily, but it reflects the deep affection, the bonds of the heart that cannot be broken and that grow stronger with time. Our Korean friends know it well: *jeong*.

In our country, we've felt this *jeong* in our vibrant Korean American communities, including in Hawaii, where I grew up, a melting pot of cultures that made me who I am and that taught me we can all live together in mutual trust and respect.

I felt this *jeong* during my visit to Korea on Veterans Day, the 60th anniversary of the Korean war, when our proud veterans of that war, both Korean and American, came together to celebrate a shared legacy: a free, democratic, and prosperous Republic of Korea.

And I felt this *jeong* in my friendship with President Lee. Mr. President, your life story—from crushing poverty to the Presidency—is an inspiration. Your success, Korea's success, speaks to the truth that with education and hard work, anything is possible. It's a spirit our countries share. You've described it in Korean, and in English it translates as: "Yes, we can." [Laughter] It sounds good in Korean too. [Laughter]

Finally, I would note that in our lives President Lee and I have both been blessed to find our better halves, leaders in their own right, advocates for women and young people, who we are proud to call our First Ladies. Mr. President, as we say in America, we both married up. [Laughter]

And so I want to propose a toast. I believe this is mine.

[At this point, President Obama was handed a glass.]

To our friends President Lee and First Lady Kim, and to their delegation, most of all to the enduring alliance between our nations, a partnership of the heart that will never be broken. Cheers. *Gun bae*.

[President Obama offered a toast. President Lee then made remarks in Korean, which were translated by an interpreter as follows.]

President Lee. First of all, Mr. President, Madam First Lady, distinguished guests, please allow me to thank you from the bottom of my heart for this warm reception extended to me, my wife, and my delegation. Thank you very much.

And Mr. President and Madam First Lady, my visit to Washington, DC, this time is especially special because before you are the President of the United States of America, you are a very close friend of mine. And this is how I consider you as well as the Madam First Lady. So this visit is very, very special for all of us.

Ladies and gentlemen, the President just spoke about the Korean emotion that we call *jeong* in Korean. I think indeed President Obama knows that deep inside his heart, he understands the essence of what we call *jeong*. *Jeong* can be explained in many different aspects, but one aspect of that is an individual that is humble, yet very strong inside. And I think President Obama exemplifies this trait of what we call *jeong*, and that is why we have a very special tie that we feel whenever I think about President Obama. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm a very, very honest guy—[laughter]—so what I say, I really mean it.

And also, Mr. President, I must thank you for one thing, because you have spoken so highly of the outstanding educational system of Korea and the dedication of its teachers and the determination of our Korean parents when it comes to educating their children. You have so many new teacher fans in Korea. [Laughter] And I have to be very honest with you. I think you have quite a number of them who like you more than they like me. [Laughter]

But, Mr. President, seriously, you do have a lot of teacher fans in Korea. But the real reason, when we look deep down inside, the reason why you are so popular among many Koreans is because everyone, including myself, are deeply impressed by your endless passion for learning and that this is very much a—very much reflected in your life story.

Mr. President, Madam First Lady, ladies and gentlemen, whenever I think about the United States and the people of America, I also have a very personal story of mine, which I would like to share with you briefly tonight. As you know, 60 years ago Korea used to be one of the poorest countries in the world. My family was exceptionally poor, and we really had nothing to eat, nothing to wear. We had to rely on foreign aid for many, many years. And I remember—I think I was about 9 or 10 years old—in my village there came an American missionary lady with boxes and containers full of used clothes that she would come to my village and hand out.

So being a boy whose only wish at that time was to own and wear a pair of blue jeans, I decided to stand in line, along with many people. But I was a very small and shy boy—hard to imagine—[laughter]—so a lot of people were pushing, and they were jostling about. So I ended up way at the end of the line. When my turn came, I went up to the American missionary lady, and I asked for a pair of blue jeans, to which she said—she just looked at me and said, “Well, I’m sorry, I’m all out of blue jeans.” And of course, I was devastated. I was heartbroken. And this kind American missionary lady takes one look at me, and out of sympathy she hands me something out of the box. She handed me a small rubber ball. Now, this did little to console the boy who was crushed, and because, after all, what was I going to do with a rubber ball?

