

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

FALK AUDITORIUM

TRANS-ATLANTIC AND TRANS-PACIFIC DIALOGUE:
ALLIANCES AT CROSSROADS

THE SECOND ANNUAL BROOKINGS-VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT
BRUSSEL-ASAN INSTITUTE CONFERENCE

Washington, D.C.

Tuesday, October 29, 2019

PARTICIPANTS:

Welcoming Remarks:

JUNG H. PAK
SK Korea Foundation Chair in Korea Studies
Senior Fellow, Center for East Asia Policy Studies
The Brookings institution

RAMON PACHECO PARDO
KF-VUB Korea Chair, The Institute for European Studies
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

CHOI KANG
Vice President (Acting President) and Principal Fellow
Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Alliances in the Age of “America First”:

CHOI KANG, Moderator
Vice President (Acting President) and Principal Fellow
Asan Institute for Policy Studies

LUIS SIMÓN
Research Professor, The Institute for European Studies
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

JAMES KIM
Research Fellow
Asan Institute for Policy Studies

JUNG H. PAK
SK Korea Foundation Chair in Korea Studies
Senior Fellow, Center for East Asia Policy Studies
The Brookings institution

THOMAS WRIGHT
Senior Fellow and Director, Center on the United States and Europe
The Brookings Institution

Alliances in the New Normal of U.S.-China Rivalry:

RAMON PACHECO PARDO
KF-VUB Korea Chair, The Institute for European Studies
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

LINDE DESMAELE
Ph.D. Researcher, International Security, The Institute for European Studies
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

LYNN KUOK
Associate Fellow, Asia-Pacific Programme
International Institute for Strategic Studies

SHIN BEOMCHUL
Director, Center for Security and Unification
Asan Institute for Policy Studies

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. PAK: Thank you, everyone, for coming to our event today.

You're at the Trans-Atlantic and Trans-Pacific Dialogue: Alliances at Crossroads. My name is Jung Pak. I'm the SK Korea Foundation Chair of Korea Studies here at Brookings, and I'm so pleased to have you join us today. I'm joined by the Institute for European Studies, colleagues from Institute for European Studies, as well as the Asan Policy Institute.

We cooked up this event and a series of events between Ramon Pacheco Pardo and I, who is the Korea Foundation chair. In London, we decided that we needed to have a trans-Pacific, trans-Atlantic conversation about Asia issues, alliance issues, and about the Korean Peninsula.

This is the second event. The first event was held in Brussels last year. For this event, we're talking about how three years into "America First," including the Trump administration's continued criticisms about alliances, how have alliances fared in the last three years? How have our allies in Europe and in the Asia-Pacific region--how have they adjusted their approaches and how do they see U.S. commitment to the region?

We have two public panels today. First, to talk about alliances in the age of Trump and then to talk about alliances in the age of deepening U.S.-China rivalry or strategic competition.

So, without further ado, I'd like to bring up Ramon Pacheco Pardo, who will also provide a few, a couple of minutes of opening comments. Ramon?

MR. PARDO: Thank you very much. And thanks to all of you for coming.

As you said, we cooked up this event a couple of years ago. I think it was in London, and last year we held the first one in Brussels in which we actually discussed: (a) the concern that many European countries have about the state of the trans-Atlantic alliance related to the policy of the current U.S. President who might be less inclined to support an alliance with the Europeans, but the event last year also served to educate Europeans of the trans-Pacific alliances, which are not as well known in Europe as, obviously, they are here.

So at least year's event, I think it was quite successful, and so far, we've had a really good conversation about how these two alliances compare with each other, the current state. There are

many links between the U.S. on the one hand, Europe, Korea on the other hand that actually make these alliances resilient. And now we look forward to the discussion as Jung said on the third year of “America First” and as elections approach here in the U.S. and as in the European Union we have actually a new commission coming in, a European Parliament also voted in. So, we have new leadership in the European Union that also has to grapple with the issues everyone should be discussing today. Thank you very much.

MS. PAK: Thanks, Ramon. I wanted to invite Choi Kang of Asan Policy Institute.

MR. CHOI: Thank you, Jung. It is my great pleasure to be with you this afternoon. Of course, actually, Asan will be hosting the third meeting in Seoul next year. So actually, our intention is to come up with some kind of recommendations for the incoming administration in the United States to upgrade or strengthen the alliance relations between the two parties.

Actually, the Trans-Atlantic and Trans-Pacific Alliance, I think the first, maybe the only one we have to talk about alliance issues across the regions. So actually, we can learn something from the other regions. But actually, it seems over the past couple of years, we have learned something about what I can call a kind of Trump risk, how we can effectively manage the alliance relations between the Trump administration and how we are going to upgrade our alliance relations into the future. That is going to be a tough challenge ahead of us but I'm sure because of trilateral cooperation among the three of us, it will enable us to provide some kind of recommendation into the future. But actually, at the moment, alliance, of course, we can't underscore the resilience of alliance but actually, there are some problems to fix at the moment and also in the future.

But not only the problems but also what other opportunities we have (inaudible). That's the area we can discuss in this forum. So, I'm very much pleased to host the third meeting in Seoul, maybe. I'm sure I'm relying on my two colleagues to come up with some concrete ideas for upgrading the alliance. I will manage only the administrative stuff in Seoul. Thank you.

MS. PAK: Thank you. Could I ask the first set of panelists to join us on stage? We have Tom Wright, James Kim, Luis Simon, and myself.

MR. CHOI: Let me introduce the speakers of this panel. On my immediate left, he

doesn't need any kind of introduction. He's a specialist on Trump. So, Tom Wright.

So, on his left, my colleague coming from the Asan Institute of Policy Studies, James Kim. He's much more specialized in public opinion as U.S.-Korea relations.

And on his left is Luis Simon from the Institute for European Studies from Brussel.

Last but not least, Jung Pak is going to speak about Korea-U.S. relations, as well as more regional issues.

Actually, let me start with questions. Maybe I will ask each of you to speak on overall assessment of the alliance relations after three years of Trump administration, and then we can start from there. And actually, not only opportunities, but the challenges we have had over the past three years, and then we'll go into the next round. Okay, Tom?

MR. WRIGHT: Well, thank you. Thank you for the kind introduction. And it's great to be here and really great to be part of this terrific joint project.

So, I think there's a clear sort of narrative arc really to the last three years which pertains directly to the future of alliances. Trump, I think when he was elected president, came in with a set of visceral beliefs that were unprecedented for any incoming president. You know, he had a 30-year track record of being hostile to alliances, particularly with Korea and Japan, a real hostility toward free trade, particularly anything involving trade deficits. And a general sort of positive feeling about authoritarian strongman, you know, that manifested itself in different ways. But he had a problem, which was when he was elected, he didn't really have anyone qualified for high office who believed what he believed, and he didn't really have any idea how to convert those instincts into policy outcomes. Right? So, in that sort of spot he found himself in, he chose people from the business community, like Gary Cohn and Tillerson and from the military side, like Mattis, Kelly, McMaster, and others, right, who sort of populated that side of it. And it turned out that they did not really share his beliefs. He just assumed that they would sort of go along with what he wanted but they were much more mainstream, and they were able to use their knowledge of the policy process to actually pursue a fairly pro-alliance policy. Right? And there was a variety of things they did that we can get into if you're interested on that. In Europe, you know, they deployed more troops to Europe and they obviously had the maximum pressure campaign against the

DPRK and there were a variety of other things that they did.

But it turned out Trump wasn't fully happy with that. He was frustrated. Around July of 2017, he has a meeting about the JCPOA waiver, and he's really annoyed that firstly, that there's a meeting, and secondly, that he's forced to sort of stay in it. And the same in Afghanistan. So, he begins to push back and sort of realizes he's the boss so he can sort of just say, he doesn't have to have a process. And so that's what begins to happen. So, he replaces -- he starts to push out himself. He tries to be truer to his own beliefs. He replaces all of the sort of axis of adults who can push back on him where people are either too sycophantic or too weak to push back. People who want to go along for their own career advantage or people who just aren't strong enough to have the weight to push back. He thought he was getting that with Bolton. He didn't, and then he got rid of Bolton, but he got rid of pretty much everyone.

Regarding where we are now essentially is that he, I think, believes that he has as someone put it, this is not the A team or B team, this is a team that says yes. Right? It says yes to him, and he believes that he is able to be president to do whatever he wants, whenever he wants in foreign policy. And that makes me particularly worried about the alliances. Right? Because the only reason there wasn't a unilateral withdrawal of the troops in the Korean Peninsula was because of Mattis, Kelly, and others back in 2018. Right? We're now seeing him making decisions on the fly and that I think could have grave consequence. And as bad as it is now, I think if there's a second term, all of the things, like the future of NATO, whether the U.S. stays in NATO, whether there is an alliance with South Korea and even with Japan, I think all of that is actually fair game and, on the table, if there's a second term. We just don't know how that's going to go.

So, the long sort of answer to your very succinct question is I think we're at a point of really unprecedented systemic risk to the alliances, and I think it is largely to do with him as a person. Right? There is a whole bunch of other factors, public opinion, long-term trends, shift to Asia to China from Europe, problems in the Middle East. All of those things will be there for any other president and they will constitute more than enough material for a conference like this or event like this to discuss at great length. But we need to disaggregate those issues which are challenging from the particular

systemic danger I think that is there from this particular president by his own sort of admission he wants to question this. So, I see the alliance as basically post-World War II alliances are probably more vulnerable right now than they ever have been before or than they ever will be in the future because I don't think we will ever see somebody with this combination of beliefs plus the way they make policy and process information.

MR. CHOI: That just scared me.

MR. WRIGHT: Sorry.

MR. CHOI: Now, James, across the Pacific, how you view, actually, your personal view or maybe in general Korea's perspective on the alliance, especially the Trump administration.

MR. KIM: So, picking up where -- first of all, let me thank both Brookings and KF for working to make this possible, as well as Ramon and your organization. It's a privilege for me to be sitting on this panel with distinguished colleagues.

Just to pick up on sort of where Tom left off on the systemic risks associated with the management of the alliance in the Pacific. I think one of the effects that the Trump administration has had in our region is how this has played in the Korea-Japan relations. Right? A lot of the alliance management has been sort of conducted bilaterally. The focus, obviously, it's a new approach. There could be some positive benefits as well as cost to this, but one area that the Trump administration has been very different from previous administration is how it has managed the relationship between Korea and Japan. That there has been very little that the administration has done on that front. And as a result of that, that gave some sort of free license to, some of the worst tendencies that you see the allies drawing on, and these tendencies I would say are stuff that gets in the way of Japan-Korea relations. Tendencies that tap into national identity and history issues.

And so, part of the reason why we are where we are today on Korea-Japan relations in my perspective is largely due to not only what's going on within Korea and Japan themselves, but also what kind of approach the Trump administration has taken with respect to managing this trilateral or three-way relationship between U.S.-Korea, U.S.-Japan, and Japan and Korea. There hasn't been much that's been done there.

And so, one of the risks is Japan-Korea relations becoming worse, and as a result that not only having impact on the overall security involvement in East Asia but also on the markets and what kind of impact that will have on the markets.

To a large extent, I think we're pretty much locked in for increased tensions between Tokyo and Seoul until the end of this year. It's anybody's guess what happens next year, but South Korea is in an election cycle. There's a parliamentary election coming up in April, and I don't see the Moon administration changing its position on this issue.

On the flip side, though, even with all these risks and sort of potential pitfalls, the alliance has been relatively resilient. If you take a look, the Trump administration has taken a new approach on North Korea. Yes, you can criticize the approach but there's been fairly good support in South Korea for the Trump administration's approach on North Korea since early 2018. Okay? So, the Koreans have a favorable view of the United States and President Trump in comparison to other countries like China, Japan and North Korea. They have a favorable view of President Trump in relation to President Xi, Prime Minister Abe, and Kim Jong-un. Kim Jong-un, a little bit more favorable for the Koreans, South Koreans after the Singapore Summit. In fact, the second most favored leader. That's never been the case before that, ahead of President Xi Jinping.

So, it's a different world we're in. Part of that, to some extent, is due to how the Trump administration has managed the North Korean issue.

