Thank you, sir. It’s a pleasure and an honor to be here.

Once upon a time, we learned three useful lessons dealing with

North Korea: It was possible to advance key U.S. interests through

talks with them. In those talks, our negotiators could break down

complex problems into component parts, and then deal with those

parts in logical order. And finally, contrary to the common wisdom,

if an agreement was well conceived, constructed, and implemented,

the North Koreans would abide by the core of it, as long as we did.

We knew, of course, that they’d game the process and hedge their bets.

These are not theoretical lessons; they come from hard experience.

But, we did a bad job explaining this to the Congress and to

the American people. And so, everything that we learned and accomplished

was buried under a mountain of myth. Instead, today

the phrase, ‘‘We won’t buy the same horse twice,’’ is considered wisdom.

Though it is based on the mistaken belief that negotiating

with the DPRK is simple flimflammery.

Some in Washington may remember, in the early 1990s, that discussions

on North Korea policy had, as part of the agenda, preparing

for something that was called a ‘‘soft landing.’’ The goal was

to prevent a calamity of the destabilizing situation that would

result from a collapse of the North.

This concept of a soft landing had a number of advantages for

us. Notably, it didn’t handcuff us to fixed goals. It allowed us room

to maneuver, to protect and pursue our national interests, as the

situation warranted. Then, as now, many people did not see the

point in talking to the North Koreans, because they considered our

problems in Korea primarily military. But, the North’s development

of a nuclear program in the late 1980s meant that the issue

for us had become as much diplomatic as military. And it still is.

It was clear that the North Koreans wanted to talk. But, why?

We developed a fairly good understanding, over hundreds and hundreds

of hours, as we listened to them. But, then abruptly in 2001,

the talking stopped, and apparently so did the listening. And, not

incidentally, all of our previous gains were cast overboard. As a result,

the situation today is much more difficult. Our leverage is

smaller, not greater. And our room for maneuver has become even

more curtailed.

If there was a chance, 10 years ago, of stopping the North from

building a small nuclear arsenal, the gain has now changed, and

it has not changed in our favor.

I worked under seven U.S. Presidents. I don’t think our problem

dealing with the North is confined to one administration or one

party. I think, in the deepest sense, the problems reflect a very

curious national inability to fathom how states like North Korea

work and how they see the world.

Our difficulties are compounded by the fact that our public discourse

in this country about North Korea has for too long been condescending

and irrelevant. The general impression in the United

States is that North Koreans live in a blasted moonscape. And any

observer contradicting that image, even purely as a matter of fact,

becomes suspect.

As we heard earlier, the word has gone out that we aim to force

the North to change its unacceptable behavior. If that is our goal,

I’m afraid that the climb is going to be steeper than we imagine,

because the North Koreans believe, if they behave simply on our

say-so, they will become part of the woodwork of the great powers.

We constantly hear that the North Koreans inhabit the most isolated

country on Earth. Yet, in some ways, we are more isolated

from them than they are from the rest of the world. DPRK officials

travel. They tune in outside radio. And they read outside books and

newspapers detailing our politics and our society. By contrast, at

least at the official level, we remain pristine. We don’t go there. We

rarely let them come here. And overall, we seem to keep contact

as limited as we can.

The result? Well, to substitute for knowledge and experience, we

have developed a fog of myths about North Korea. And amidst this

fog, the North Koreans have learned to maneuver like Drake’s

small ships among the galleons of the Spanish Armada.

Ultimately, progress on the North Korean issue depends not on

the pressures we bring to bear, but on how well we understand the

regime. If we don’t grasp that North Koreans believe they have

legitimate national interests, then we fall into the trap of thinking

we can force them, sweet-talk them, or bribe them into doing as we

want. Diplomacy worked with North Korea when it’s searched for

those places where interests overlap. But, when we signal the

North Koreans that there is no place for them in our vision of the

future, we undermine the basis for serious discussion of circumstances

in which we might, for now, coexist.

Do, in fact, such areas of overlapping interests still exist? It’s

hard to imagine getting at an answer if we don’t actually sit down

and explore the landscape. Thank you.

A little bit.

Then I apologize if I was unclear. I think they are

interested in talking to us, maybe less so than they were several

years ago, but that, as you have suggested, until we sit down and

explore what’s possible, we can’t know. We can’t make assumptions,

because, in fact, there is a track record. There is a history

of a period when they were deeply engaged with us. And there’s always

a possibility we could get back to something like that again.

I’ll say something that a lot of people may not agree

with. But, I think the six-party talks are a dead-end. And I don’t

think we should focus a lot of our attention and emotional commitment

to them. If they serve their purpose, well and good, but we

need something else, and getting to bilateral faster is more important.

Well, it’s worth noting that the number of cell

phones in the country has increased significantly in the last few

years. This cell phone infrastructure has been improved and built

so that something like 70 or 80 percent of the country is now

covered, in terms of cell phone towers. And the number of young

people that they’re training on how to use computers, and how to

sort of become computer literate at least, is really quite remarkable,

so that when and if this access ever is opened up to the international-

based Internet, I believe it’s going to spread rather

quickly. And, in fact, if I were a North Korean Ministry of Security

officer, I’d be very nervous, at this point, at what I see happening

in this society.

I’m afraid that—well, I would say, the steps that we

would take to advance denuclearization are not to talk about it

right away, quite frankly. I think the situation has so deteriorated,

in terms of our own position, that it would not be a wise strategy

to start off with that subject, because we won’t get anywhere and

the negative result will poison the entire process.

I think if, now, we want to get to denuclearization, it’s going to

take us longer than it would have before. And we’re going to have

to explore a broader horizon with the North Koreans, in an effort

to establish some sort of common ground from which to speak to

each other, and then eventually zero in on that, since it is so

important to us.

I’m afraid that every lesson that we’ve taught to the

North Koreans over the last 10 years is that they’d be much better

served by relying on a nuclear deterrent than on our good word.

And we have to teach them the opposite now. And it’s going to take

us a while to do that. We’re going to have to follow through on

agreements, as will they. I’m not suggesting this is one-sided. But,

we have a lot of homework to do and a lot of brambles to clear in

the path ahead of us, because of some policies that we’ve followed

in the past.

I would say it ill behooves the Japanese to worry about the pacing

of our talks with the North Koreans, when they are so focused

on a single domestic issue, which they consider quite important—

it’s quite emotional; no one can second-guess them on it. But, the

fact is, they’re so fixated on that, that they’re not being very

helpful to us in our own attempts to deal with this larger regional

problem.

To the extent that, as I think is true, that North

Koreans, at least at the level you’re talking about, really do see

themselves as part of a legitimate country with legitimate interests,

I think we’re fooling ourselves to think that, when the family

is replaced, that suddenly, you know, Hosanna, they’ll have a—

they’ll see the world as we do, especially against the South Koreans.

So, I wouldn’t necessarily look forward to that sort of a shift

in regimes. I wouldn’t think, off the top of my head, that it would

make the situation better for us. Whether it’s more dangerous or

not would—might depend a lot on the personalities involved.