THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

FALK AUDITORIUM

REIMAGINING THE U.S.-SOUTH KOREA ALLIANCE

Washington, D.C.

Wednesday, August 22, 2018

PARTICIPANTS:

MICHAEL O'HANLON, Moderator
Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

MICHAEL J. GREEN
Senior Vice President for Asia and Japan Chair
Center for Strategic and International Studies

JUNG PAK
Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Good morning. And welcome to Brookings on this late August day.

I'm Mike O'Hanlon with the Foreign Policy program, here with my colleague at Brookings, Jung Pak, and our good friend, Mike Green, from CSIS. We're very glad to have all of you here to discuss "Reimagining the U.S.-Republic of Korea Alliance."

And I want to thank my outgoing research assistant of many years, Ian Livingston, for help with that brilliant title, as well as many other things over the years.

I want to thank you for being here. I think you all know the importance of the question that we're addressing today. This is, in part, a panel that will update as best we can tell or know anything about what's going on with the negotiations between the United States and the DPRK on the nuclear issue now two months-plus after Singapore.

But our main purposes is a little broader. And let me try to just spend a moment framing this and then I'll introduce the panelists who I think most of you know very well, and we'll get into a little bit of discussion with them before going to you for your questions later on.

The big idea here, I think many of you can explain as well as I, but it was brought to the fore when President Trump, after the Singapore summit said, "I'd love to pull the U.S. troops out of Korea. Now may not be quite the time but I'd really like to get them out." And this was not the first time President Trump said that kind of a thing about an alliance, and in many cases at stages like this around Washington, the foreign policy community criticizes President Trump for these kinds of comments about alliances.

But in regard to Korea, he's sticking with it a little more doggedly than he has been with NATO or with Japan, and frankly, he has a little bit of support in the broader academic world when people write about restraint and retrenchment and offshore balancing

and wonder why the United States should want to stay engaged long-term with mid-size country like Korea, sort of geographically, inconveniently stuck to the big Eurasian landmass in a very hard place to defend right next to China. Why would the United States want this burden?

I'm not giving you my view, I'm giving you the debate such as it is in much of academia, and frankly, much of the foreign policy community outside of Washington, even though within Washington we tend to have a very strong consensus. And I don't want to speak for everyone, but in favor of alliances, in favor of a sustained strong American role in the world.

But to bring it back home and make it a little more topical, what if Kim Jong-un decides tomorrow to say I'd be very happy to give up all my nuclear weapons as long as the United States and South Korea break off their alliance and the U.S. forces go home. Many people have written that this is really the North Korean definition of denuclearization. If they talk about a willingness to consider denuclearization, that's what they mean. Because in their mind, or at least in the negotiating and talking points, unless the United States nuclear deterrent is disengaged from the peninsula, they're still under nuclear threat. And how could they possibly squander their own nuclear capability without getting a quid pro quo which really is commensurate with the states?

So that's why this issue could come up any time because President Trump doesn't seem to want our forces to be in Korea any longer than he has to keep them because we could see North Korea raise the issue of a quid pro quo, a trade of giving up its nuclear weapons for a complete entity alliance.

And -- this is my last point -- if we ever did get to the point where the North Korean threat was much reduced, it would actually be a fair question in both South Korea and the United States to ask, do we really want a long-term alliance for other reasons? So we've,

as you know, been allies since 1953 formally, and we had fought together for three years before that. After Dean Achson had famously said in 1950, the United States has no interest, no strategic interest in defending the Korean Peninsula, and that was seen in some ways as a green light to the North Koreans to invade, considered a huge historic blunder by most people. But nonetheless, back then, following George Kennan's logic and others, people decided Korea maybe didn't have to be within this broader American defense perimeter, and it's going to raise the question, if and when the North Korean threat is diffused, does Korea still have to be within this broader American strategic alliance system thereafter? Is that good for the United States? Is that good for South Korea? And we really want to begin that conversation from first principals with you today.

So without further ado, and I've said enough already, I've got the real experts here with me on stage, I cannot imagine two better people to talk about this question today than Mike Green and Jung Pak.

Let me begin with our visitor, Mike Green. Although, as he and I were just reminiscing, he's no visitor in my family because our moms knew each other growing up and we've basically been family since the 1930s. And that's a line Mike once used up here with me when he was the moderator a few years ago for a book that Jim Steinberg and I had done together. But Mike has just written a magnificent book, probably the best book in the history of America-Asia studies on the history of America's policy and strategy towards Asia. And I will hold it up here for you.

You still have time for your beach reading. If you haven't gotten to "By More Than Providence" yet, you should. This is a history of U.S.-Asia policy since the founding of the United States. And even though it looks pretty big, and I've been doing my workout this summer so I'm able to hold it up above my head, it's actually surprisingly readable and not as long as you might first thing.

So with congratulations to Mike for a book that, to my mind, really, not only traces through the history but puts it in strategic context -- what was the United States fundamentally about in Asia? Why did it want to interact with Japan and China in the way that it did? You know, in the years, in the century before we even had global aspirations, what was our role in trying to balance the role of other powers in Asia and make sure they didn't dominate in a period we were not yet ready to dominate but we knew that we didn't want a hostile group or country or block from somewhere else to do so.

So that leads naturally into the discussion of sort of what's the role of Korea inherently in America strategy and foreign policy? And Mike is senior vice president for Asia at CSIS, professor at Georgetown, former senior director for Asia at the NSC, and just one of the best thinkers on Asia in the United States today.

Jung Pak is our superstar new colleague at Brookings. We stole her from the CIA. We probably should feel guilty about reducing American government capacity on North Korea at such a crucial time in our country's history, but we don't feel guilty at all because it's such a pleasure and a thrill to have her here. She's already written a lot of stuff, including an article that if you haven't yet read you really should, which is called "The Education of Kim Jong-un," an article that appeared on the Brookings website in our long form essay series back in February, and I believe the subject of her forthcoming book, although I don't want to put pressure on her about the timing of that.

But Jung was studying Kim Jong-un at the CIA, was one of the world's closest and top Kim Jong-un watchers during her eight years at CIA. She was born in Korea, raised in Manhattan, studied at Colgate and Columbia, and now has been at Brookings for about a year.

So what I want to do, now that you've thankfully heard me out and I'm almost done talking for the day so you're about to have the good stuff, what we want to do now is

begin with one question, a quick snappy update on what we think we know about the negotiations to the extent that we feel like we have any insights into what's been going on the last couple of months and have a sense about where things stand. And I'm going to begin with Jung to give us a quick briefing on that and then ask Mike to add his thoughts. And then we'll launch into the bigger question of the future of the alliance. What should that future be? If we got an offer from Kim Jong-un to denuclearize in exchange for ending the alliance, should we take it? And more broadly, how important is Korea to the United States? How important is the United States to Korea long term?

So without further ado, Jung, can you inform us in any way about what you see going on now with the post-Singapore negotiations on the nuclear issue?

MS. PAK: Yes, Mike, thank you so much for organizing this panel. This is your idea and I think it's very timely and important discussion to have.

And thanks to Mike Green for writing that book. I remember working on my dissertation and seeing the Tyler Dennis 1922 book was the only one that was available on U.S. foreign policy in Asia. So it is a great book and I would encourage everyone who's interested in Asia and U.S. role in the world or at large to take a look at it.

And I'm very happy to be on this panel with the two of you today.

So, you know, in North Korea terms, when we talk about North Korea, it seems as if every week is equal to about three months. So it's hard to believe that the Singapore Summit was just two months ago. And so let's talk about what's happened since Singapore, June 12th. I think a lot of Korea watchers went to bed on June 11th hoping that at a bare minimum we would have a strong statement from Kim Jong-un that he was going to commit to denuclearization, similar to the September 2005 joint statement when the North Koreans committed to denuclearization. Not work toward denuclearization, which is what ended up happening, what we ended up with in Singapore.

So I think there was nothing inherently wrong about the U.S. president meeting with Kim. I think it's important from the North Korea perspective to have a leader to leader instead of the usual talking points at the lower levels about how they're not going to give up nuclear weapons.