Second is despite the fact that there's been sort of a transactional, bilateral approach to U.S.-Korea relations and U.S.-Japan relations, it has remained relatively, you know, manageable. If you take a look at South Korea, the KORUS Trade Agreement was redone. We had a one-year agreement on the special measures on burden sharing last year. We're in the midst of another round of negotiations. We've just began, just this month, and we'll see where this ends up. Whether we will get an agreement the beginning of next year, which coincides with the election cycle. There is another outstanding issue having to do with OPCON transfer. How all of these issues, how it's managed, what kind of impact that will have on U.S.-Japan relations as they negotiate their, you know, their thinking about their burden sharing agreement and trade matters as well.

So, it's a bilateral transactional approach. There isn't really a clear alternative to this approach but it's sort of worked out to a large extent. South Korean public has a relatively favorable view of the bilateral relationship with the United States. Their view of China is more contentious, and part of that, thankfully, has to do with Beijing's approach to managing its relationship with South Korea and Japan. And also, you know, how other countries in the region are managing -- Australia, Japan, in their relationship with each other and also with Korea.

So, it's a little bit of a mixed view where I agree with Tom that we're -- I don't know how long we can hold out and keep the ship going, but if it's the same administration after 2020 in Washington, it's going to be very, very challenging. But for now, it's sort of okay. For now.

MR. CHOI: For now.

MR. KIM: It's manageable. Right.

MR. CHOI: I will come back to you with some questions about this. You are too much optimistic. (Laughter)

Okay, now, Simon, please.

MR. SIMON: Yeah. Thank you. Thank you very much. And good afternoon.

Let me perhaps try to bring in a different perspective and try to zoom in beyond Trump and "America First." And I'll get to that in a bit. And also try to draw attention to some themes that I believe are common or shared between Europe and East Asia when it comes to alliances. Because my sense is that the U.S.-led alliance systems in Europe and East Asia are indeed experiencing important transformations. But I am just not sure how much that has to do with Trump and "America First."

In the academic literature you have this traditional distinction, sort of dichotomic approach to U.S. alliances in Europe and East Asia. NATO is typically seen as the embodiment of multilateralism, whereas in East Asia you have more hub-and-spoke systems in the sense that the different allies have deep ties with the United States, which is the hub, and not to each other. But my sense is that these categories are less and less useful today. In fact, I would argue that Europe and East Asia are moving away from multilateralism and hub-and-spokes, respectively, and trending towards some sort of converging, toward some sort of hybrid alliance structure in the sense that different U.S. allies and

partners, and that applies to both Europe and East Asia, connect through overlapping bilateral, minilateral -- because we see a lot of trilaterals in East Asia, but also on Europe -- and multilateral initiatives and frameworks to tackle different threats.

Of course, in Europe, NATO still exists. And this is not entirely new because, I mean, bilateralism was also there during the Cold War, but we're just seeing it more. And today, NATO is, I mean, of course, continues to exist and to provide a direct formal connection between all U.S. allies. But in recent years, Europe has actually witnessed a proliferation of bilaterally and minilateral security initiatives, both within and outside of NATO, such as, for instance, Nordic defense cooperation, the bilateral Franco-British military framework, but also U.S.-Polish bilateral, Polish-Baltic minilateral, and so on. And in East Asia, the hub-and-spoke system is also giving way to growing bilateral defense ties between the different spokes, which were previously much less connected. And also, U.S. allies and partners are cooperating in a number of trilaterals and quadrilaterals. I mean, we have the U.S.-Japan-Australia, U.S.-Japan-Australia-India, the U.S.-Japan-ROK trilateral, which is now going through a bit of a bump but it's still there.

So, we're seeing also greater connectivity within the larger alliance system. And I think my sense is that this sort of convergence towards a hybrid alliance structure that combines elements of multilateralism and bilateralism, if you will, has to do mainly with changes in the regional threat environment in both areas, much more so than Trump. And Trump may have further compounded some of those strengths in some instances, but I think this goes beyond Trump.

In Europe, for instance, we see a much more diverse threat environment than we did during the Cold War, which was sort of dominated by an overarching threat of the Soviet Union that sort of concentrated the mind of all the allies. And great threat diversity I think is leading different U.S. allies and partners to cluster around subregional groupings on the basis of their threat convergence. So, we're seeing a lot of Baltic and Polish and Nordic defense cooperation to deal with the deterrence challenge in Northeastern Europe. The French are doing a lot more with the Spanish, with the Belgians, with the Italians in Africa, and so on and so forth.

And in East Asia, think we observe the opposite trend, a simpler threat environment than

used to be the case, which is increasingly defined by China use strategic-wise and military organization.

I think I'll leave it at that for now.

MR. CHOI: Thank you. Good comparison between Europe and East Asia. So, I will come back to you with some other questions as well.

Now, Jung?

MS. PAK: Thank you. Thanks to everybody for this panel. This is a great conversation.

I think when after the election of Donald Trump, it coincided with the time that I left the Central Intelligence Agency where I was an analyst for about nine years, and sitting at Brookings, judging from the number of delegations and questions that I got from our allies and foreign partners about what's happening, that there was a lot of anxiety in 2017 about what is happening because so much of conventional wisdom, about U.S. foreign policy was being upturned, and there was a really great deal of unpredictability. And I think what Tom had mentioned, the axis -- the so-called axis of adults helped to in certain ways to try to stabilize some of that. But not much had changed in the past three years and that there's still this constant question about what's happening. And my question always was, I don't know but it could be X, Y, and Z. And our analysis is based on, or trying to be more agile and creative and checking our assumptions about what the alliance relationships are and how they're going to -- how this is all going to pan out.

But I'd say three years on, I think we have a little bit of what could be called an uneasy stability in that we are more useful to unpredictability, so we kind of guard ourselves for the unpredictability, the whiplashing decisions, the overturning of conventional wisdom. Of statement or Twitter or Tweet that comes out that overturns a lot of things. There's still a lot of anxiety to be sure, but I think we're used to the anxiety and we're used to the unpredictability. So, I think there's a little bit of adaptation in that.

But let's go down to the granular. I think Luis had a great talk, conversation, started a conversation about how do we compare and contrast the two types of alliances. And I would say that in terms of a hybrid alliance systems or networks emerging, I think these are not new things; right? But these are things that our allies and partners in the region, whether it's Europe or in the Asia-Pacific, have

kind of picked up things from the past. The quad, for example, was something that they picked up from the past. The South Korean President Moon's new southern policy of engaging more with Southeast Asia, that was also plucked from the past. And something that the previous South Korean Governments have thought about at least or, you know, had made moves toward.

So, what I see our allies and partners doing, whether it's Europe and in East Asia is that they're looking back to the past and exercising some of that muscle memory they had not used. South Korea engaging more with Europe, for example. Or South Korea engaging more with the Southeast Asian countries.

And so I think in a way that also transcends and it's beyond Trump. And I think what gave impetus to an intensification of those efforts was this unpredictability.

That said, despite the resilience, as James mentioned, and others have mentioned, as well as some of the adaptive moves that these countries have made, there are problems. And my colleagues have alluded to this. And it's that China and Russia are exploiting the seams of alliance management, of the President's constant criticisms about alliances. Why do I have to -- how many things do I have to pay attention to when asked about the South Korea-Japan dispute? Why do we -- why do we have -- why do we have NATO? Why do we support NATO? What about the trade deficit? You know, this constant questioning of the value of alliances I think has a profound impact on how much this seeps into the consciousness of our allies.

And so I think the Japan-South Korean conflict I think is part of the alliance mismanagement. Because the U.S. doesn't care, and it's clearly that the U.S. President made such strong statements about not wanting to get involved in those things that it gives -- it opens up a lot of space for those disputes to fester and to get worse rather than get better.

So, I'll stop there and look forward to this conversation.

MR. CHOI: Thank you. Thank you for the excellent opening remarks.

Tom, I'd like to throw a question about the resilience of the system in the United States to stand against maybe against the unpredictability of President Trump. So actually, from across the Pacific, we have become much concerned about President Trump's personal management of issues and

that actually can be translated into unpredictability of policy, especially in the actual implementation. So how much the resilient, the system you have in the United States?

MR. WRIGHT: I think it's pretty resilient. You know, I think it's stymied sort of what he might have wanted to do at the beginning. You know, I think he was willing to put these alliances on the chopping block to some extent but he wasn't able to do that. I think part of that was because there still is a process because Congress matters. I agree with what the other panelists have said. I think it is sort of a mixed, you know, story. There are other sort of elements, international dynamics that sort of bodes for the alliances. I don't think the U.S. has a good alternative. Trump's views on alliances have not really transferred to the rest of the Republican Party. The public has become more support of alliances even as the President has not. So all of those things are true, I think, and they are why we still have a healthy alliance system.

My point is just that that is not fool proof. You know, those are very strong barriers and they help. But they're not unsurmountable. And I think if somebody like Donald Trump keeps winning elections on a platform of opposition to alliances, that will have a major impact. You know, that's why I think the next election is so vitally important. And I think, you know, what you saw early on and with those cabinet officials, we were able to tell a story that the policy and tweets are different. Right? That was the mantra of 2017-2017. Whenever we'd have officials in they'd always say, well, I don't pay any attention to the tweets. I do my job. And that was the right. That's sort of code for "I don't pay any attention to the President," which doesn't sound as good, so they say tweets.

But that has now merged. You know, the policy and tweets are now much more similar. And so I think what is happening is the levies are being breached a bit. They're still fairly strong. I think the U.S. system overall has been resilient. But it requires people in Congress to actually take advantage of the reprieve that they had from that resilience to actually demand sort of accountability to insist on a formal process, to assist on certain officials. And there's not a great sign of that yet.

So I guess I do take some comfort from the resilience, and I do think the alliances are maybe stronger than we would have thought they might be in November of 2016, but I worry just with this trajectory that we've seen that we're back into a moment now where it really is about one person and

what they might do. And then the team, I think is more inclined to just, I mean, I would just finish on this. Look at what the Secretary of Defense did, right, when he was asked to transfer money to fund the wall on the Mexican border. Right? He took it from Europe and he said, "Here's the money for your wall." Can anyone imagine Mattis doing that? Anybody? No. I mean, it would never have happened. And did Esper do it because he believes in that? No, of course not. He probably did it because, you know, he's not all that experienced as secretary of defenses go. He owes his job to Trump and he was keen to try to please him. That's the difference between 2019 and 2017.

MR. CHOI: So, for example, because actually, since the departure of the grown-ups, the others, the system resilience has become weaker. Can I say that?

MR. WRIGHT: Yeah. You just did say it.

MR. CHOI: So actually, that actually raises a concern.

MS. PAK: So what I think is so interesting is that despite, you know, I think, look at you, all of you in this room. Right? To talk about alliances. You know, it was not -- it wasn't going to be a snooze fest. You were clearly going to -- you were clearly interested and invested in alliances. And we filled up this audience with standing room in the back. And I think that is one of the signs, very small sign, but not insignificant sign that there is great public interest. And when you look at all of the polls on how Americans feel about or think about U.S. foreign policy, the vast majority of Americans support alliances. In the recent Chicago poll, it's something like two-thirds of Americans really want strong alliances in East Asia -- in Asia and in Europe. Seventy percent believe that the U.S. has a role to play in the world, and 90 percent of Americans who are polled want there to be free international trade or free flow of goods.

So, I think from the American public perspective, I mean, I think that's pretty echoed in Europe and Asia as well that the public supports partnerships, the public supports free trade, the public supports greater multilateral engagement and partnerships because they sense that there is benefit to having those things. And I think that is part -- just one part of the resilience. But I agree with a lot of the panelists here is that, you know, this is not something to be taken for granted. You know, alliances are like marriages, for better or for worse.

MR. CHOI: I actually (inaudible) the public interest can be translated to real policy.

That's another issue because at the end of it is going to be maybe the President has the ultimate power to make a decision. So maybe if he doesn't care much about the public opinion, we have some problems. That can be the case.

So, let me turn to James about the South Korean's public understanding of an alliance. Of course, in 2017, when President Trump mentioned about fire and fury, his popularity went down. Very much, actually. Even the conservatives were really concerned about the possible use of force by the United States against North Korea. So actually, we were almost against the use of force, but actually, when he switched his position toward more dialogue with North Korea, his popularity went up.

MR. KIM: That's right. Traditionally, we've been polling since, what, 2012 on a lot of these issues. South Korean public opinion on the relative ordering of favorability if you were to take a look at United States, China, Japan, and North Korea, it was, you know, Japan and North Korea would be at the bottom of that list and they would flip-flop depending on whether or not you get a history issue that pops up every now and then. But U.S., there's been fairly, you know, very stable support for the United States ahead of China, and China would be, you know, a distant second.

