

Center for Strategic and International Studies

Foreign Policy in a New Era: The ROK and U.S.

ROK-U.S. Relations and North Korean Nuclear Issue

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SUE MI TERRY: Ladies and gentlemen, let's get started. We're going to have a panel discussion. Can you hear me? How do I do this? OK, it's on now? OK. We're going to start the next – we're going to have a panel discussion on U.S.-South Korean alliance and the Korean – North Korean nuclear crisis. And for this panel, I mean, CSIS could not have put together a more impressive panel. Truly a wealth of knowledge and experience on this panel, not only on the academic side but from policy perspective. So I think it's an honor to have this discussion with you guys.

I think it's not an exaggeration to say, I mean, anybody who's been following North Korea for a while, there's always been crisis of some sort between U.S. and South Korea – North Korea, and South Korea and North Korea, really since 1953. And we've had various crises here and there, but I feel like – at least for me – the current state seems different. With North Korea with two nuclear – two ICBM tests in July, the sixth nuclear soon followed. And North Korea being close to completing their nuclear program, getting to that capability where they can attack the United States with nuclear-tipped ICBM. And in Washington this sense that that's not acceptable. And there's a sense of urgency that something new and different – whatever that is – needs to be done about that.

And of course, so we have Mr. – President Trump, who had really increased the rhetoric against North Korea. I'm sure everybody has seen his speech at the United Nations calling Mr. Kim Jong-un “rocket man” on a suicide mission, and so on, totally even threatening to destroy North Korea. And of course, Kim Jong-un following up with a very personal statement. And personally, as a Korea watcher myself, I have not seen such a personal statement – first person with his name signed. Just everything becomes so personal. And of course, the North Korean foreign minister, they're following up with a threat to potentially do another nuclear test, this time over the Pacific Ocean. And even today earlier with more threats to even possibly shoot down our – one of our bombers.

So I think – and in the middle of all this, I don't think it's a majority opinion, but let's, to be very candid, there are voices out who are advocating a preemptive military – or, more accurately, preventative military action. And of course, in the middle of all this we are ramping up sanctions and so on. So this is the state of the current – the state of play here. And to help us, to enlighten us, and to help us sort of go through these issues, we have these panelists.

And the panelists – no one here needs a full introduction. You all have their bios in your program. I'll just do a brief introduction so we can get on with substantive discussion. So this brief introduction, starting at the far end, we have Professor Kim Joon Hyung from Handong University. Professor Kim is a member – or is a member of the policy advisory committee to the Ministry of Unification, and a member of the security and foreign policy committee of the Moon Jae-in administration. And sitting next to Professor Kim is Ambassador Lippert. Still very wildly popular former U.S. ambassador to South Korea. And I think one of the many reasons why he's so popular is because he's so embraced all things Korea. I think even his love for Korean food and learning the Korean language, giving his children Korean names and so on. (Inaudible.) And of course, it's great to be still beloved by the Korean people.

Sitting next to him is Ambassador Gallucci, distinguished professor in the practice of diplomacy at the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. Long-time scholar, diplomat. Served in various government positions and long, distinguished career, including special envoy to the State Department. Also, chief U.S. negotiator during the first nuclear crisis in the early 1990s. And next to me I have Choi Kang, vice president of research at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, which is

obviously a premier independent think tank in South Korea. He also served as a senior advisor to the National Security Council during the Kim Dae-jung administration.

So tremendous experience and knowledge in this panel. We're very fortunate. We're just going to – how this is going to work is I'm going to sort of ask each panelist to give brief opening initial remarks, three to four minutes, maximum five minutes. And then we'll use that discussion as a springboard for further discussion. And towards the end, I will open it up with some questions from the audience.

So with that, let me just start by asking all of you two very basic questions because we're talking about the alliance and then North Korea. So first, on the alliance, given the current state of tension between North Korea and Washington, and given that President Moon is less bellicose than President Trump in terms of dealing with North Korea, does this new tension mean that U.S.-South Korean alliance is indeed getting stronger, as Foreign Minister Kang talked about earlier, or even potentially weaker? And what are some of the challenges and opportunities for both the Moon Jae-in and Trump administration in terms of particularly in coordinating North Korean policy. And if the Koreans can talk about Moon's administration, the Americans can talk about the Trump administration, that would be helpful.

And then secondarily, I think a big macro question on North Korea. Particularly given the two new – two ICBM tests in July and where they are headed, are we reaching or have we already reached a critical threshold in terms of national security that requires a different type of response, whatever that is. And what would that be? And so if you could just comment on what you think should be the path forward in dealing with the North Korean crisis, but in terms of practical – practically speaking, where do we go from here, where we are today?

You want to start?

CHOI KANG: Me? OK.

MS. TERRY: Yeah.

