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CONFRONTING NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR AND MISSILE PROGRAMS:

AMERICAN AND JAPANESE VIEWS OF THREATS AND OPTIONS COMPARED

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: I'm Mike O'Hanlon with the Foreign Policy program. And on behalf of my good friend and colleague Richard Bush, and my good friend and colleague Shibley Telhami, and all of us here; welcome, happy New Year.

I'm very glad for the chance to discuss an issue that we all know will likely be quite important in the new year, and we hope with positive developments, but we are all a little on edge about the state of the North Korea crisis.

And we are fortunate that in today's discussion, which by the way, as you can see, is being telecast on C-SPAN, and also has a Japanese translation dimension to it, that I'll got to in just a moment. But in today's discussion we are going to begin with some polling that was done Yashushi Kudo, and Shibley Telhami, in the United States and Japan, respectively, with various other organizations in support.

This is looking at United States and Japanese attitudes towards the North Korea crisis across a range of issues. We'll begin with that. Shibley will present here, from the podium in just a moment after I've introduced everyone.

Then we will reconvene a panel discussion, at which time I will begin with Mr. Kudo, being able to offer any quick thoughts he has to further understand and embellish, especially the Japanese dimensions of the poll.

But then Richard Bush, who is the head of our East Asia Policy Center along with Mireya Solís, and my long-standing colleague here. Richard will then broaden the discussion to also think about South Korea, obviously an interested actor in this whole equation, and a very important factor. And we'll to understand a little bit about South Korea views, public opinion, politics, and whatnot.

And then finally, playing the role of panelist at that point, I will try to talk a little bit about military options or, in my opinion, the lack of good military options. But this is something that will follow naturally from some of the questions in the polling.

So, let me just add a couple more words about our panelists, and then

without further ado, we will get to Shibley's presentation, and the rest of the day.

Shibley is the Anwar Sadat chair at the University of Maryland, where he's had a distinguished career for many years commenting on Middle Eastern issues, and he's been associated with Brookings, the Middle East Center, and U.S. Islamic World Project throughout that whole period, and one of the most eloquent voices at American relations with the Broader Islamic world for many years.

But he has also started, in recent years, a Critical Issues Polling effort, and that's where we get today's material from, in large part. And this is, I think, the first time he has extended in a major way to East Asia. Much of that polling began with focus on the Middle East and on the United States. It's excellent polling, and I look forward very much to the results. I've seen them. There are a few re-affirmations of what you might expect. There are also potential surprises that we will have some time to discuss and then have your questions on later.

Yasushi Kudo is the head of Genron NPO in Tokyo, where he's done a lot of polling, but also really been a proponent and practitioner of Track II dialogues with a number of countries including, importantly, China and Korea in the region, trying to improve Japanese relations with those two other Northeast Asian powers. And then more generally, international think tank and Track II kind of dialogue across many different countries, and has been involved in a number of initiatives on that front.

And Richard Bush, I can't say enough about. We've been colleagues here for about 15 years. We had a colleague in the old days, Lincoln, who I used to call the Cal Ripken Jr. of Brookings, because he was so dependable and so rock solid. I think Richard is the top Brady. I'm not a Patriots fan, so I say this with some trepidation, but he just keeps reinventing himself, and he's timeless, and ageless, and always outstanding. And so, we really benefit from having him on the panel as well.

So, without further ado, I'm now going to introduce and give the floor to Shibley, we'll hear from him, see the results of the polling, and then have the panel

discussion. Please join me in welcoming Shibley to Brookings. (Applause)

MR. TELHAMI: Thanks so much. Good morning to you, and thanks so much for braving the cold to be here this morning. I really appreciate that. This is really a pleasure for me. Not only because we are talking about an important issue of course that concerns all of us, but also because we are partnering with the Genron NPO in Japan to do at the same, roughly at the same time, early November, two polls, one in Japan and one in the U.S., asking some of the same questions, trying to see how the Japanese and the Americans differ on the issue of North Korea's nuclear program, and a little bit beyond that in terms of Asia security.

So, what I'll do is, I'm going to present both results together so you can see them side-by-side. For that reason, of course I'm not going to show the breakdown in the U.S. Democratic-Republican because otherwise it would be hard to prepare with Japan at the same time.

Those, I will mention some of them as I go through, but everything is posted online. It's posted on the University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll website, and it's posted on the Brookings website. Certainly the methodology is posted there but all of the results are posted including the breakdown. So, feel free to pursue this after the presentation, if you have questions, there is a lot more data and breakdown of the data as well.

Let me start with the polling methodology. I have, as I said in Japan, it was a sample of 1,000. Our poll, usually we do it with Nielsen Scarborough, this is all done with Nielson Scarborough. It's an online panel in their probabilistic -- a sample of 2,000 among their probabilistic panel. We also have an over-sample of young people just to have more confidence about what the young people are thinking in the U.S. Again, the methodology is posted and you are welcome to look at.

So, let's start with one of the first questions that we had. Which of the following do you believe is the most effective way to stop North Korea's nuclear program?

If you look, obviously the blue is Japan, the red is the U.S.

The most striking thing here is look at the two middle options, the one that says, "Stricter sanctions against North Korea and military action by the United States and its allies." You see how very few agree with those options. In the case of Japan, only 11 percent think stricter sanctions work. In the case of the U.S., only 7 percent; the same thing with the Military option 8 percent, and 11 percent only think those would work. And by the way, even in the U.S. if you break it down Republican/Democrat, slightly more Republicans think that's possible, but 17 percent, so still not huge on this issue.

Instead, you see the U.S. and Japan, in the case of the U.S. the plurality 35 percent, the second option is multi-party negotiations; and in the Japanese, the first option is, sort of, a little bit stronger than the others, 21 percent direct talks between North Korea and the United States. So, clearly you also see at the very bottom, that a lot of people think it won't be resolved, particularly the Japanese, 27 percent more realistic, in a way you can call it realistic, about that.

Do you support or oppose the United States initiating military action against North Korea in an attempt to stop its nuclear program?

So, it's interesting here because despite the fact that you saw how very few people say it can be solved by military option, when you put the military option on the table, you end up getting more people supporting it. Yes, it's a minority, only 21 percent in Japan; 33 percent in the U.S., I think that's actually quite high when you consider what Mike will tell us about, really what are the options, what the good options, I would love to hear Mike's opinion on that.

But if you look at that, you also find something a little bit more -- probably more difficult to understand, which is that if you break down that 33 percent, the majority of Republicans, 53 percent support a military option. That is very interesting because that is the President's principal constituency, and you've got 53 percent who say they would support that.

The next question: Do you think the problem relating to North Korea's nuclear program will be resolved, and if so, when? Now again, this is of course more about optimism or pessimism. It's not that people really know the details of this, it's a way of measuring: are people generally optimistic, or are generally optimistic or generally pessimistic? And let's be, you know, clear about that.

But look at how pessimistic people are. I mean, what you have, obviously a lot of people don't know, that's not surprising, but among those people who would gave an answer, two-thirds of Japanese think it won't be resolved and one-third of the U.S. Very few people above say it will be resolved any time within the next five years, so, a lot of pessimism.

North Korea has already acquired nuclear weapons, and so the question is: Do you support or opposed recognizing North Korea as a nuclear weapon state? Now, of course people may interpret this in different ways, and this is actually worth the conversation, because even with all of the realism that you see, military option may not work, won't work, the issue wouldn't be resolved, in a way, a recognition of North Korea's nuclear reality.

And yet, at the same time, you find that, you know, only 13 percent of Japanese accept recognizing North Korea as a nuclear state, and 38 percent of the U.S. The Americans are more divided, you see 38 percent, 37 percent, but still there is more acceptance, not surprisingly I think, in the U.S. than in Japan, that's worth a conversation.

