

## **Center for Strategic and International Studies**

### **“Press Briefing: Preview of the Trump-Kim Summit”**

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H. ANDREW SCHWARTZ: Welcome to the Center for Strategic International Studies, CSIS. I'm Andrew Schwartz. For our colleagues who are on the trip, who are already on the trip, we miss you and we'll get you the transcript right away. Thank you all for being here. Thanks to Tulane University for being in the house. They're visiting today and so they're going to see this press briefing as we do it.

We've got a big summit coming up – a very, very big summit, to say the least. One thing I want to plug is we have a new podcast called The Impossible State, which is on Apple Podcasts. It's also on Soundcloud. You can find it on the homepage of CSIS right now. It's Mike, Sue, and Victor all talking about the upcoming summit. And there's a transcript there as well if you want to look at that too. So check out The Impossible State and check out the transcript.

With that, I'd like to turn to Dr. Michael Green, who's the senior vice president for Asia and our Japan chair. Mike's going to set the stage and then go to Sue and then go to Victor.

MICHAEL J. GREEN: Thank you. Thanks, Andrew. Thank you all for coming.

As you know, President Trump has engaged in a series of high-profile pardons for celebrity criminals. On June 12th, we'll find out if we've broken 25 years of unsuccessful diplomacy or getting ready for the biggest pardon of all. We know a certain amount about what's going to go into this summit. And we can speculate about some of the possible outcomes. And we can talk a little bit about what North Korea's motives are, and also the dynamics within Pyongyang, which Sue and Victor and I will try to do for you, and then take some questions.

The three of us have been involved in the diplomacy of the Korean Peninsula for the past 15-20 years in various ways in government, in the Pentagon, in the NSC and the CIA. This is the third major crisis followed by diplomacy with North Korea since the end of the Cold War. There have been many smaller ones. The previous two that are best known were the crisis in 1994, when North Korea heated up its plutonium-based reaction on Yongbyon. The Clinton administration threatened sanctions, potentially military strikes. And Jimmy Carter went to Pyongyang. The situation quickly defused. And the Clinton administration negotiated the so-called Agreed Framework, which was supposed to freeze their plutonium program and begin a framework of denuclearization inspections and a full accounting of North Korea's nuclear programs and missiles.

At the time, I believe North Korea intended to cheat on that. And I say that because in 2004, when I was in the White House on the NSC staff in charge of Asia, we had an opportunity to sit down with Hwang Jang-yop, who was and is the highest-level defector to ever leave North Korea. So we—several of us in the administration had several hours with him. And he described now, as propaganda minister, he had to explain the so-called Agreed Framework, this agreement the Clinton administration struck, and that the chief negotiators, Kang Sok-ju and others, told him that the DPRK would delay and prevaricate on the denuclearization until they were ready to confront the United States with a new and even more powerful nuclear deterrent.

So that became the second crisis, which I was involved in and then later Victor and Sue, when we discovered that North Korea, in fact, was cheating on the Agreed Framework and other agreements with Japan, with the Republic of Korea, with the U.N. and the IAEA, by developing a path to nuclear weapons through enrichment of uranium. Much harder to detect because you don't need water-cooled reactors like the Yongbyon reactor. You can do it in caves, spinning centrifuges.

We confronted the North Koreans in October 2002 in Pyongyang – I was there. They basically confessed and then broke out. And we had a coalition of countries in the six-party talks – South Korea, China, Japan, and Russia – and got the North Koreans to the point – Victor was very involved in this – where they agreed in September 2005 to denuclearization again. They then tested a nuclear weapon in 2006. The crisis continued, and then in 2008, they agreed again. They tested a nuclear weapon after that.

We've been through a lot of negotiations. We've had multiple deals with North Korea. We now know they have a pretty good track record in these negotiations – a perfect track record of cheating every time, so that's the context we now face.

We also know that, over this entire period, the North Koreans' demand was that we deal with them as a fellow nuclear weapon state, that we engage in arms control talks, that the United States have a summit with the president and their leader to, in effect, show respect for their nuclear weapon status, and that we end our hostile policy before they would engage in denuclearization. And the hostile policy involves pretty much everything we do in Asia – our nuclear umbrella over Japan and Korea, sanctions on North Korea, criticism of human rights, our troops in South Korea.

That's the pattern that has been very consistent, and if we had any doubt, in 2012, the North Koreans changed their constitution to declare that they were permanently a nuclear weapon state. So that's a pretty high hurdle for the president to try to get over to achieve denuclearization.

We're now in the third major crisis. It really peaked last year when the North Koreans tested the Hwasong-15, a ballistic missile with the telemetry, the range to hit the United States – an ICBM, and when they tested by far the most powerful nuclear weapon they've ever produced.

The Trump administration, to its credit, put in place sanctions in September of last year, the most sweeping sanctions we've ever put on North Korea. The administration also hinted, and the president himself suggested strongly that we were prepared to attack North Korea militarily because this ICBM and nuclear weapons capability was intolerable, as the former national security advisor, General McMaster, put it.

That really heightened tension and drove the South Korean president, Moon Jae-in, in the context of the PyeongChang Olympics, to invite the North Koreans and to broker what became this summit between President Trump and Kim Jong-un, something the president of course said he wanted to do in 2016 during the campaign.

The North Koreans come into this, I believe – given the history I just mentioned – with pretty clear goals. Sue will say more about this. They've achieved two of them. One is to establish their reputation, respect, and credibility as a nuclear weapon state. They have defied the international community and multiple Security Council resolutions and sanctions with evermore dangerous tests of missiles and nuclear weapons, and in return, they are getting not only a summit with the president of the United States, but the first summits for Kim Jong-un with the leader of China, Xi Jinping; probably with Prime Minister Abe of Japan; and now there's talk of Kim Jong-un addressing the United Nations General Assembly in September. So they have checked that box.