And that's understandable given how much South Korea trades with China. China is the number one trading partner. But also, not only trade but the relationship that South Korea maintains with the United States politically and militarily.

So, on many levels this has not changed, by the way, even before, even during 2017. But on the relative favorability of leaders, President Trump was not the most popular guy in 2017 when he was, you know, talking about fire and fury. And there was, you know, just one test after another by North Korea and the U.S. response has been very, you know, strong. He was, in fact, less popular than President Xi Jinping at one point.

But starting in 2018, he's now back up to being sort of the most popular leader in the region, and the least popular currently is Prime Minister Abe. And, you know, as I've said before, Kim Jong-un is the second most popular. If you were to ask him specific questions about where the South Korean public stands on USFK and the alliance, you know, in January of this year, we asked this question when we were in the midst of a burden sharing agreement that went over time into March. It was about

68 percent support for the presence of USFK in the future, even after unification. If you were to ask would you support USFK presence on the Korean Peninsula after unification, this year it was about 44 percent. Last year, in 2018, it was about 49 percent. Do you trust USFK? Sixty-three percent trust for the USFK. South Korean views about U.S. nuclear umbrella, 67 percent support for that.

So overall, it's been resilient, but there's been a bit of a slippage as I mentioned about, you know, about U.S. support. And this is the risk. This is one of the risks. So you know, if you were to ask the same question about the presence of USFK on the Korean Peninsula in 2016 to 2017, it was low 80s. Now, in 2018, that slips a bit to 76 percent. And in 2019, that goes down to 68.

So there's a bit of a slippage. So there's a weakening. You know, the system resilience is weaker as you pointed out. But it's not weak enough to break it.

MR. CHOI: But what is the factors that actually contribute to that kinds of dropping of support?

MR. KIM: So obviously, you know, President Trump's sort of new approach to alliance management.

MR. CHOI: Inter-Korean relations, no?

MR. KIM: On the inter-Korean relations I think there's, you know, part of the reason why it's up as high as 68 percent despite what he's said about needing to negotiate, renegotiate FTA and also demanding more on burden sharing from South Korea, you know, North Korea is the saving grace there. I think that's part of the reason that it's up at 68 percent. But on these things like, you know, what's being talked about in the news media, that President Trump would like South Korea to pay five times more than what it's currently contributing for troops that are based in South Korea, which is going to be very tricky; right? Because I think the total cost is somewhere in the \$1.5-\$1.6 billion. How do you get the \$5 billion for the stationing of the troops there? Do you increase troop size or do you renegotiate the status of forces agreement? It's not clear at all where this negotiation is going.

And would you be able to get the negotiation done by early next year? If you don't, how would that play out with the South Korean public as they're in the midst of an election in April? And how would the ruling party want to use that to their political advantage? So there are a lot of risky, you know,

these spots of high riskiness as Tom pointed out earlier but, you know, again, as I've said before, we still haven't gotten there yet. We've actually managed to get over these hurdles. Albeit in a difficult way, we've managed to deal with them.

And so the relationship is still very robust but it's unclear what kind of event would tip this over the edge. And we get some real significant deterioration in the alliance relationship, let's say in troop reduction of the USFK or some other areas where, for instance, on North Korea, would the Trump administration's approach to North Korea -- President Trump's approach to North Korea be different in 2020 or 2021 compared to what it's been so far? Would he, instead of going back to 2017 fire and fury, would he be inclined to make a bad deal with North Korea? So, you know, these are some of the issues that could potentially be very problematic and things to think about. But we're just not there yet.

MR. CHOI: Okay.

MS. PAK: So what are the things -- I have a question for James. So what are the things that would make it all come crashing? Like, who is holding it up with duct tape and toothpicks? I mean, what is the duct tape and the toothpicks that are propping this mechanism up?

MR. KIM: So again, when President Trump had said that, you know, he wants to renegotiate the FTA, and I guess the axis of adults were able to intervene if we read Woodward's book correctly and the stories about the things that Gary Cohn had to do to, you know, hide that letter from President Trump before it was sent to Seoul as they were renegotiating the FTA, yeah, it's the axis of adults, I guess, and the bureaucracy, and Congress, as well as all kinds of people-to-people relations that are part and parcel of the alliance and the institutionalization of the alliance and the combined forces command, U.N. combined forces command. I think all of these are playing a very significant role.

But if we were to, let's say, in the burden sharing agreement, the United States does not play that out very well. When I say the U.S. doesn't play that card very well, come early next year, if the United States continues to insist on a \$5 billion contribution from South Korea, without clear justification on where that number is coming from and how South Korea can contribute, and President Moon decides to use this as a political card in order to further bolster progressive sentiments, progressive anti-American sentiments, nationalist sentiments in order to support certain progressive wing of the party, it could

potentially be a very bad situation we're in.

MR. CHOI: I'd like to ask the same question to Simon about how do you view, or Europeans view Trumps approach, especially from the burden sharing issue? Because actually, when he made a speech, he asked Europeans to increase the defense budget by two percent. So how do you view Trumps approach toward the alliance?

MR. SIMON: Let me perhaps say a couple things on resilience and public opinion and then turn to that question. I mean, if I say that the current U.S. administration does not have a stellar reputation in Europe, I'm, of course, not revealing any state secrets. In fact, the European Union in particular has in recent years, in the last few years sort of pushed this notion of strategic autonomy, of European strategic autonomy, particularly over the last three years since the publication of the European Global Strategy in 2016, which is a notion that sort of precedes Trump but has been politically fueled by this feeling of growing uncertainty in Europe about Trump's commitment to European security and the fact, to go back to your question, that even though the burden sharing conversation has been introduced both in Europe and East Asia, it has been pushed much more aggressively, much more aggressively in Europe; right? The sense is that the United States is prioritizing East Asia over Europe.

But it also has to do with Trumps constant criticism of the European Union itself as an institution, right, which is news because historically, the United States has been one of the staunchest supporters of the European integration process, and that seems to be in question right now.

Having said that, I would argue that this push towards greater European strategic autonomy, which comes partly in reaction to all these uncertainties associated with Trump and the current administration, so far, it's primarily confined to the rhetorical realm; right? For instance, many European countries, particularly those in Central and Eastern Europe still continue to see the United States as the only reliable guarantee of security on the continent, especially as Russia sort of continues to flex its muscles.

So, I think Europeans are able to distinguish between all this unpredictability hype, which is associated with the short term, with a sort of -- distinguish that between the deep-seated perceptions about the credibility of American power and America's role in Europe.

And I think they also distinguish between Trump's rhetoric and his actions because actually, the Trump administration, and that may very well have to do a lot with Mattis and with the Pentagon itself and with the bureaucracy that you were alluding to earlier, but the Trump administration has actually enforced America's military presence in Europe in the last three years, right, in many ways.

But beyond those considerations, and sort of going back to the main theme of both alliances and trying to look for connections, there is a lot of discussion in Europe these days about what America's adoption of a sort of China First or even Asia First approach to foreign policy, if you will, means for the Trans-Atlantic relationship, what it means for European security, what it means for America's commitment in Europe.

And I think this is new. And this is quite new to us because Europeans are sort of accustomed to be at the center of global politics and at the center of U.S. grant strategy, or they have been at least for the past decades or even centuries. And this is now changing. And as the U.S. focuses more on competition with China, particularly in the Pacific sort of theater, there's a growing sense that Europe is becoming a sort of secondary theater, both in global politics and in the context of U.S. grant strategy.

And I think this could have implications beyond resource availability because it also means that consideration is related to competition with China and East Asian geopolitics will become increasingly relevant in Trans-Atlantic relations. And we're beginning to see this in the context of the EU-U.S. relationship, but also in the context of NATO where the China theme has suddenly picked up over the last year, sort of popped out of nowhere, and is now increasingly occupying conversations in that context.

MR. CHOI: But actually, it seems to me that during the Obama administration we heard the rebalancing fever. So it seems the Indo-Pacific is Trump's version of this fever. So it's not really new.

MR. SIMON: No.

MR. CHOI: So, but what was Europe's reaction to the fever on rebalancing?

MR. SIMON: So there was already a lot of hype about that back then, particularly after the Defense Strategic Guidance in 2012 was published, which announced the rebalancing towards the

Asia-Pacific and Coalition Pacific. But that sort of subsided after Russia's annexation of Crimea. Right? That sort of changed things, and it made that conversation sort of go away. And in fact, a lot of Western Europeans were complaining about the rebalance in 2012-2013, where then in 2014-2015 telling the United States don't push it too much towards Russia.

So, I mean, Europe always sort of follows a damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't approach towards the United States; right? If you engage too much, it's because you engage too much. And if you retrench it's because you retrench. But that sort of went away because there was much more focus on Europe 2014, 2015, 2016 with the NATO Warsaw Summit, even 2017, but then you had the National Security Strategy, and particularly, after Mike Pence's speech at the Hudson Institute, the conversation sort of came back; right? The sense that the United States was prioritizing Asia once again sort of came back, and in a different manifestation, if you will, because now a lot of conversations are about China's growing influence in Europe and China's ability to sort of deliver its economic weight to strengthen its diplomatic and political influence in Europe.

MR. CHOI: And Jung, can I ask you a question? How much serious is the U.S. about the Indo-Pacific initiative strategy?

MS. PAK: I think it depends on who you ask. I think some would say that it's a program, an initiative versus a strategy. And I think from South Korea's perspective there has been less appetite to go with Indo-Pacific because of the perception that this is specifically targeting China or containing China, and South Korea's desire to maintain at least some sort of neutrality in dealing with -- in its economic security relationships with China versus the security relationship with the U.S.

So I think that Indo-Pacific is not going to go away. You know, whether it was called the rebalance or the pivot, or now the free and open Indo-Pacific, but I think one of the things that the Trump administration has been trying to do is that this is about values, about rule of law, about these broad overarching views, goals that the regime can glom onto.

I think a lot of -- if you ask any of our allies and partners, that they would say that it's in the implementation that's always been sketchy or scattered or confusing in large part because of some of the things that Trump, the president himself is doing really undermines a lot of the things that, at least the

bureaucracy is trying to advance on the Indo-Pacific, which should be very compelling that everybody could be able to glom onto.

I did want to ask Luis and others a question though about what, you know, in looking at, you know, do we see, and you've written about this before, Luis, is the EU-Asia connection. So you talked about concern in the European countries about the focus being -- turning toward Asia and less so on Europe, whereas I think the Asians would say it's always Europe, Europe, Europe. But so I just wonder, you know, we saw the EU come out with a statement on -- or a policy, or a white paper on China recently, and do you see more efforts by the European Governments to try to connect with Asia as a whole?

MR. SIMON: Yeah. No, that's a good question.

Going back to the fact that you always complain that the U.S. has a Eurocentric approach, none of us can get enough of the U.S., I guess.

The China question, the China conversation is picking up big time in Brussels, in EU circles. You alluded to the fact that the EU put out a communication in which it referred to China as its systemic rival, but also other things. I think there's no -- my sense is that there's no, I mean, there's no unified European approach towards China. As far as the connection with Asia is concerned, yes, it is much more deeply felt. But of course, Asia is not necessarily as a partnership because Asia as a continent and different Asian powers are much more deeply felt.

Perhaps focusing specifically on the EU-ROK relationship, I think, and I'm going beyond the specificities of all these specific partnership agreements and economic partnership agreements and so on. I would argue that, for instance, if you pay attention to the EU's public narrative, what you hear is that one of the things that the EU and South Korea sort of have in common is that they reject this frame of Sino-American competition. They don't want that to be the compass of their foreign policy. And they reject that frame because it sort of imposes a binary choice on them; right? And they'd much rather talk about preserving the multilateral rules-based order than talk about great power competition; right? Because that sort of brings up the question of how are you going to position yourself in the context of Sino-American competition?

And in the EU, you hear a lot about the need to, yes, reject that frame and then try to build up again sort of a multi-lateral rules-based order 2.0, so to speak. I'm a bit skeptical about whether you can do that given the current climate in the Sino-American relationship. I often say that Europeans might not be interested in Sino-American competition, but Sino-American competition is definitely interested in them; right? I think that also applies to a lot of East Asian countries.