MR. CHOI: OK. Thanks for having me here. Actually, I was here about three weeks ago. So I don't know what I can add at the moment. But actually, about the second question, I'm a little bit cautiously pessimistic about peace resolution of the North Korean nuclear problem. So of course, we are trying to have diplomatic resolution by enforcing sanctions and by the military exercise. But those things have not prevented North Korea from doing the things we don't want them to do. So actually, North Korea is clearly determined to have the completion of nuclear as well as missile program. So maybe while we are pursuing the diplomatic efforts to bring North Korea back to the negotiating table. Maybe we have to think about how to live with nuclear North Korea.

So if that's the case, we have to think about how we are going to upgrade our deterrent and defense posture in a more comprehensible way. So, of course, we are talking about the missile defense. Is missile defense good enough to defend South Korea? Is one battery? How many batteries do we need? So actually, we have to think about a totally different world, because actually – not just only externally. But actually, internally one of the factors which contribute to the legitimacy of Kim Jong-un is that he's heir of Kim family, who actually – that family has invented nuclear as well as missile program. So it is about the legitimacy of his rule as a North Korean leader. So internally is almost impossible for him to give up nuclear weapons. So, actually, I'm a little pessimistic about the peace

(project ?). Of course, that maybe – at the end of the day, maybe North Korea can gradually give it up. But it would take long time than we expected and we hope. That's my first response about the second question.

About whether there a cleavage between President Moon and President Trump, of course, maybe we can say United States is tilting more towards military options while President Moon Jae-in and Moon administration is tilting toward more dialogue and engagement, of course. But actually, after seeing a series of provocation of North Korea, Moon Jae-in administration has become much more tilting toward more pressure. Nowadays, he's talking about the pressures and sanctions. And he clearly state that it is not the right time to talk about dialogue with North Korea, unless we have North Korea's positive response on denuclearization. He has no intention to approach North Korea independently from the other side because, actually, he's now taking autonomous approach in handling North Korean problem, despite he made a proposal – two proposal(s), actually. One is like a mil-to-mil – resumption of the mil-to-mil dialogue and communication along the DMZ. The other one's a humanitarian dialogue. But at the moment, he has not stated any strong desire to follow the proposal he made on July 17th.

But on the other hand, actually, Koreans actually – generally, South Koreans have become much more concerned over the possibility of military options by the United States, regardless whether you are progressive or conservative. So that's why, actually, for the Moon Jae-in Korean state, there should be no war on the Korean Peninsula against South Korean will. But still, actually, we should not – I think we should not drop off any kinds of military options. But actually, in Korean media, you actually see all three major distinctive military options that they are talking about: preventive strike, preemptive strike, or decapitation. But below that level, you can think of various military options. But actually, we have not revealed any kind of military options which will enhance our deterrent and defense posture vis-à-vis North Korea, which will neutralize the military utility of WMD – not actually completely, but actually to a certain degree. So that's why there is a constant demonstration of force by the United States, sometimes jointly, unilaterally. So we have think about what kinds of deterrent measures are really necessary to enhance our deterrent posture vis-à-vis North Korea. And there's a way – actually, there's a way to deliver assurance message to the South Korean public and clear message to North Korea.

MS. TERRY: Thank you.

Ambassador Gallucci.

ROBERT GALLUCCI: Thank you.

I'm, frankly, confused by the current situation, because the way I look at it – and I'm confused. I was talking to a colleague, Tag (sp), just a little bit ago. I was trying to capture what it is that – what's this – what is this current situation similar to in all of our experience. In that what I'd liken it to is when you watch the television and you hear – you see a picture of somebody living in beach house in Florida or Houston or some place, and the National Weather Center is telling you that there's this category 23 hurricane about to come up and everybody should leave and, you know, they're drinking martinis and hanging out. And nobody's going anywhere. And you say, well, what is – you know, well there are people evacuating, but they're staying put. It's OK. So that's – and you wonder, so what are they thinking?

I've never actually lived in a beach house, so I don't know, but I do have the feeling now – and, Sue Mi, you said today, many of you must have heard, Ri Young-ho say that he took – or his government took – the words of the president of the United States as a declaration of war. When was the last time you heard a country's foreign minister say that your president had declared war on his country? And if you didn't get the significance of that, he then went on to say that that would mean that even over international waters we might shoot down American aircraft, which he knows – and you all should know – we have flown for the first time in a couple of decades north – you know, this is a bomber, a B-1 with fighter escort – north of the 38th parallel.

And let's have another martini. (Laughter.) I mean, there's no – I have no heard the words – you know, some people in this audience will recall them, from 1994 when we got a blistering cable in from – it's known in the State Department as the Luck-Laney cable. That was General Luck and Ambassador Laney sending a cable essentially asking whether we in Washington were nuts with what we were doing and planning to do in June of 1994. And we hadn't started NEO operations. For the uninitiated, that is non-combatant emergency operations. That is to get dependents and all ours and other countries' dependents out of Korea. That's a couple of hundred thousand people out of Seoul.