The other goal they had was to reduce the pressure of sanctions, which they knew would be coming when they tested the Hwasong-15 and their nuclear weapons. Whether or not the president

reduces or relaxes American sanctions, the North Koreans have achieved that goal in large part because China accounts for 90 percent of North Korea's trade, and there is plenty of evidence we can talk about that, since this shift to diplomacy, China is not implementing sanctions and is backing away.

The U.S. goal, for decades, really, has been the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization – CVID – of North Korea's programs. If you listen to the president, we've walked back from that. John Bolton suggested on television we wanted the Libya model – three months, turn over all the nuclear equipment, as we did with Libya. That's technically not feasible and politically impossible to imagine with North Korea. The president publicly walked that back.

There are reports that Secretary Pompeo, in his second trip to Pyongyang, tried to get North Korea to turn over warheads, or missiles, or something concrete as a down payment to show that this time they were serious. The North Koreans refused. The president's open letter to Kim Jong-un had no asks in terms of nuclear weapons.

And so it's not entirely clear what the president will ask for, and Victor and Sue could perhaps say more about that, in terms of denuclearization. What he has talked about is a peace declaration. A peace treaty, of course, would require all the signatories to the armistice of 1953 that ended fighting in the Korean War, but also, of course, it's a treaty. It would have to be ratified by the Senate. And you can be sure Congress would have lots of demands.

So a peace treaty is a pretty high bar. But there is some chance that the U.S. position is we want a peace declaration. That's certainly what South Korea's Moon Jae-in wants. That's problematic, because a peace declaration would not actually reduce the threat. But the North Koreans would use that as a pretext, as would China and Russia, as they have used the North-South agreement at Panmunjom with Moon Jae-in to argue no more missile defenses, reduce exercises, reduce sanctions. So it's kind of a freebie for the North Koreans, in my view. But we'll see if that's what's on the plan.

I'd conclude just by saying we are in a better place than we were. This summit, whatever happens, is better than where we were before the PyeongChang Olympics, when we were talking about war. And it was the United States that was talking about war, preventive war, not preemptive war – preventive war, to stop North Korea from developing a capability. That could have been catastrophic in terms of casualties and the position of the United States in Asia.

We're in a better place than that. But I'm not sure that was where we should have been in the first place. My view – and I think Sue and Victor agree with this – is that the diplomacy is unlikely – we should try, but unlikely to get North Korea to denuclearize; a military strike extremely dangerous. The reality is a longer-term strategy of containing and interdicting and pressuring the North Korean program would have been smarter. That will now be harder. It will be hard to do that, because the sanctions regime will be hard to put together internationally. But we'll see, as the president likes to say.

SUE MI TERRY: So I'll just talk a little bit about North Korea, what it wants. I think Mike is absolutely right. I think what – I mean, it's pretty clear what North Korea wanted all these years is to become a complete, verifiable, irreversible nuclear-weapons power. But I think, more than that, right now they've been looking to gain international acceptance as a bona fide nuclear-weapons power.

So that's one; and then, secondly, to really fundamentally change its relationship with the United States by concluding a peace treaty. And, by the way, peace treaty, it's not something they just

came up with right now, right. This goes back for decades. I think the first time they really came – this came about is in early 1970s, when there was a joint statement in 1972. They've been asking for a peace treaty for a very long time.

North Koreans don't have to ask for a reduction of troop presence. It's just by – when you conclude a peace treaty, it eventually undermines the rationale for having U.S. troop presence in South Korea. So they don't have to ask for a troop-presence reduction. They just need to ask for a peace treaty to get to that goal.

And then, of course, what Mike was talking about, getting economic assistance and getting sanctions relief will be what obviously Kim Jong-un will be looking for.

It's interesting how and when Kim Jong-un – why Kim Jong-un turned to this diplomacy and summitry. And this is where I think I kind of underestimated North Korea. After the past – in 2017, after they conducted three ICBM tests and hydrogen-bomb test, I really thought they were going to continue, go on a little bit longer, to really – to prove their successful reentry capability, because they had a couple more technical hurdles to cross. So I was surprised by the new year's address and Kim Jong-un turning to summitry and diplomacy, first by sending North Korean athletes and delegation to the Olympics.

I think that was very shrewd move on Kim Jong-un's part, and I didn't – I just thought they would continue to go on. But North Korea knew just the line to stop. They didn't go further. They didn't conduct – remember, we were worried about North Korea conducting atmospheric nuclear tests and going further. But they just stopped right before they crossed that line, right – you know, and then turned to this – what we've seen in the past few months.

And I think North Korea, we can say, was wildly successful in terms of establishing also just image makeover and what they've been able to accomplish in the past few months, which is to really gain legitimacy and normalizing the country, normalizing Kim Jong-un, by meeting with Xi Jinping twice. I mean, you saw all the optics that came out of that. You know, he brought his beautiful, attractive wife standing there with Xi Jinping with his wife, all the photo ops, really looking pretty much like a normal leader of a normal country. And then subsequently, he met with President Moon Jae-in a couple of times, hosted a Russian foreign minister and so on. So already, North Korea has gained and North Korea is much better off today than where it was, like, just in November, December of last year.

And regardless of what happens with the summit, they are pretty OK. They have already weakened political will in terms of implementing sanctions, right, that we're already hearing reports that China, it's not – China is loosening its implementation of sanctions. And it's going to be really hard to keep up this maximum pressure after the summit in this environment.

And I don't believe that North Korea, regardless of what happens, will return to provocations anytime soon. I don't think they will return to any more missile tests or nuclear tests. They don't have to. They've already said they've completed their program. They've tested six times. Pakistan, I think, tested six times. They don't have to push this further.