I don't know to what extent the EU and the ROK are powerful enough to reject that frame of Sino-American competition, let alone propose an alternative organizing framework, which does not mean that they should stop trying. But I think they have to grapple with it because it is, I mean, it is coming and it's coming to Europe.

MR. CHOI: So anyhow, I think it is inevitable for Europe and Asia, or South Korea to accept Sino-U.S. rival as a given fact and it made me think about how we are going to cooperate within that framework as a given factor. So this area of cooperation between Europe and Asia to find a third way, a different way. As you mention, a multilateral or minilateralism. But it seems to me that there's no strong connectivity between Europe and South Korea, unfortunately, especially in security dimension. Maybe trade is an area we can cooperate in but about the security dimensions, I don't know, what are the issues we can discuss between Europe and Asia? Do you have any recommendations to make?

MR. SIMON: Yeah, I would by and large agree with you, I mean, but perhaps some nuances here and there. I mean, I would distinguish between the global level of analysis when it comes to EU-ROK relations, meaning strengthening the multilateral, rules-based order in key areas like trade. But also proliferation, environment, and so on and so forth. And I think that level of analysis, the global, offers a lot of opportunities for cooperation between the EU and the ROK, not least because we're pretty much on the same page on a lot of those things.

But also between the EU and other U.S. allies in East Asia, like Japan, for instance, who also faces a similar predicament when it comes to Sino-American competition, although with its own specificities. But my sense, and I guess this is where I agree with you, is that as we move onto a much more competitive geopolitical environment and geostrategic environment, European and East Asian countries will worry primarily about the strategic balance in their home regions; right? And that means

that they will not have that much bandwidth to cooperate with each other.

Yes, security in the transnational domain, like, and the Indian Ocean perhaps is a meeting place for the two countries. But my sense is that as the security situation in Europe and East Asia worsens, if we indeed accept that assumption, there will not be that much bandwidth. And our main connection is actually likely to remain our alliances with the United States.

MR. CHOI: Okay. Tom, can you tell us how the Trump administration will approach this minilateralism or multilateralism? Because I haven't seen anything positive from the Trump administration about the minilateralism or multilateralism. It has been dealing with issues in purely bilateral mode -- U.S.-Korea, U.S.-Japan, or U.S.-China. So I haven't seen any kinds of connectivity among these relations. Is it going to be the same way into the future or different?

MR. WRIGHT: Yeah. I mean, I don't think they think of it in terms of minilateralism and multilateralism. You know, they, I mean, obviously, you know, I think they have limited bandwidth to think about these issues in general, and to the extent they have thought about them it's the great power competition frame; right? That's how they sort of see it. And so I think cooperation multilaterally comes into the picture. You can make a compelling case to them that they have to work with the allies and with Europe to have a common position toward China. Right now, the President really buy that but most of the administration officials do, I think. And so that's sort of the ride in. Are there problems with that? Yes. You know, definitely. But I think that is the way into it right now.

I'd just like to make one point on, just on the Europe side of this. You know, I think the reality is our countries, you know, won't have to choose in the sense of abandoning all relations at one and going all in with the other, but they will sort of have to choose in a way that they didn't have before. And 5G is like the perfect example of that. I mean, European countries and allies in Asia, too, are being forced to make a choice. And the choice about whether or not you think your 5G, you know, Huawei investing in your 5G infrastructure is a problem really comes down to sort of a world view question about whether or not you think China's intentions could change in the future in a way that would really jeopardize your security. So it's really a sort of theological debate about the nature of the world and the nature of rivalry. And, you know, the American view is that you do have to make that choice, and

actually, you need to be skeptical of China's rise in that regard, and you need to hedge against it now by not having some costs in that could not be recouped later.

That choice, I think, is unavoidable. And by not making the choice, European countries and others are making the choice, you know, by saying that they're going to wait and see, that means that they are actually making those sum costs. And I think there has been a shift in Europe over the last couple of years. I think you can have these conversations with European officials in a way that might not have been possible, and it's complicated and the decisions aren't coming out necessarily as we would like, you know, all the time. But I think that there is a greater sense of realism there.

I think the other point I would make just is I think when we talk about cooperation between Europe, say and the ROK or Japan or others, it's easy to default into the what can Europe do in the South China Sea or East China Sea, or what can Europe do in that theater? Or what can Korea or others do in Russia? And the answer is, not that much. But a lot of this is actually global. I mean, the security competition is regionally focused. But the technological issues, which are increasingly the center of gravity of this competition are global, and those standards problems are uniform basically across our countries. The assault on sort of the rule of law, on human rights, on core values, those are global issues. How much we make of what's happening in Xinjiang or Hong Kong is as much an issue in Berlin and Paris and London as it is in Seoul and Tokyo; right? So there's a lot of different cross-cutting issues that I think would benefit from a global discussion between the allies.

And I would just mention one sort of seemingly potentially whacky idea that we've been throwing around recently, but I think there's a case actually for South Korea, for Australia and others to make a bid to join the G7, to expand out that G7 to like a G11 or G12 with like-minded, democratic countries that have sort of the same sort of shared interests and values. And there can be a counterweights to this sort of new authoritarianism that we're seeing. It would be substantively different from the G20. We need the G20 as the forum for all the major economies to come together regardless of governance type, but I think actually expanding at the G7 would be a way of ensuring a global, multi-lateral or mini-lateral forum that could bring together all of the different allies with the U.S. to actually have these conversations on these global issues, and then also to focus maybe occasionally on regional

security issues as they arise.

So I'm all in for South Korea to join the G7, basically.

MS. PAK: So I think -- has anybody taken a CPR class? Anybody? No one? Thank you, Andrew. I knew you would.

So I learned in my CPR class, if you're in charge and you're trying to resuscitate this person you have to like slap them around. Slap them around and you have to say, are you okay? Are you okay? And you have to really shake them. Not like, oh, hey, are you okay? But that it's more like, you know, you really have to get in there and slap.

But when you need help, somebody to call 911 and somebody to do the AED thing, get the AED machine, you have to actually look some person in the eye and say, you, call 911. And then, you, get the AED. So, I have a point. And it's that who is going to take the lead on these things; right? So on tech, on climate, on all these things that the U.S. used to be part, you know, in driving it. So who is going to say, you? Is it going to be Germany that takes the lead on climate? On tech issues? Is it going to be the U.K.? You know, who is it going to be? So I just wonder, so when you have, you know, when we talk about alliances, alliances are a composite of different, you know, different countries with different interests and threat perceptions, et cetera. Who is going to take the lead?

And Tom, if you could put your European hat on. I don't know if it's going to be South Korea, and Luis as well, like, in terms of from the European perspective, who is the lead? And in Asia, who is taking the lead in Asia? I would say probably Japan is taking the lead on a lot of the security and economic issues.

MR. CHOI: That's right, actually. But actually, I'd like to come back to Tom's point about trilateral cooperation, the U.S., Europe, and Asia's cooperation on these global issues. It matters a lot.

But on the other hand, as Jung mentioned, who is going to take the lead? Some of the regional countries or the United States? Whether the U.S. is in a position to take the lead of all these issues again? Because, actually, nowadays, under the Trump administration, we have some questions about the U.S. leadership and credibility.

QUESTIONER: You're not the only ones.

MR. CHOI: You know, Jung, you point out sort of Japan's role in Asia. The question there is does Japan want to lead or is this Japan just hedging the risks associated with dependence on the United States? And you could argue, if you take a look at the Australians and you want to talk about the Indo-Pacific strategy and the values aspect of that, there is more of an allergic reaction to that, as much a very similar way to the South Koreans. The Japanese, I think, would be more inclined to take on that sort of global agenda.

So not only looking at who is going to lead, but also who will follow is a very important question. But even there, on who is leading at the local, regional level, I'm not sure that Japan is capable of doing that. And that's not to say it's not going to have any effect but, you know, just looking at Japan's ability to lead in that region, if it was leading, its approach toward South Korea should be different but it's not.

So I think that there are some limitations to even this kind of replacement leadership as far as East Asia is concerned. It would be interesting to see what you guys think about Europe.

Okay. Now, I'd like to open up the floor for questions. Okay, please, identify yourself.

MR. WINTERS: Steve Winters, independent consultant. I'd direct this to Jung.

Admiral Blair said recently that he had heard from many friends in South Korea that the South Koreans who were thinking that Japan was hyping the China threat in order to have an excuse to build up their military, and of course, this issue of historical militarism is very sensitive in Asia. So, and it seems like President Trump is very much in the camp of Abe in terms of encouraging this and also Armitage and Nye in their fourth edition of their report.

So the question is this: Specifically, I wonder what the South Korean reaction has been to President Trump's repeated statements that the current Japan-U.S. security treaty is unfair to the U.S. because it doesn't commit Japan to coming to the assistance of the U.S. if it's attacked and it's clear what he would like is something like Article 7 in the NATO treaty. But this would be incredible. So he said this several times. It must have gotten some reaction in South Korea because it plays into this whole issue of are you going to see Japanese troops fighting all over Southeast Asia again.

MR. CHOI: Jung, may I collect a couple more questions? If not -- there, the gentleman

in the second row.

MR. MCCRAY: Chris McCray. So, in your discussion, you seemed to make quite a lot of sort of conflict variables which haven't been included so let's take, you know, energy exports. Saudi, Russia, U.S., I think they're about 75 percent of all energy. Now, how does this sort of fit with all of your alliances? Because if they are that much energy, you know, that plays a game. Or we haven't really talked about India and China. Each one fifth of the whole world's population. If American has always been greatest means that China can never or India can never be more than a third of the wealth of Americans, again, that does not seem to be something that is sustainable long-term. So how does this fit into your sort of alliance framing of things when there are these big variables which sort of don't fit at all with the geographic way you're framing it?

MR. CHOI: The gentleman in the fourth row?

MR. HEROWITZ: My name is Elliott Herowitz. I just want to thank the panel for a very good presentation.

The term "strategic autonomy" was mentioned in the discussion. I would like anyone on the panel, please, to define what strategic autonomy means.

MR. CHOI: Okay, thank you.

Simon?

MR. SIMON: I'll take that right away.

Yeah, I mean, that's a very good question. I mean, the EU uses that word quite often but there's no agreement whatsoever on what the definition is. In any case, I mean, autonomy is not like -- I mean, it's not like -- it's not a binary concept. It's not like pregnancy that either you are or you are not. You can be more or less autonomous. You're never fully autonomous; right? Not -- even the United States needs partners and allies to accomplish many things. I guess this in a European context at least, this concept is used primarily in reference, in relation to reducing the existing dependence on the United States and on NATO, specifically, and particularly when it comes to conducting, I mean, the meaning has been changing.

It started to be used in the late 1990s when the EU launched common security and

defense policy and back then it was used in the sense of the EU should be able to conduct low to medium level of intensity expeditionary operations without resorting to NATO's command and control infrastructure, therefore, U.S. assets. And now, strategic autonomy is used much more broadly. And, for instance, one of the consequences of this use of strategic autonomy is the EU's push towards greater European defense industrial cooperation. Industrial and technological autonomy. And sort of there's this notion of the EU emerging as an autonomous pole that sort of rejects the frame of Sino-American competition that I was alluding to earlier.

So to sort of recap, there's no -- I don't think there is any sort of agreed definition on what strategic autonomy means, but in a European context those are sort of the parameters of the discussion, if you will.

MR. CHOI: Okay. Jung?

MS. PAK: I don't know. I mean, I would ask James and Kang to pipe in, too.

MR. CHOI: I'm the moderator. You have to tell us.

MS. PAK: Because you just came from Korea.

MR. CHOI: Okay.

MS. PAK: So on this conspiracy that we've created the China threat or that Japan is amplifying the China threat to undermine South Korea, I think that's a little far-fetched. But I think what that speaks to is that South Korea and Japan have fundamental differences in how they want to see and how they want to deal with China. And so, you know, that's one of the problems of the region, or having collective leadership or having one country take the lead is that we all might have similar values but we have different ways of looking at the strategic threat.

For South Korea's part, I think the tendency is to try to be the middle player, and the fact of the matter is South Korea is very dependent on China.

And James, you mentioned how if Japan wanted to be a leader, that the relationship with South Korea wouldn't be this way. I think similarly, the logic for South Korea is to cooperate more with Japan to reduce its dependence on China, but that's just not the case. Which is another example of how countries don't necessarily act in strategically or security-logical ways.