Do you support or oppose Japan acquiring nuclear weapons if North Korea does not give up its own? This is the question of, as you know this has been a taboo in Japan, and you see far more support in the U.S., 33 percent of Americans support that; only 12 percent of Japanese support it. But one of the things that -- the points that Mr. Kudo makes in his presentation about the Japanese results, is that this 12 percent is actually an increase, because it was only 5 percent last year.

So, yes, in comparison with the U.S., it looks like a small number but it

seems an increasing number of people who may be prepared to accept that.

The same question about whether: do you support or oppose South Korea acquiring nuclear weapons? We have roughly the same, in the U.S. the same acceptance level, in Japan slightly fewer people support, 9 percent; but it's really roughly the same results.

If North Korea doesn't give up its nuclear weapons, do you support the placement of American nuclear warheads in South Korea and/or Japan? And here you have a lot of Americans supporting that, a slight majority of Americans supporting that. And you have, obviously, still an opposition in Japan. Again, not surprisingly, but still you have 21 percent who support that. There is a difference between Democrats and Republicans on that issue, as with the other issue, and I will talk about that on the panel.

How do you foresee the likely outcome of the situation on the North Korean Peninsula in the next 10 years? This obviously, we don't follow it as much here in the U.S., in Japan they follow this a little bit more. And the question is whether -- what kind of outcome that is the public perceive for the Korean Peninsula?

You could see that, you know, quite a few people ranging from almost a third of Americans, and 28 percent of Japanese say the stability will remain the same, roughly. And then, very few people say North Korea and South Korea will have reduced their attention and improve their relations; or even fewer say they will be unified.

So again, the people don't think that relationship is going to profoundly change. They differ on the level of instability, really, whether it's going to remain the same, or whether it's going to increase on the American side, I think people think it's going to get a lot worse, and that is something obviously striking in comparison to the Japanese. Although, in the case of Japan there a lot of people who say they do not know, or a large number of people who say they don't know.

How do you think the North Korea crisis has affected Japan's relations with the United States? Here it's again interesting, because both have, in a way, similar

perceptions. Over 40 percent of each public think they have been strengthened, and obviously the people who say they have been weakened are few, among the Japanese only 4 percent. It is actually a bit high in some ways for the American side. Even if it's 20 percent, you might ask the question, why would it even be 20 percent given that the North Korea should be a unifying issue with Japan?

When you look at the breakdown by party, you find that Democrats are more likely to say, than Republicans, that they have been weakened. And I think part of it's the anti-Trump, that anything that has -- it's not just about, is the relationship improving, but is Trump dealing with it well? And so I believe that's what that means, and we'll see that actually, in a minute, because we have a specific question about that.

What level of military power should the United States maintain in Asia? Obviously a relevant question, one that we all are grappling with, and here it's interesting because you have, in a way, almost half of the American public, 42 percent of the Japanese public, say, maintain the same level. In the U.S. it's a little bit more, 29 percent who think we should increase the level; 12 percent in Japan. Decrease, some support, 13 percent in Japan, 9 percent in the U.S., but not much more than that.

How do you view the way President Trump has handled the North Korean nuclear issue? Now, I needn't tell you this, because you know this, about every other issue, there's a huge partisan divide on this among Republicans and Democrats, but the Independents fall the Democrats' way on this one, so that's kind of where that data is.

But you can see here the majority of both the Japanese public and the U.S. public; think that the view, they're handling unfavorably. The difference here is, you know, very unfavorable or somewhat unfavorable. More intense in the U.S. than it is in Japan, but obviously still a majority of 63 percent of Japanese view the handling of North Korea unfavorably; as do a majority of the American public.

Which of the following is closer to your view, North Korea's nuclear arms

buildup is mostly driven by insecurity? That just one, obviously, hypothesis that people talk about, that it's mostly driven by ambition and aggression. That it's mostly driven by a desire to be fully recognized. Or it's mostly driven by the need to maintain the current regime.

So, you see that a plurality of both publics really think it's mostly about the regime trying to maintain power. But they're divided, a lot of others in the middle that, you know, a quarter believe it's mostly driven by ambition and aggression, and a quarter of the Japanese think that it's mostly the desire to be fully recognized.

This is the question that was only in the Japanese market, and it really had to do with China. So, currently, there is discord between China and the U.S.-Japan Alliance when it comes to Northeast Asian security.

In the future, do you think a multilateral security mechanism, which includes China, is necessary in order to bring a stable, peaceful environment in the region? This is one that our partners, Genron, feel that in Japan, only we didn't ask that question obviously, and 58 percent say it's necessary, only 5 percent say it's not. Hard to interpret that, obviously that's worth a discussion.

As a multilateral security framework for Northeast Asian security, which of the following alliances would be the most effective? Now, this is interesting because we tried to kind of ask the question the same way, understanding the Japanese think about it a particular way, and we think about it in a particular way. We put the options there, you know, as China, Japan, South Korea; China, U.S., Japan; U.S., China, Russia.

But what's interesting is, it seems as though the public in both places like broader multilateral coalitions. So, if you look at the one that has the most embrace at the U.S., China, Japan, South Korea, Russia, that is one that has the biggest support. So, clearly I think it is more embraced of multilateralism in dealing with North Korea, that seems to be the case in both.

Please name two countries that you believe pose the greatest threat to

world peace and security? Now, I want to tell you that this question is an open-ended question. We did not give names, we did not give anything at all, people could name whatever country they want. And it is very interesting to look at that, because this, again, is worth real conversation, especially in light of some of the other results.

Not surprisingly, both in the U.S. and in Japan the public name North Korea as number one, in this environment they see that as the country that threatens world peace more than any other. However, if you look at where the U.S. is, it's striking because it is number two for the Japanese, 43 percent of the Japanese name it as one of the two countries that are most threatening to world peace and security.

Now, remember these are not going to add up to 100 because we are asking people to name two countries, not one, so that's why you get this. This is a list of two not a list of one, that's why you get those kind of numbers. So, even among, in the U.S. it is striking because when you look at 13 percent of the American public says the United States is the biggest threat to world peace and security, and oddly enough it edges China on that here, in terms of people writing it.

It doesn't mean they don't not think China is a threat, by the way, that is a different thing, it's just what comes to their mind, because if you had rate each of these countries, separately, they may rate China higher, that's a different story. But it tells you about how our publics are divided on this, and obviously you can see the same thing in Japan.

Now, one reason why this might be so high in Japan despite of all of the other things we've seen is the following question that I will end up with, which is: Please name two national or world leaders you think pose the greatest threat to world peace and security? Again, it's an open-ended question. We don't try to lead them in any shape or form.

And so, what we have, in Japan Donald Trump is number one, followed by Kim Jong-un with 44 percent. And even in the U.S., actually, Donald Trump is roughly

tied with the margin of error of Putin, at number two, following Kim Jong-un who is rated at number one.

And I think if you look at, obviously, the complexity of the Japanese attitudes will be discussed, we have two superb experts on the panel who will tell us more. But I will say something general, and not so much about Japan, that we do know from other polls, particularly Pew, Pew had done these global polls on global attitudes, perceptions of the U.S., and the perceptions of the President, and they show very clearly, particularly in a poll they did just a few months after the election, that the perception of the U.S. are highly correlated with the perception of the President of the U.S., highly.

Highly, and in fact it's so graphic it's very interesting, and I urge you to look at if you haven't seen that. But certainly, this could be one of the reasons why it's so high on the threat of the perception that the U.S. is one of the two most-threatening states to global security, as the view of the Japanese.

So, with that I will end, and I will invite my colleagues to join me on the panel, and we will have a discussion. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. O'HANLON: Well, thank you, Shibley. It's fascinating. And what I would like to do now is begin this panel discussion by turning first to Kudo-san, our Japanese colleague who was Shibley's partner in the polling. And as for any further clarifications, embellishments, or just quick thoughts he may want to have, before I then turn to Richard Bush.