But we weren't, in other words, behaving consistent with the level of threat that we were beginning to define in Washington. Well, this is now going on now for some months. And people have said extraordinary things. And they're not random people. We're talking about the president of the United States, the leader of the DPRK. And yet, we're leaving everybody in place. And I think we are – so my contribution here – I think we are within hours of a military exchange – within hours. If I – I may have misunderstood, and it wouldn't be the first time.

But if there's a splashdown of IRBMs around Guam, if there is a test of an ICBM, a missile we would judge to be ICBM, at range instead of altitude, if there is even a brushback of U.S. military aircraft of some kind, I think it's quite plausible that the secretary of defense wasn't kidding when he said: Certain things happen, it will be game on. And Tag (sp) will certainly appreciate what that phrase means, and certainly everybody else should too. And so what I'm expecting, in other words, and I would want to say I will not be surprised if the hurricane doesn't hook right and miss us entirely. If we get hit by this hurricane, I don't think anybody should get up in the morning and say: How could that have happened?

Now, I don't want to completely ignore your question – (laughter) – but so what does this mean for the alliance? Well, I noticed that President Moon said something like – and somebody here – maybe you all can correct me. But something like the United States has assured him that we will not act in a kinetic way – I know he didn't say that – but in a kinetic way without first getting, I think, approval from Seoul. Certainly consulting, but consulting is a kind of soft word. But approval's another word. There might not be time. What I'm saying is that I – to go through a crisis like this and have nothing happen I think is terrific, Sue Mi, for the alliance. I think to go through a crisis like this and have it tested, where we strike – we, being the United States of America – and our ally is the most likely to suffer consequences, if there are any, really stresses an alliance.

It would also be stressful if something of significance as a provocation happened from the North, and nothing happened on our side. That would also stress the alliance. And I just want to say finally, that I hope we could avoid saying the kinds of things that have been said – I think most sharply by a guy who used to work in the White House by the name of Bannon, who said: There is no military option. But ladies and gentlemen, there are many military options. There is just no free military options. There's no military option which is without risk. If someone is without military options, I

would argue, it is the DPRK, not the USA. We have a lot of things we could do. But we cannot assure that they will not produce very negative consequences, in the first instance, for our ally. And that will test the alliance.

MS. TERRY: Well, thank you for sufficiently scaring us. (Laughter.)

Hopefully Ambassador Lippert has something more uplifting to say.

MARK LIPPERT: I do have a little bit more of a glass-half-full assessment.

MR. GALLUCCI: Great.

MR. LIPPERT: Look, I guess I would say this. You know, and as Tom and Sandy know well, you know, when you're the ambassador you're charged with maintaining the bilateral relationship. And what ends up happening is that you manage – what you try to do is manage through the disagreements because you're never going to disagree – or, you're never going to agree on everything. You're two sovereign countries, two different peoples, all of that. But then you try to accentuate the positives. And I guess you're trying to take stock of where the alliance is. What I would say is on North Korea policy, just a couple of points.

First, what's interesting is that North Korea policy has really dominated the alliance, right? I would say towards the end of the Obama administration, we were obviously very focused on the North Korea threat. Rightly so, and I think, you know, President Obama would you tell you – upon leaving office, he would say it was the number one or right there with ISIS. And he had held that view for some time. I think that the question is we were looking at that, but obviously looking at all the other facets of the bilateral relationship, one of which, you know, flared up in the news about a week ago, which is the trade relationship, the economic relationship on KORUS.

So what I would say is on the North Korea situation, what it has done is it has drowned out a lot of the other elements, at least in terms of bandwidth. And I always say that, you know, the scarcest commodity in Washington is the time, attention and energy of senior policymakers. And it's, rightly, fixated on the North Korea threat, but probably at the expense of some of the other facets that are important and really critical to the livelihood, peace and prosperity of the South Korean and American people. So I think that's one point, that you do see this interesting – and, again, I agree with, that you do see this real focus on North Korea, rightly so. But remember, you just – there are only so many hours in the day to work on these issues.

The second is taking apart North Korea, or unpacking North Korea. I don't see a lot of daylight in North Korea policy between Moon Jae-in and – the Moon Jae-in administration and President Trump's administration, at least right now. Three, four months ago, I might have said there's a potential for drift, but I do think that the provocations and the escalating nature of the situation, as Bob outlined, has caused the two to sort of kludge together on a range of issues. I would say they're basically on the same page in terms of pressure to negotiate. They're basically on the same page in terms of what I would say – you know, in the defense sphere, in terms of communication through our military channels, through our capability upgrades. I think they're – you don't see major issues there. And what I would also say is they're being fairly creative in terms of their military thinking, posture, planning. And you don't see a lot of rifts, at least outwardly so.

