



THOMAS BAGGER

Head of Policy Planning, German Federal Foreign Office

Thank you very much. I think we heard a remarkable speech by the President this morning, but I would like to draw your attention to a speech that she gave in the German city of Dresden in the former East Germany in March this year, when she was on her presidential visit to Germany. It was a lecture titled An initiative for peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula and she laid out in greater detail some of the issues that she also touched upon this morning.

I think the German/Korean relationship is far broader than the rather superficial similarity of having a history of division, but it is quite interesting that we come back to this issue of division and unification on the Korean Peninsula, first, because the President has made it a strong hallmark of her policy initiatives, but, secondly, also because there is a new dynamic in this intractable issue, namely in the attitudes of China, and I think that is something that we should discuss. There is a lot of dynamic in the relationship between Korea and China these days.

We have set up a Korean/German advisory group to discuss and reflect on the German and European experience, some of which has already been touched on in the first panel this morning, not because we think that there are lots of similarities. Actually, the differences between the Korean and the German experience are rather striking, and just to mention some of them: the experience that there was a war between the north and the south on the Korean Peninsula and there was never a war between East Germany and West Germany. The time dimension of the experience of division, we are talking 70 years now on the Korean Peninsula. We only had 40 years before reunification happened in Germany. When you compare the size of the population, you are talking 2:1 here. We are talking 4:1 in Germany. When you talk about the difference in GDP per capita, it was maybe 3 to 5:1 in the case of Germany and you may talk about something that is closer to 15 or 20:1 in the case of Korea. Then, finally, maybe the most important issue of all that has already been mentioned is the nuclear dimension, of course, which was not there in the case of Germany. As a final reminder of the unpredictability of what we are trying to address here as an issue, let us not forget that German unification, the fall of the Iron Curtain and the wall in Berlin and Europe came as an almost complete surprise at the time, 25 years ago.

Given all of those differences in the overall situation, why is it useful to even look at the European and the German experience, as we have tried to do? The answer is pretty straightforward: The key question of how to build among the nations of the region the proper framework for peaceful political and social change is the same challenge that we were facing in Europe and for which we have tried to find our own solutions. Former Foreign Minister Han, who is chairing that group on the Korean side, is better placed than me to talk about the reflections of that German/Korean group, but I will just name three categories that are hugely important.

One that the President has stressed and is obvious in the way she frames Korea's policies is the need to build trust. I think it is entirely appropriate to stress this point, also given the Russian dimension of what we are currently facing as security challenges. We can talk for a long time about Ukraine and Eastern Ukraine and Crimea, but the larger dimension of the conflict is the loss of trust that has been built over decades in Europe, and that is the real loss and that is the challenge of rebuilding it in our part of the world, but it is also the challenge here.

Second, pragmatic cooperation – try to focus on pragmatic steps and practical solutions in order to narrow the gap that divides south and north. Third, if you think about it, if you reflect about the history of Ostpolitik in Germany and Europe, it took place over decades. It was very controversial in the beginning and also domestically controversial, but in the end it became part of the continuity of German foreign policy. I think this policy continuity and looking at it as a long-term strategy is absolutely critical. Thank you.