At this point let me that this where your translation devices will come in handy, and just in case there's any kind of malfunction, I will try very briefly to summarize what we've heard from Kudo-san. And our understanding is that this should work also with C-SPAN audiences, that you should be able to hear directly, the translation into English, as that proceeds. And I think we want to be on channel 2, if I'm correct, with those of you here, with your devices.

So, really, Kudo-san, first of all, thank you for coming so far, and thank

you for your excellent work on this poll. Is there anything that you wanted to draw our attention to, any one or two additional points beyond Shibley's excellent presentation?

MR. KUDO: (Speaking in Japanese) Well let's see, we did the poll, and we made the release to Japanese media back in 29th December. It was a shocking data for Japanese media. A lot of huge coverage was done in Japanese society; the Japanese society took it as shocking news.

Why is that? I think that's That is an interesting point. That's because America, a lot of Americans support North Korea -- recognizing North Korea as a nuclear power quite a few number. And similar results can be found amongst Japanese experts. A lot of Japanese experts have put the idea of recognizing North Korea as a nuclear power, but this is a public poll, public opinions.

General public in America supporting North Korea as a nuclear power was a big surprise for the Japanese. North Korea, who is the neighbor to us, nobody knows what the leaders might do, and our ally, American people, recognizing North Korea as a nuclear power that could possibly dramatically change the security strategy under the alliance.

But in any case, it was shocking news for Japanese society. A lot of media talked about that. But at the same time, there was a lot of Americans also supporting Japan acquiring nuclear power. That was another big surprise, although predominant support was coming from Republican, but was a very big surprise, and that caused a lot of uncertainty and concerns among Japanese society.

And now, there were new opinions in Japan. We could potentially have a serious discussion about whether Japan should be acquiring nuclear power. Now, we have done three polling over the last one, two years. Now, about one year ago, it was only 5.1 percent of the people who said we should be having a nuclear power, and it came up to 12.3 percent only in a matter of a year plus a few months.

So, anti-nuclear power attitude in Japan has shrunk quite a bit. And we

asked the same question to Japanese expert, 20 percent of Japanese experts support the idea of Japan acquiring nuclear weapons. This is not going to be easy process in Japan because this is not really acceptable by Japanese political culture. But now, because of the situation that's happening, there are a lot of concerns, worries amongst Japanese public.

So, not recognizing North Korea as a nuclear power and being completely aligned across allies, as well as neighbors, I think a lot of Japanese think that has to be the strategy. That, I think, is a small insight that we have acquired. That probably is the most plausible scenario as we move forward.

MR. O'HANLON: Among the important points that our friend, Kudo-san wanted to make, Japanese surprise that the United States would have such a high fraction of Americans support of a Japanese nuclear option, and yet there is Japanese expert opinion that, perhaps, is moving in this direction gradually and not overwhelmingly by any means. That would be one of the important points.

A second important point, as you heard Kudo-san say, assuming your translation worked well, otherwise I'm quickly summarizing just in case. Is that, Japanese were a little, maybe, taken aback or surprised that the United States and Americans would consider recognizing North Korea as a nuclear weapon state, which as you all know, we don't at present.

And that's going to be a good question for me to start with Richard on. I'm going to ask them more generally to speak about South Korea and South Korean attitudes, but I hope perhaps he can also offer his process as to why Americans, or why at least a substantial minority of Americans seem willing to recognize North Korea as a nuclear weapon state.

Is that just a bow to reality that Americans begin to say, there's just no way to eliminate these things? Or is it, and somehow in some sense favoring a formal change in America's positions? That's a question, Richard, that I want to add.

Before I give the floor to Richard, let me just add one more clarifying point, which is important for Richard and me, and our colleague, Jung Pak, who holds the Korea Chair here, and others. Those of you who wonder why we are focusing on a Japan and America perspective, to some extent this is our good fortune with Kudo-san and Shibley having done the poll on those two countries.

It was not designed to be comprehensive way to think about the Korea crisis, or public opinions across the entire region. We didn't have that kind of big, long project that would have looked at five or six different countries. So, please don't interpret this as somehow signaling that these are the only two countries that matter. But clearly they are two of the half-dozen or so, with among the greatest equities in this issue.

And now, Richard, if I could turn to the one country that has perhaps the greatest equity of all, and ask you to talk about the Republic of Korea, our close treaty ally, how you just view the North Korean issue through their eyes, interpreting their public, their politics. And then if you could, on this question of why Americans seem increasingly to be willing to tolerate the idea of North Korea as a nuclear state? Or at least acknowledge that that seems to be the reality.

MR. BUSH: Mike, first thank you for your kind introduction. You may think I'm ageless, but I certainly don't feel it, and because I'm not ageless I'm going to answer your last question first, so I will remember it. (Laughter)

Second, I'm pleased that you've given me this opportunity to talk about South Korean opinion, for reasons that I'll talk about. On the question of recognizing North Korea as a nuclear weapon state, I actually think that that question is quite ambiguous, or assumes knowledge by the respondents that they do not have.

The word "recognize" has a certain legal power when it comes to this issue. And as I interpret it, it means that you are recognized as a nuclear weapons state for purposes of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and only five nuclear weapons states are so recognized. And there are other states that possess nuclear weapons that

are not recognized as nuclear weapon states.

I think that, you know, de facto, they are a state with nuclear weapons, we all know that, but we are not going to give China and Russia, and anybody else who are going to give North Korea the special privileges conferred by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty that the current recognized states do.

So, on South Korean attitudes, first of all, you're absolutely right, South Korea does have the greatest equities involved here. As our colleague, Jonathan Pollack, likes to say, this is the Korean Peninsula. (Laughter)

But most importantly there is a widespread assumption in policy-making circles in various countries that, if the United States or South Korea were to take overly aggressive action against North Korea, then it would lead to unacceptable retaliation by North Korea against the Republic of Korea, South Korea. The capital city, Seoul, is just about on the front lines.

So, South Korean views have a presumptive value. Second, political trends in South Korea are important here as well. We had Conservative Presidents for nine years up until last year. Now we have a Progressive President, and his ideas towards North Korea, relatively speaking, are more conciliatory and more in favor of engagement than those of his predecessors.

So, that raises the question of whether public attitudes have moved as well. I'm going to draw on two recent polls. One is by Gallup Korea in September, and the other actually is by Genron NPO. And so thank you, Kudo-san, for doing that poll last July. The two polls didn't ask the same questions, but that's okay.

So, the first question: How much does North Korea pose a threat to peace and security, particularly after the last nuclear test? People in South Korea, 76 percent say it is a threat of some degree; and only 20 percent say it's not much of a threat. There are no illusions in South Korea about the danger that their country faces from their northern cousins.

The second question: How likely do you think that North Korea will actually start a war? Thirty-seven of South Koreans said that it was a possibility to some degree. Only 13 percent said that it was a high possibility. But still, about a third of the public thought it was. And then 58 percent thought it was a sort of low possibility.

Now, that was a pretty simplistic question by Gallup, but this set of responses strikes me is a good reflection of what I understand South Korean opinions to be. Genron NPO poses this issue in a different and more open-ended away. It's not whether North Korea will start a war, but whether military action will occur in response to North Korea's nuclear weapons development.

And so it includes the possibility that the United States might take the military action. So, 38.6 percent of Koreans say yes, that military action will occur; 43.1 percent of Koreans say no, 18.3 percent are not sure. Now, for 39 percent to say yes is not that different from Gallup, and you'll remember that, 37 percent said that there was a possibility that North Korea would start a war.

Gallup asked whether the respondents agreed that the U.S. should take preemptive military action if North Korea continues to test its military and nuclear weapons technology. This is only a continuation of testing, it's not used in some way. Thirty-three percent of the public agreed that the U.S. should take military action, while 59 percent disagreed, and 7 percent didn't know.

Now, for 33 percent to agree is higher than I expected, but that number is suspiciously close to the working estimate of the strength of conservative voters in South Korea. Our working model of South Korean politics is that 33 percent are conservative, 33 percent are progressive, and 33 percent are swing voters and to move in the middle.

