May 2015 JoongAng Ilbo-CSIS Forum Opening Remarks
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Dr. HONG, Seok-Hyun is the Chairman and CEO of JoongAng Ilbo/JTBC. He became the CEO and publisher of JoongAng Ilbo in 1994. During his career, Dr. Hong has been active in public service. He served as President of the World Association of Newspapers for two terms (2002-2006), as the President of the Korea Association of Newspapers (2003-2005), as the ROK Ambassador to the United States (2005) and as the first Chairman of the English-Speaking Union Korea (2004). Previously, he served as senior vice president of the Samsung Corning Company (1986-94). He first joined the ROK government in 1983, where he was chief assistant to the Minister of Finance and then the chief assistant to the chief of staff of the President. Early in his career he was an economist at the World Bank (1977-83) working on the economies of Turkey and Malaysia. Currently Dr. Hong is a Deputy Chairman of Asia Pacific Group of the Trilateral Commission, Member of the Board of Trustees for the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Chairman of the Korea Baduk (Go) Association, and President of the organizing committee of the World Culture Open (WCO). Dr. Hong holds a B.A. in electronic engineering from Seoul National University, and holds an M.A. in industrial engineering and a Ph.D. in economics from Stanford University.

Honorable former Prime Minister Lee Hong-koo, CSIS President and CEO John Hamre, former World Bank President Robert Zoellick, distinguished speakers from Korea and abroad, and members of the audience. Thank you for coming to the JoongAng Ilbo-CSIS Forum 2015. It's great to see you all!

This is the fifth year we are hosting the JoongAng Ilbo-CSIS Forum and each year, we are seeing an increasing level of interest from not just opinion leaders in the academia and government but the younger generation with a genuine interest in the geopolitics surrounding the Korean Peninsula. From the first conference in 2011, this forum has embodied our effort to bring together the foremost in diverse perspectives and insights, so that we may contribute to strengthening peace and trust and building prosperity in the region and beyond.

That said, allow me to share with you my concerns regarding the world today. We are in the midst of a major transformation which is fueling global anxiety to a palpable level. From regional conflicts to political upheaval, cruel acts of terrorism, economic instability and devastating natural disasters, there is turmoil in just about every corner of the world. East Asia is no stranger to turmoil. The 'Big Four' powers, namely the United States, China, Japan, and Russia all have vested interests in East Asia but solutions to ongoing issues cannot be reached by the 'Big Four' alone. The Middle Powers including Korea, Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia can and should play crucial roles in securing peace and prosperity in the region. Asian nations
need to take on a more proactive role because it is obvious they are becoming more economically interdependent than ever before, with cross-border business reaching new highs with each passing year. From the geopolitical standpoint, it has become evident over the past 70 years since the Second World War that no one nation can go it alone now. It is time to map out the next 70 years.

In order to alleviate the pain and suffering that comes with this unprecedented turmoil, it goes without saying that we need the right policies and leadership. And speaking of leadership, it strikes me that the age of 'unipolar leadership' or hegemony appears to be over. In his essay in the Washington Quarterly entitled "The Rise and Fall of the Unipolar Concert", Thomas Wright explores how the era when the United States set the agenda and others followed suit has ended and how geopolitics has made a comeback. It is time for the big power, key player, 'unipolar concert' to evolve to a multipolar, all embracing and inclusive concept of power and global leadership.

Assuming that the concept of power and leadership will evolve in time, what are the factors that will impact peace in Asia over the next 70 years? I am sure you will agree that a major factor will be relations between the United States and China. The two countries are in competition in both the foreign affairs and economic arenas with China demonstrating an increasing assertiveness in opposition to the American-led international order. While the Barack Obama administration is touting implementation of its Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agenda, China is moving ahead with plans to launch the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Beijing is also drumming up support for its 'One Belt, One Road' initiative to build roads, railways, and ports linking China to Europe. Most recently, Pakistan signed onto this New Silk Road plan with China to invest US$46 billion in infrastructure and energy projects in the South Asian country, including the construction of a 3000-kilometer Economic Corridor linking Gwadar port in Pakistan to the ancient Silk Road city of Kashgar in western China. It seems China's carefully planned soft power drive pouring funds into Pakistan is aimed at winning over not just this neighboring county but impressing others in the region. This is only the beginning of President Xi Jinping's ambitious design to steer towards a new post-war international order and we will be watching to see what transpires next with the awareness that these developments could pose an enormous challenge to the order the United States has enjoyed over the past decades.

Meanwhile, North Korea remains a major component in Asia's stability or lack there of. It continues to resist calls for a halt to its nuclear program amid growing concerns it is building an arsenal of atomic weapons. Stakeholders in Northeast Asia need to cooperate closely to resolve this roadblock to peace in the region. Stakeholders in Northeast Asia also need to make a concerted effort for reconciliation on historical issues. We hope to see sincere progress in talks between Korea and Japan and China and Japan to face history head on so that we can finally move on and open up an era of true reconciliation in Northeast Asia.

I may sound like an idealist but if we are bold and creative enough to forge a resolution to North Korea's nuclear issue, if the U.S. pivot to Asia hits a true balance, if China does not pursue a Sinocentric hegemony to arbitrarily replace the existing order, and if Japan stops its revisionist push to deny and rewrite history, let me dare say, the next 70 years will be headed in the right direction. The big question is, how? How will we go about resolving these issues? That is why I believe each and every one of us are here today. We have gathered once again in Seoul, not
simply for the sake of being here, but to make the most of the opportunity to pool and share what
we know and what we have learned for the sake of peace in Asia in the decades to come. I am
sure you will all concur that this is no small feat. It is something that should resonate beyond this
conference hall, to be shared amongst policymakers and government leaders so it inspires change
that will mean a more peaceful Asia, a more peaceful world, for us and for the generations to
come. Thank you.