So then, what will happen after that? Again, sanctions that hold maximum pressure is going to be hard to implement. It's hard to get back to the talk of preventive strike, particularly when North Korea does not do any more provocation. And it has already on its own way, like, it's doing all this

diplomatic work with China, Russia. And South Korea will go on with North Korea on their inter-Korea project. So I think North Korea – Kim Jong-un is very shrewd, he's very smart. I think he's been playing this very well. And then, so I think they're pretty much set for a while.

So in terms of Kim Jong-un coming to the talks, I think, you know, U.S. credits a lot on, you know, maximum pressure. And it is true, I do think President Trump does deserve credit for being able to finally do more on the sanctions front and, in particular, getting the Chinese to finally implement sanctions since the fall of last year. And I do think sanctions played a role in that at least it was beginning to have an effect and Kim Jong-un was able to see that it was – what was coming in the future years if this kept going on.

And I think all that, you know, I didn't like it at the time with all this preventive – this talk, rhetoric coming out of President Trump with calling Kim Jong-un “Rocket Man” on a suicide mission, fire and fury, locked and loaded, whatever. But I think it played a role or so that kind of – although it probably got the South Koreans more worked up than probably North Korea. But I think all of this did play a role.

But I do think a big part of this is Kim Jong-un deciding to come to the table from a position of strength. Because it's also because North Korea has achieved a certain level in their nuclear and missile program, and now he thinks he can come in from a position of strength and then have this negotiation. And I think he really thinks this is a maximum – the maximum leverage point where he can sit down and try to negotiate something with the United States and see what he can get out of it.

I think the big question is – and you're going to hear and I'm sure you've been hearing this now, too, because I have this competing narrative because I've been hearing it all over the place, particularly when I go to South Korea, this competing narrative that's out there saying, you know what, everything that Mike was describing is under Kim Jong-il, under Kim Il-sung. Kim Jong-un is different, right? You've been hearing this narrative that he is different from his father and grandfather because this is a young man who wants to rule the next 40 to 50 years, he doesn't want to rule a poor, pariah, backwards state.

He does want to – and it does appear like he wants – he wants to be a modern leader of a modern country. Since he came into power, he did all these, you know, established all these modern trappings of what he thinks a modern state should look like, renovating the airport, you know, coming out with an amusement park, a dolphinarium, an aquarium park and a horseback riding club and so on, and that he is ready to make this fundamental change.

When pressed for evidence on that, there's no real evidence except the fact that he's a young man who probably – so it's more logic based. And I don't think we will truly know that until the summit unfolds.

I have my suspicion that this is going to be – that he really is this person who can put nuclear weapons on the table and we're going to be able to conclude this completely verifiable, irreversible, or get there, dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear program.

I will just say what I think or my prediction is in terms of or my concerns are in terms of this summit. I think what's going to happen, I think there are a couple of scenarios. I do think, you know, of course, there is going to be a joint statement. And no matter what happens, President Trump and

Kim Jong-un are going to call it a success because both leaders are invested in this and they want to – so the optics are going to look good.

I even think there is a possibility – I don't know that we might a little bit disagree – but I think there's even a possibility that Kim Jong-un might put something on the table front that looks really great for optics, whether that's an agreement to sort of at least get a couple ICBMs, intercontinental ballistic missiles, out of North Korea or dismantle something or blow up something, of Yongbyon, to really make it look like, and to sort of that Kim Jong-un is going different direction, to really reinforce this other competing narrative that I just told you about, to make the whole world believe that North Korea is turning over a new leaf. That would be a truly smart play. And then drag out the rest, right, the whole verification implementation. All of that will take years. So then after that, continue on this meeting and summit to – and then drag out the – drag out the rest, and then really buy time and wait out the Trump administration.

And so I'm thinking most people – we can't even – you don't really know if some – an agreement succeeded or failed, because even the Agreed Framework, we knew it failed in 2002 for sure, but for a long time we thought it was successful. So what I'm saying is we could have an agreement. North Korea does not have a problem with coming to an agreement. We can have an agreement and it could even look successful for a while. And I'm thinking even like a five-year timeframe. And then they can drag this out. And then we'll find out later that, obviously, we didn't there in terms of, you know, our goal, which is complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement of their program. But that's my prediction. We'll see. We'll soon find out. But I would just – you know, I would just caution against – because of everything that just Mike said in terms of history and just North Korea's just own interest – I can't imagine that they would get to this place.

And why would they? Why would they completely – at this point, when they're about 90-95 percent done with their nuclear program? This is different case than Libya. I think there are only two cases, like Saddam Hussein and Gadhafi really gave up. I mean, South Africa and Ukraine doesn't count because they gave up when there was regime change involved. But this is not – North Korea is not Iraq or Libya. They are a nuclear weapons power. They do have up to 60 nuclear warheads. So I can't imagine that Kim Jong-un has any incentive to truly give it all up, particularly where verification is going to be so difficult to achieve.

MR. CHA: I agree. (Laughter.) So, as you all know, this meeting is going to take place Monday night, right, Tuesday morning Singapore time. There's a meeting. There's going to be a lunch. And then there's a lot of room after that for other things that could happen. So the first thing I would say is be prepared for surprises. Both of these leaders like to do things that surprise people at these summits. I mean, you remember when President Trump went to South Korea in November, his first trip to South Korea, he actually signaled – he said one evening, oh, we have a surprise coming. And that was his attempt to make a trip to the DMZ, right? When Kim Jong-un met Moon Jae-in, and they met at the demarcation line, right, Kim Jong-un pulled Moon Jae-in across to the North Korean side. So, you know, I would – I would be prepared for surprises as well, because these two leaders certainly have a flair for the drama and the dramatic in these sorts of – in these sorts of meetings.