And so to this day—and I shared this story with President Obama, and I—when I finished the story I remember the President laughing a bit nervously though. But—[laughter]—I told him, I said, “Mr. President, as you can see, I do not owe the United States anything, except”—

[laughter]—“except maybe for a rubber ball.” [Laughter]

So, ladies and gentlemen, Mr. President, Madam First Lady, although half-jokingly I say that I do not owe the United States anything, but in reality, my country and my people owe you tremendously. Which other country—no country came to aid the Republic of Korea 60 years ago when my country was being attacked by Communists. No country sacrificed more than 37,000 lives defending freedom for the people of my country. So for that, for many, many years onwards, we will always, always be grateful to the American people.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, just last night, the United States Congress passed and ratified the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. I’ve said this before, but please allow me to say it again: I am deeply appreciative and grateful to the leadership of Congress, to all the Members of the United States Congress who supported this measure, and especially to the steadfast leadership of President Obama for pushing this through.

And also, Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I know that there are those in the United States Congress who did not vote “yea” for this very important agreement. I think I see a few faces here, maybe—[laughter]—but I’m very, very confident, ladies and gentlemen, that in 1 year or even less, that these people who may be a little bit critical of this important agreement will say that they made a mistake, because they will see the visible results of this very important agreement.

And the thing that I want to prove the most, ladies and gentlemen, with the KORUS FTA is that many of those critics were saying that the KORUS FTA was somehow going to make people lose their jobs, but really the KORUS FTA is going to create a lot of good, decent jobs for the people of America. And this is a point that I want to prove by implementing this agreement.

And, ladies and gentlemen, you see Mr. King seated at the head table here. As I was receiving guests, and when he came up to me and I was shaking hands, I thought to myself, this is my chance to explain to Mr. King that

the KORUS FTA is going to create a lot of good jobs for his people and the members of his union.

Well, the fact that Mr. King accepted the invitation to be here tonight just goes to show that he believes in the essence and the core values of the KORUS FTA, so I have no worries. [Laughter]

Mr. President, Madam First Lady, ladies and gentlemen, our relationship between our two countries began 130 years ago. Sixty years ago, our mutual defense treaty began what is considered to be one of the strongest military and political alliance that the world has ever known. Of course, we are here today to celebrate our journey of the last 60 years, one that has been—always been marked by triumphs, sometimes heartache, but always full of hope. And we are gathered here to reaffirm our friendship and to renew our common commitment towards our shared goals. I know that our relationship will go strong; it will become more mature and complete.

Mr. President, as we talked about over the last few days, we have many, many challenges that are facing us as a nation and as a member of the international community. We do not know when, what type of form, or how it is going to strike us. There is a lot of uncertainty out there. But I believe in our friendship, because when during—if we are faced with challenges, I know that we will overcome them and even come out stronger.

And I just want to emphasize once again, our alliance between the Republic of Korea and the United States ensures us that we are not alone. Neither is Korea alone or the United States. So we can have confidence that we will

be able to overcome any challenges that may face us.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, I see the guests today, and I think a lot of you are people who are very much liked by the President and the Madam First Lady. I also see a few of you who I always wanted to see, and so I'm very happy that I have a chance to see and meet with you tonight.

And so once again, Mr. President, Madam First Lady, thank you so much for this honor, and thank you for your invitation.

[President Lee spoke in English.]

Okay. I'm going to propose toast for us. [Laughter]

[President Lee continued in Korean, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.]

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me now in a toast: First of all, for the health and well-being of President Obama and Madam First Lady, and of course, for our everlasting friendship between our two countries. Cheers.

[President Lee offered a toast.]

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8:30 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations; and Kim Yoon-ok, wife of President Lee. President Lee referred to Bob King, president, United Automobile Workers.

Remarks at the General Motors Orion Assembly Plant in Lake Orion, Michigan October 14, 2011

President Obama. Hello, Detroit! Hello! Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. It is great to be back in the Motor City. I notice the mood's a little brighter on this particular visit. [Laughter] I'd like to think it's because everybody is excited about the Korea Free Trade Agreement, but I suspect it might just have a

little bit to do with your Lions beating up on my Bears. All right, all right, all right. [Laughter] Don't get carried away now. [Laughter] Not to mention your Tigers hanging in there last night.

As you can see, President Lee is a pretty good politician. [Laughter] He knows how to