So I would say that there is general alignment. And I think the question is, you know, a couple of things. One, are – how is this going to hold up over time? Two, you know, I think the U.S. does need some of its people in place to help manage these alliances. You can only manage these at the top for so long before you start to see some cracks or some dropped balls. And this is not a situation for dropped balls. And three, what I would say finally, is that, you know, there is, I would say, a general agreement on the assessment, right, which I think is important. And Marcus could speak to that, which is I think that Kim Jong-un is not his father. It's a very different situation. And the situation is very dangerous, and much more dangerous than it was just five to 10 years ago.

Finally, let me just say, you know, in terms of the other facets of the alliance, because we would talk about other elements of the alliance and that would include the economic relationship, our non-proliferation relationship. Bob Einhorn is here, worked for five and a half years – or, at least, on and off as a private citizen – on the 123 Agreement. I think the jury's still out. And we've got to see where we are on those other elements. And those are important elements going forward. But, rightly so, again, to repeat myself, North Korea has been in focus and in sharp focus because it is a serious and dangerous problem. I'll stop there.

MS. TERRY: Thank you.

KIM JOON HYUNG: Hello, everyone. I think you already noticed that I'm kind of a new face here, and the least-famous and least-known person here. And I'm honored around – surrounded by the famous people. And actually, I was the member of the foreign policy team in the 2012 election campaign. And of course, we still have – we failed. And in 2016, I rejoined and consulted him regarding foreign policy. That's why I was – I'm invited here. And this is the second time this month that I have to go back tomorrow and teach, because I'm teaching now. And I don't have any official, you know, government position right now. So I'm freer in a way to criticize rather than the Minister Kang. (Laughter.) And actually, I want to say freer to do that, to give, you know, a constructive criticism. Because it might sound a little different from my, you know, opinion, from other people.

So I'll give three points, and maybe I could go over a little bit longer, but bear with me. I think we all might have confessed that we reached the point that nowhere – point of nowhere to go, as far as North Korean nuclear problem is concerned. And North Korea is a de facto nuclear state, even though it's not – we cannot accept that as a state of policy. And Kim Jong-un is different from his predecessors. He's a – it's all – he's not about gaining leverage over negotiation. It's about gaining nuclear capability all along. And it is little bit exaggerating things, but it's not a total empty boast. And he's in on his pace. It's my way type of approach. And he doesn't want to have dialogue now. And he's not going to rush for dialogue until his completion of nuclear development. And North Korea problem may not be solvable at this moment and for the time being.

But at the same time, we all know that we cannot accept this situation, accept North Korea as a nuclear state as a state of policy. And what do we have now? And everybody says – and especially leaderships in American – U.S. government is talking about all options on the table and military options. To me and to Koreans, is unthinkable. It's possible but unthinkable. And majority, at this moment, many people agree, share the opinion that increase the pressure over North Korea and increase the capability, the South Korean military capability, the deterrence capability, until what? Until North Korea is giving up or collapsing or coming to the table with white flag. I don't think it's possible in the near future.

And having said that, right now – because, you say, everybody knows Moon government is outcome of, you know, candlelight demonstrations. He is sandwiched by conservative and his supporter from progressives. I'm kind of in between progressive and him, because I cannot fully criticize him right now, but progressives are really frustrated. They expected him to be different from the predecessors.

And many people in Washington agree that Moon has to navigate a very narrow path. He has so many obstacles: China's ascension, North Korea's provocations, and challenges and pressure from Washington, of course, and domestic politics. And although Moon has not done much on the engagement issue yet, but still there are widespread concerns, if not suspicions on his, you know, weak and even, Trump said, his appeasement.

And the deployment of that becomes a litmus paper from both directions, from the U.S. and from progressives in South Korea. He is being sandwiched by these two. I'm really worried that he's losing the support base of progressives and the domestic audience is becoming much more important in both countries. That's the big issue here, too.

And although the Trump administration has placed North Korea as a top priority and a broad outline has been provided through interviews and speeches and tweets, his policy toward North Korea seems, to me, as in flux. It's, then what? It's strategic patience with hostile words or strategic confusion? That's what I'm saying.

And while Trump wants to differentiate himself from the Obama administration policy of strategic patience in the name of maximum pressure and engagement, his policy so far has emphasized pressure with a little clarity on what conditions for engagement.

My last point – nowhere no question about, Trump continues to give mixed messages. He thinks by doing so creates additional leverage. Maybe he's right, but it's too risky, especially for South Koreans. He has to decide to solve the North Korea problem or to use the North Korea problem to accomplish other goals, let's saying containing China for domestic purposes, because I think he cannot have both because China's help is critical. The U.S. trying to divide China and South Korea, which makes South Korea's positions much more difficult and makes the North Korean problem much more difficult.

Also, Washington should continue to try to work with Beijing on North Korea because there can be no serious progress without China's cooperation. Understanding China's interests as a source of leverage over the Korean Peninsula in gaining trust can be the best way to draw Chinese commitment to solve the problem.