Things to watch out for, so certainly, you know, there will be some sort of joint statement. And who knows if – I don't know, have they said anything about a press conference, they're going to do a press conference?

MR. GREEN: There's time for a press conference, but they have not announced it.

MR. CHA: They haven't – right, yeah. And –

MR. GREEN: Signing ceremony.

MR. CHA: Signing ceremony, right. And so the things to look for, obviously, are what is said on denuclearization. Despite all of the happy talk that we've heard from the president about nice letters and kind words, there is nothing that has changed in North Korea's statements on denuclearization, right? They have said the same thing, which is denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula when there is no longer a hostile policy by the United States, right? And that – if we're looking for changes in behavior, or signs or signals that somehow this leader is different from the other leaders, that's the same language that they've been using since the 1994 Agreed Framework, right? So are they going to say things differently on denuclearization?

The other thing is that – and I think – I want you all to think about this, because it's not something that gets asked often enough, I mean, in part because the North Koreans don't do press conferences. But we know what our definition of – this is all about denuclearization, right. And we know what our definition of denuclearization is, right. It's CVID or some version of CVID. You know, suspend it. Secure it. Monitor it. Disable it. Dismantle it. Remove it, right. That's our definition.

And the North Koreans talk about denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, but they never have to define what denuclearization is. So they talk about denuclearization in very vague terms, and then they talk about the condition for denuclearization; that is, the end of our hostile policy, also in very vague terms.

And they are never asked to define, right, for reporters, to define – to ask them to define what they mean by denuclearization and what they mean by end of hostile policy, because what happens is then we all start scrambling around saying, all right, well, if we gave a security assurance, if we signed a peace treaty, if we removed our troops, if we stopped exercising, we start scrambling around for what their definition of hostile policy is. So, I mean, to the extent that you have a chance, I would ask them, like, what's your definition of denuclearization and what's your definition of hostile policy?

The other thing to look for, obviously, is what is said on the – you know, there's the denuclearization side and then there's the peace side. And what is going to be said in terms of peace declaration, you know, peace agreement, normalization of relations, liaison offices? These are the things that I think we're looking for on the peace side.

I mean, for the United States, it's very clear. You know, what the president wants is a commitment to some form of complete abandonment of their nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs on a defined timeline, which presumably means by the end of this administration. And, of course, the North Koreans, they're not going to agree to that. It's very unlikely that they will agree to something like that, because, as Sue said, they would like to backload the good stuff to the very end, you know, perhaps long after the Trump administration is gone; you know, 10, 15 years down the road.

I'm going to borrow a very good point that Mike made in some other of the 100 briefings we've been doing this week where he said that one of the most important things – but I'm going to claim ownership of it now, so please quote me – (laughter) – one of the most important things to look for is what is the process that the two leaders mandate at this summit in terms of – they will make broad

statements about peace and denuclearization. And do they mandate a concrete process led at a very high level – you know, a Pompeo level – that will meet frequently to implement, you know, on a timeline, the mandates, the declarations that these two leaders have made?

If we see that, you know, for all of us who look at this carefully, that's a good sign that there is going to be follow-through and they're going to at least give it a good try. If we don't hear anything about that, then we know it's just a photo op, right. That's all it is. It's a photo op. And we, being the United States, will not be made more secure as a result of this meeting, right.

In terms of the process going forward after the summit, you know, one hopes that there is some sort of negotiation that takes place. But I think, you know, here I agree with Mike. I think that if this meeting goes well – and I think optimally it will go well – this will set up Kim Jong-un – as Sue said, this will set up Kim Jong-un very well, because he will probably have a meeting with Putin, right, after this meeting.

I imagine if the meeting goes well in Singapore, the U.N. secretary general will invite Kim Jong-un to come to the U.N. General Assembly in New York in September and address the U.N., not to put him before the ICC, the International Criminal Court, for crimes against humanity, but to have him address the U.N. General Assembly.

And since he's in the United States, why not have him come to Washington after that, right? So it wouldn't surprise me if we saw that. And then why not throw in Mar-a-Lago at the same time? I mean, why not? You know, it's clear, based on what Trump has said so far, he wants to do this. He wants to invite him to the United States.

We should also expect to see after the summit a ramping up of inter-Korean cooperation. They've already started pre-positioning a lot of stuff in terms of inter-Korean military talks, family reunions. We're coming up on August 15th which is liberation, you know, it's independence day for Korea. It's historically a great time to do family reunions, maybe temporarily reopening Kungang Mountain to allow these reunions to take place. There's all sorts of things that could happen on the inter-Korean side.

And then there are – you know, everybody has been talking this morning about how the president says I don't need to prepare, right, I can just – I just go on my instincts. But as these two have heard me say all week, North Korea has been preparing for this meeting for this meeting for 45 years, so you can't go in unprepared because the North Koreans will open lots of trap doors for you.

And so what are some of these trap doors? One of them would be a promise, a commitment to peace treaty and normalization in return for vague promises of denuclearization far into the future. Right? Trap door number one.

Trap door number two: The North Koreans, I think the Chinese, have talked about a synchronous process of essentially action for action. Right? Well, an iterated – an iterated game where there's action for action, a so-called synchronous process of negotiation. That's trap door number two. That is Sue's, you know, 17-year negotiation where they'll never denuclearize, right?

Trap door number three, as I mentioned, is end your hostile policy. Right? And we will then say, all right, troops, missile defense, you know, whatever else, we'll start putting all that on the table.

The fourth trap door is, if you want us to suspend our program, you must give us interim energy assistance. Right? And I think the last – the last time this happened, it was a million tons of heavy fuel oil annually. Right?