So, on this question, conservatives stand out. Now, Gallup asked whether South Korea should have its own nuclear weapons, 60 percent agreed, 35 percent disagreed. This seems high, but my recollection is that previous polls have

gotten similar results. This is not mean they do not like the U.S.-Korean Alliance, they like it a lot, this is the typical response.

On the question of how to address the current situation, according to Genron NPO, Koreans tend to emphasize dialogue and negotiations: 35.8 percent favor diplomatic efforts, like the Six Party Talks; 12.1 percent favor direct talks between the United States and North Korea. Perhaps 47.9 percent in favor of some kind of diplomacy; 26:1 favor strengthening sanctions, 14.4 say China should play a greater role.

Now on the long-term future, Genron NPO asked what the Korean Peninsula would look like 10 years from now, 29.2 percent said the status quo would persist, 31.2 percent said North-South conflict would intensify. Only 19 percent said there would be a move to unification, 20.1 percent said it's unpredictable. That strikes me as a pretty realistic distribution of predictions among the public at large.

So, to sum up, these are my takeaways: South Koreans see North Korea as a threat. They don't see that war is likely, and they do believe that South Korea should go nuclear. South Koreans believe that the future will look about the same as today or worse. Still, they believe diplomacy is a good method for addressing the current impasse.

In the current context, I think that this final opinion gives President Moon Jae-in at least some running room to test North Korea's intentions; most immediately regarding the Olympic Winter Games. And tomorrow will be the first meeting of North and South negotiators to talk at least about the North participation in the Winter Olympics. Thanks a lot.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you very much, Richard. So, this is fascinating, and Richard did a great job of summarizing at the end, so I won't try to encapsulate and reiterate those main points. I want to get fairly soon to your involvement in the discussion, but there are still these two or three other big issues that we want to put on the table briefly.

I'm going to do one of those which is: what might military options be? And the polling that we saw from Kudo-san and from Telhami-san recently, showed us that there are some interesting divides. Richard just reiterated that, in regard to ROK public opinion.

There's also the question of how well can the sanctions that have been so intensified in recent months, you know, starting with the Trump administration, Ambassador Haley at the U.N., but also with the participation of many other countries, how well can these bite in 2018? And then more generally, what kinds of policy prospects and options do we have?

I don't think we are going to touch that last question in our presentations. We'll leave that to you to bring up, if you wish, in the discussions, and the same think with sanctions and economic options.

But let me briefly talk through just four military options that I think might be on some people's minds, let me start at the beginning, and say again at the ends, I do not endorse any of them, I think they all wind up being bad ideas, even on their own relatively narrow terms of what they could directly accomplish.

And then as my colleague, Jung Pak, and others at Brookings have written and emphasized, and as Richard just alluded to, we have the whole big question of: how would Kim Jong-un respond? And so, let me be emphatic, that I am not endorsing these options. None of them presume an all-out invasion by the United States, presumably with the South Korea along, something I don't think South Korea would want to do, but none of them are beginning with the option of regime change, or 2003, Iraq-like overthrow of the existing government.

I don't think anybody is contemplating that as even a remote possibility, in Korea it's too hard. Before North Korea had deployable nuclear forces, the estimates that we heard were that such a war would cause, at a bare minimum, many, hundreds of thousands of fatalities on the Korean Peninsula.

But those were probably low estimates for the time, they are certainly low estimates for today, because one Hiroshima-size bomb -- and by the way, North Korea now has bigger bombs than the Hiroshima bomb -- but one Hiroshima-size bomb over a city of the density of Seoul has estimated by various experts to cause 200,000 to 400,000 prompt fatalities, that's one nuclear weapon. North Korea may have several dozen, and we don't have much means to intercept nuclear weapons aimed at Seoul. Or, even for that matter Tokyo. Tokyo, a little better chance given the distances and some of the systems that we have deployed in the region and elsewhere that we could bring in.

But I just want to underscore, all-out war, I think virtually everyone agrees, looks very bad. So, I'm going to talk about for more specific, limited attempts at the military force. Or at least efforts that in our mind would be limited, and we would hope it would stay that way, but again there's the huge uncertainty as to whether they might.

One option that was actually articulated a dozen years ago by two, Ashkar and Bill Perry, two Democratic secretaries of defense, is to shoot down any future ICBM test launch by North Korea. On the grounds that doing so would deprive North Korea of the ability to get data and develop perfection in technology of long-range missile strikes.

So, ICBM, intercontinental ballistic missiles, this is what they've been trying to develop. They launched three such missiles in 2017, the last in November, we think they're making a lot of progress, we are still not sure, neither South Korea as to whether North Korea has all the different pieces of this kind of complex technology perfected. Specifically we are not sure if they have reentry vehicles that could essentially protect the descending warhead from heat, and kinetic disruption during its descent into the atmosphere before detonation, that's a very thing to do.

Well, we are not really clear, and we are not really sure the North Koreans could be clear if they perfected that. So, why not prevent them from having the

option of having a missile descend by shooting at it while it's still on the way up, or in mid-course, or even before it's launched?

It's an interesting option. You know, at first flush, not crazy, and I'm not sure it's crazy even at second flush. The problems I have with thinking it through, even if we could successfully prevent these kinds of launches, or stop them early, you give North Korea incentives to then develop other kinds of technology that could be even more threatening. Specifically, solid-fuel ICBMs, could be even more threatening.

They are harder for us to see being prepared for launch, therefore harder for us to deal with in the very early going, and we don't necessarily want to steer North Korea towards accelerating that kind of technology. And also, these kinds of test launch, you know, shoot-down options, could not do anything about the threat to Seoul, and even probably not much about the threat to Japan from shorter-range missiles, of which they are already many in abundance. Of course, the nuclear arsenal of North Korea is unaffected by this option as well.

So, it's true it could have some narrow -- if successful, and we are even really sure, we would successful in shooting down those North Korean ICBMs in their ascent or in their mid-course. Our technology in these areas is much better than it has been, but the odds of any one shot succeeding are probably 25 percent to 50 percent, in that rough range.

And so we could miss. We could wind up embarrassing ourselves. We could wind up having our interceptor land in a place it wasn't supposed to, which is not clear we'll be successful. There is enough to give smart people like Ashkar and Bill Perry reason to think this option through a dozen years ago. I'm not sure they endorse under current circumstances, in fact I don't think they do. But on balance, it doesn't deal with the existing threat, and it may not even prevent the future ICBM threat, from taking on a different form.

That's the first option. I'll try to speed up here a little bit. There are also

nuclear facilities that North Korea is developing to expand further its nuclear arsenal; as you know, it has a working research reactor that makes plutonium, one of the key potential ingredients in a nuclear bomb, it also has the famous uranium enrichment facility, they weren't supposed to have, they told Secretary Kelly, back in 2002 they've been doing this surreptitiously. So we now think they have both enriched uranium and plutonium, as the way to fuel their nuclear explosive devices.

We could, in theory, try to deal with that, reduce that. The problem is, you can't attack the existing research reactor because you are going to create like a mini Chernobyl, if you do. You're going to spew radioactivity over a large swath of North Korea. I don't think that's a viable option for the United States on strategies or moral grounds.

You may disagree but, you know, we could destroy that reactor, but it's been operational for so long, it's going to be like in any mini-Chernobyl or a Fukushima if it happens.

We could try to destroy any work on new additional reactors, the way the Israelis destroyed an Iraqi reactor in '81, and then a Syrian reactor in '07. If that were the only potential capability the North Koreans had to build bomb material, I think the case would be stronger for doing that.

The problem is if you do that today with a reactor there believed to be -- they're trying to complete, you are not going to affect the existing research reactor. And if you go after the uranium enrichment facilities, the way we were thinking about in much of the discussion of Iran, up until the Iran Nuclear Deal three years ago, if you go after uranium enrichment, there's a little less concern about radioactive spillage from the existing sites, but we don't know about any additional sites the North Koreans may have, above and beyond the one at the established location of Yongbyon.