So the leadership meeting was important. But I think when we look at what has happened so far, the IAEA recently, according to reports, the IAEA said that North Korea has not made any credible advances toward denuclearization, although at the top levels of the U.S. and South Korean governments, North Korea is making progress for denuclearization, but I think if we search the surface bed, we see that a lot of the things that the North Koreans are doing so far to show that they're being faithful to their past and Singapore commitments is exploding, blowing up the entrance way to the nuclear test site, starting to dismantle the missile test site, agreeing after what seemed like excruciatingly painful negotiations on the return of POW remains at a mere just about 50 or 55 remains instead of the hundreds that they could have been forthcoming with. We recently had family reunions where just a few dozen family members were able to meet for three hours or so.

So I think when we look in the larger scheme of things, we haven't see any credible responses or activities by North Korea to move toward denuclearization. I think one of the questions that gets asked is, well, what has the U.S. done? I think from the U.S., I think it's significant that the president has maintained this high level type of discussion. Secretary Pompeo has been shuttling back and forth, talking to senior officials in North Korea, as well as the officials in the region, to have this high level dialogue.

But from all accounts, it seems as if whatever Secretary Pompeo has floated to North Korea about a timetable, about verification, about inspectors, the North Koreans have knocked it all down. Instead, the Nodong Shimon recently came out with saying, again, harkening back to when the North Korean media referenced the Trump model, in essence,

trying to decouple the president from his rank and file, his senior advisors form his intel community for international organizations like the IAEA, that is saying that we're not seeing very much progress. But in referencing the Trump model or in referencing, and in trying to flatter the U.S. president to saying only you can solve this problem, I suspect that they're angling for a second summit. There are indications that Secretary of State Pompeo will go to Pyongyang. North Korea is planning for its September 9th celebrations and the North Koreans are also calling for a peace declaration to have this declaration to end the Korean War, which only ended with an armistice in 1953.

So I'll stop there. I think with a couple of comment on what we should be looking for, are we going to see momentum for a second summit? If so, then that would be -- I know there's going to be a lot of hair pulling and chest, you know, flailing by Korea watchers. But I think if there is a second summit, that would be an opportunity, an important opportunity for President Trump to empower the secretary of state and subsequent nuclear negotiators that they have the gravitas and the confidence of the president to negotiate an agreement with North Korea. So I would see a second summit as an important opportunity for Trump to foot stomp that.

Next is, is Kim going to, you know, what's going to happen on September 9th when the North Koreans are obviously planning a massive military break? What missiles are they going to show? What kind of rhetoric are they going to use? Who's going to be there? Is President Xi going to go? So those are some things that we should be looking at.

And finally, UNGA. Is Kim going to go to UNGA, go to New York, make statements, be on another international stage?

So I'll stop there, and I want to just thank Mike for the opportunity to be on this panel with you.

MR. O'HANLON: And just before I go to Mike. One clarification. Of course,

Kim has never been to UNGA before. He's never been to the United States before.

MS. PAK: Yes. Right.

MR. O'HANLON: So any of this would be unprecedented.

MS. PAK: Yes. Right.

MR. O'HANLON: Mike, over to you for the same question, please. Just how you see things playing out.

MR. GREEN: Well, I think the positive thing you can say, the silver lining about the U.S.-DPRK engagements would be that there are no provocations happening. The U.S. Forces Korea Pacific Command was constantly on alert because of missile tests, nuclear tests. The provocations are basically strategic provocations. Nuclear missile tests have basically come to a halt. That's good.

The question still could be asked, would these provocations have stopped without a summit? Personally, I think they would have with the right combination of sanctions, pressure, and a military option. But in any case, to start with a positive, you can say there are no provocations and that's something. How valuable that is ultimately depends really on how far you think the North Koreans got with their program. There's a debate in the open source literature about whether the North Koreans have the ability for nuclear weapons to reenter the atmosphere or not. The U.S. government's position in testimony is they were months away, so we stopped that. Other experts say they didn't actually have to physically have a reentry vehicle to enter the atmosphere to have that capability. It's gray in my area. In my opinion, it's a gray.

But setting aside that somewhat positive dimension, because the cycle of provocation and tension was not good, I think there's not much else you can point to. The June 12th statement itself was by far the thinnest statement out of any U.S.-DPRK agreement or U.S.-ROK -- well, set aside the Korea -- but certainly compared to the agreed framework,

the six-party talks, it was by far the thinnest. And the language itself about denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula was North Korean language. That was not U.S., Japanese, or certainly conservative Korean language.

So there's not much there. There's not much you can point to as evidence of denuclearization.

The partial dismantlement of the Sohae, the rocket missile liquid fuel launch facility is somewhat interesting. The partial explosion of the entrances to the test facility, Punggye-ri is somewhat interesting. Reversible gestures.

But what Secretary Pompeo wanted was a declaration. Turning over fissile material. He's gotten none of that. And as Jung pointed out, it's because the North Koreans think -- and by the way, the Chinese and Russians think -- they can separate Donald Trump and his enthusiasm for the summitry from the U.S. government, which I find, at the level of Secretary Pompeo, Mattis, the NSC, it's pretty unified, actually, in what they need to get.

So what happens next? Jung raised the right questions. What do we see in the National Founding Day Parade? What kind of missiles? I would say there are three ways this unfolds going forward. And since I'm not from Brookings and cannot be held accountable for this, I'll just randomly assign percentages to them. Based on the Brookings computer model that Mike lent me earlier.

So one scenario is that Moon Jae-in is right, that the traction will lead to substantial denuclearization, possibly something like a declaration or opening up Yongbyon, the plutonium facility to international inspections or something like that. I would put that in the single digits as a possibility. I'd put it as very, very low. For one thing, there's no precedent to believe verification would work in the history of U.S.-DPRK relations and nothing on the table right now. That's possible.

The second possibility I'd put in the 20-30 percent range would be we have

enough symbolic steps, including further dismantlement of the liquid fuel rocket testing facilities and so forth that President Trump invites Kim Jong-un to UNGA. The U.S. and North Korea declare peace. It's not a peace treaty necessarily but declare peace. In fact, the nuclear threat is there. The production of fissile materials, weapons continues, but you have relative stability. And the get for North Korea from that is a peace declaration that permanently freezes U.S. exercises with South Korea that raises increasing questions about why we have forces on the peninsula. That begins the decoupling process and that weakens sanctions because China is already defecting. There were dozens of Russian and Chinese entities and individuals on the target list for U.S. sanctions. Yesterday or the day before two Russians got named. That's it.

So the North Koreans get out of this, a dissipation of sanctions, and a decoupling of the U.S. from the ROK that they can play and continue to use.

But I'd say 20-30 percent because that would take a certain amount of discipline from the North Koreans, and it would require a certain amount of discipline from the U.S., in particular, the Congress.

I think the most likely scenario I'm sorry to say in the 60-70 percent range if Brookings' computer model is correct, is that we go back into a cycle of confrontation again next year. Not before the midterm elections. Not before the North Koreans see what they can get. But simply because there is no credible evidence of denuclearization and the pressure will build within the U.S. and I think from the Congress to increasingly mount sanctions. And then the North Koreans will react to that.

I don't think we'll go back to the so-called "bloody nose" scenario of a preventive military strike by the U.S., but I think we're probably heading back to a cycle of confrontation with a North Korea that is armed with more dangerous weapons.

So those are Brookings' model simulations. I'm just kidding, of course.

That's why they're speculative and random, of course. But it segues to Mike's next question. If we have these scenarios, it raises the question in the first two scenarios, why do we have U.S. Forces Korea? Because President Trump is clearly pressing his generals almost every week and his admirals to answer why do we have forces in Korea and also in Japan? And the Congress is not pressing. The National Defense Authorization Act actually puts a floor under cutting troops on Korea. This is not like earlier periods in American history but there is pressure from the president.

And so if we have the somewhat more optimistic scenarios this issue will come up and will have to be answered. And if we have the more pessimistic scenario, we're going to have to answer questions about how do we manage a different environment of deterrence with North Korea where the North Koreans will be more tempted to engage in lower levels of coercion and take higher levels of risk because they feel they can deter us with nuclear weapons. And that may point to a different kind of force posture, or different kind of alliance network to deal with a North Korea that is emboldened because it thinks it can deter us from responding to conventional provocations with nuclear weapons.

So it's a timely topic. Not many people in this town are talking about the alliance or U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula. Whether we end up with a more optimistic or more pessimistic scenario, I think this issue is going to come up and we're going to have to start thinking about it.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you, both.

