

(Conference Material – Talking Points)

“Strategic Dimensions of National Development: Case of East Asia”

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## **Introduction:**

President Lee's Shangri-la Dialogue speech

Korea's post-war (Korean war) economic development very impressive for many reasons - before War, Korean per capita GDP at level of Kenya's now higher than Saudi Arabia's and Portugal. Korea's success is slowly being recognised.

Korea, only second East Asian member of the now 33-member OECD club

Korea, second smallest east Asian G20 member – first Asian, Pacific and non-G7 host

And this despite its precarious location on the Korean peninsula and next to its belligerent, nuclear tipped anti-thesis.

Importance of location:

Most see Korea's location and economic geography as a series of challenges to overcome. Korea developed despite its location

No natural resources, high population density

Located next to historically expansionist great powers – Japan, China, Russia

Korea's development and the economic reforms that enabled this to happen greatly benefitted, dependent on Korea's strategic location

Guaranteed post-war US and Japanese interest – link to G20 and OECD – external political war to support Korea

Created domestic political will for economic reform – economic reform necessary for political survival – helped override vested local interests

Provided very powerful counter-example neighbour  
Created deeper faith in and commitment to state and national goals

More contentiously provided national security legitimacy for long period of dictatorship

Democratisation lifted challenge to this political will – ensured longevity of Korean project

Regional example:

East Asian economic miracle across countries has common strategic underpinning

Meiji Japan and then post-war Japan (model for Korea)

RoC and threat of PRC (most similar example)

Singapore, the “little red dot” (only SEA example)

PRC and century of humiliation/end of economic and political Maoism

Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Burma no such overwhelming security challenge, less development, less political will.

Laws and economic development choices can be seen as means to political ends – in these cases, choices made for the end of political survival