So, if we go after their nuclear capability, their nuclear production capability, we may be getting at half the problem of a future buildup, and doing nothing at

all about what they own already, because we don't think we know where the nuclear weapons that are already built might be today. So, you are slowing the scale and pace at which their future reactor and centrifuge capabilities could expand their arsenal.

Again, that has some limited tactical appeal, but the risks are enormous and you're not eliminating the arsenal in any way, and not even preventing its future growth.

The third option you might consider is of a different type, not going after the weapons of mass destruction directly, necessarily, but blockading North Korean trade as a supplement to the U.N. sanctions, so that they can't get around those sanctions by cheating, by working with any companies or countries that might be willing to break the sanctions, and you could actually use the U.S. and South Korea Navies to try to stop trade at North Korea's ports.

And it does have some potential ability to further tighten the effect of sanctions. I think there's no doubt about that if we were to do this, but of course it's also an act of war under the international law. The North Koreans already the sections are an act of war, but this, everybody would agree, in some sense, is an act of war. It's a tool that countries don't employ often. North Korea might well shoot back at our Navy, or shoot at other assets, just as an immediate tactical sense.

But above and beyond that, the main concern I have about this option, it doesn’t prevent them from doing trade across the border with China, the land border, and it doesn't prevent them from flying in high technology equipment if they still need any for their nuclear missile programs. So, again, it doesn’t get at the most serious worries, the weapons of mass destruction, and it runs a huge risk of escalation.

The very last option I'll mention, is direct assassination of Kim Jong-un, and I probably wouldn't feel like I was being very polite bringing up that kind of an option at Falk Auditorium at Brookings if it weren't already in the public discussion. Because we know from reports last fall, there are elements of existing combined forces command war

plans that apparently would envision going after military command and control of which Kim Jong-un is the top rung in the ladder.

Therefore, one would ask: why don't we just try to kill him, the way we try on the first day Operation of Iraqi Freedom in 2003, to essentially, assassinate or kill Saddam Hussein. As you'll recall, the opening day we thought we knew where he was, we launched a big attack at that farm complex, South of Bagdad, it turns out he wasn't there.

He was on the run shortly therefore, he knew we were after him, we caught him a few months later, but the actual bombing attempt did no good. There's always a chance we could figure out where Kim Jong-un was on a given day and kill him. We could try to argue that this was justifiable under international law given his behavior and his noncompliance with various international obligations, and hope there was no fallout or bounce back against our own leaders.

But above and beyond that, I think the more compelling counter argument is that we have no idea how his military command would react if that happened, and very little reason to think they are going to very docilely just accept a peaceful reunification, or whatever other kind of terms we are offering them and just, you know, go into exile, or whatever terms we've offered.

Chances are, some, or many, or most would create an alternative leadership and fight. That would probably be seen as the opening act in a war. I think on that particular option the risks of North Korean escalation are particularly high, and perilously high. Although they are higher than I would feel comfortable for any of the four.

So, sorry to go into such detail on that, but I wanted to get it on the table, and before we go to you in just a moment here, I want to just run on the panel very quickly; Richard may want to comment on what I just said, and then we'll go to Kudo-san and Shibley for any further comments they want to briefly make and then to your questions.

MR. BUSH: No. I think you stated it very well. And I want to hear the questions from the audience.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Kudo-san, anything else at this point?

MR. KUDO: Now, we have been doing opinion polls so many times in the past, we did it together with the Chinese counterpart as well as many other countries. But opinion polls give us great insights though. One of the messages we can take from this opinion poll is that a lot of Americans and Japanese believe status quo is not going to give us a solution to the problem in North Korea.

And Japan, the U.S., as well as other neighboring countries, may be, needing to come together so that we can have strategic objective together. There's this air of suspicions about, about maybe we are not really aligned to each other. And so North Korea -- recognizing North Korea may not be possible under NPT, but they do already have the nuclear weapons and they are trying to have their own missile so they can shoot in different locations in the world.

So, what maybe we need to have as a solution, is to have an effective oversight, bringing out more effective control to the nuclear in North Korea. Otherwise we will, and our neighbors will not feel secured, but not too many people have started to think about potential, having control or oversight.

And hoping, crossing finger that, you know, a nuclear program will be stopped. But that uncertainty is driving the opinion poll. But there's a big if on the opinion poll result data. They were feeling insecure because of the status quo. If the status quo doesn't give comfort to our people, what are the new solutions that we should be discussing about?

By the way, number two answer from America is Chinese involvement. Now, China shouldn't only step up for economic sanctions. I think there could be a potential nuclear option by Chinese, too. We've done an opinion poll with China last year. China has just changed their international law, almost all the overseas polling

agencies are banned from taken polls, but we are given the access to polling in China.

In last year's poll results, we asked a question about: Do you think North Korea is a threat? Only 13 percent of Chinese thought North Korea was a threat; 25 percent of Chinese thought South Korea is a threat. But Chinese experts are different, Chinese experts think North Korea nuclear is a threat. Chinese opinions are being controlled by Central Government, but experts know, experts are exposed to the reality, and the experts are aware of how risky the North Korea nuclear is.

Now, I think this discussion needs to be discussed together with us and also with China. We should start discussing about specific scenarios once we are successful for freezing their nuclear program. Maybe America should take leadership in that.

Is America willing to take leadership in that? I think that's a very important question. Because if America can take leadership in this multilateral discussion, I think the sense of uncertainty, the worries that people are feeling, could dramatically change, possibly. So, non-nuclear option in Korean Peninsula is something we should be discussing, inviting many different countries, I think.

MR. O'HANLON: Shibley?

MR. TELHAMI: Well, thanks. From my point of view to just give my thoughts on your presentation, Mike, which I thought was extremely comprehensive in terms of outing out what people are thinking about in terms of options. Military option is unthinkable, it's not just risky, it's just unthinkable, and I think the public actually seems to think that as well. In fact, when you ask them what will resolve -- whether military action would resolve the Korean issue, very few people agree that it would; it's like 11 percent, and in Japan it's even fewer; so there's agreement that it would not happen.

In my opinion, the reason why you slightly higher numbers supporting a military action when you ask in the U.S., like, 33 percent, it is basically because we are split on everything. You are either pro-Trump or against Trump. And some if the options

that when people are saying this, that's just identity politics. I am going with Trump, or I'm going against Trump, that is part of the problem right now in reading our polling.

But I want to say something that is broader about the global options here. You know, my colleague, Kudo said obviously the U.S. should take leadership in the multilateral negotiations. You can see the American public, and the Japanese public, and South Korean public prefer multilateral talks. They think that is the avenue to proceed.

But here is the problem, and that's where these polls come. Now, in order to take leadership, people have to trust you. You have to have a moral position to lead. People have to think that you're not a threat. When they think you're a bigger threat, then the President of North Korea, when they think that President of the U.S. is a greater threat to world peace than the leader of North Korea it's very hard to persuade people to join you on whatever option you want to do.

Whether it's going to be additional sanctions, whether it's going to be a military, which I think is unthinkable, but somebody might go there, because some of the Republican, the public seems to be somewhat open to the idea.

Who is going to join you in the world when you are doing that? If you are going to lead in a multilateral way, from what agenda would they even trust you to lead if you don't have the agenda? So, clearly, we have the crisis in the way how we are projecting ourselves in the world. That even, is seen in places like Japan which, on this issue, should be a clear ally and it is.

But we see that in the attitudes. And not to mention within our own country, I mean we are in such a crisis internally, divided like we've never been, I think probably in our history, some of the polling that we've done on the divide it is extraordinary, where the difference between Republicans and Democrats is 80 percent or over 80 percent. It's like we are two different countries, not like one country.