And let me now try to make this segue, because as you just said, Mike, some of the scenarios make it a more obviously next question than others. Although I'm wondering, even if we imagine that confrontational cycle, would President Trump feel a temptation to try to revive his dream of a big foreign policy success and be willing to break away from the Mattis-Pompeo broader U.S. consensus and actually do the deal, complete denuclearization for an

entity alliance. He may not have it within his power to do that deal but he might be sorely tempted to think about it. So I'm hopeful that even though you've both thrown a little bit of cold water on the idea of a big breakthrough, and that may make some people wonder why we're even thinking about this post-North Korea threat environment, I think in any of these scenarios, the question comes up and it's worth asking in more fundamental terms.

So let me do it that way. And you both know this question is coming. I've been sort of setting it up now for a half hour. But as you think about the inherent value of an alliance between the world's number one superpower and the world's 11th largest economy, South Koreans are very modest people. They love to joke about how they -- not joke but observe they are minnows in a sea of sharks and whales and dragons and bears all there in Northeast Asia, big creatures all around them, Russia, China, Japan, and of course, North Korea as well, but South Korea is the world's 11th largest economy. It's, I believe, America's fifth most potent ally in terms of military spending. You could argue it's America's best ally in terms of overall deployable military capability. Most of that, of course, is focused right now on the peninsula, but it's the largest military of any American ally. And certainly, pound for pound and, you know, anybody who has been to the DMZ and seen those impressive South Korean soldiers with their martial arts training, anybody who has seen the Korean units operating their K-1 tanks which are sort of lighter, more nimble versions of ours, anybody who has just gotten to know the South Korean people, country, military knows that this is an amazing ally. But it still doesn't answer the question of what would be the point of this alliance continuing for either side if and when we could imagine getting beyond the North Korean nuclear threat, or if we were offered that trade.

So what's the inherent importance of this alliance to both sides? We're all Americans on stage, although as I mentioned, Jung's got some Korean background, and we all consider Koreans very close friends. But we don't pretend to be able to answer the

question for the South Korean polity about whether they would want an alliance long term. But we'll still speculate a little bit on what some of the concerns might be. And we'll speculate a little on what the American consideration should be. We've got close to 60 allies and security partners around the world. Is it really important that we keep that South Koran ally if we get to a point where it's more of an option and we've got to rethink from first principals whether or not such alliance makes sense?

So with that long prelude, Mike, let me offer you whatever, however you want to approach the topic to start. You know, historically, strategically, however.

MR. GREEN: So briefly, for historical background, the instinct of the United States as a player in the Pacific has been to avoid entrapments on the continent. And Donald Trump in some ways by saying he wants to pull out troops off the peninsula is evoking, as you said, George Kennan, or even going further back, the obscure Peter Parker, who was the lead American envoy in the Pacific in the 1850s in China, and he proposed that we let France have the Korean Peninsula, the British get Hong Kong, and Singapore and the U.S. would take the Okinawan islands Zurboni as our offshore base. Because in the maritime strategy we inherited from the British, later developed by Mahan and clearly embedded in the current administration's free and open Indo-Pacific strategy, you don't want to be on the continent. And there are other replays of that.

Acheson's January 1950 speech at the National Press Club where he drew a line saying our defensive perimeter after the fall of China communism is here, you do it in the waters between Japan and Korea, that wasn't an accident. That was based on policy planning that began in 1940 when Kennan and McArthur and almost everyone, Marshall, agreed, we don't want to be on the Korean Peninsula. Jimmy Carter tried to pull off after the Cold War.

So this is unnatural in some ways for the United States, and yet, if you look to the most recent American opinion polls by Chicago counsel and others, a significant majority

of Americans favor defending Korea if it's attacked. There is no voice other than Rand Paul that I'm aware of on the Hill -- we're about to produce a survey of congressional attitudes on foreign policy and defense. There is no voice for pulling off the Korean Peninsula in Congress. The recent NDAA shows the opposite.

In any case, the debate is coming back again for the reasons we discussed.

Why do we need it? I mean, first and foremost is the North Korean threat. And if you believe as I do, and I think Jung does, that the North Korean threat is becoming more serious because of its survivable road mobile ICBN capability, then we need a much more robust deterrence posture and much more ability to demonstrate the consequences for North Korea to escalate in any fashion.

And in that context, having a joint and combined command with U.S. forces on the peninsula, with the planning in place and the exercise in place so that North Korea knows we can rapidly escalate and counterattack and destroy them if they choose to attack us. That is, I would say, more valuable than ever.

Now, what that presence looks like is another question. There are discussions about transferring wartime operational command to Korea but keeping the Joint Combined Forces Command, but that jointness and that presence is a really important deterrent, more important than ever because of the North Korean threat. So for the foreseeable future I'd say it's more important than ever.

What kind of forces you have we can talk about. But that jointness and that presence and that certainty that the U.S. will be joint and ready with Korea to respond rapidly is more important than ever.

The second factor is more geological but as the national security strategy, the national defense strategy indicate rightly, the biggest geopolitical challenge we face now is China. And it's a longer discussion but I think it is pretty clear that under Xi Jinping, Beijing's

goal has been to weak the center of gravity of American power in Asia. And that center of gravity is, from Beijing's perspective, our alliances. And I think for Beijing, Japan is a little hard to get at. That alliance is pretty strong and it's at sea. Australia is pretty hard to get at. But China has been going at Korea to begin uncoupling American alliances.

In the Shanghai Summit of April 2014, so called CICA Summit, some of you have heard me mention this or write about it, the Chinese pushed for Korea and two dozen other continental countries, including U.S. allies like Turkey, to sign on to a statement saying there should be no foreign blocks, no foreign alliances in Asia. And that Asians should defend themselves.

Koreans were the only country -- Israel signed on, Turkey signed on -- Korea was the only country that held out. But it was interesting that Xi Jing-pin though they could get them to sign on. And he issued that statement as a speech anyway. And then if you followed --

MR. O'HANLON: Was that President Lee at that time? Or was it already Pak?

MR. GREEN: It was President Pak. And it was Yun-Byung Se, my SAIS sempi, who was farm minister. And he held firm. But I asked my friend, Foreign Minister Yun, why do you think the Chinese thought that you would sign on? That should be worrisome.

And then in the THAAD dispute, the terminal high altitude air defense deployment, the Chinese embargoed illegally, Korean goods to the tune of billions of dollars to try to get South Korea to back off from deploying American missile defenses.

Why does China hate THAADs much? It's not because this missile defense can target Chinese missiles. Technically that's not the problem. It's because electronically it would link Korea into a missile defense system that includes Japan and potentially Australia, maybe even Taiwan. And NATO.

So China's game is to prevent U.S. alliances from getting closer together. We have bilaterally alliances in Asia. To weaken them incrementally. Our game, as we respond to Chinese gray-zone coercion of the South China Sea to keep pressure on China and North Korea, is to demonstrate the consequences of Chinese coercion, North Korean coercion, will be that our bilateral alliances come together. We're doing that with U.S., Japan, Australia quite visibly. U.S., Japan, Korea is the hard one for a lot of reasons with blame to go around.

So the second reason this alliance is really critical, again, the exact nature of our presence is up for discussion, I think, but the second reason that's really important is because China, to expand is strategic influence at our expense, is aiming at our alliances? That's the center of our gravity. And the strong alliance on bilateral terms but complicated in a reasonable complex that they're aiming at is Korea. And talking leaving the Korean Peninsula or freezing exercises in a summit with Kim Jong-un, which Prime Minister Abe asked the president not to do. And doing it without n prior consultation with Korea or Japan, and doing it at the suggestion of Xi Jing-pin and Putin is really, really bad in the context of that second issue I've discussed about the large geopolitical game of influence. So those are, you know, there are lot of others in trade, values. But those are the two very compelling reasons. We can talk further about what kind of forces you need. What kind of command structure you need because there is some variation depending on how you interpret the circumstances.

MR. O'HANLON: Fantastic opening answer.

I've got a lot of follow-up, so let me go to Jung for her initial thoughts and then we'll discuss a little more.

MS. PAK: So, I mean, when you look at some of the polling from Pew from Spring of 2017, 91 percent of South Koreans expected the U.S. to come to the aid if North Korea attached. And 64 percent, the majority of Americans think that we should defend South Korea if it is attacked. And when you look at the Osun survey form March of 2018, when

South Koreans were asked if the U.S. and China were in some sort of confrontation or having a strategic rivalry, 67 percent of South Koreans favored the U.S. Over 23 percent of China.