I'm going to finish my comment by quoting Jeffrey Bader's recent report. I quote, "The attitude of "America first" and the public debate in the U.S. over the North Korean nuclear problem that obsesses over the threat to the U.S. mainland while ignoring the clear and present danger to allies on our doorstep has revived long-dormant debates in the region about U.S. reliability in the face of China," end of quote.

Thank you.

MS. TERRY: Thank you.

So I have so many questions, but I'll just ask a few and open it up to the audience.

Just a follow up on your statement on how do we – maybe we need to consider living with a nuclear North Korea, I think there's a debate here. So I have a couple of questions, the first question has to do with deterrence and containment because we don't want to go there, we don't want to publicly accept North Korea as a nuclear power and all that. I get that. But after all the various diplomatic, economic and defense and military efforts, if it doesn't work and North Korea does gain this capability to deliver a nuclear weapon over long distances, the big question, I think, among Korean watchers right now is, where deterrence and containment in terms of traditional nuclear deterrence and containment, like worked with the Soviet Union and then Russia, for over 50 years it worked, I think there's debate here from the Korean watchers community ultimately whether deterrence and containment could work with North Korea. And given how little we know about Kim Jong-un's intentions, right, what his thinking is, how sure are we, how confident should we be that deterrence and containment will work with North Korea?

And the second question is on China just because you brought it up a little bit, but we haven't talked about it obviously in fact in terms of dealing with North Korea. China announced Saturday that it would halt exports of some petroleum products to North Korea and stop importing textiles. And this is after China's central bank issuing a directive to other banks to stop trading with North Korea. And obviously this bears watching because we've watched China for a very long time, you probably can speak to, and we've been disappointed over and over. They have a long history of backsliding when the spotlight fades. So what is your assessment on China's recent moves? Is it tactical? Is it hedging tactics they have always done? Or is there something more fundamental going on in terms of a strategic shift that you are seeing? So just a quick question on China.

And I just have one clarifying question for you, Professor Kim. When you said President Moon Jae-in is losing progressive votes, I'm not quite sure, what are the progressives expecting from President Moon? Because he has reached out to North Korea many times asking for dialogue, engagement and so on. It's the North Koreans who are not accepting it, North Koreans who are saying no, we're not going to deal with South Korea. So what is President Moon supposed to do about that?

MR. CHOI: OK. About deterrence and containment, of course, we have to think about different deterrence posture because actually now that's why some people argue for reintroduction of tactical nuclear weapons or permanent station of strategic assets or upgrading the conventional weapon systems USFK has nowadays. So these options should be seriously considered by the U.S. as well as South Korea. And that's the military side.

And the diplomatic side, of course, some countries have just started to expel the North Korean diplomats, diplomatic isolation, as long as they keep developing their ICBM and provoking the situation.

And also economic sanctions, because actually, we have just started the real sanctions by having 2375. But we have not gone to the level we applied to the Iranian case. We can think about really – I saw it, actually maybe older North Korean people will suffer from that kind of sanction, that very kind of comprehensive sanction. So we have been following very targeted sanctions and now we are shifting toward more comprehensive sanctions. The financial sector is very critical. You remember clearly BDA, how North Korea reacted on the BDA case. Finally, how it can dry up, the hard currency, in North Korea is the way we can bring about some changes inside North Korea.

Information infiltration and influx information in North Korea, that actually leads to gradual change of North Koreans' minds. Now the people are talking about this, but they call it marketization of North Korean economy. We have to think about how we can utilize or use the marketization of North Korea.

And of course, on the other hand, actually, I like to be more flexible on the humanitarian front. Maybe if there is a humanitarian disaster we can provide humanitarian assistance in North Korea, but that must be guaranteed. Actually, North Korea should guarantee the monitoring and verification. Of course, we cannot be sure about it, but anyhow, we can think about the use of international organizations as a kind of monetary mechanism.

So those are the things I can think of, different ways to approach the North Korean nuclear and missile program.

MS. TERRY: You want to answer, and maybe the China question, too?

MR. GALLUCCI: China?

MS. TERRY: No, I mean, on the nuclear thing, too, whatever you want to take.

MR. GALLUCCI: First, I'd like to say my glass is half empty. (Laughter.) I think that, to go to a point that you made, one can look negatively, particularly if you live in South Korea, at the United States' current fixation on the idea that we will become vulnerable to the North Koreans with ballistic missiles mated with nuclear weapons, a situation which the South Koreans and Japanese have been living with for quite some time. That would be a negative interpretation of an "America first" interpretation.

I live here and, of course, have great affection for my country, so I don't take it that way. I take this as a manifestation of a structural problem which we have long recognized with extended deterrence. And we had that problem, as the Europeans came to understand, not that it took them very long, one of the problems with our NATO guarantee and our nuclear umbrella when the Soviet Union had extraordinary nuclear capability. Could we still be trusted? You know, would we trade one of our cities for one of their cities? And that question could be asked of us now.