And then trap door number six, and I think we've already fallen into this, is the notion that north – if North Korea gives up their nuclear weapons that they can become rich. And I think our secretary said that, that they can become rich, money would flow in there like they've never seen before. If the North Koreans wanted to be rich, they could have been rich a long time ago. Right? They don't care about being rich. Right? Their ideology has nothing to do with being rich, it's all about being self-sufficient, the pure race, right, uncontaminated, untainted by the outside world. So this notion that somehow American investors going in is going to be the magic bullet, the silver bullet that will cause the North Korean regime to give up everything, that's trap door number six. Because, you know, they may, you know, they may take a Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise or a Coca-Cola bottling factory or something like that, but that's all just – that's all just distraction and show.

Last point. It's inconceivable that we could have a conversation with North Korea about a broader political normalization of relations without talking about human rights. The president has already met in the Oval Office with the man who ran the RGB, the Reconnaissance General Bureau, that was responsible for killing 46 sailors, South Korean sailors, in 2010, that was responsible for the Sony hack, responsible for a lot of bad things. And he's going to meet in Singapore with the worst human rights abuser in the world that has been recommended by the U.N. Security Council to the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity.

So it's impossible to me that we can just focus only on denuclearization in this meeting because of that atrocious human rights record.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Let's open it up for your questions. And if you could identify yourself and your news organization, that would help.

George.

Q: George Condon with National Journal. I actually have two questions.

I can't pass up, after you've mentioned it. All three of you have briefed presidents. What do you make of him saying he doesn't need briefings, attitude is more important? And the second, more substantive question is, he's already downgraded expectations and what his goal for a best-case scenario is, just it's get to know you. What is your worry about the worst-case scenario? What would make this summit a failure?

MR. GREEN: So the president said this morning, if you didn't hear it, he was saying it as I drove into the garage just before we started that he doesn't need intensive preparations because he's been preparing for this summit his whole life. Prime Minister Abe of Japan wanted to set up a coordinated process between the governments to lay out some of the benchmarks and highlight some of the traps Victor mentioned. And you heard the same thing at Mar-a-Largo a month – the previous summit, not the most recent one. It's – to me, it's an indication that the summit will be about optics and atmosphere. The president's open letter had virtually nothing about the issues on the table, nuclear weapons and missiles. It was mostly about, you know, the atmospherics and how Kim Jong-un was treating him.

So I think this points – we’ll see, but I think this points to a summit that’s mostly about the atmospherics, some big declarations, and that the allies and the State Department and probably the NSC staff are really very focused on what comes next, as Victor said, a process where they can actually see if they can get North Korea to agree to concrete steps – maybe a declaration, meaning a list of all the stuff they have. Because they’ve never done that. You can’t begin negotiating denuclearization if you don’t know what they have. And they’ve never, ever, in all these agreements produced that, even though they were supposed to. So I think the staff, the Japanese and probably Korea – although Moon Jae-in is also mainly concerned with having this summit – are focused on what comes next, and how do they come out of what will probably be a kind of vague, atmospheric summit and try to get some concrete steps.

It will be hard for them because, as we’ve all been saying, the pressure that was built last – beginning last September, has dissipated. And as long as the summitry is going on, and Kim Jong-un is going to be invited to the United Nations and so forth, it’ll be very hard to get China, Russia, even South Korea back on board. So the leverage will have dissipated, but I think that’s the focus actually, what comes after the summit where the concrete stuff might possibly get done.

Worst case scenario? How much time do you have? (Laughter.) I’ll let Sue and Victor—

MS. TERRY: So we know the president doesn’t like to read intelligence products, but I don’t think he even wants to just prepare, as you said, even orally. By the way, when – you know, as a former CIA person, when we write president’s daily brief, analysts pour over every word choice. And we want the presidents to read it. It’s different when you’re orally briefing even, because a lot of nuance gets lost. But this president apparently does not read the products or even like orally prepare. (Laughs.) So this is deeply concerning.

I’ll just say what my personal biggest nightmare scenario is, and that’s President Trump agreeing to some sort of a peace treaty – not some sort of, a peace treaty that has all kinds of consequences that he doesn’t really think about, or actually he knows. And he’s not even looking at it as a concession, but the fact that he brought up this couple times, I think he almost wants a reason to maybe withdraw U.S. forces in return for this vague promise that Victor was talking about that does not lead to North Korea giving up nuclear weapons program. So then we just have reduced or ended our commitment with South Korea, our alliance commitment, that leads to a troop withdrawal without us having gotten anything. That’s my – personally, my high-risk scenario.

MR. CHA: So usually before – I mean, before meetings like this, you know, the president gets a ton of material, and the most important of which is the thing that’s – the binder that is drafted by the NSC, which is – you know, which can be a pretty thick binder. And I think most presidents go through every page of that thing, right? And I think this president maybe just looks at the cover to see if it’s got a nice picture on it. So, you know, it’s very problematic for all the reasons that people have said. I mean, I don’t know what else to say about that. I mean, it’s just problematic.

I mean, both – you know, we worked for President Bush and – President George W. Bush. And many people thought that he was not a reader, but they were wrong. I mean, he was a voracious reader. And he would read everything – because we’d get it back – he’s read everything that was written and had marked it up and everything. So it’s just – we’re in a totally different situation right now.

In terms of best and worst-case – I mean, worst-case scenario, I see two. And they have to do with Donald Trump doing the same thing, which is going into this meeting and basically putting

everything on the table – everything that we can possible give on the table. And then looking at Kim Jong-un and saying: He's not interested, right? We're done. Right? That would a very bad scenario. The other bad scenario would be: Put everything on the table, and then Kim Jong-un makes a vague promise of denuclearization and then he says, we're done. You know, we got what we wanted. (Laughter.)

MS. TERRY: Yeah, yeah.