How is any leader going to be able to morally mobilize us to do the right

thing, whatever that right thing is, let alone bring all these people around the world when we are increasingly isolated and seem not to be trusted, or even worse, seem to be a threat? That is, I think, the challenge that we face in reality.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay. So, let's go to you. I think I would like to take about three questions at a time, please. Please wait for a microphone and identify yourself when you get the microphone. Please limit yourself to one question per person, and if possible, you could direct the question to a specific individual, or if need be, to the whole panel. Start right here please?

QUESTIONER: So, I've done opinion polling all my life and I realize it can be quite tricky. I'm interested, if you could have added one wildcard question at the end of the survey which, you know, therefore, wouldn't have (inaudible) all the other questions, what might you have added?

For example, if one asked the question like: if trillions of dollars is going to be spent focused around North Korea, should it be on the nuclear conflict or on developing people? Something like that, would then enable you to analyze all the other results segmented by that, because it's quite difficult, you know, knowing who was really thinking what, what was expert in terms of answering a lot of those questions.

MR. O'HANLON: Thanks. We'll go over here to the woman in the third row, please.

MS. BOURBON: Hi, My name is Contessa Bourbon. I'm a freelance journalist. I'd like to ask the panelists, what do you think motivates Kim Jong-un in initial talks that should start tomorrow? How optimistic are you that this could lead to multilateral talks?

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent. And then we'll have one more here in the second around row, for round one.

QUESTIONER: Bill Bernario, Retired Foreign Service Officer, USAID. Your comment regarding control and oversight begs the question with regard to North

Korea selling off their nukes to terrorist organizations, terrorist cells. I mean it seems like a hard question to answer, but has that been thought of, and are their ideas on how to mitigate that problem?

MR. O'HANLON: Great! So, if I could, why don't I suggest that Shibley and Kudo-san, you take the first question, that was polling. And then maybe Richard could talk about what Kim Jong-un might be thinking, and we can all weigh in here on the final question about the broader risks.

MR. TELHAMI: Obviously, and Mr. Kudo if you have something you want to add, please feel free. You know, I know a rhetorical question, but my own, I can tell you what my own sense of where the public is. I mean, the public probably would generally say, just in general, people don't want war. American people are still anti-war, the post-Iraq War kind of sent them in still holds to a lot of degrees. And they obviously don't think that wars are solving the problems.

The question is whether that translates into: do they want to spend American money to develop other countries? The public is really divided on this, and along partisan lines pretty much. I think in theory, they are open to it but you could see how they are opposed to foreign aid, and they might tie it, it's very hard to get a grip of that.

But just one, to get a little bit to the second question about the openness and the negotiations, not so much because I know what the North Koreans are going to say, but what the public in principle says.

One of the big things that we try to get at in the poll is to see what people think is motivating North Korea. You know, is it insecurity? Is it aggression? Is it regime protection? And insecurity and regime protection are one of the same thing, so if you combine them together, you find a lot of people think that, because they think, either the regime is trying to get it to stay in power, or I think that's a good interpretation.

Because if that is one of the big motives, insecurity, given North Korea's

history, then there are people who say that this is an opportunity because they were trying, once they had the successful ICBM tests, they now think they actually have in effect established deterrence against the U.S. And they've always said, you know, one (inaudible) negotiation will probably do that. The question is whether this, you know, negotiation with South Korea is an attempt to kind of influence South Korean public opinion away from the U.S., or whether it's a genuine conversation? I would love to hear, actually, both of our panelists on this.

MR. O'HANLON: Richard?

MR. BUSH: With respect to the talks that will begin tomorrow, or in about 12 hours, the defined scope of the talks is to talk about the Winter Games. Kim Jong-un actually has an interest in his athletes participating in the games, for them to be excluded is a kind of humiliation.

So, I expect that some sort of formula will be found where North Korean athletes can participate and perhaps under a single flag. Now, the question that's raised is, can these talks then be extended to go into other issues? And I think there will be an attempt, but my guess is that it will not get very far, because each side has very different demands and expectations of the other.

I think that we will find that North Korea sets out a very tough agenda concerning the future of inter-Korean relations, and it will be something that President Moon cannot accept. As I suggested, and in response to Shibley's question, what we see in the polling of South Korea is on the one hand they are happy for these talks to occur, but the views as of now, concerning North Korea are quite negative and quite fearful.

And so I think President Moon doesn't have too much running room to make big concessions. Finally, one might ask of the North Koreans: Do they really want to have talks on big issues including their nuclear program? They are moving closer and closer to their goal of being able to hit the continental United States with a nuclear

weapon. They probably do not want to be stopped in the middle of that, before they've gotten to what they really want. Thanks.

MR. O'HANLON: Let me just use the moment to pivot to your question but also to make an advertisement for colleagues at Brookings who have thoughts on these questions, and you may want to look at our website. Because we have, we are blessed here, I know Richard would agree with me, to have remarkable strength on Korea, including our Korea Chair, Jung Pak, who spent many years in the intelligence community trying to understand what motivates Kim Jong-un.

And the question and debate we've had internally, which I think is happening in the government: What are his goals? Why does he want the ability to hit the United States with a nuclear weapon? I think most of us would agree he does. The question is, is he an aggressive, assertive, ambitious leader who really envisions reunification of the Peninsula someday and wants to split the United States and the ROK Alliance, such that America's nuclear umbrella no longer covers South Korea.

South Korea is isolated somehow, coercible into submission of some form or another. These kinds of theories are sometimes discussed. Other people say no, he's fundamentally trying to avoid the mistake that he thinks Saddam Hussein, and Muammar Gaddafi, and the Taliban in Afghanistan, and Slobodan Milosevic all made, which is being in a hostile relationship with the United States and not having your own nuclear weapons.

And it really is about regime protection. I don't really think -- I'm not going to try to speak for any consensus among the Brookings scholars because I don't think there is a consensus -- but I think we will all agree, we don't really know. And people may weight one possibility more than another, and if Jung Pak wants to weigh in, she can please catch my eye and correct the record here.

But I would just encourage people to look at that. We've also got Bob Einhorn who spent a lot of time in Track 1.5 and Track II dialogs with North Koreans.

And then Jonathan Pollack, whose book about 15 years ago was the first to basically sober us all to the fact that North Korean nuclear arsenal was probably not going to be easily eliminated anytime soon, if ever.

So, I just wanted to mention those three. And that's a way of answering your question, sir, indirectly at least, which is to say, whether North Korea would ever do something quite as, you know, potentially self-destructive as to sell nuclear weapons abroad, it's hard to say. They already have, so as you know sold some nuclear materials, not actual weapons. Would they someday threaten to sell a weapon if they feel the U.N. sanctions have so squeezed their economy, that they want the rest of us to believe they have no other choice to keep their economy afloat?

I could see them making that threat. I'm not sure if they would do it. But I think these are the kinds of fundamental uncertainties we really have about future North Korean behavior, and it's pretty hard to be precise any more than that. I don't know if --

MR. TELHAMI: Let's see if Mr. Kudo also had a comment on that.

MR. O'HANLON: No comment?

MR. KUDO: No.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay. Okay. So, let's go to a second round of questions here. We'll start with Mack in the first row, and then we'll go to the gentleman in the red scarf in the fourth row, and the woman in the next to last row. That will be the rest of round one.

QUESTIONER: I believe Richard raised the question about the survey, and the questions of accepting North Korea as nuclear power. I wonder if the question had been put not in a way that might be confused with the Non-proliferation Treaty acceptance, but reluctant acquiescence. I wonder if the answer -- if there's any way of thinking the answer would be, that that would have had any more support if it were phrased as reluctant acquiescence because we lack other options.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. The gentleman here in the third row?

QUESTIONER: Thank you. My name is Peter Cook. Given the options that you've described, you could say they (inaudible) continuum from military action to diplomacy/negotiation, military action has been considered horrific, but given our government's behavior with TPP, with the Paris Climate Accord, and even with the Iran Nuclear Deal, we don't have a lot of credibility, is my assessment. Where does that leave us?

MR. O'HANLON: And the third question.