So I think that there are two things for me that come out here. One is, does our extended deterrence lose any credibility once we become vulnerable, CONUS is vulnerable? I have a short answer to that: No, we're still credible. But the question stands.

The second thing is, what do Americans particularly want or ask of their government with respect to the North Korean capability to take one of those boosted or truly thermonuclear weapons and put it on an American city? Do they expect our government to stop the North Koreans from this, as you said correctly, not a preemptive strike, but a preventive strike, to stop that capability, knowing that it not only would be catastrophe, plausibly if not inevitably, for South Korea, but a second Korean War, right? Or do we, instead of going that way and risking that, we risk the vulnerability of the uncertainty of deterrence of the leader of North Korea?

So this is – I like this as a question for the American people and for the president. I don't know what the American – I know what my answer is, I just don't know what the American people's answer is.

Third point is, just two more, China, American presidents always discover China when they try to deal with North Korea. And I'm prepared to believe that the Chinese have figured out what we want them to do. We don't need to send anymore envoys to explain that to them. However, I would like an envoy to go and be as clear as possible about American thinking and tolerance for North Korean behavior and our expectations for their restraint under certain circumstances. That's what I'm on about now, not getting the Chinese to act responsibly in Northeast Asia, blah, blah, blah. We've been there, done that.

And finally, sanctions. I recognize that there are different kinds of sanctions, that we have a model of what happened in the Iranian case and sanctions played in our model a key role. And I'm prepared to believe that's true. But I am not prepared to believe that we should fall in love with sanctions. I think that sanctions can increase pressure and that may be good or bad depending on what we want to achieve. It is not going to stop their programs. I do not believe that it's even remotely possible that it would cause sufficient pain that they may decide that if they could have that pressure released by negotiations they will have a fake one or a real one, so you may get them to the table to this. And if that's your objective, OK. If you have another objective, which is getting them to their knees, I think that's not going to happen and we shouldn't make believe it will.

MS. TERRY: Do you have –

MR. LIPPERT: Do you want an answer? Let me take a stab at a couple of these. I guess I would say, first, on tactical nuclear weapons, you know, I'm not a fan, I don't think it's at this point necessary. I think I'm with Bob on the extended deterrence issue. I think the American commitment is very strong very real. Having worked at the highest levels of the Pentagon, I'll just tell you we take these commitments extremely seriously. We put resources against them and we practice and are prepared for them. They're real commitments. So I think that's the first one.

And the second point I would say on that, you know, a lot of the arguments when you hear them about reintroduction on the peninsula tend to be around a tripwire, you know, if there are the tactical nuclear weapons, there's more of a tripwire and the U.S. will be less a bit able to be decoupled in the event of some sort of threatening with nuclear weapons from North Korea. The tripwire is there. It's 30,000 troops, it's all the American citizens there. It's the treaty commitments. There is deep and abiding commitment there.

So I would say – and finally, it undermines your moral authority, right? If you're trying to get rid of nuclear weapons in one part of the peninsula and you reintroduce them in the others, I do think it undermines your credibility. And you – we are dependent upon the international community, especially at the U.N. Security Council and elsewhere, to help effectuate this policy.

A couple of other just quick points. I would say just to – on the American involvement, you know, look, there – either get this – if there's a silver lining here, it shows that, you know, the – this crisis shows how deeply committed the United States is. This is the highest levels of this government, very committed. And I would say it was on a bipartisan basis back through the Obama and Bush administrations, very senior-level attention, and I would argue the Clinton as well.

The point two is, among the American people – I was at a lunch today, and, well, it was off the record, so I'm not going to cite it, but a well-known Asia hand here in D.C. was citing polling data that's publicly available. It does show Americans continue to believe Asia is the most important part of

the world. Americans in record levels believe we should defend the Republic of Korea and Japan if they – if there's an attack against them. So not just the government at high levels but also the American people, I think, are deeply engaged with this issue as well. I'll stop there.

MR. KIM: OK, because you – I asked a specific question, so just short answer for the tactical weapon. As I said, it's domestic audience. This is like a conservative some kind of hitting ground, like, a nationalist sentiment because of the crisis caused by North Korea. So that's, you know, government position. And Moon – President Moon's position is (solid ?). It's not the solution for the crisis.

And regarding your questions, why progress and what progress we want, then? You have to understand, first, is an outcome of candlelight demonstration. And one of the big issue and one of the big promise – campaign promise is the different approach toward North Korea. Everybody and even (protesters ?) don't consider them as pro-North or – you know, they understand the grave situation. They understand why Moon is more, like, inclined to the hardline policy.