MR. CHA: So those are both bad scenarios, yeah – for obvious reasons, right? I mean, you know, none of us are against peace – like we all believe in peace on the peninsula. I think we all agree that we'd certainly rather be here than where we were a year ago, in 2017, when there was lots of talk about war on the Korean Peninsula. And I think to some extent we all agree that at some point you have to talk to the leader of North Korea because he is really the only one who makes a decision, and that will require the president talking to him.

Now ideally you would like that to happen after an actual negotiation process, with real professionals and experts, using the summit as the action-forcing event to try to get it over the goal line but, you know, that's not the way it's happening this time.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Yeah.

Q: (Off mic) – becoming – is that on? Yep. Greg Myre with National Public Radio.

So there's a lot of talk about worst-case scenario/best-case scenario. Could any of you paint sort of the middle-course scenario – North Korea doesn't denuclearize, the maximum pressure campaign, or military force doesn't return – but, you know, something in the middle that's a healthy process that doesn't produce any great or sudden results but would be a positive in your view?

MR. CHA: Yes, so I think the middle road would be – I mean, and we've kind of talked about this a little bit, I mean, that there would be some – there would be, you know, pleasant optics, some statements about denuclearization, and a peace process, and then there is a negotiation that takes place – high level, you know, chaired by Pompeo, meeting fairly frequently – and that while all this is happening, North Korea continues its suspension of missile tests and nuclear tests, and ideally, also suspends further operations of their nuclear reactor at Yongbyon and whatever else they may be doing outside of Yongbyon.

You know, my guess is that, in sort of this middle-road scenario, they may be hesitant to allow inspectors back in. In this middle-road scenario, if they did, that would be leading to a better – even better outcome, and that this – I mean, and that would certainly give us, from the perspective of markets and other things, a stable status quo for the time being. But what we don't know is whether Trump puts a time limit on that and says, I want to see results by the fall, right, otherwise I'm walking away, and then what happens on sanctions because if there is going to be a stable status quo, the North Koreans are going to want us to pay for that stable status quo, and that will mean some sort of sanctions lifting, which is where John Bolton's influence will then be felt.

MR. GREEN: That would be the middle scenario. I would just point out that the Clinton administration ended up with that middle scenario in the 1990s with some – it was the first time with some hope, testing that it might work.

The Bush administration ended with that middle scenario with the six-party talks, which we worked on – more skeptical, to be sure, but again, testing to see if we could get something out of it.

The difference this time is we should know better, and we should also remember that each of these two middle paths bought the North Koreans a few years, took it off of the headlines for a few years, and then when the North Koreans were ready, they escalated and created a new crisis with missiles and nuclear weapons that were much more dangerous. And that's where we'll be in a few years I suspect.

As Sue pointed out, the North Koreans chose not to do an atmospheric test, they chose not to do certain things. They are technically capable of doing it, and once the pressure is off, they have established Kim Jong-un as a world leader, when the time is right and they want to drive the price up, I think this middle path, if we end up with it, ends up with another president – or maybe this president again – you know, dealing with a much more dangerous North Korea that escalates and creates a crisis again. That's the problem with the middle scenario.

And one other – in 1990s and then in the 2000s, when Clinton and Bush each tried these different formulas, China was not as powerful, and it was not as ambitious about changing the order in Asia and asserting its dominance. This time China is, and so if we have a peace declaration, if we have a – the president, for example, saying we want to get troops off the Korean Peninsula, if we have a peace process that keeps Japan out – all of these things will reinforce the narrative in Japan, in Australia, in India, in Singapore, that the U.S. doesn't have the stomach or the wisdom to deal with China's assertion of its power in Asia. All of these things will weaken the alliance network that is our center of gravity in Asia, and that will fit into what Xi Jinping has said is China's goal. He declared in April 2014 in Shanghai that Asia should have no blocs, no foreign blocs, meaning U.S. alliances.

So this time, the China factor means there are larger strategic consequences beyond the peninsula if we start going soft and demonstrably falling for this again in front of our allies, and potentially with a peace declaration and other things setting up a downward spiral in our missile defenses, our deployments, our exercises and our troops. So higher stakes and we should be smarter.

MR. CHA: (Off mic) – he just says requires us understanding the history of the negotiation, which means preparing. (Laughter.) So.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Yeah, right next to Greg.

Q: Gregory Ho from Radio Free Asia.

What is the indication from North Korea's internal propaganda? Are they preparing their audience, their resident citizens that there something rosy is going to happen? So I want to – I want your guys choice on prediction on their internal propaganda. Are they preparing their citizens something's going to happen?

MS. TERRY: No, not really. And they have not talked about denuclearization at all, even – particularly the way we define it. They have not. It's – what they've done is that their propaganda is like this: Because they have completed their nuclear weapons program now that they're this strong power, now all this – all this stuff is happening, right? Now there is – Trump is this – Pompeo coming, all these leaders are coming and wanting to meet with Kim Jong-un because now he's this bold leader, a strong leader who was able to complete the program.

So in terms of whether can he – can he say after the summit goes well and there's some sort of agreement on denuclearization, and even an agreement on definition of denuclearization the way he define it, I do think he can spin that domestically because he can always say this is the will of my grandfather, because even Kim Il-sung always said, OK, denuclearization – they are committed to denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. So if they got – if they were able to get some sort of commitment from us – that there was an agreement to normalize relations or whatnot – then he can say because they were able to complete the nuclear program, now the U.S. is willing to, you know, give us this and that. So he can, I think, really spin that and be able to sell it to his public. It's not something that he can not do. Do you agree?

MR. CHA: Yeah. No, I think it's – I mean, I think the internal narrative – and they have to build one because they have – I think with the second Pompeo visit they started showing pictures and talked about summit. So –

MS. TERRY: But it's people coming home and, you know, like –

MR. CHA: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. So they – you know, they control information very tightly. Once they put that information out, they have to construct a narrative for it. And I agree, it's entirely a narrative about we have achieved what we have wanted to over five decades. And now the American are – everybody is coming to us, right? The Chinese, the Americans, the South Koreans, the Russians, the Syrians, the U.N., everybody.