MS. PERLMAN: I'm Diane Perlman, George Mason School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution. In Kim Jong-un's famous comment about the button, I haven't heard anyone pay attention to the second-half of the sentence, which is that he has a button and he will not use it unless he's threatened. So, I think it's pretty clear that he feels the need to deter us, and people are more dangerous when they're afraid and threatened and backed into a corner.

And Shibley started to talk about this, but what about more, like tension-reduction reassurance, and freeze for freeze, that I think they have a much higher probability of success.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay. So, how shall we begin? Richard, do you want to begin this round?

MR. BUSH: Sure.

MR. O'HANLON: And then we'll go to Kudo-san.

MR. BUSH: Mike, I wished they had asked the question that way. It would have been more useful in terms of thinking about policy responses. To Mr. Cook, I agree with you that military option is horrific. I agree with you that we are hurting ourselves by these statements of the President. I think that, sort of underneath the rhetoric, there is a policy that's emerging, and that is containment and deterrence to include sanctions.

Sanctions do not have an impact right away. They have to be in effect

for a longish period of time, they have to be applied in a comprehensive way. It's interesting that the really tough sanctions are only now beginning to take effect. China is only now beginning to add its weight to a comprehensive sanctions campaign, whether this will change North Korea's policies, I do not know, but this seems to be the most likely approach of achieving some sort of goal that has a broad international support.

I didn't quite hear the question in the back. I think that the problem with any kind of negotiations is not because the two sides don't understand each other, or sort of don't have an opportunity to get to a compromise, but at this point, they have very different declared goals.

North Korea says: we are going to be a nuclear state, get over it. No country in the international community, particularly any country in those that are most affected and have been part of the Six Party Talks, are willing to accept that the goal. Ours remains denuclearization. And until one side or the other backs down, it's not clear to me that there would be an opportunity to find some middle ground.

MR. O'HANLON: Kudo-san?

MR. KUDO: Now, I'm in the United States, it's a very cold country, I find out, but I am feeling more comfortable because I am away from North Korea now. I think maybe I'm speaking from one side, and you are speaking from the other side because distance differences from North Korea.

But North Korea is having nuclear power already. If military option is not thinkable, then the only thing is to raise the deterrence and containment. And I agree with that. But for Japan to have better deterrence, maybe Japan needs to bring American nuclear maybe that needs to be discussed across Japanese society. If the Japanese society engaged that discussion, other neighbors will start discussing bringing about nuclear in our state.

Now, somebody talked about, you know, the nuclear spillover to terrorist organizations, but that may add on top of that, there are a lot of layers of complexities

associated with that. So, if we recognize North Korea as a nuclear power that could potentially damage the NPT as well as the security framework currently we are relying on.

Now, at Genron NPO, we are having dialogue program with China and South Korea; we invited the American friends last year. Now, in our dialogue we wanted to identify common objectives about security of our region. Now, with South Korea and Japan, can't quite agree about nonnuclear in North Korea, but the Americans don't think that according to the poll. Asked about 10 people, 60 percent said no nuclear, but 40 percent is supportive about recognizing North Korea as a nuclear state.

Now, as an ally, and that attitude for America was troublesome for many Japanese perspectives, because there's one state, North Korea, in Asia which owns nuclear weapons and if we see them, and if it does continue, security strategy in Japan has to be changed. We do not want to change it, because we are victim of nuclear, we are very allergic to having nuclear weapons or allowing other countries nuclear weapons in our land. So, nonnuclear is the only legitimate option for many Japanese people.

And there are only two options to do that. One is to strengthen economic sanctions so that we can have more effective diplomatic talks, or military option to some degree, whatever that degree might be. And you know, of course peaceful solution is the best, and we want to do it peacefully. So, how can we raise pressure so that -- and then give the motivation to North Korea by recognizing them as a legitimate state, or extend the economic development.

But having them stop or freeze, or completely abandon nuclear in North Korea is the only valuable option for us, and I hope international society agree with that, but this is the attitude of Japan, if I may say.

MR. TELHAMI: Well, let me start with Mack's questions. Richard of course is right about this being somewhat ambiguous, but it's actually interesting, that if you had asked the same question to experts, you are probably going to get the same

answer even if they know more.

Because what we find in the results, actually, is exactly what you might expect the expert to say, which is most seem to accept that you're not going change the reality on the ground, there are nuclear weapons, but most don't want a formal recognition, they may not know exactly what the meaning of that is, and they may not know what is entails for non-proliferation, but they have a sense of this question means, you're asking for formal recognition.

And as Mr. Kudo said, in Japan, obviously there's a huge reluctance to accept that formally, even there's an acquiescence or acceptance of it. So, I think actually we do get that result that you might expect even with the experts, so it's not that it's -- there is something here, that is interesting to learn from.

On the insecurity, Richard is of course right again on saying that there are different aims. I mean, obviously that the case. The question is, what is the basis for starting even a negotiation even with different aims? At some point you are going to have to start some negotiation.

The reality is, even if you don't think that the principal motivator for North Korea is insecurity, no one would deny that part of it is insecurity given their history particularly for their people or for the insecurity of the regime. So, the question is whether if you give them some added sense of security, whether that's going to make them more open to negotiations. Not to give up their nuclear weapons necessarily, but do some negotiations.

So, when you go into something like Alton Frye's suggestion, an article he wrote a few weeks ago saying: let's place 50,000 Chinese troops on North Korea's soil to assure them, essentially we would never attack North Korea. Now, that is innovative thinking, we disagree, agree or disagree with it, but in principle those are the kinds of things I think that -- ideas that we need to think about.

With the question of our credibility and the possibility of war, despite all

that we have said -- despite of what Mike said in going through all the different options of saying, look, there's no good military option here. And some of it's really more strongly than that, for a variety of other reasons, not to mention the war ones, not to mention consequences for the neighbors of South Korea, and Japanese, and everyone else, but despite all of that, I don't have the confidence to say that our government won't do it.

And that is the scariest part of all. Because with the fact that you have options, you can assess the risks, you start a conversation about the risk, and if you are in the White House, and you want to do this. And maybe some of you have a whole excellent theory about how our President makes his decisions, I don't, but I leave that aside; the fact that you have 53 percent of the Republicans in the U.S. supporting a military option, even without the President really putting it on the table, tells me that it's not unthinkable.

And so we all have to not be satisfied with the fact that we are analytically, we don't think it's possible, or it shouldn't be possible, it should be unthinkable, that public opinion doesn't think it's going to solve the problem, and it won't, because there are all these other things that we have to worry about, and that's something that I do lose sleep at over.

MR. O'HANLON: Richard wanted to add a point, and I'm going to add one too, and then we'll have a final round.

MR. BUSH: On February 29, 2012, the United States and North Korea came to an agreement, it was a limited agreement, North Korea would suspend nuclear and missile tests and we would provide food aid. It was a kind of freeze for freeze, and the hope from the United States side was this could progress to something else. But then three weeks, North Korea through a definitional trick, reneged on the agreement. And so that, among other things, raises the questions about the credibility of their commitments. I was going to talk about something else, but go ahead.

MR. O'HANLON: I agree with Richard, even though what I wanted to

say might seem to run at somewhat cross-purposes. Bob Einhorn and I have written about a freeze for a freeze kind of construct, but I agree that we would have to assume that the North Koreans are going to try to cheat, and that it might just be temporary in their minds, we don't have to go into this kind of idea with those two points clearly in mind.

The idea that Bob and I have been trying to develop is that how could we get the North Koreans to freeze not just nuclear missile testing, but nuclear production. So there must be some way to get a sense of where all their nuclear production capabilities are, which will be hard, because we don't know where any additional uranium enrichment facilities, in particular, might be located.

And then we have to not give them too much for that deal, because it doesn't achieve denuclearization. We certainly should not formally recognize them as a nuclear weapon state, and I believe most of the U.S. sanctions would have to stay in place even with that kind of deal. We could tolerate some more Chinese and Russian trade at that juncture, and let up on some of the pressure to keep tightening the U.N. sanctions. This is some of the basic thinking that Bob and I have been trying to get at.