MR. KIM: Okay. Well, I mean, just to add to Jung's point, I would ask Admiral Blair, which half of Korea are you talking to? Because South Korea it seems to me is split on this issue about Japan even. If you were to ask the South Korean general public or even for that matter the elites, you know, do you value security cooperation with Japan? Somewhere between 52 to 54 percent of the South Korean public would say, yes, security cooperation with Japan is good for South Korea's national interest.

So there's the other half, obviously, that would say, no, it's not. Perception of China as a threat, if you were to ask the South Korean public to choose between China and the United States, 70 to 80 percent would choose the United States as a natural military partner, and also an economic partner over China. But, if you were to ask, what do you think of the U.S.-China trade war and its impact on South Korea's national interests, 75 percent would argue that it's not good for South Korea's national interests.

So, you know, this gets back to the point that was made earlier I think by both Luis and Tom, you know, what's the strategy here? How are we going to address this issue, the strategic competition between U.S. and China? Because if we're clear on the strategy and the path forward, then Koreans can say, oh, yeah, we're on board with that or we're not on board with certain aspects of that. So, you know, you could criticize the administration right now in Washington for not having clarity on the policy, as some people say there's no clarity. On the other hand, you know, you could argue that there's something there and I guess, you know, we would continue to push on exactly what that is. And I think the South Koreans, both left and right, are asking this question. What is the Indo-Pacific strategy exactly?

MR. CHOI: Actually, let me answer the question. Of course, there used to be kinds of arguments like that. Japan is using China's threat to justify its military buildup. Maybe there is some argument like that in Seoul. But nowadays, South Korea is so much concerned with the rise of China and its military dimension.

Last year, China actually violated the Air Defense Identification Zone 20 times and this year up to 19 times. Actually, Russian aircraft violated our own airspace. So actually, South Koreans have become much more concerned with military power of China. So the Chinese military buildup is different from the Japanese military buildup. Of course, we are concerned with Japanese military buildup,

but actually, when it comes to actual figures it's a different story. The Japanese have acquired -- of course, now some people argue Japan is going to acquire more F-35s and then going to more airborne refueling systems to increase (inaudible) capability, but now their most discussion is on China. So South Korea has become much more concerned with China. That's the trend we have in Korea. So of course, if you look at some literature in South Korea about China's military threat, you can find very few. But behind the scenes you will have lots of discussion going on, the meaning of China's rise, not on the economy but also the military dimension very much. That's the thing.

But about the Indo-Pacific, I think South Korea finally endorsed Indo-Pacific because it sees some common elements between the Indo-Pacific initiative and new Southern policy. But I have some question whether South Korea will go beyond the trade and economy in joining maybe the security cooperation in more nontraditional security dimensions or not. I'm still not so much convinced whether South Korea will go along with the United States or Japan or India in realizing Indo-Pacific strategy.

The next step is going to be how are you going to institutionalize the Indo-Pacific strategy. Unlike BNR, Indo-Pacific is far behind the BNR because BNR has already established mechanisms. AIIB is one example. China is pushing to introduce other mechanisms to back up the BNR. But how far the United States will go in implementing or realizing the Indo-Pacific strategy? What's new in Indo-Pacific strategy compared to the rebalancing strategy of (inaudible). That's the question I have.

Actually, Tom, you were going to say?

MR. WRIGHT: Oh, I can wait till the next round.

MR. CHOI: Okay, sure.

The lady in the middle?

MS. BENYA: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Alice Benya. I'm at Johns Hopkins SAIS.

That was me; right?

MR. CHOI: Oh, yeah, yeah.

QUESTIONER: Actually, just following up on this conversation. So I'm a Europe specialist, so it's really interesting to have this conversation from you. Really enlightening. So my

question may be a little bit obvious.

So you've mentioned the worst case scenario of a second Trump mandate, but what if it's a democrat who comes to the White House in 2021. What can we expect in terms of China's strategy coming from the democrats? And what sort of common approach could they develop that takes into account the local concerns of Japan and Korea? So that kind of links with your last question.

MR. CHOI: Thank you.

The gentleman in the back?

MR. COBURN: Stanley Coburn.

In his farewell address, President Washington advised the American people not to make alliances permanent. Alliances, he said, should be temporary arrangements to deal with an emergency and should be dissolved once the emergency is over.

Why in your judgment was President Washington wrong?

MR. CHOI: That's for everybody.

Okay. The gentlemen in the white shirt?

MR. PULZER: Oh, yeah. Karl Pulzer.

I'm just wondering how much -- how tight the U.S., South Korea, and Japan really are militarily? In other words, if you think forward about 20 or 30 years and the U.S. wants to detach, at some point they have to go beyond, you know, giving them planes. They either have to arm them with nuclear weapons -- because the only deterrent that those two countries have against China and North Korea is ultimately nuclear. So how does that -- how can we not be there? I mean, that would totally upend the whole region. So aren't we kind of tied there?

MR. CHOI: Okay. We have three questions.

Okay. Andy?

QUESTIONER: Hi, (inaudible), Catholic University.

Jung, don't expect me to save anyone if anyone is choking.

My question is directed at Luis. It's about regional leadership and regional hegemony.

So in Asia there's more contestation about who might become the leader in the future

between China and the United States. But in Europe, I'm wondering if that's less of a concern. And so if the U.S. withdraws, if that's okay because in Europe you still have the European Union. That doesn't mean that the EU is united on all fronts but you don't have that dynamic where there's another power that's gunning for leadership. Perhaps Russia, maybe, but they're still, in my opinion, on the periphery. So I was wondering if you could just comment about any sort of leadership struggle within the European space.

MR. CHOI: Okay. Now, who can answer the questions?

Tom?

MR. WRIGHT: Yeah, just a few thoughts.

The first is just on European strategic autonomy. The best description I ever heard of it was it's a conference-building measure. So, it's designed to be discussed at great length.

And just on Trump and Japan, you know, he was saying that on Japan, on the mutual defense side for years. Like, the first time I got interested in what Trump was saying on foreign policy I saw him on TV in a debate or a rally in Iowa in 2015, I guess, and he was talking about that treaty with Japan and how it was unfair. And I was completely confused as to how he even knew about it. But it turns out that it's part of this decades-long antipathy toward alliances. So it's not new.

Just on the question about democrats. I think it's really, you know, a tale of two camps. Right? So if there's somebody like Biden or somebody like that, I think it's quite predictable. You'll see a pretty robust kind of China strategy with all of the different elements of that including in the security competition side, but the big difference from Trump will be working very closely with allies and all the sort of critiques that have been made of the Trump strategy by sort of mainstream (inaudible). I think if it's Sanders or Warren, I think it's different, and it's also sort of interesting. Both of them have folded China into this worldview that sees democracies vying with authoritarian governments for sort of control of the international order. And so they're both very much on the record as taking a fairly tough stance in China, but there's going to be ambiguity about the degree to which they want to lean into the security competition side of that or that they think that can be contained to other spheres, like economics which is their main focus. So I would anticipate some, you know, some ambiguity and maybe even some disagreement

about that and what it means to have sort of a credible forward, you know, power projecting capability in the Indo-Pacific.

And the final question just on Europe, I think it's very different, Andrew, if you look at what would happen in Europe. It's not that Russia would achieve hegemony, although I think they would dramatically increase their influence. I think the debate is whether or not a U.S. withdrawal from NATO would really exacerbate internal stresses in Europe. And that would result in sort of negative trends across a range of areas. So what would the impact be on democracy and the rule of law in parts of Central and Eastern Europe for instance? And in Western Europe for that matter. Would it empower sort of more nationalistic forces in Western Europe that might be less willing to cooperate with the United States like the AfD in Germany or Front National in France? And what does it do to Europe's strategic orientation in terms of working with Russia and China? You know, does Europe, to the extent (inaudible) become sort of an entity that sees the U.S. as just one option amongst others and it will just play all sides because it has no alternative? Or is it sort of an anchor for liberal order? So those of us who sort of look at Europe would say it will be a strategic catastrophe for the U.S. to disengage because you would basically, potentially lead to the unraveling of that European order in a world that's already, you know, very problematic for sort of democratic and free countries.

MR. CHOI: Luis?

MR. SIMON: Yeah. Let me perhaps start with the George Washington question.

I wouldn't say that he was wrong; it's just that he was looking at it from a very different platform. It was a platform of a republic that had just achieved its independence, and today, the United States is a global superpower with extensive economic, security, and political interests in multiple regions. And I would argue that its alliances are very instrumental in terms of helping the United States secure or advance those interests.

Having said that, the specific value of individual alliances does change as a function of a dynamic geopolitical and geostrategic context. So I guess the broader Washington point stands, I mean, from that perspective.

On the Europe question, thank you very much for asking me to air the dirty laundry of the

Intra-European struggles on the record. No, but seriously, I think you're right. I think you're right. I mean, in East Asia, you do see a comprehensive cross domain challenge to the regional balance in the sense that you have China that is not only strengthening its regional position in the military strategic domain, but also in the economic domain, and also diplomatically to some extent, sort of leveraging its growing military power and economic influence. You do not have such a situation in Europe, and that is partly, I would argue, why the United States prioritizes East Asia over Europe; right? Because you do have Russia sort of posing a military challenge, but it's not a military challenge. It's not challenging the regional balance. I mean, it's posing -- and this is recognized I think in the NDS itself, that Russia does pose a threat to U.S. allies but it does not pose a threat to the overall balance. It could. I agree with Tom, it could. But at present it really does not. And you have, I mean, one of the reasons is that you still do have NATO and European countries by themselves do have still formidable, at least technological capabilities and the potential to balance against China without the United States should they wish to do so, which is an entirely different question.

And then in the economic domain you have Germany/the European Union. Yes, they're influential but they don't dominate. And the EU decisions need to be negotiated with other powers. So you have -- I agree with you. You basically have a very different -- a very asymmetric picture also from the viewpoint of U.S. grand strategy and U.S. interests.

MR. CHOI: James?

MR. KIM: I guess I'll just add that, you know, going back to more recent past history, instead of the founding of the country in the U.S. In '92, I think, there was contemplation of a staged pullout from Korea because the strategic environment had changed, right, in the early '90s. But it's interesting where we are today. And some of those challenges haven't gone away. Part of the reason why I think the alliances still remain intact. And it's evolved in some ways as Luis pointed out that, you know, we don't have a peace deal with North Korea yet. We don't have that Korean Peninsula issue settled. China is now a strategic competitor. And Russia, the Russian issue is, you know, it's not gone. So some of those similar challenges I think they're still lingering. And I guess the question is, not only for the United States but also for the allies in the region, are these emergencies, are they gone or are they

still there? Using sort of your quote that you mentioned earlier about, you know, the emergencies requiring the alliances. And if that's the case, you know, you could very well argue using Washington's logic that some of these similar problems are still there and that needs to be dealt with.

MR. CHOI: Okay.

MS. PAK: I think the second question answered the first question; right? The fact is that South Korea and Japan live in a really terrible neighborhood with terrible neighbors. And I think maybe you were asking, what are the possibilities of South Korea and Japan going nuclear? And I think there's the special representative, Stephen Biegun mentioned that recently about what happens if North Korea stays nuclear, that we have the potential for nuclear proliferation in the region. I think yes, that's always a possibility. But I think, and the reason that South Korea and Japan have not gone nuclear, which they could very easily, is because of the strength of the U.S. commitment. But I also, I don't want to downplay the threat of nuclear proliferation in the region, but I think that there are constraints on those countries from going nuclear and that is the reputational cost. I think there's going to be a "not in my backyard" kind of movement. Japan, obviously, has a really terrible history with nuclear weapons. There could be sanctions that get activated as a result if South Korea and Japan go nuclear. Or Taiwan is another.

And finally, that's bad for everybody because it explodes the concept of the Nonproliferation Treaty in which a near unanimous international treaty to stem the flow of nuclear and fissile material and others to make sure that we have a stable international environment. So I think there are big constraints on South Korea and Japan going nuclear.

MR. CHOI: I was going to raise a question because actually, I have never seen any conference which has not covered North Korea. But this is the first one. We have not, actually, all the way up to now we have not touched upon North Korea. We have not used the word "North Korea" at all.

MR. WRIGHT: I said DPRK once. I mentioned it.

MR. CHOI: Okay. But anyhow, I was going to raise, because the "America First" policy in three years, because actually one of the issues the Trump administration has dealt with was North Korea. Has there been any kind of progress, whether it's been successful? And what is your outlook? Especially, Jung, I would like to have your take.