MS. TERRY: You know how Giuliani said they are coming begging and pleading or kneeling, or whatever? That's what Kim Jong-un is basically saying about the rest of the world to him completing the program.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Yeah, we'll go right over here.

Q: Thank you very much. Sun Ariyu (ph), a reporter from Hong Kong Phoenix TV.

Just two questions. First would be: What role could China play – could you specifically talk about this – during the summit and after summit? Second, if the summit produced or leads to sort of inactive results, would that increase the possibility that U.S. make a military strike on the peninsula? Thank you.

MR. GREEN: China has overlapping interests with the U.S., Republic of Korea, Japan, in wanting to see a denuclearized Korean Peninsula. But China's timeline and tolerance is very different from ours. I believe that the view in Zhongnanhai in Beijing among the leadership is this issue – the North Koreans are not going to give up nuclear weapons. And this issue would better be resolved 10, 20, 30, or 40 years down the road, when China has far greater strategic influence over the Korean Peninsula. And for that reason, I think China's first imperative in the current diplomacy – well, the first one is no war on the peninsula. And I think we're not going back to the bloody nose.

The next thing I think China will focus on is weakening the U.S.-Korea alliance. And the North Koreans after the Panmunjom agreement, peace declaration between Kim Jong-un and President Moon, began telling the South Koreans you cannot do intelligence sharing with the Japanese, you cannot do military exercises. There are some indications that this was not actually the North Korean position, but China was pushing it. So China will want to accelerate its own influence over both North and South

Korea in this process, which will weaken pressure on North Korea. So it requires discipline on our part. And it's why things like a peace declaration or declaring we don't need troops on the Korean Peninsula play into the Chinese strategy.

I think China can cooperate with us and can do an important role. The six-party talks were one example. The Security Council sanctions last year and the Chinese sanctions were quite serious. So China can do this, but given the opportunity to not do it, China will take that opportunity and focus on its other strategy, which is weakening U.S. influence on the Korean Peninsula, which is the first step towards weakening the American alliance network, which is the core of our influence and, from Beijing's perspective, the biggest obstacle to China gradually reasserting its centrality in Asia and controlling the destiny of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, Xinjiang, and then the near abroad. So China will not be unhappy.

The Chinese – the foreign minister would like to be in the process. China doesn't want to be left behind. But to my perspective, that's more tactics.

MS. TERRY: Regarding your second question about the possibility of returning to this preventive strike talk, in one of the scenarios that Victor described when we put everything on the table and Kim Jong-un says no and Trump getting upset and walking out, potentially now we have just elevated the risk of returning to that conflict talk.

I just think it's hard to do, particularly if, as I just mentioned, what I think Kim Jong-un is going to do is not go back to provocations in terms of further testing. So absent that and he's doing all this diplomacy with all these other countries, he's going to try to pull, you know, divide the U.S. from the rest of the world. So it's, optics-wise, I think something very hard for us to return to, particularly now after these months of summitry and diplomacy and North Korea is going to continue doing that.

MR. CHA: I mean, the maddening thing about all this is, if this doesn't go well, right, then the United States needs China to do maximum pressure 2.0. Right? And the Chinese have – the North Koreans will need China if this doesn't go well. Right? And this seven-year – the so-called – you know, this sort of six- to seven-year absence of any conversation, influence that China had over North Korea, well, this is all gone. I mean, this is a completely different situation now, right? The North Koreans will need – will need China.

If this goes well, right, and if we move in the direction of peace, normalization, all this other stuff, you know, the Chinese don't have to demand U.S. forces off the peninsula. The discussion will just start. In Congress, people will be, like, well, why do we have troops then if there's peace. Right?

And so, I mean, in South Korea, there will be lots of discussion about, why do we need troops if there's – if there's peace?

And then on top of that, if this goes in a positive direction and, you know, now the World Bank, the IMF, they're all starting to look at North Korea, BRI is going to be right in there, like, funding all of North Korea's infrastructure needs to extend strategic influence over the peninsula for the foreseeable future. Right?

So this is what's maddening about this is, like, when we're just sanctioning and, like, demanding denuclearization, it's pretty – it's black and white, it's very clear. And it was actually – it

was actually working in 2017. And once we start opening the door to negotiation, it becomes infinitely more complex and complicated.

All the burden comes on the United States whenever we do diplomacy. Whenever the diplomatic door opens, everybody looks at the United States and says, can you do a deal, can you be more flexible? But when there's no negotiation, everybody looks at China and says, can't you squeeze them harder? It's all your fault, can't you do more? And so that's the price you pay when you open the door to negotiation for the United States.

MS. TERRY: That's why I say Kim Jong-un has been playing this quite – (off mic).

MR. SCHWARTZ: Questions? Yeah, in the back.

Q: Thank you. Donghui Yu with China Review News Agency of Hong Kong.

A follow-up question on China's role. I believe right now Beijing worries about the possibility of being marginalized in a negotiation. The biggest concern they have, I think, is the U.S. and North Korea finally establish a kind of relationship that might include North Korea into a network of hedging a rising China. I think this is their biggest concern. Do you believe this scenario is possible? Is it the ultimate goal of the United States? Thank you.