And the last piece of it would be, that the one thing that the United States perhaps could give in addition to some food aid or other humanitarian gesture of that type, would be some kind of a cap, very well thought through, on the size of future military exercises with the clear emphasis, however, that this is not in any way meant to tolerate a reduction in the readiness of combined forces in Korea.

So, we had to substitute a big one with a few smaller ones. And we had to talk to good people like Colonel Tim Hayden, my colleague standing behind us who was the Head of our Brigade in Korea last year, and many other military officers to figure out how to make sure we could do this.

And if they are not comfortable in the end with the proposal, we would probably have to walk away from it. But I believe that we could cap the size of exercises,

at some relatively high number, 15,000 or 20,000 troops, and still be okay militarily. That's the kind of freeze-for-freeze one -- at least two of us here at Brookings have been talking about. I should emphasize, not everybody at Brookings agrees with us.

So, let's do one last round, and I would like to favor people, or folks from the region. I haven't seen too many Japanese or Korean hands, not that I would necessarily guess right on who you are. But I want to give at least first preference there if there are any; and then I'll just open it up more generally. Well, we'll start with the woman standing in the back, and then the gentleman standing in the back, and then we'll come out -- and then here in the third row, and we'll wrap up with those three questions, please.

MS. DRESSMAN: Thank you. This is Alicia Dressman. I'm a nuclear policy specialist. Within the last month we've seen Russia align its assessment of the North Korea's ICBM capabilities with a very provisional statement from Sergei Lavrov, that they have aspects of ICBM -- they've reached aspects of ICBM capabilities.

And so I'm seeing kind of on the diplomatic front, there's kind of some meeting in the middle here, one of the diplomatic alternatives that I did not see discussed here was a Partial Test Ban Treaty. So, I wanted your thoughts as to U.S.-Russia, Six Party Talks, whatever venue, getting North Korea to limit further testing to of course, below ground, knowing that in our testing history, we tested live ICBM with the warhead, and that's not beyond the pale of thought considering the future of North Korea's nuclear testing. Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Sir? The microphone over here please, in the back. He needs the microphone over here, in the back.

MR. LIMAGE: Thank you. Simon Limage, former State Department Non-Proliferation Bureau. A question on one item that didn't come up was the U.S. public opinion, and it seemed a recurring 30 percent of U.S. respondents who didn't have an opinion or didn't seem to know as much.

And I was curious, as somebody who has worked in non-proliferation for a long time, how disappointed that on and initiative that's in the news a fair amount that there didn't seem to a comfort level with the response. What was that more, I think as you talked to them during dinner, is that because people, despite this being in the news, don't have an opinion? What are your opinions on that on the high level of non-response?

MR. O'HANLON: And finally to Jennifer, here in the third row.

QUESTIONER: Thank you very much to all the participants and speakers. Jennifer Mackley from FAS. On the nuclear testing idea, I was just thinking North Korea participated in the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, just an interesting thought, and they are the only country with nuclear weapons who signed this recent Nuclear Ban Treaty, for whatever that's worth. But my question actually was really about the role of Russia. I wonder if any of the panelists could discuss that more. Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay. Great! So, Shibley, why don't we start with you and then work down.

MR. TELHAMI: Just quickly, actually it's not the right impression, on the U.S. side. On the U.S. side, very few don't know except on one or two questions, the rest of them were very, very low. And those two questions were really detailed questions in the way they had to think about, they don't know much about it. We don't usually get a lot of unknowns, don't-knows at all in the U.S. market. It's more in Japan than in the U.S.

MR. O'HANLON: Kudo-san, any last word here on those three questions, or just a quick word of conclusion?

MR. KUDO: So, you mentioned about, a lot of Japanese response: I don't know. Very many Japanese people say, I don't know, as an answer. But for this last opinion poll, and the question is those who responded, I don't know can swing, right. So, now about 25 percent of Americans said they don't know, for military option, and I

think this can sway very big, in big way, depending on how new developments will take place.

So, once the opinion gets swayed one way that can have a huge impact to the political assets, and that can become uncontrollable. So, before anything, a big crisis happens, I think two countries need to start, more engaged to each other, communicate to each other.

What can Japan do? Now, Japan can do only a few things. We can maybe make a commitment for future assistance to the developments of North Korea, but another thing that Japan can contribute is scenario development exercise on this North Korean issue, because without North Korean issues being resolved, there is no peaceful framework in that region, because there's no peaceful institution in our region.

China is there, U.S. is there, there's no peaceful communication channel or institution; maybe this North Korean issue is giving us an opportunity. China, South Korea, Japan, the U.S., maybe the four of us should get together about the new peaceful institution that can possibly work in the region. But Japanese media and that society is busy about -- talking about Mr. Trump's tweets, Mr. Trump's attitudes, about missiles from North Korea.

We are very short-sighted in a lot of media coverage, and that is the reason why a lot of Japanese people are saying: I don't know as my answer. I think we now have to seriously face solution discussions about this problem. And I think the starting point have to be identifying a common objective across two countries as well as our neighboring countries.

And by the way, this event taught me, a lot of things for me. There are a lot of different perspectives from Americans that are different from Japan. And I'm not criticizing that. I think we need to -- or more Japanese people needs to recognize about the American opinions so that we can have more productive discussions across Japan and America about new order in our region.

But in any case, for Northeast Asia to be peaceful, North Korea nuclear issue has to be resolved. I think that's the perspective of Japan that I just wanted to emphasize at the very end.

MR. BUSH: On the question of Russia, Russia's position, formal position on what the outcome should be has always been very good. Complete denuclearization. I will say that there has been some concern in the last year that Russia may undercut the tougher and tougher sanctions that are being imposed, and may be come in behind the Chinese. If the Chinese reduce oil, then the Russians increase oil.

Third, there has been some expert analysis that suggests that the really remarkable progress that North Korea has made in the last two years on rockets or missiles was a result of new help that they received from the Russian enterprise that produces rockets. No information on who ordered that company to do that, but that's concerning, because it's made a bad situation much worse.

On the question in the back, we spend a lot of time arguing with ourselves about what's the right formula for getting North Korea to the table, and what's the right formula for getting to yes? I will offer in response, what Secretary James Baker said around 1990 when he was talking about negotiations with Nicaragua, and where we had a similar sort of problem.

It was simple: 202-456-1234, it's the White House telephone number. If North Korea has some ideas on what could get us to yes, they know who to call. Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: And I'll just add one brief concluding word, which is sort of meant as a bookend to Shibley and his concluding response; and I share certainly his concerns, and the poll did a nice job of highlighting how much Japanese share the concerns about the leadership we do have at that very White House that Richard just mentioned.

And I am not here to try to suggest that I'm completely at ease with the

decision-making style of our Commander and Chief, but I am confident of one thing, and this is meant as at least a slight word of reassurance as we conclude, that the quality of the advice President Trump will get will be excellent. And the Secretary Mattises of the world, the General Vincent Brooks, Combined Force Commander in Korea; H.R. McMaster, National Security Advisor, these gentlemen have seen too much war in their lives to be in any way delusional about what it would entail.

And some of them are on record publicly as acknowledging that a war in Korea would be substantially worse than anything they've seen in the Middle East. So I think you are going to have a sophisticated discussion of the costs and risks. I don't know the decisions that will produce, and I wish the public articulation of the discussion and of the options were of a somewhat different tone and character, especially from the man at the top.

But I've known a lot of this team for a long time, as have a number of others here in the room, and it's a rock solid team on questions of war and peace. The level of advice, the framing of options, I'm confident will be very good.

And I hope that is something we can finish with a slight feeling of reinsurance about. And I want to thank all of you for being here. And I thank the panel, and particularly tip the cap to the excellent poll that Shibley and Kudo-san did. So, please join me in thanking them. (Applause)

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