MR. WRIGHT: You're saving that for the last question?

MR. CHOI: Yes.

MS. PAK: You know, James mentioned North Korea on the polling.

MR. CHOI: In the polling.

MS. PAK: And the popularity of President Trump.

What's going to happen with North Korea? So I think things look good for North Korea in many ways. And it's related to alliances, too, in that if China prefers bilateral negotiations because they can move their heft more easily, North Korea also prefers bilateral negotiations and bilateralism because it gives them a chance to exploit national preferences. So, for example, you know, it prefers to talk to China alone. It prefers to talk to Russia alone. It prefers to talk to the U.S. alone. It does not prefer to talk to Japan at all. But you can see North Korea's own hub and spokes way of dealing with its neighbors.

What is disheartening on the North Korea issue is that when the U.S. President himself criticizes alliances. When South Korea and Japan are quibbling about trade and economic issues as well as military issues, and China is kind of sitting back watching all of this, it doesn't really strengthen the sanctions regime or strengthen our hand when it comes to negotiating with North Korea. For North Korea, it's better for us to be divided than united because all of these things take a lot of effort, and even the show of unity goes a long way in showing North Korea that it can't have it their way. So we'll stop there.

MR. CHOI: Okay. Thank you.

Actually, I'm personally concerned with actually the weak, maybe some adjustment of ROK-U.S. alliance is faster than the denuclearization process because actually President Trump announced that they are actually scaling down or termination of joint military exercise. I don't know whether we maintain the same level of military preparedness. That's a weakening sign. That's bad, actually. In the eyes of North Korea, they can say we can exploit that aspect very much. Very much concerned with that. So I hope we can review the robustness of our alliance stature and joint military preparedness level very much.

So please join me in thanking the panelists for their excellent presentation and answers.

(Recess)

MR. PARDO: Okay. So we'll begin with the second session. Thank you very much for staying for this panel or coming to it. We discussed "America First." That was the starting point of our discussion on the first session, the first panel. On the second panel, we're going to be discussing Alliances in the New Normal of the U.S.-China Rivalry.

My name is Ramon Pacheco Pardo. I am the KF-VUB Korea Chair and I will be moderating this panel.

And with me I have three -- we're not missing anyone -- three speakers on this panel. So we have an empty chair here next to me and we have the three speakers to my left. I will introduce them and as then we'll do as before, we'll have a discussion amongst ourselves, or they will have a discussion among themselves and then I will open it up to questions from the audience.

So immediately to my left I have Lynn Kuok, who is actually a former Brookings expert, and right now she's a senior research fellow at Cambridge University. In January, she's going to be the Shangri-La dialogue senior fellow for Asia-Pacific Security at the IISS, where she is currently based also as an associate fellow of the Asia-Pacific program. And recently, she gave evidence on East Asian Far Eastern Affairs efforts on the U.K. House of Commerce Defense Committee.

Then in the middle we have Linde Desmaele, who is a Ph.D. researcher at the Institute for European Studies with the Korea chair as well. She was a (inaudible) at the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium, and last year she was a visiting researcher at the School of Foreign Service here at Georgetown University here in Washington, D.C.

And to my far left I have Shin Beomchul, who is the director of the Center for Security and Unification at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies. Before he was director general for policy planning at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea between 2013 and 2016, and he has held advisory posts with the National Security Council, the National Assembly, and the Ministry of National Defense, all of them in South Korea.

So I think what we are going to do is we're going to start maybe with Lynn, and I want

you to discuss, we have this competition which is structural between China and the U.S., and this has been intensifying over the past few years and with the current administration.

So can you give us from an Asian perspective, how has Asia, East Asia responded to this competition between the U.S. and China?

MS. KUOK: Well, I think the thing to say at the outset is that Southeast Asia is exceedingly worried about the intensifying competition between the United States and China. I think broadly speaking, countries in the region welcome a firm U.S. approach to upholding a rules-based order in the region. As such, it's been generally supportive of U.S. freedom navigation operations in the South China Sea. It's also recently welcomed stronger statements by the U.S. State Department in terms of criticizing China's acts of encroaching upon Vietnam's exclusive economic zone since July through the use of seismic vessels.

That said, what the region does not want to see between the United States and China is a no holds barred competition between the two superpowers because the region fears that it's going to become collateral damage in this great power competition.

I think countries in Southeast Asia have generally responded to China's rise by seeking to hedge its bets. So what it's done is it's tried to broaden and deepen security ties with the United States while at the same time pursuing the economic opportunities that China offers.

What's happening with the intensification of the U.S.-China rivalry, however, is that this is narrowing the region's strategic options. So while the United States insists that it's not making countries in Southeast Asia choose between the two powers, what happens when the United States actually says that it will not share intelligence or work with countries that use Huawei equipment? This is tantamount to giving countries an ultimatum to choose even though it might not be said in so many words.

But even if the region takes the United States at its word when it says that it's not making the region choose, I think what will ultimately happen with the decoupling of economic and technological spheres in the case of deepening rivalry is that it becomes almost impossible for the region not to choose between the two countries.

So as far as possible, in my view, I think countries need to stay by their rule of law and

support a rules-based order without actually taking sides in many of these disputes. So to stand on the side of principles and the law rather than necessarily choosing one power over the other. But, you know, whether or not it has the wherewithal to do that moving forward is, of course, an open question with the United States being perceived as a very fickle power, as well as China's increasing economic clout and therefore, persuasive powers in Southeast Asia. So I'll stop there.

MR. PARDO: One point. You said it might be impossible not to choose.

MS. KUOK: Well, if there's a decoupling of, you know, the technological spheres or the economy spheres, then it really, you know, if it's Huawei or no way, you know, you have to choose; right?

MR. PARDO: We'll get back to this, who might a Southeast Asian country choose or not, but I want to ask the same question to Linde with a European focus. What are the bureau's responses in Europe on U.S.-China competition that has been intensifying over the last few years?

MS. DESMAELE: So I think in general there are actually a lot of overlaps with what Lynn just mentioned that Europeans also feel like they are kind of being forced or pushed to choose by both sides. So on the one hand China opposing this concept of alliances and seeking to create some sort of vision for a common destiny, while at the same time, of course, the United States expecting the Europeans kind of to get tough on China and pressuring the Europeans on certain issues such as it was already mentioned, 5G, et cetera.

But I actually think that in response what we have seen and we've already kind of alluded to in the previous discussion is that Europeans, and by that I mean Europeans within the European Union, that they have very desperately tried not to pick a side and that they've kind of -- this competition has served to perhaps strengthen kind of the desire for some sort of European strategic autonomy. And I think to kind of -- one could of course put into question the sustainability of such an approach or whether or not that it's effective, but I think it depends very much on which domain or which sector you're going to look at.

So if we try to, for example, subdivide this competition between the United States and China into different elements, if you look at, for example, the economic domain, which is arguably the domain in which the competition is the most visible and the most fierce at the moment, I guess you could

say, well, in terms of economics this is really an area in which the EU is or can be a formidable power. It's also an area in which the European Union has competences. So where it has I would argue it does have some leverage over both the United States and China. And of course, in the economic domain, Europeans share a lot of concerns with the U.S. when it comes to reciprocal market access, intellectual property rights and all of that.

But I think the United States is not making it very easy for Europeans to work with them because at the same time you also have the United States imposing tariffs against certain European countries or repeating threats to do so. So I think the EU kind of sees them as two problematic partners given the current U.S. administration. And so there it's really tried to kind of stick to its own course by adopting an investment screening mechanism, by adopting a connectivity strategy, and all of that.

If we then look at more the security realm, of course, their not picking a side becomes a lot more problematic because there is a trans-Atlantic security relationship. There is the alliance, so of course, the Europeans are much closer to the United States. But there I think that in many European capitals, China is simply not or not yet really seen as like a geopolitical threat in the same way that the United States looks at China. So I think that the need to choose there also seems less pressing or less salient precisely for the reason that the immediate security threat might be less obvious.

And it was already mentioned also during the previous panel, there are conversations now about China with NATO but this is still rather exploratory and it's not at all at the same, I guess, level as, for example, the Russia conversation.

And then finally, more in political terms. So this, let's say, Washington model versus the Beijing alternative, there obviously it seems very logical for Europeans to align with the United States because we have so many things that bind us together, but there again, I think with the current administration the EU has a very difficult relationship there because of I guess some ideological convictions that lead the current administration to be very openly skeptic, to be supportive, openly supportive of the Brexit process. So there, also for domestic political reasons, certain European countries might not be all too willing to align with the United States. So I think, but as I said, we can get back to this later. You can put into question how sustainable it is but at this point the choice of Europe has been not

to make a choice I guess.

MR. PARDO: I want to move the discussion further and actually discuss from a South Korean, maybe Northeast Asian perspective, what do you think that both the U.S. and China are trying to achieve from this competition that has been ongoing for a number of years now?

MR. SHIN: Maybe the United States and China also seeks to influence over the region. Traditionally, there is a word for South Korea's position. We always talk about "shrimp between the whales." The whale can be the United States and China with South Korea, which is believed to be the weakest one between the big powers. Sometimes that becomes Japan or China.

But when it comes to the U.S.-China competition, it makes us in a more difficult position. As we all know, the (inaudible) European country has the same position that we are U.S. alliance partners. So when it comes to connectivity, it cannot compare to the that of the United States and that of China. We are on the U.S. side.

However, because China's economic influence is growing, growing, growing, South Korea's number one trade partner is China, not the United States. That was 20 years ago. So we cannot but listen to China's voice to expand our economic prosperity. However, China's economic cooperation always entailed political influence, frankly speaking. The best case was the year 2016 when South Korea deployed the THAAD system, China levied heavy economic sanctions on South Korea. Even with the change of government in South Korea, China's economic pressure continues. So in October 2017, our foreign minister Kang Kyung-wha pledged to the congress saying that our position of three-no's. We are not deploying more THAAD systems. We are not joining the U.S. MD missile defense system, and we are not going to develop trilateral security cooperation among Korea, the United States, and Japan into a trilateral alliance. I think that that's a mistake. But anyway, that is kind of China's pressure continues and getting stronger and stronger. That's problematic.

So from a South Korean perspective, I think we need a peaceful coexistence between the two big powers which will enhance our national capability and national power, national interest, with a strong alliance system with the United States and peaceful economic cooperation with China. But that is the past. I think it will not happen again because of hardening competition, I think the position of South

Korea is getting harder and harder.

MR. PARDO: You mentioned peaceful coexistence and it sounds so very good but we don't have peaceful coexistence right now. So where do you think South Korea is leaning? Do you think it is trying to get closer to China because of what we talked about before, the plans in the U.S.-ROK alliance or do you think that this is really not going to happen?

MR. BEOMCHUL: Yes. In diplomatic areas it's very difficult to lead between the lines. I believe that South Korea never leans to China. Never. Maybe in the year 2015 when President Park Geun-hye visited Tiananmen Square and sat beside the president Xi Jinping when China celebrated their winning of World War II. So probably, President Park Geun-hye is the only leader that comes from the free world (inaudible) to seek liberal national order.

So many U.S. specialists and Japan specialists have asked me at the time I was working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the director of Policy Planning, asked me about South Korea, whether South Korea was leaning towards China, my answer was no, that's not happening because we have our own strategy to persuade China, to persuade North Korea. That's our strategy. Although there was failure as it turned out, however, because of our national interests, we are difficult to leaning toward China. Look at the Korea system. We are free democratic countries. Our (inaudible) human rights is relatively high, I think. But the only reason we expand our cooperation is economic prosperity but there is a limitation because the nature of economic cooperation with China is changing.

Ten years ago it was very, I think, reciprocal, because of South Korea's money and high technology combined with China's cheap labor, we produced goods and then sell in the foreign market, in the United States and Europe. However, because of China's development of its own technology, the economic situation, we are having more competition with China, not such kind of cooperation with China. So maybe in 10 years people will realize that South Korea never leaned toward China. And South Korea always feared China's political influence over the region, just like the last 2,000 years.

MR. PARDO: Lynn, I wanted to throw this question to you as well. I mean, you did mention that there is worry about the Chinese behavior in Southeast Asia; right? So can you talk a bit more about what is the perception in Southeast Asia about what China is trying to achieve in the region.

Is it hegemony, something different? And similarly, what is the perception about the U.S. goals in the region as we speak?