And think when you look at what China behavior, I'm in full agreement with what Mike has said so far on the North Korea threat and the geopolitical competition with China as the reasons for supporting the alliance between South Korea and the U.S., but I'd add that the Chinese perspective of South Korea is that South Korea is not acting -- it does not have an autonomy in and of itself but that it is acting on behalf of the U.S.

So anything that we do with South Korea in trying to counter the North Korea threat is seen as just a hidden way of trying to contain China. And I think if you look at over -- at least for the past seven of eight years, that China doesn't take South Korea's security serious as much as it takes North Korea security seriously. It's not hard to find Chinese official statements about how, you know, they didn't believe the Cheonan was sunk by the North Korea. They called the Yeonpyeongdo artillery, the North Korean provocation at Yeonpyeongdo as a mutual exchange of artillery. And with THAAD, they refuse to acknowledge that this has something to do with North Korea and trying to deter the North Korean threat.

Not to mention the economy retaliation to a whole of government effort by China to try to use its economic leverage. South Korea's number one trading partner, to try to sway the way the South Koreans make their foreign policy. So if that's not coercion, then I don't know what it is. It's also another reflection of the fact that Chinese officials don't believe South Korea's security fears should be taken seriously as they should be. And so I throw that out there.

And what is concerning I think in this period where we're talking about alliances, and I think it's an uncomfortable discussion for a lot of people, I think. Alliances, you know, you have to have two people doing the dance. But what if North Korea stays quiet for a

while, for years, no provocations; right? No provocations in the sense that they're shooting off strategic weapons. What if there's no -- we don't see that for a few years and South Korea continues to push on this economic community, the rail community. Trying to knot together Russia, China, and North Korea and South Korea into this economic community? What happens if the South Korean government, at a strategic level, think that the U.S. is an impediment? That the alliance with the U.S. is holding back reunification? And that the alliance is the only thing that is standing in between the final, the ultimate, the goal of both sides to reunite families forever and that at a strategic level the South Korean government says the U.S. is standing in our way of our strategic goal. And maybe that's why the alliances doesn't work for us anymore.

So I think these are uncomfortable questions. You know, at this point I don't see the North Korea threat or the China -- competition with China threat abating. So these might be more long-term questions. But, you know, North Korea gets a vote, too. And they could play this for years. For seven years, Kim was laser-focused on developing the nuclear weapons program, developing cyber capabilities. And so I think -- I have to think about the impact of time on the way we start to think about alliances, and especially the U.S.-South Korea alliance.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. That's great.

Can I follow up by, you said it could be a very long-term proposition before we get to that point where reunification is a realistic prospect. But let's bring in South Korean domestic politics. And you two know a lot more about them than I do. But I've had it explained to me that President Moon, who had been chief of staff to President Roh and saw the difficulty of the relationship with the United States back then, has been much more smooth, pragmatic. Maybe he's a little bit more moderate than Roh. But he's only got four years left; right? And I've heard it describe to me that the way to think about South Korean

politics very simplistically for someone like me that doesn't do this full time is that Moon has been so effective at weakening the conservatives in many ways because he's been a successful politician, the conservatives who are often the defenders of the alliance, are not going to be as well positioned longer term within South Korean politics. And some of Moon's own colleagues within his party are more left wing, more anti-American than he is. So when we get to the next South Korean president, we could see an additional flux just from those internal domestic politics in South Korea.

Let me start with Jung and then ask Mike to comment as well.

Is there anything to that concern?

MS. PAK: Yeah. I think President Moon has done a great job with what he was given. And trying to manage China, manage the U.S. alliance, and trying to manage North Korea. And he has affirmed the alliance many times over, and he has affirmed the shared values with the U.S. And I think he's done a good job of trying to stay to the center of a lot of issues.

And I think that South Korea domestic is one thing. I think we can't talk about how South Korea abused the alliance and about our government without talking about the U.S. president and some of the erratic ways that the U.S. president has been taking in terms of foreign policy. And so, that the optics of drawing away from South Korea, I just wonder how much of that is going to affect the way the public thinks about South Korea developing its own nuclear weapons.

I think even just a handful of years ago, no one in South Korea would have talked about developing a nuclear weapons capability. President Trump mentioned it on the campaign trail, and he's averred to it since then, or referenced it since then. So I think what does that do for the public when there's a perception of drift and that South Korea has to defend itself and that nuclear weapons are the answer? And what does that mean for our

nonproliferation policies and what we've been trying to do for decades, which is to reduce nuclear Weapons.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you.

Mike, over to you.

MR. GREEN: I mean, you're right about Moon Jae-in. He was chief of staff for Roh Moo-hyun. I was in the Bush White House at the time. And I think our general impression was that as chief of staff, Moon was a pragmatist and dealt with the so-called Taliban in the Blue House who were much more ideological. And Moon also experienced one of the early crises for President Roh, which was when Moody's downgraded Korea's sovereign debt rating early in his administration because the analysts were worried that he was going to decouple from the U.S.-ROK alliance. And a lot of institutional investors in New York see great promise in Korea but there's a thing sometimes called the Korea premium where they, you know, build into their models for investment a certain risk. And a lot of that is about North Korea. But hey also closely watch the U.S.-Korea alliance.

So in other words, I think Moon would have realized from that experience that if you mess with the U.S.-Korea alliance too much as president of Korea, you will immediately be punished by stock markets, by places like Moody's. And so he's going to be very cautious and pragmatic.

On the other hand, you know, he has people around him -- his own chief of staff, Im Jong-seok and others, who are real movement, anti-base, anti-American, pro-North Korean activists from their student days. The former head of the All-Korea Bolshevik Student Union. People who have been arrested for firebombing the American Center in the '80s. I know them because they were on the Blue House staff when I was in the White House. And we are friends. And they say, no, no, we've changed. But you know, when you were growing up in the 1930s, I'm sure -- when you were growing up, whenever it was, I'm sure you

developed certain world views that stuck you. And so I think those are there.

I don't think that the movement progressive around Moon have a real theory of the case about North Korea, or a strategy. I think they're very tactical. I think their real obsession, if you will, or their real target is the conservative movement in South Korea, which those are the guys that imprisoned them in the '80s. And so I think a lot of what they're doing is trying to corner the conservatives. And keeping momentum going helps them to do that. And the conservatives in South Korea are really in disarray because of Pak Un-ay's demise. But also, Donald Trump has completely undercut conservatives in Korea, as he has conservatives in the U.S. and Britain and Australia.

And in the Korean case, first it was the "fire and fury" and talk of preventative war, which traumatized all Koreans, conservatives, too. So Koreans, conservative and progressive, and kind of relieved to be out of that. And it's very hard for conservatives in the Korean intellectual space to push a hard line right now because people are understandably relieved to not be talking about war.

And the other thing is now the president of the United States, a republican who would normally be the kind of support and buttress for conservative thinking in Korea is declaring peace on the Korean Peninsula.

So the conservatives are really on their back feet, but I personally think looking at the polls and so forth that the Korean public is not where it was in the 2000s. It is inherently pretty cautious and conservative on the whole about North Korea, relieved to be not talking about war. But still skeptical enough, and still understanding the value of the alliance enough that we're not facing the dangers Jung described unless the U.S. creates a narrative on our part that makes things like nuclear weapons or other steps seem more logical.

MR. O'HANLON: Fantastic.

I could carry on but I think it's more fair and fun to let you join in on the

conversation as well. So I think we'll take a couple of questions at a time. And I also want to encourage any South Koreans in the room to make sure they get their hands up, too, and get some of your voices in as well.

But I do see -- we'll start here with these two since I saw their hands first, and then we'll take a second round.

So we'll take both these questions to start. Please identify yourself.

MR. HURWITZ: Hi. I'm Elliot Hurwitz. I was in the intelligence community, and I worked at the World Bank for 20 years. Thank you for a great presentation.

Dr. Green, I wanted to ask you a question. You said that joint exercises and command are more important than ever. However, our president has said that he would like to, or will, or already has, pulled out from joint exercises with the South Korean forces. So I'd like your comments or -- I'd like your comments on that point.

MR. O'HANLON: Great. Thank you.

Let's take this one also before we come back to Mike and Jung.

MS. OSWALD: Hi. Thank you for this panel. My name is Rachel Oswald. I'm a reporter.