But, you know, the mixed message from the Trump, they understand – no, I understand actually President Moon is trying to get assurance from the U.S. and make them understand or, you know, clarify the suspicion from the especially hardline in Washington that Moon might be the second coming of the Roh Moo-hyun. And he tried to clarify that and make them understand and get the assurance to avoid some kind of political sabotage from conservative politician inside. But too progressive is too much, and too much work. They note that this is not the time for engagement, but at least they want Moon to show some kind of positioning, you know? And, you know, make – get the vision and some part, you know, persuade U.S. And they were so happy that first summit meetings between Trump and Moon, and we are kind of leading role. We are entitled to have a leading role. But with time over time, it's not true. OK? That's the point. And those mixed messages, especially from, you know, specifically three things, you know: appeasement issues. And Lindsey Graham's comment and over those, you know, abolishing FTA – KORUS FTA and things like that.

MR. CHOI: Let me answer the China question, whether China has made a tactical move or state change. So actually, after having the U.N. Security Council resolution, China's used to comply at least three months to six months.

MS. TERRY: Yeah.

MR. CHOI: And then they actually have returned to their old way of doing the business. So I don't think China has made a kind of strategic decision.

It seems to me that for China, the preservation of North Korean regime is the most – utmost important national security interest over denuclearizing North Korea. So I don't think China will push to the limit because they're afraid of the collapse, maybe regime instability of North Korea. Of course, right now China is complying with the U.N. resolution, but I don't know how long they can actually enforce, and then maybe they can enter the next level of sanctions vis-à-vis North Korea.

So I'm a little bit cautious about the Chinese cooperation in enforcing the sanctions. But actually, the problem in having Chinese cooperation is how far U.S. is willing to go – for example, secondary boycott – how far U.S. is going to use its power or influence over China to get China to do what it is supposed to do.

MS. TERRY: Well, right now they're going – it looks like they're fully going to – going after secondary sanctions.

MR. CHOI: Of course.

MS. TERRY: I mean, U.S. government is, I think, recommitted to that.

MR. CHOI: Yes.

MS. TERRY: But since we're running out of time, I'll take some questions from the audience, and I'll just take in a group. If you could just keep it concise and identify yourself. Any questions from the audience?

This lady, yeah.

Q: Hi, my name is Abigail Dawson, and I'm a first-year student in the Asian Studies Program at Georgetown University.

I have a question for Ambassador Lippert, as well as anyone else who would like to offer thoughts. Do you think that there would ever be a point in the future at which it would be reasonable and realistic to consider placing tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea, and if so, what would that point be? Thank you.

MS. TERRY: The other question? There was a question here.

Q: Good afternoon. My name is Dae Wan (ph). I'm a research intern at – (inaudible). And thank you very much for your speech, and I really enjoy and learn a lot from you guys.

And I have a question that what are the other option rather than the more offensive weapons or the impression on China or on more talks – more talks attend to the – with the North Korea? What are the options left for South Korea and the Republic – South Korea and the U.S. could do – what are the options left to deal with the North Koreans solve this issue? What different initiative we can take for today?

MS. TERRY: Why do you ask such a hard question?

Go ahead.

Q: Yeah, I think – I think we're all dumbfounded by all the questions and inability to answer. But one thing we haven't talked about, and that is generational. And I know it was rather intriguing that President Moon had said his dream was to take his elderly mother back to North Korea, to her home. And he would prefer to live there as well, and I don't know long ago he wrote that, but you have that on the one hand. And is that the progressive? Or we have not heard the word reunification once. And secondly, how many of the South Korean young people feel anything other than just the security, military threat, and are they just in their own other world? And thirdly, how many people in North Korea would be just devastated if Kim were to depart?

MR. KIM: The last part?

MS. TERRY: If Kim Jong-un were to –

Q: If Kim Jong-un were to no longer be head of government, how many people would really be devastated?

MS. TERRY: I think we just have one more. We have to take just one. We'll just take one more and then –

Q: Hi, my name is Yang Li (ph). I'm first-year student at Johns Hopkins University SAIS.

I have a question for Mark Lippert. And my question is, everybody agrees that China has a key role when it comes to dealing with North Korea issues, but – and also, it seems like everybody kind of agreed that the U.N. resolution is a very important. But what if U.N. resolution turned out to be unsuccessful? Does United States go far to impose secondary boycott on China?

MS. TERRY: Okay, so we have first question on, again, tactical nuclear weapons. So maybe not now you said we don't need tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea right now, but maybe your question is at what point, if maybe North Korea goes nuclear and has this capability to attack mainland United States and so on, at some point is that acceptable or not, I guess first question.

Second question is, what new other options are there when it comes to North Korea. Third question on generational divide and unification. And then the last question is, if sanctions fail, then what do we have? It's kind of similar overlapping questions. So I think I'll just – you can choose whatever you want to answer.

MR. LIPPERT: So since they were directed – so I'll – maybe I'll lump the first and the third together and – because they were both directed at me.

MS. TERRY: Yeah.