MS. KUOK: Well, in terms of Chinese goals, despite what China claims about wanting a win-win outcome for the region, I think the region is quite clear about what it sees China's goals to be. And from that perspective, I think the first point they would think about is first China wants economic rights, that it's not permitted to under international law, economic rights in these coastal states' exclusive economic zones. That's number one.

Number two, China wants to deny the United States and its allies the Navy's access into much of the South China Sea.

And number three, just outside of the South China Sea, what China is looking for is for Southeast Asian countries, when they make the foreign policy decisions, to take into account Chinese interests.

So those are the three main goals I think the region sees China seeking. They obviously find these goals objectionable, and you have countries like Vietnam trying to push back against China. So we saw in the last three months very tense, for the last three months until last week when China withdrew its seismic vessel, we saw a very tense standoff between a Chinese seismic vessel, as well as its escort vessels on the one hand and the Vietnamese Coast Guard on the other hand when Vietnam was seeking to register protests at China's actions.

But in a sense, in the region where the countries are very much smaller than China, as well as much poorer than China, there's a degree of resignation in terms of how long and how far they can push China, push back against China and to stand against the rising tide of Chinese influence and power.

So the Philippines and the Duterte administration has adopted a formal conciliatory approach to China than the former administration. It's shelved the South China Sea's tribunal ruling which largely ruled in the Philippines favor and it's really focused its efforts in terms of seeking to conclude an agreement to cooperate in oil and gas development in the Philippines exclusive economic zone.

And in some respects, in fact, it's actually ceded ground to China. So in June, when the Chinese fishing vessel collided with a Filipino fishing vessel that was stationary, President Duterte came out quite early on to explain the presence of the Chinese fishing vessel in the Philippines EEZ by saying that, oh, in 2016, he had agreed with China that China should be given rights to fish in the Philippines EEZ. Now, that was the first time anyone in the Philippines had heard that but that just goes to show how far he was willing to go to normalize in a sense China's presence in the region.

And, of course, earlier this year for about six months or so, we had hundreds of Chinese vessels swarming Philippines-occupied territory in the South China Sea. And this might not have reached international attention if not for the fact that a U.S.-based think tank, the Asian Maritime Transparency Institute brought it to the attention of the international media in February this year because the Philippines was keeping mum about it.

So there is a certain degree to which countries in the region feel that there is very little that they can do even if they wanted to do more. And Malaysia similarly has adopted an approach that has sort of minimized tensions between China and itself. I can talk about that a little bit more. But let's just leave that at that in terms of how countries in the region have responded to China's goals.

In terms of how countries in the region perceive the United States' goals and how it's responded to them, I think what one can say is that there is no great degree of clarity in terms of what the U.S. goals for the region are. For instance, is the U.S. goal to ensure that China does not surpass it in power and influence in Southeast Asia or broader East Asia? Or would Washington be satisfied if it were to be able to ensure that China played by the rules?

And so this lack of clarity I think is borne out in the trade dispute between the United States and China. So this start off really as a concern by President Trump over the trade and balance between the two countries. And since then it's really evolved into a more holistic problem with China's approach to its economy, including, you know, the theft of intellectual property, voice technology transfers, as well as unfair market access. And then beyond that at a higher level, you know, some of the United States, they demand that China address the outside influence of state-owned enterprises. And even beyond that, there are some within the United States who would at least privately admit that that

concern goes beyond mere economic rivalry, but the trade war is really a war by another means. It wants to be able to contain China's rise or push back against China's rise.

Now, countries in the region respond to this rather nebulous group of goals by saying, or by broadly supporting U.S. efforts to support a rules-based order but they're really wary about U.S. actions that appear to be containing China. And I think a very good example of this would be the Singapore Prime Minister's speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue in June when he said that, you know, attempts to use trade to keep one country down is very divisive and destabilizing. And he urged that countries, meaning the United States, stop, cease such actions.

And the United States, apart from having unclear goals which hurt its interests, is also hurt by a perception that it is not a very reliable ally. And I think the region has an experience of this in 2017 and 2018. Vietnam received threats from China for drilling for oil and gas in Vietnam's own EEZ and the United States was silent. And of course, we've had the recent episode where the United States withdraws from Northern Syria without informing its Kurdish allies and that has not played out well I think in other parts of the world, including Southeast Asia where they are no doubt looking at this U.S. action and thinking this could be me next.

So I think I'll stop there.

MS. PARDO: And just talk about, I want to follow on actually because you mentioned Malaysia, Vietnam, Philippines as well. What about Indonesia, which is the biggest country in the region, it's a member of the G-20. What is Indonesia's position vis-à-vis this rivalry?

MS. KUOK: I think Indonesia has always been to a greater extent than say countries like Singapore, it's been more equally distanced between the United States and China in any event. We take that fact into account, plus the fact that Indonesia also has great infrastructure needs. So Jokowi, President Jokowi's maritime access, I think he seeks to build greater connectivity between the various islands in the Philippines. And for this you need Chinese capital and money because China seems to be the only power or one of the few powers that seems to be consistently willing to offer up some of these goodies.

And so we had elections in Indonesia earlier this year, and in the elections, President

Jokowi was receiving great criticisms from some of his rivals for being too close to China. But in the midst of these elections we had Jokowi's close aid go to China with \$91 billion worth of deals saying please, you know, are you interested in any of these infrastructure development deals within Indonesia? And I think this gives you a sense of where Indonesia would stand in any great power rivalry.

MR. PARDO: Linde, if you look at Europe, we have seen a huge increase in Chinese investment in Europe, a 50-fold increase over a period of 10 years. We have the belt and road initiative which covers the whole duration, all the way to Spain and Portugal. So we see this increasing presence of China in Europe that we're not used to before the global financial crisis, for example.

In your view, what are the European views of what China is trying to do in Europe by increasing its presence in this dramatic way?

MS. DESMAELE: So I think, first, I would actually note that it's true that investments have gone up a lot. But actually, if I'm not mistaken, in the last two years they've also went down a little bit again for different reasons. Also, because of Chinese domestic, I mean, there is less supply, so to speak, and also, because as I already mentioned, certain European countries have become a little bit more skeptical of these investments.

So I think in this sense the picture is a bit different between Europe and Asia because I don't think that China wants to dominate Europe or wants to own Europe or wants to achieve some sort of hegemonic position there. While that might be more the case in Asia, but I think that from China's perspective it would just make sense to neutralize kind of Europe, to neutralize Europe when it comes to its competition with the United States because if the EU, of course, we can say that it's weak in some areas, it's strong in other areas, but it would be a very formidable partner for the United States in this competition with China. So I think what China seeks to do is basically to neutralize Europe. And how does it do that? Precisely through these investments and through some sort of divide and rule tactics. It seems to kind of nurture some bilateral relations or relations with subregional groupings. And in this way, it kind of can make sure that whenever something comes up at the council that it can basically block it if it were negative for China's interests. And I think it's been kind of successful in doing that because there have been already several instances where individual countries have refrained or have actually blocked

statements that would criticize China on human rights practices. I believe that was Hungry. Or when it comes to the Chinese claims in the South China Sea where once again the EU ultimately could either not send out a statement or really had to tone it down because the EU on many areas is a consensus-based organization. And so I think there China has actually been quite successful. So I don't think it tries to own the EU, but if it can make sure that it stays somewhat divided and that it's not a credible -- or as credible as it could be in being a partner for the United States, then I think that's from the Chinese perspective a job well done.

MR. PARDO: Now, to move to the U.S. and to give some background maybe to the audience, when President Trump came to the NATO summit last year for example in Brussels, in Europe there was fear. We didn't know what Trump was going to do once he came to the summit; right? There was a discussion about what is he trying to achieve with all these trade wars? Potential for tariffs on German carmakers, for example. What do you think are the European views about what the U.S. is trying to achieve in Europe under the current administration, if anything?

MS. DESMAELE: This is a very good question.

I think in a sense there's just the traditional goals of the United States in Europe, by somehow, you know, maintaining open markets for U.S. products and a good trade relationship and maintaining some sort of regional stability in all of that. But I think then what happens in the Trump administration, I think there are two layers actually added on top of what we tend to traditionally see and it concerns foreign policy in Europe is that first there's really an ideological element of really being very highly Euro skeptic, which is of course a big difference compared to the past in which the United States was always, although under certain conditions rather supportive of European integration, and here I think this is really an ideological argument where the current administration is very skeptical of this. And as I already mentioned, supporting Brexit in all of that. So I think there's an ideological layer that you should add on top of it.

And then there is, to also bring it back kind of to the title of the panel, The China layer also which is layered on top of it that I think the United States is also starting to look at Europe kind of in what Europe could or could not do in terms of competing with China. And so there the 5G would, of

course, be I think an interesting example where we definitely see that the United States is pressuring Europeans not to go along with China here, and I think the United States is also increasingly interested in seeing how Europeans position themselves vis-à-vis China which is something that wasn't necessarily there in the past. So I think we have to add two layers on top of it but then with a lot of theatrics surrounding it.

MR. PARDO: And Beomchul, in your case, if we talk about competition, some people have portrayed the Indo-Pacific's strategy as a way to isolate China. And when President Trump went to South Korea for the first time he actually raised the Indo-Pacific in his address with President Moon. What is the South Korean approach to the Indo-Pacific strategy?

MR. SHIN: Maybe the President's most flagship diplomacy this time is a new thought on policy. It means that because Northeast Asia is a red ocean. South Korea is seeking a blue ocean. That is Southeast Asia and other Pacific countries. So the Moon organization tried to expand the cooperation with ASEAN countries and then already President Moon visited ASEAN three times and then he visited almost all ASEAN countries.

With regard to the Free and Open Indo-Pacific, South Korea was late to join. Maybe not join, to support the participating ideas because the Moon administration integrated May 2017 but when it comes to South Korea's support of the belt and road initiative and in Indo-Pacific, strategy is total different. South Korea, Moon's administration supported belt and road initiative in December 2017, but the Moon administration supported the Indo-Pacific last June, one year and a half later than supporting the belt and road initiative because of a fear of Chinese influence.

But anyway, at the time, President Moon and at the summit between President Moon and President Trump said that South Korea and the United States seek a connection between their Free and Open Indo-Pacific and South Korea's new foreign policy maybe.

There are several areas of cooperation. One is composed of building of Southeast Asian countries. Frankly speaking, South Korea doesn't want confrontation with China because we are always kind of weak partners. We are probably getting suffered from Chinese economic sanctions like that. Instead, we want a detour to have a U.S. strategy. That is capacity building. For example, several years

ago, South Korea sent its retired military vessel to a certain country and they used that military vessel to check China's fishing ships. That is the kind of South Korean effort to build the capacity in a Southeast Asian country. We also have some kind of spend a lot of ODA to Southeast Asian countries and we can help those countries expand their democracy and respect human rights. I think that is a kind of South Korean role to expand our cooperation with the United States.

The problem this day I think with regard to this kind of cooperation may be, no, it is hard to criticize the current administration but anyway, when it comes to the last administration, the Obama administration, the United States at the time rebalancing strategy, that entails, that emphasized value, democracy, free economy, human rights. But this day, although the Trump administration emphasized expansion of the U.S. cooperation in the region in the name of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific but the U.S. emphasized what? "America First." It's very typical to work together under the name of "America First." No, we must emphasize the value. A country like South Korea, easy to join and easy to support.

So I think, I believe the Trump administration's Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy now is kind of formulating and that they are adding more plan. So I hope the United States thinks more about the value issue. Then it will be much easier to bring other partners into the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy.

MR. PRADO: Another question I wanted to ask you, obviously, the New Southern Policy is the second most important foreign policy issue for the Moon administration, the most important one is North Korea, how to deal with North Korea. So this U.S.-China competition or rivalry, how do you see it from a South Korean perspective it affects the potential for peace, denuclearization, or inter-Korean reconciliation, for example?

MR. SHIN: I think from the beginning, the division of two Korea, there is a kind of influence of big powers. In the time of the Cold War period, the big powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Nowadays it is the United States and China. And this day, you probably noticed the delay of the nuclear negotiation between the United States and North Korea, and North Korea's position is getting tougher and tougher. I believe that is because of China's influence.

From China's perspective, the northern part of Korea is their own territory of influence.