Speaking about South Korean's liberal government, there has been reporting about the shrinking space and support for activists, including North Korean defectors, focusing on human rights in North Korea amid this broader reengagement strategy. How important do you think it is to maintain a focus and funding through the U.S. government for nonprofits focused on not just journalism into North Korea but also documenting human rights abuses? How does that fit into a broader strategy? Is it as provocative as some people say to Kim Jong-un? And is it worth pursuing?

MR. O'HANLON: So Mike, you got a specific one to you. Why don't you begin, take whatever fraction of the second one you wish as well, and then Jung can weigh in,

too.

MR. GREEN: So the cycle of U.S. exercises with the Republic of Korea include exercises that are primarily computer-based, tabletop, some movement of forces, but mostly testing, command and control relationships, things like that. That's the one that was postponed. I think the U.S. Command, the Pentagon can live with that.

The way it was postponed was not good. As I said, over the objections of the Japanese government and the deep concerns of the Korean defense establishment at the suggestion of China and Russia, which have a clear common interest in seeing U.S. alliances weaken everywhere, that was very problematic. But the freeze itself is not going to seriously undermine our deterrence or our readiness.

I hear from people in uniform, both Korean and American at senior levels that we can even maybe miss the cycle that involves more movement of troops. But we do this in a second year and we start to really lose our edge. Particularly, in terms of the senior commanders knowing each other, the American commanders knowing the terrain, testing the plans. The exercises test the assumptions and the plans. And so that's where you learn whether we have the right kind of missile defense capabilities, cyber capabilities. Do we have enough ammunition? So it's sort of like a basketball team that can miss a practice, you know, once, and then maybe miss it the next week. But eventually, even if you're working out individually, you need to know who's going to lateral to you and that kind of stuff. So eventually, it will hurt readiness.

The bigger problem though from my perspective is it will hurt the credibility of the U.S.-ROK alliance will introduce -- not introduce, will continue and deepen the narrative that the United States is perhaps willing to cut deals that undermine the defense of our allies. And that is especially resonating in Japan where the prime minister of Japan has decided not to challenge the president to work with him to try to get something done. But at the level

below that across the Japanese government and in the diet, you hear deep, deep concern that this exercise freeze may be permanent. And it's less about the capabilities, although that's an issue and more about willpower. What does it say about the American willingness to defend our allies? Risky terrain.

Just quickly on North Korean defectors. You know, there is a little bit I think of a chilling in Seoul these days. I wouldn't overstate it but -- and it's also not expulsive to progressive governments, even under conservative governments defectors have been somewhat managed in Seoul. I would like to see, as I think you suggested in your question, more support on an international basis for defector testimony for information about North Korea.

And you know, it gets very political. The North Korea Human Rights Act in the U.S. Congress was copied in the Korean National Assembly. It was supported by the conservatives at the time. It was opposed by the progressives. It became very political. President Trump's criticism of North Korean human rights in the State of the Union and then not mentioning it at all in the summit, that was very political.

So it's not that we have to turn the decibels way up; we just need to have a consistent and persistent attention to it and try to take it out of partisan politics in both countries in my view. But it has suffered under conservatives a bit, but now I think under a progressive government there is less space in media and elsewhere for activists and human rights experts and defectors to speak up. In my view. I don't know if Jung agrees.

MS. PAK: Yeah. I think when the whole -- before the Olympics and then this whole thaw happened since January, that there was a sense that from, whether through statements or just an atmosphere of optimism about all of this that it wouldn't be appropriate to criticize.

Now, policy is one thing, or government directives are one thing on censoring,

but it's the self-censorship that I think provides that added umph to the quieting of human rights voices and of the defectors' voices.

I would also ask that in this period of rapprochement with North Korea is how much does North Korea get to call the shots? They threatened the family reunions, something that Seoul always wants, that everybody wants to happen, if they don't return the defector, the waitresses; right? And in tamping down on voices critical of North Korea, what does that do to your own systems in that the fear that you instill in people who are pretty vulnerable in South Korean society, but also the fear of giving into North Korea or aligning more with North Korea's preferences and priorities on censoring and about tamping down on criticism on the regime itself.

So I think when we look at how voices on human rights have been softened or muted or muzzled, it's multiple layers of looking at censorship of the government and self-censorship, and the course of nature of the North Korean regime.

MR. O'HANLON: Just one quick second.

Let's have your follow-up and then his follow-up.

MS. OSWALD: When you said self-censorship, were you talking about journalism, looking at human rights abuses? Were you talking about defectors choosing to be quiet? Were you talking about donations to nonprofits that support defectors drying up?

MS. PAK: All of those things. And journalists, you know, they want access; right? And if you want access, you're going to try to Pugh pretty close to what you should be, you know, to make sure that you still have those contacts. It also, you know, and people rely on the news to highlight grievances, to highlight some of these terrible things that are happening. You know, but when it's not in the news, when it's not being talked about, I mean, it's just human nature that if it's not in the forefront of what you see and what you read every day you forget about it.

And we talk a lot about the missiles and the nukes and the things that we can see. We often don't think about or talk about or take seriously the things that we can't see. And that is the changing of mindsets. It's the changing of how your preferences are directed or shaped by outside forces that necessarily don't have your interests at heart.

And so I think in foreign policy and in other political matters, that's why the education of the public is so important and making sure that we still have those, the freedoms to say these things in public and in private. That's something that we don't have in North Korea.

MR. GREEN: You don't have to read Korean to see this, although if you want to read my book in Korean it's out from the Aspen Institute, by the way. But if you just --

MR. O'HANLON: This one -- this one's out in Korean?

MR. GREEN: It's out in Korean.

MR. O'HANLON: No kidding?

MR. GREEN: Yeah. And coming out in Japanese and Chinese soon.

SPEAKER: Is it on Amazon?

MR. GREEN: I don't know. I don't know.

So anyway, you don't have to read Korean. You can just go on the website of the major Korean dailies and just do your own quick sort of content analysis. And I think you will find -- I'm sure you will find that if you look at American newspapers coverage of Korea, which isn't perfect, but if you look at the ratio stories about North Korean diplomacy, North-South dialogue, and then human interest stories about suffering in North Korea human rights in American papers, or European papers, or Japanese papers -- that one is more sensitive -- but, and then you look at Korean dailies right now, you will find many fewer stories. Many, many more stories about the diplomacy. Many fewer stories about suffering in North Korea. And I think that's for the reasons that Jung said.

I wanted to pick up on Jung's really important point about the North Koreans not getting to dictate the terms of how the Republic of Korea talks about its interests or human rights or other things because I think this is why the second scenario I mentioned, I gave it 20-30 percent, maybe that's too long listening to Jung. The scenario where North Korea dials down the provocations and keeps playing this. And the reason that would work for North Korea is because if there's a peace declaration, if the North-South humanitarian reunions of families doled out in small doses to keep the South Koreans hungry, returns of American MIA doled out in small doses to keep the Americans hungry, and then we have a peace declaration and we're negotiating a peace declaration, that is a perfect formula for North Korea to claim that our military exercises, our sanctions, our criticism of human rights are all breaking this opportunity for peace and this opportunity for humanitarian actions to help the people, the survivors of the families in the U.S. or in the Republic of Korea. And that is not just fantasy on North Korea's part. That's worked before. The agreed framework in 1994 in my view failed in large part because the administration at the time, the Clinton Administration, stopped talking about human rights. And when I came in, my first day, first week on the job -- I'm going to criticize the Bush administration to be fair in a second -- but my first day on the job I got a call -- I got a copy of the Annual Human Rights Report around the world and there was nothing on North Korea. Myanmar, China. There was nothing on -- Burma, we called it. So I called over to the Korean desk and they said, well, the seventh floor told us that we are not to criticize North Korean human rights right now because of the diplomacy. And I said, well, who was it? And they listed people from the previous administration. I said, you know, there was an election and there's a new -- you will put it in.

But the Bush administration also, look, after Chris Hill rejoined the six-party talks in 2007, lifted sanctions -- returned the money from Bank of Deltage to North Korea, we didn't react at all to the North Korean nuclear facility at Alkabar in Syria. We didn't do

anything. We toned down human rights, that criticism to a significant extent.

So the North Koreans are not crazy to think that an administration in the U.S. might -- or in South Korea, especially in South Korea -- might, you know, get entrapped in this process and really, you know, especially if we have a peace declaration, and want these humanitarian things for their people, and want this sense of peace and hope. And they especially I think, with the current administration here and with Moon Jae-in see it even better than they had in the '90s or in the 2000s.