MR. GREEN: You know, since the end of the Cold War, Kim Il-sung, then Kim Jong-il, and now presumably Kim Jong-un lost the ability to do what they had done to preserve *juche*, autonomy, which was to play the Soviets against the Chinese. So, when the Soviet Union collapsed, Kim Il-sung wanted, Kim Jong-il wanted, and now Kim Jong-un wanted a relationship with the U.S. to offset China's influence over North Korea because in Kim Il-sung University, in classrooms, they teach – it's not in the public propaganda as much, but they teach China as the enemy too, in spite of, you know, lips and teeth and alliance; that the country that could collapse North Korea is China. And so nuclear weapons are one answer to deter not only the United States, but China or South Korea from absorbing the North. And nuclear weapons are the way to entice the U.S. to open up some kind of strategic relationship.

So I think the North Korean goal would be to have a relationship with the U.S. that gives them a little more of a – of a playbook, some other cards vis-à-vis China. But I don't think the North Korean leadership – Sue can speak to this, but I don't think the North Korean leadership expects the U.S. will align with North Korea against China. And I doubt – scholars and journalists have been saying this, but I doubt that the leadership in Zhongnanhai really believes that North Korea would ally with the United States against China. And the Foreign Ministry and some international relations scholars are upset that China's not at the center of the diplomacy, but I think that's easily managed by Xi Jinping, who, you know, had two meetings with Kim Jong-un, because China has so much leverage over North Korea.

So that's how I see it. I think there's a lot of – there are a lot of stories about China being unhappy about being left behind. I think that's tactical, as I said. I think from Beijing's perspective the fact we're not talking about war is a big plus, but also the fact that our own president in the United States is freaking out our allies about our commitment in Asia – not just the Koreans, but the Japanese. If you – you know, JoongAng Ilbo, Asahi Shimbun are full of stories in Japan and Korea, and also in Singapore and Australia, about is this the beginning of the U.S. withdrawal from Asia. That serves

China's strategic interests. Not being at the table initially is a tactical thing that China can have – can affect and control if this process continues.

MR. SCHWARTZ: On that happy note, we're going to –

MR. GREEN: Can I say one last, quickly?

MR. SCHWARTZ: Yes.

MR. GREEN: I'm sorry.

We didn't – somebody asked, Greg maybe, you know, what's the worst-case scenario and what's the best-case scenario. We never really answered the best-case scenario. And so we don't just seem like the bad-news team from CSIS – (laughter) – let me try a little bit of a stab, if you guys will indulge me, in what might be the best-case scenario.

I don't – I do not know of a single U.S. official – and we talked to a lot of them – or Japanese official below the level of the president who thinks North Korea is going to denuclearize. That is just for the – for all the historical reasons we said, the limits to our leverage, the only way we can get them to denuclearize is war, and we're not going there.

So what – so then that opens the debate, well, what is an acceptable level of reduction of their threat or capability? And that's a somewhat more reasonable argument.

And, you know, one scenario people talk about is the – a freeze on ballistic missile tests or testing. The problem with that is it's easily – it's not verifiable and it's easily reversible whenever North Korea wants to turn on this game again. So it's not great. And in my view – and I think Victor and Sue would agree – it's not worth very much. Maybe what we're doing is right. We're not increasing sanctions; we're keeping where we are. But it's certainly not rewarding – worth rewarding North Korea because they can reverse it at any time.

The other possible scenario is maybe North Korea shuts Yongbyon. Maybe North Korea turns over some nuclear warheads or a full declaration of what they have; something that is somewhat verifiable, is irreversible in the sense that it reduces marginally their capacity. That probably is worth something in terms of perhaps sanctions relief, but not a lot, because they will still have dozens of nuclear weapons. And the uranium-enrichment facilities are not verifiable from outside North Korea. Yongbyon is, because we can see if it's cooking.

So there are some best-case scenarios where we get a marginal decrease in the threat and in North Korea's capability. And the question is, what are we willing to pay? I would say not a lot, but something. That's probably the best-case scenario.

I don't see the president focusing on that at all. I think he's focused on big declarations and historic accomplishments. But maybe that's where the process goes when it reverts back to Pompeo and the negotiators – maybe. And then it's a big question. What is it worth to get a piece of this program to reduce the threat? But an actual path to denuclearization is extremely unlikely in the view of almost anyone involved. The South Korean government says, no, no, it's possible. But that's kind of the exception, and the president.

MS. TERRY: Just to follow up, I think some of the things that we could possibly give is like opening liaison offices. That's not – that's not a big, but it helps towards improving the relationship, right. And it's not a peace treaty, but just some sort of declaration that war has ended, that it's not legally binding. It's not. But it's just a statement. Something like that, I think, is something we can do.

You said full declaration. I don't think we'll ever get full declaration, because we don't even know what full declaration would look like. I mean, even if they give it to us, or partial declaration, we don't really know, because we don't have all – we don't have intelligence on all their weapons program. So best I can expect is a partial declaration, I would just say.

MR. GREEN: And that's basically why a lot of us are asking why, given that limited possibility in the best-case scenario, why would we dismantle the sanctions, the alliances, that we need to deal with this problem if it's not going to be solved? We're betting an awful lot on it being solved in terms of our ability to then deal with it if it isn't solved.

MR. CHA: And the tradeoffs and choices that were just mentioned, as some of you know, would not be unique to this administration. I mean, these were exactly the tradeoffs and choices that the Clinton administration faced and that the Bush administration faced when they negotiated with North Korea.

So, I mean, President Trump would like to see this as a very different, bigger deal. Everybody else screwed it up; now he's going to fix it. But again, as you think this thing through, he's going to be faced with the same choices that other administrations face, and, you know, taking half a loaf rather than a whole loaf. We want to solve this problem, but we may be stuck managing it.

MR. SCHWARTZ: With that, you can reach us at [BadNewsCSISTeam.com](http://BadNewsCSISTeam.com). (Laughter.)

Thank you very much for being here today. This transcript will be available on [CSIS.org](http://CSIS.org) later today. We'll email it out to you.

I want to thank our amazing Asia team for this briefing.

Thanks a lot, everybody.

(END)