MR. LIPPERT: Look, in a situation like this, I don't think you want to take options off the table, right? I mean, this is – you know, this is a dangerous, delicate and complex situation, so you don't want to start ruling things in or out forever and ever, or saying that you'll never do something. I think that's the first point.

On tactical nuclear weapons, just at the risk of repeating myself, I would still say the bar's high, extremely high for reintroduction, for proliferation concerns, for proximity concerns, for your moral suasion concerns. So, again, I would just say I wouldn't, you know, hazard a guess as to what conditions, because I can't predict the future, but I would say it would be a high threshold.

And on secondary sanctions, you have seen increasing proclivity to engage in some secondary sanctions as well, and that's, you know, something that both administrations, Obama and Trump, have been exercising – I think judiciously – because the issue at hand is if you do too much, one, you actually release all of your leverage, and what you're trying to do is essentially speed up the Chinese clock, so you sort of – you implement the sanctions and the sanctions run and that's all you have. But the second is, is that, you know, you risk turning the Chinese the other way. And as everybody here has said today, the Chinese are a necessary part of this equation. So I'll stop there.

MR. KIM: OK. These are hard questions you raised.

I think from my personal experience with President Moon, he's more like – he resembles more like Kim Dae-jung rather than Roh Moo-hyun. He's such a pragmatist, to me. He's very progressive in certain areas, especially North Korea. But after he became the president, I think he became more pragmatic. So you don't have to worry about much about his philosophical or ideological, you know, cover, you know, behind him. So he's a – he's a really pragmatist.

And I think the biggest difference here is, Korea is the one who suffers the most and – but has the least resource and leverage to solve the problems. So Korea to be in the driver's seat, so we need help from China and the U.S, because both countries have the leverage over it. So here's my ideas. Get the leverage from these two country.

And for the past 25 years, we never – many people said that we exhausted all other options, but I don't think so. We never used this pressure and engagement at the same time. So at this moment, maximum pressure and engagement, also it's not like simultaneous applications. So we need some kind of division of labor between – among these three trilateral cooperation – not among U.S./Japan/Korea, but among Korea/U.S./China. That's why I said U.S. need to decide whether to solve the problem – the North Korean problem. So U.S.-China is maximum – maximizing pressure, and they're outsourcing dialogue channel to South Korea. I think that's the – that's the one insight Moon I don't – I don't exactly know. So that's why progressives are arguing and asking Moon to more have a position rather than zig-zagging to – you know, to people.

And about young generation, they worry about – they really worry about and – but you know what? Many Americans are, you know, surprised how calm Koreans, South Koreans are against, you know, in this situation. Maybe one reason is because it's been a while. So – and North Korea is always like that. But these days, we're really worried because of unpredictability from President Trump but – and of course – and, you know, nuclear bomb. So young generations, they prefer peace rather than unification. They really – I don't think they really care about unification at this point. And Moon also is care about the peace rather than unification. Unification is a process or an outcome of the whole peace process. And if I'm North Korean, I don't know. Maybe outside they will be sad, but inside they will welcome it.

MS. TERRY: Any concluding thoughts? Because we're running out of time for – Ambassador Gallucci –

MR. CHOI: Actually – because actually I hope President Moon Jae-in stay in the current course by enforcing the sanction and upgrading our defense posture by spending more money on defense. He promised to spend 2.9 percent of GDP on defense. So the sooner, the better. Actually, he actually underscore he's going to actually preserve combined defense posture and combined forces command. So I hope he can – I hope he will maintain the current course as far as we can. However, to China, actually, I don't know whether it is possible to have Chinese cooperation. Now, you usually talk about China's role, but actually it's China responsibility. So we have to say it is China that actually has led the situation to the current mood. If China helped us in correcting North Korea's behavior 10 years ago, maybe we would be in a better position at the moment.

The other problem right now, China sees North Korea nuclear problem as a U.S.-China rivalry. So as long as they have that kind of mentality, it's almost impossible to have Chinese cooperation – have wholehearted Chinese cooperation. At the moment, China's cooperating. As I said, how far and how long? I don't know.

MS. TERRY: Ambassador Gallucci has the last word, and I'm sure he will disagree on something, which is good. (Laughter.) That's what panel's supposed to do.

MR. GALLUCCI: I would like to end on a proposal of a two-step program to solve the North Korea program.

MS. TERRY: OK.

MR. GALLUCCI: This will be funny, all right? (Laughter.)

MS. TERRY: OK.

MR. GALLUCCI: Step one would be the judicious application of duct taping two capitals. (Laughter.)

MS. TERRY: That's different, right?

MR. GALLUCCI: Yes. Step two would be an agreement to have fairly senior representatives of both governments meet without preconditions to have talks about having talks. Thank you.

MS. TERRY: Great. With that, I think we'll conclude this panel. Please thank them with a round of applause. (Applause.)

LISA COLLINS: Thank you very much. We'd like to thank our panel of distinguished experts and everyone for coming today.

(END)