So maybe my 20-30 percent scenario, maybe that number is too small. I don't know what you think, Jung. Maybe it's higher. Maybe the North Koreans will see this working and push it. I suspect not because I think after the midterms here, the "king has no clothes" line will begin in the Congress and even within the administration. But you can see how North Korea would want to play this.

MR. GREEN: I think if I could add one last quick point and then we'll go to the second round, unless you two know otherwise, one thing I don't have a good feel for -- we all tend to say as the new received wisdom, the sanctions regime is loosening. But we don't really have good numbers. You know, we know that the best estimate from the Bank of South Korea is that the North Korean economy contracted by three and a half percent last year and that was a year in which the sanctions were only imposed really in the second half of the year, primarily, the tougher round. And we've heard a lot of anecdotal evidence of individual violations of sanctions. I don't personally feel like I have a good sense of just how much they're still biting. If the erosion is sort of in the 5, 10, 15 percent category, then North Korea may feel the need to either increase the charm or do something else to push things further.

Anyway, unless you two know otherwise, I think that's a question of just how much sanctions have already degraded is sort of an unknown in this whole thing which could have a big impact.

MR. O'HANLON: So let's go to -- we'll take these three, one in each row, third, second, first, and then come back to the panel.

SPEAKER: Thank you. (Inaudible) Central News Agency, Taiwan.

I want to go back to the uncomfortable question. Is Korea's unification America's interest? How about the young generation's attitude toward the unification in South Korea? Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: And then here.

DANIEL: Good morning. My name is Daniel. I'm soon to be a grad student.

I often see that it takes a long time for the U.S. government to even move within a two-month period. So why is it that we should expect so much from these talk and what came from them within these last two months?

MR. O'HANLON: And then finally, a friend in the front row.

MR. NELSON: Thanks. Chris Nelson, Nelson Report. Thanks, as always, for a great discussion.

I think we need to refocus a bit on the potential disconnect problem that could threaten the alliance in the short-term. We have kind of not been talking about that. We were talking about longer range things.

I need to hear a better discussion, not necessarily today, on the (inaudible) declaration. What is in there? What are the South Koreans and North Koreans really think they're talking about versus what we, you know, our goal (inaudible), you know, that tends to get lost. And I think we need to focus on that.

My question is, we may have Pompeo to North Korea shortly. We may have Kim -- President Moon shortly or fairly short. Maybe before UNGA. What kind of things do we need to look at that could help or could further the disconnect risk? Specifically, for President Moon, does he have a role in talking to his buddy Kim about a declaration with a big D? All of

us so-called experts are saying that if we don't have a declaration with a big D, you know, we're just kidding ourselves on this stuff. It would seem that it's in South Korea's direct interest to make sure that North Korea understands that if they want the sanctions to be lowered and economic programs, et cetera, et cetera.

So that's my question: What is the South Korean role, President Moon's role in pushing the strategic concerns that we have that will help his goals of furthering economic cooperation. If he opens up Kaesong, you know, where does that leave us? That kind of thing. So thanks. Thanks. And thanks for the discussion.

MR. O'HANLON: Thanks, Chris.

Jung, why don't you start with whichever fraction of those questions you'd like and then Mike can go second this time.

MS. PAK: I want to start with the second question because that's an uncomfortable question. The second question was why -- it was another uncomfortable question. Why should we expect so much in two months? But only if you look at it from the perspective of two months. We're talking about decades in terms of what the North Koreans have been doing. So I think to criticism that we're expecting North Korea to do too much too soon without us giving anything, we've already given security guarantees in the past. We've given security guarantees. Indications that we want to talk about a peace mechanism in the region to, you know, reflecting their desires for that kind of peace treaty. We've done high level discussions, even a POTUS meeting. And so it's not just about two months. It's about since the 1960s, probably, since when Kim Il-sung started his, you know, got his eyes on the prize, on the nuclear weapons program.

The potential disconnect now, you know, so the whole idea of the simultaneous movement of peace and denuclearization on the same track was always questionable in that, you know, the idea was that you have these two wheels connected by

this axis and you're just going to keep moving. And the progress on one was dependent on the other and that President Moon, from his past experience, recognized that both have to move in tandem. But the fact is, I think, there was always the fear that peace track, that the peace wheel was going to move too fast and that denuclearization was not going to move and it's just going to keep spinning. And I think that's what's happening where there is a momentum. And I think momentum and inertia, a push forward, is important. That is driving the peace process forward, especially since North Korea wants it so much and they're using that as a -- and it's aligned with what the South Korean government wants in terms of this peace declaration. So whereas the U.S. is still saying we have to see credible signs of denuclearization and North Korea has not given those signs in the past few weeks since in the summit. So I think, yes, there is a great potential for disconnect now. I thought the conversation about the liaison office and how that might violate sanctions came from an unnamed U.S. official instead of a discussion privately.

MR. O'HANLON: Mike?

MR. GREEN: I'm going to take advantage of maybe ruin Jung's two wheels metaphor because it created an image in my mind. If you picture those displays or games in science museums where you have a gear, a big gear, and then you have a little gear that moves it, the big gear is denuclearization and the little gear is peace declaration and peace treaty. And I think one way to conceive what North Korea's strategy is, the big gear to turn towards denuclearization and get five degrees turned requires the little gear to turn 90 or 180 degrees or something. And eventually that turns so much that the marble falls through and the alliance is broken. And I think that's sort of how the North Koreans are looking at these two wheels. It's not that their wheels are spinning exactly the way I visualize it, but the North Koreans in exchange for very small changes are going to demand big changes -- peace declaration, U.S. forces off the peninsula, no nuclear umbrella. Things that are really almost

existential to the alliance in exchange for things that are very small and incremental and don't really fundamentally get at North Korea's nuclear program. That's the negotiating dilemma we have.

So yes, it takes a very long time to negotiate arms control. No doubt about it. History shows that. The reason as Chris mentioned, people say, well, let's see a declaration. Let's have the North Koreans declare what they have. It's not because that solves the problem but because that would be the first indication of what we know from arms control history is some intent or some basis for the arduous, long, difficult negotiations that will follow. But we don't have that. We don't have anything that suggests we're on a path towards denuclearization. A more modest accomplishment might be can we continue to freeze, cap -- we're not going to be able to verify the HEU, highly enriched uranium prediction. We're not going to be able to verify or monitor weaponization. We can monitor tests because we can see them from satellites. So getting beyond tests would be tough. The one thing we could monitor would be Yongbyon, which is marginal now, very marginal as a program. Maybe if they turned over fissile material we could do the forensics. That would be valuable. I don't think they'll do it.

It raises the question, would we be willing to accept some lowering of sanctions, some separation, some humanitarian aid, in exchange for the kinds of steps I just described which would not stop their program, not at all, but it would slow it down a bit. You could argue maybe more effectively than sanctions would.

The problem with that formula is we're terrible at it. It requires a kind of subtle rheostat. We generally don't do that. We, the Koreans, the U.S., Japan. We tend to just have an on/off switch. You know, we're doing sanctions or we're talking to them. And the North Koreans know that.

So if this were a normal arms control negotiation, it would be, I think, a

legitimate point that it takes a long time. But it's not because there's no indication at all the North Koreans have intent to begin that process. That's the problem. Hence, Chris's point about some kind of declaration. I don't actually expect it, Chris. We all say it because that would be kind of a -- that would prove us a little bit wrong.

SPEAKER: (Inaudible)

MR. GREEN: Maybe. Maybe.

The Panmunjom Declaration is, you know, pretty thin, too, I think. You know, if you want a consequential -- not a consequential, but a substantive North-South agreement, it's the North-South Basic Agreement and the North-South Denuclearization Agreement from 1991-1992, which spelled out practical near-term steps for confidence building and reducing tensions. North Koreans are not interested in that. They're interested in the big prize -- peace declaration undermining the legitimacy and rationale for the U.S. Combined Forces Command, for the U.S. nuclear umbrella. They want us to turn that small gear quickly so they can begin dismantling. And if you disagree, Jung, tell me, but I think that's what they're after. And they have some support for that. Considerable support from Beijing and Moscow.

MS. PAK: The time, the context is important, I think. The Panmunjom Declaration of 20 -- what is it, Ari, 2018? Of 2018 versus the Inter-Korea Declaration from 1991 and 1992. Early '90s, what happened? The Soviet Union collapses and North Korea loses its major source of money and of political and economic support. So what do they do? They start looking, poking around, you know, turning over, you know, looking under blankets and see who might be willing to engage. And that's South Korea.

So I think in that context of 1991 and 1992, that makes a lot of sense. Even the 1994 Agreed Framework makes sense in that context. But, you know, the "thin gruel" of the Singapore Summit and the Panmunjom Declaration from 2018, and the fact that it said so little about North Korea's commitment to lay down their weapons, I think it shows their

confidence. You know, it's not the, you know, let's talk seriously about all these steps and timetables that we're going to talk from the 1990s, but it's maybe we'll work toward denuclearization once everybody is denuclearized. We want peace because who doesn't want peace?

And so, when you look through the lens of where North Korea was in the '90s, and when North Korea -- or how North Korea perceives itself in 2018, I think that should be a real eye-opener for us that they don't see themselves as a position of weakness but as a position of being able to demand things and getting it.

MR. GREEN: By the way, the history real quickly is useful, and Jung Pak said it very accurately. Because after the Cold War, Kim Jong-un was -- Kim Il-sung, excuse me, was successful at playing Moscow and Beijing against each other in the same way Ho Chi Minh did in Vietnam. Usually in Korea history, Korean leaders are terrible at that. They try to play China and Japan against each other and they both invade. They try to play Japan and Russia against each other and they both invade. Usually, Korean leaders are really bad at this, but Kim Il-sung was very good at it. Very good at it. Aided by the Cold War, of course. So when he lost his Moscow patron, he needed some card to keep the Chinese at bay and to get some legitimacy and so forth. And he needed nuclear weapons more than ever. And I don't think what we see with Kim Jong-un is any change in that line, which is a complete nuclear deterrent and some level of legitimacy relationship with the U.S. to get, you know, sanctions relief around the world and to keep China a little bit off guard. And I don't see any fundamental -- I see tactical changes with Kim Jong-un and before in Kim Jong-il. I don't see any fundamental change in that North Korean strategy since the end of the Cold War.

MR. O'HANLON: So let's do a round more in the back of the room. Actually, we've got a gentleman here in about the sixth row. And anybody -- did I see a hand further back, too? Okay, up here in about the sixth row. And then there are two back in that corner

we'll take as well in this round.

SPEAKER: Thank you. My name is (inaudible). I'm doing a fellowship for (inaudible) Academy.

MR. O'HANLON: A little louder, please.

SPEAKER: I'm doing a fellowship for (inaudible) Academy. And I'm also doing an internship at the Stimson Center. Thanks for the great presentation. And I had a question about wartime operational control.

So recently South Korea reported or announced a defense reform for five years, and it also incorporates a transition for wartime operational control to South Korea. And this also includes replacing the current commander of the CFC to a Korean ROK military general. And I was wondering how the U.S. sees this? How do you guys feel about this? And how does it affect the U.S.-Korean alliance? Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you.

And we've got two in the back.

By the way, I'm going to start on that one and you can overrule me and correct what I say if you want. But this way we'll have one question per person at least potentially.

SPEAKER: There was a report that South Korean National Defense Ministry is considering North Korea as an enemy in its 2018 National Defense White Paper. How worried are you in terms of U.S.-ROK alliance?

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you.

And by the way, please identify yourself as the microphone is still there.

SPEAKER: (Inaudible) from Radio Free Asia.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you.

And then the gentleman over here?

MR. SNIPE: Good morning. Rob Snipe from the Australian Embassy.

Going back to the scenario of the marble dropping and that either severing or significantly modifying the U.S.-ROK alliance, if this were to happen, how would you see the alliance framework within the Indo-Pacific falling beyond that? And what effect would this have too a U.S. military permanent presence within the Indo-Pacific? Thanks.

MR. O'HANLON: So maybe we'll go from me down the row this way this time.

I'm just going to begin with the first question because this is a pet peeve of mine. And Mike's a much better diplomat and much better strategist and nicer guy. So I'm just going to come out strong.

Operational control was always a very bad idea. Operational control transfer. It flies in the face of everything we've learned about coordinating and simplifying military command and control in war. And the modern history of the American military's own internal reforms, especially Goldwater-Nichols and everything that we learned in the failed Iran hostage rescue attempt of 1980 and subsequently in our difficulties operating together, the need to strengthen combatant commands, simplify the chain of command from the president to the secretary of defense to the combatant commander, not even involve the chairman or the joint chiefs or the service chiefs. It's all about responsibility, clear authority, the idea of divvying up the command geographically or functionally or otherwise to me has just always been something that we let ourselves get maneuvered into for bad reasons and then people realized it was a bad idea so they postponed. Because it was always easier to postpone than to revoke or admit a mistake. And that's why we continue to find ourselves in this conundrum.

So if I were -- you can see why I'm not in government. I'm not very good at diplomacy. But I think we should begin from that basic premise. As long as there's a clear threat, a clear North Korean threat, even though today's panel is imagining beyond -- as long as there's a clear North Korean threat, we can imagine ways in which the forces get better

integrated. General Brooks has worked very hard at that. So have his predecessors. So have South Korean friends. But the idea of somehow splitting up what General Brooks now controls in one person into multiple or two positions makes no sense, especially when General Brooks works for the Blue House and the White House already. So there already is equality in the overall grand strategy and political leadership of the alliance. And I think that's where we should keep it until the threat has been much mitigated. But now you can clean up my mess.

MR. GREEN: I agree. I'm very diplomatic. Brilliant.

No, I think, look, I'm not in favor personally of OPCON transfer to Korea right now because it's being pushed for political reasons, not reasons of enhancing deterrents or readiness or anything like that. You know, the Blue House is pushing to get wartime OPCON transfer from the U.S. commander to Korea, which means in a wartime the Korean general is in charge, for political reasons. Part of it is because the North Koreans have long had a list of demands, including ending the U.S. nuclear umbrella, breaking up the Combined Forces Command, as have the Chinese in a somewhat way. And this seems to indicate in the Korean environment that we're going down that path. I think it sends very bad strategic signals in the direction of Japan, China, Korea, North Korea, and Russia.

As a practical matter though, if we maintain the Combined Forces Command. If the commanders in chief are ultimately the two presidents anyway, if their responsibility for the ground war, the air war, the naval, you know, cyber and space are the same three and four stars, I think it's doable. I think it's doable. And I don't think the U.S. should oppose it too explicitly because it is a matter of pride, and the Korean military is capable of much of this. And they know full well, the Korean three and four stars, that they don't have adequate capability for space, cyber, certainly nuclear, strategic, intelligence, even tactical air. So -- or naval in many ways. So I think it's doable if we keep the Combined Forces Command.

But in the current environment with the President of the United States saying I

want to get off Korea, with the Chinese and the Russians and the North Koreans all pressing to break up the U.S.-Korea alliance with political motivation for some in the current Korean government to give sort of things that are not necessarily in our interest but are attracted to North Korea, I just think in the current political environment it sends the wrong signals.

The question about if we were just off the peninsula. I mean, I think this is profound for Australia, to be parochial on your behalf. And this was negotiated in the context of, of course, the U.S.-Japan Peace Treaty, but really, the Korean War. And it depends on how it happens, of course. But if the U.S. is off the Korean Peninsula, it means that the U.S. alliance network in Asia is basically only maritime. It's Australia, Japan. It puts enormous pressure on Singapore. Probably unsustainable pressure on Singapore to sustain Shanghai and our presence there. It puts enormous pressure on Thailand, which is not as critical to us in terms of military access but we do rely on Utapao, the airfield, the airfield and other things. It gives enormous pressure to Thailand and raises huge questions about or commitment to Continental Asia. It allows Beijing to consolidate its internal lines on the continent and focus entirely on the maritime. Which means from Australia's perspective, you know, there are significant forces along the (inaudible) and so forth. It means over time the PLA can reconstitute itself to more air and maritime and they're going to be in your neighborhood a lot more and a lot more confident. And it raises questions in all alliances about U.S. staying power.

So I think it's very consequential in many, many ways. It depends on how it unfolds. It depends on, you know, if the scenario is there's actual peaceful unification, you know, it's hard to justify a U.S. Infantry Division in the 8th Army and stuff. You know, if that's the scenario and we maintain some combined forces command, maybe we combine more the bilateral U.S.-Japan, U.S.-Korea alliances, you know, if that is happening it's not as consequential. But if we just, as Theodore Roosevelt would say, cut and run, I think it's pretty

-- it's an onside goal for us.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you.

Jung?

MS. PAK: On the enemy moniker, I don't really mind but it would also be nice if the North Koreans stopped calling people nasty names, too.

MR. O'HANLON: One last quick round and then we'll have to wrap up.

So we've got a gentleman over here in the fifth row with the hat. And did I see a hand behind him also or not?

Okay. So his question and then there in the third row, and over here. This is a lightning round though so we'll go quick questions, quick answers.

MR. WINTERS: Steve Winters, independent consultant.

Quick question to Jung.

Who said that the North Koreans because (inaudible) situation are really desperate on getting the peace side going? And you referred to that. But the recent OECD report on South Korea really portrays that situation of the South Korean population is pretty desperate. I mean, the number of elderly people living in poverty. And similarly, Russian-Asia, Putin is desperate to get that thing kick-started. So it isn't just one country but three at least there that desperately want this peace thing to go forward so that they can go forward with the economic plans.

So it seems to me, and this is the question, isn't this the Chairman Kim as they're calling him now, winning a sort of war of perception here because they say that the U.S. is pushing too hard for results too fast that are just impossible, and maybe the Russians and the Chinese might go along with that. But the point being, if the whole thing goes down in flames, not firing but the peace process let's just say (inaudible, off mic).

MR. O'HANLON: Okay, thank you.

Then, we'll go to the gentleman in the third row, please.

MR. BRENOWITZ: Thank you. David Brenowitz.

I was wondering. I understand that most of the missile technology in North Korea came from Russia. And I'm wondering what Putin's role is in this and what his interests are in the whole area.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you.

And then the final question will be over here and then we'll do a wrap-up with answers and any concluding thoughts people may want to throw into those answers starting with Jung.

MR. STEWART: Kyle Stewart, defense legislative fellow.

Regarding the prior comments about the possibility of reemergence of DPRK's provocations, what would be the implications to the U.S.-ROK alliance of a U.S. unilateral strike against DPRK's nuclear capability? And what would be similarly the viewpoints and implications for allies, partners, and friends in the broader Indo-Asia-Pacific?

MR. O'HANLON: So why don't you take whichever of those you like, Jung, and then Mike, and then I'll add a word of conclusion as well.

MS. PAK: Yes. So, you know, Kim Il-Sung blamed the U.S. and South Korea for the Korean War and for killing people. And so if the Kim family does anything relaly well, you know, as Mike mentioned before, is playing Russia and China off of each other but also laying the blame somewhere else. As well as playing the optics game of who's doing what to whom?

And so whether that's going to lead to the end of the alliance, you know, it's all dependent on so many other things. It depends on what happens with our president here, as well as what happens in South Korea domestically. And North Korea also has a voice in whether or not it decides to do something provocative in the next few years.

MR. GREEN: On Putin, I think the Russian's role on the North Korea problem varies. When I was in the six-party talks they were pretty helpful, actually, on the whole. Right now they're extremely unhelpful. President Trump doesn't think so but they are extremely unhelpful. They are backfilling Chinese sanctions where the Chinese are imposing sanctions and the Russians are filling in. They care clearly guilty of transferring oil and resources against the U.S. Security Council Sanctions. So not helpful.

I think what Putin is trying to get out of it is basically three things. Russia wants a seat at the table, and from the Russian perspective, you can get a seat at the table by being helpful, as they were a little bit in the six-party talks, or by creating trouble, as they are now, by backfilling sanctions.

Second thing, I think the Russians want to weaken our alliances. This is global for them. Putin, himself, is more focused on NATO, but it's clearly U.S.-Australia, U.S.-Japan, U.S.-Korea, U.S.-India relationship, especially. And anything that makes Putin a peacemaker that reduces the logic of missile defense, especially is a plus that freezes exercises. Between the U.S. and its allies is a plus.

And the third thing he wants is money. And the principal vehicle for that is a proposal the Russians have had for 15-plus years, to build a pipeline from North Korea through South Korea to sell natural gas to Japan, Korea, and to have everyone else pay for it.

The first communication Putin had with President Bush when I worked in the White House was, on the North Korea issue was a letter saying I have an idea. We'll do a pipeline. And then everyone will be happy and we'll solve the problem. And that's a pretty consistent goal. I don't think -- I don't think we play with Russia on this one right now. I think we marginalize them and eventually they come around.

On a U.S. unilateral strike, you know, a U.S. unilateral strike will not take out all of North Korea's nuclear capabilities. It will be some fraction if it goes well. So then the

question is, what happens next? If it's successful in the sense that North Korea does not retaliate and comes to the negotiating table, I think our alliances are in pretty good shape. But even then there's going to be a real, holy -- we're not allowed to say this because we're at Brookings -- holy "beep" factor in Seoul and Tokyo. And what do they do? I think they -- I think they move towards more jointness with the U.S. I don't think the instinct in Seoul and Tokyo is going to be decoupling. It's going to want to be even more joint and involved in U.S. military planning to get inside that decision loop.

But at the same time, I think you could see considerable accommodation, maybe by Seoul, to avoid a second strike.

You saw a little bit of that in the era when President Trump was talking about preventive war and bloody nose. Moon Jae-in brokered this summit, invited the North Koreans to the Olympics. He did all these things in large part to preempt and prevent U.S. military strikes.

So I think it would force a lot more unhelpful, in my view, South Korean accommodation.

Japan is more complicated. I don't think the Japanese are in a position to accommodate North Korea to avoid this. So you'd see more jointness, more strengthening the alliance, and probably more pronounced unilateral strike capabilities and independent options.

Now, if the North Koreans shoot back and there's a nuclear war, then it's anybody's guess. Because if deterrence -- deterrence has never failed, really, in the U.S.-Korea, U.S. Japan alliances since we've formally signed treaties. If we strike and the North Koreans strike back and we -- and that's the end of it, then deterrence has failed. And I think that unleashes programs in Japan and Korea, if nuclear deterrence physically fails in the sense that the North Koreans, you know, shoot back.

Mr. O'HANLON: I want to add one word. Jung may want to add one word,

and then we'll wrap up.

It seems to me also, linking this now to the topic of the meeting today, that whatever these immediate responses in the context of an ongoing North Korean threat and an acute crisis to manage, we have sent a major signal about how we see the alliance longer term. And even though my earlier comment about OPCON transfer was sort of hawkish from an old-fashioned American perspective, I don't think we go around risking nuclear war unilaterally with sworn allies that we fought together in combat previously, especially if we're hopeful that over the longer term they're going to trust us as an ally looking well beyond.

So as they think about their position vis-à-vis China, it strikes me that what they don't want is an America that's dragging them in to fights recklessly, and their relationship with China is instinctively always going to be to try to find a middle ground, I think. And sometimes our instincts are more hawkish. And I think that for Koreans is going to be one of the big questions they have to wrestle with as they think about the long-term desirability of staying aligned with the United States.

I would like to see, if we could imagine this world of a denuclearized North Korea or even the threat gone in some way, I would like to imagine a world where we still have 5-, 6-, 8,000 U.S. forces on the peninsula. They're more regional and maritime and expeditionary and multilateral in their orientation. We do a lot with South Korea, but we also train with Japan, with maybe even China, do various counterpiracy, counterterrorism, peacekeeping, humanitarian relief. But also, there's the implicit benefit for South Korea. The Americans are still here and the Chinese will notice. But it's not a posture that's positioned against China, per se. To me, that's the best long-term place we can wind up. And I don't know how we get there by unilaterally launching military strike that have potential implications for leading to nuclear war. So in the end, I'm with Mike on opposing that option.

But Jung may have some thoughts, too, and then we'll stop.

MS. PAK: And the missile and nuclear and other sites are conveniently or inconveniently, depending on who you ask, located very close to the Chinese border and to the South Korean border. So, and the recent warning of ties and Kim's Summit diplomacy has had the effect of creating real state bubbles on both sides of the border. On the China and North Korea border, as well as the North-South border. So you're going to have to get through some human shields to get to those sites.

MR. GREEN: And some great casinos if you've seen the video, with horses.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you all for being here. Please join me in thanking Mike and Jung.

(Applause)

* * * * *

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2020