Probably, some of you remember that only in 2017, when the Trump administration inaugurated, President Xi Jinping visited the United States. They had the summit at Mar-a-Lago, Florida. At the time, President Trump explained what President Xi Jinping mentioned about the Korean Peninsula and said, it was quite a shock, that Korea was a part of China for a long time. Who teaches history to Xi Jinping?
(Laughter)

Anyway, that's China's understanding. They don't want to lose North Korea to the United States. So they cannot but support North Korea, not leaning towards North Korea. That's the core of the matter of nuclear negotiations.

You know, when President Trump meant Kim Jong-un three times, Kim Jong-un visited China four times and Xi Jinping visited North Korea one time. They have five summits. And then the term, China and North Korea are traditional allies, revived. President Xi Jinping didn't even meet North Korean Choe Ryong-hae in the year 2012 and 2013 because Choe Ryong-hae, the second person of North Korea when he visited China, he must have pledged North Korea's devotion to denuclearization. That's China's position in the year 2012, 2013. But as time goes by, South Korea tried to kind of -- what is -- mediate between North Korea and the United States and President Trump accepted South Korea's mediation and directly meet North Korea. That is kind of a concern of China. So China cannot but to meet Kim Jong-un, and they cannot but to provide the support to Kim Jong-un. I'm not sure whether the report was right, but last June when President Xi Jinping visited Pyongyang, Asahi Shimbun reported China pledge to support 800,000 tons of grain and two million tourists to North Korea.

Three days ago, North Korea, Chairman Kim Jong-un visited the Kumgang Mountain, and then he hold the Hyundai Asan which is the counterpart of Kumgangsán tourism in North Korea. And the North Korean government provided 50 years the right of development to Hyundai Asan, but Kim Jong-un just nullified that kind of guarantee. And North Korea would develop the Kumgang Mountain with their own.

I believe that there is also a connection with the Chinese tourist. Interesting is that we tried to fill up every economy loophole to North Korea to bring North Korea to the negotiation table for denuclearization. Only one loophole was tourism. We didn't know that. But anyway, there is no U.N.

sanction to prohibit tourism to North Korea, or China detour the kind of sanction. So probably there are many Chinese tourists at this moment and it's going to increase. That is kind of a Chinese negative impact on nuclear negotiations.

So Kim Jong-un, North Korea unlawfully, illegally developed nuclear weapons. Nowadays, if you read the North Korea's term, they believe that their nuclear development is justifiable because of the United States pressure, hostile policy. Their position is now looking at the more like upper hand. That's because I think of China's role.

So from the beginning on the beginning matters, the United States should solve this matter with China first. Without the cooperation of China, from China, it's very hard to solve a North Korean problem. So this day there is a possibility of a small deal, very small deal anyway. So North Korea just to keep Yongbyon nuclear facility instead of the United States provide lift of several sanctions. But look at the nature of negotiations. For the last 25 years, North Korea developed a nuclear program, and look at their capability. They started building the Yongbyon facilities and then other facilities, and they produce the nuclear fissile material and they produce nuclear weapon. That's the leverage of North Korea's nuclear development.

On the other hand, the international community is responsible as to establishing sanctions step by step, increase the sanctions. What North Korea tried to sell this time is selling their cheapest one, facilities. What North Korea wanted to get, more expensive and valuable. The sanction of at least two years. Not long time ago years. That's the two. So we changed the calculation in the year 2013. We started to pressure directly on North Korea's economy. So this time, if the United States accepted a step by step approach with the sale of buying North Korea's nuclear facility and the giving of lifting recent sanction, that was a mistake, I believe.

So we must get the kind of promise of North Korea. And so what is the end state of North Korea's denuclearization? That must be a North Korea giving up all nuclear weapon and all nuclear facilities and all nuclear fissile materials. We must get them from this kind of commitment. But North Korea never mentioned that kind of commitment this day. That is, I think, a very risky negotiation.

MR. PARDO: Okay. One last question before we open up to the audience, maybe to

Linde and Lynn. Maybe Linde, we can start with Europe.

Do you see any potential scenario under which Europe could strategically align with China? Because we still have NATO easily. That hasn't disappeared. It's not at risk as far as we know. But do you see any possibility of Europe saying, okay, let's take a different approach and align with China?

MS. DESMAELE: In short, no.

MR. PARDO: Great. Next question.

MS. DESMAELE: I think that Europeans will never say now we choose China over the United States. And I think there are many reasons for that. But I do think that it is possible because currently we don't really have I would say a very strong consensus on a European level on what the strategy then should be, although we are thinking about it and there's kind of a consensus that we should get a little bit tougher but still I would argue that we're not quite there yet. So I do think that for as long as several countries in Europe remain interested in Chinese investments and in Chinese money, quite frankly, they will try to also keep it like this. And so for as long as we kind of remain divided, then I don't think we're really choosing China but I think that plays into China's hands. And of course, if relations with the United States would deteriorate depending on what happens also with the next administration I think this could really work well for China. So I think even if we do not choose China, because I think we will never do that, and I hope we will never do that, I think it could be de facto that we are much less of an interesting partner for the United States than what the United States would like to see. But I'm also not necessarily saying that that's the action that we should take.

So I don't think that we will choose them but I think that de facto it might actually work out quite well for China as it is right now.

MR. PARDO: And what else has Southeast Asia -- is there a scenario in which Southeast Asian countries, or some of them, might decide to align with China strategically?

MS. KUOK: I think at the moment what we've seen is a sort of reluctant acceptance of, at the moment, United States' vision for the region Free and Open Indo-Pacific. So in June, we saw ASEAN adopt an ASEAN outlook for the Indo-Pacific. It's a fairly anodyne statement. It doesn't say very

much but I think it seeks to, just by adopting the terminology of the Indo-Pacific, I think it's trying to buy into some of the principles that are outlined in the free and open vision or document. I would probably say that Mr. Shin, I think earlier you mentioned that we need to -- the United States needs to think about values more. I think it has outlined some values which I think are good for the region to buy into, so free and open in the Indo-Pacific means freedom from coercion, good governance, and then open means, you know, open seas, as well as trading systems.

And I think that these are fairly easy principles for the region to buy into and that's why they're important. But when we start talking about more values like, you know, democracy, human rights, I'm afraid that some countries in the region don't take kindly to references. These are important values but perhaps the best way of achieving these values might not be in a strategic document that seeks to win friends.

I think what interested me in something that a Japanese diplomat said recently was that the failure to reference human rights in the national security strategy was really not a Trump failing. It was the success of Japanese diplomacy. So I think they lobbied, Japan lobbied for reference to good governance rather than human rights in the National Security Strategy. And I think that helps to achieve greater buy-in in Southeast Asia at least for better or for worse.

So some buying into the U.S. vision, that said, I think we are also seeing at the same time small but perceptible movements by the region towards it's greater alignment with Chinese interests and priorities. I think we see that in bilateral relations between China as well as countries like Malaysia and the Philippines. So President Duterte of the Philippines, as well as the former Prime Minister Najib. They were quite willing to, or rather, they were very reluctant to push the country's South China Sea claims because they were hoping to get more belt and road deals from China.

The current Malaysian administration, under Prime Minister Mahathir is supposed to be more hardline against China. But even Prime Minister Mahathir has recently said that he prefers rich China over fickle United States. So you could not have a more clear statement than how China's rise and how it's actions are actually influencing bilateral relations.

And in terms of multilateral relations, I think China's increasing geopolitical influence is

also showing itself, like in the European Commission in its dealings with ASEAN, and I think a lot of us in the room would know that in 2012, China successfully leaned upon its ally, Cambodia, to leave out reference in the joint ASEAN statement to the South China Sea. What we probably have heard less of is how in 2016, China was able to successfully get Cambodia and Laos, but also a claimant in the South China Sea, Brunei, to say that the South China Sea issue is really a bilateral matter for the claimant states involved and outsiders have nothing to say about it. So forget, you know, the right to freedom of the seas, et cetera, and the right to legally permissible maritime rights in the South China Sea. These are all matters according to China that should be bilaterally dealt with between China and small countries.

So we see China's geopolitical influence dividing ASEAN already, but we also have to worry about how China's growing political influence in the region might actually reach or make it easier for China to gain agreements that favor it. So in the code of conduct negotiations in the South China Sea that China is currently discussing with Southeast Asian countries in ASEAN, it's asking for very worrying provisions to be included in them. One of them is for external navies to not be able to conduct joint military drills or exercises with countries in the region unless there is permission given.

And the second worrying position, as well, is for countries in the region not to cooperate in the maritime economy with external -- with companies from foreign companies. So China is seeking to close off the South China Sea for anyone apart from China, the dominant power, as well as the smaller, Southeast Asian countries.

But by and large though, I think that although there might be this tilt towards China, it's still taking place within the broader hedging strategies of Southeast Asian countries. And so far at least it has not meant a corresponding shift in security ties. So we see the Philippines maintain its alliance with the United States. In fact, I think it's been strengthened with the U.S. clarifying that reference to the Pacific in the Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines includes reference to the South China Sea. So that generally made the Philippines quite happy.

We see, I'm told that, you know, U.S. surveillance planes continue to fly out of Malaysia no problem. Singapore has signed onto the purchase of many more F-35s because we definitely need

more toys. Vietnam, through its comprehensive partnership has also been deepening its security ties with the United States. But I think in the long run, if we see the continuing economic integration, the economic carrots that China has to offer to a region that is in dire need of development, and infrastructure development in particular, I find it very hard to believe that we can have this dichotomy between economic ties on the one hand with China and then security ties on the other with the United States. I think there are tensions there already today and moving forward I think those tensions will come to a boil in the future.

MS. DESMAELE: If I can perhaps just quickly --

MR. PARDO: Very quickly. Yes. Yes.

MS. DESMAELE: Some of the things that she said I think are also very relevant actually from a European point of view. Because if we indeed look at kind of public views of China, we also see that in the countries that receive a lot of Chinese investments or are in large need or in demand for these Chinese investments, we definitely see that actually public perceptions are still, I would not say positive, but more positive than in other areas of Europe.

So in Western Europe, we see that perceptions have become increasingly negative but in countries like Greece and Bulgaria, more than 50 percent of the population still has a positive view of China. And in Italy, for example, we've seen actually that perceptions have become more positive over the last year which correlates also with Italy signing upon the belt and road initiative. So I definitely think that we should also not underestimate that some of these countries simply are really looking for investment and simply are really having economic troubles and then China has a lot to offer. So then I also think from their perspective it might not be -- it's also kind of comprehensible why they do this. And also, similarly, because I don't precisely remember who said it but also the fact that it's rather difficult nowadays, the relationship with the United States. I also think that for many Europeans it's not clear what precisely the United States is trying to achieve with China. Is it trying to decouple? Many analysts would say yes. But for example, last week, Mike Pence delivered a speech where he was very clear in saying, no, we are not trying to seek -- we are not seeking to decouple our economies. So I also think if perhaps the Americans or the administration would be a bit more clear in which are the areas of concern that it

might also get certain Europeans onboard because these Europeans may not be interested in like some across-the-board, very confrontational approach but might still share many interests and might still share many concerns and could on individual aspects still work together. And I think this is really an area where the current administration really missed this kind of an opportunity to get more support than it actually could because of that.

MR. PARDO: Okay. So now we're going to -- I already see four hands. So we're going to start collecting maybe three questions here on the right-hand side and then we can move to the left-hand side. And I saw a couple of you already there.

If you can please introduce yourselves briefly.

MR. WINTERS: Steve Winters, independent consultant.

I'd like to direct this to, let's see, we've got Lynn Kuok I guess I'd say.

I've had many visits to Singapore and a lot of those were with the U.S. Navy back in the day. Quite an interesting place in the Sembawang port, a lot of history.

So my question is, the U.S., in terms of this competition with China, is very concerned about China's announcement of this China 2025. In the areas of technology they were going to become number one in the world by that time, and perhaps by 2030. What has been the reception in a country like Singapore to the Chinese plan for 2025, particularly given that Singapore is such an advanced technological society itself? Do they fear this or do they welcome it? Is this a good thing for Asia, a bad thing? Certainly, in South Korea, it's greatly feared because Samsung thinks it will just put them out of business.

MR. PARDO: Thank you.

Had another one here and then another one there.

QUESTIONER: Thank you very much. I'm Do-jun Jang for International Peace.

Actually, 200 years ago China took charge of 30 percent of world GDP and now they are underway to reaching to the same position. So I think China is not just rising, they were just sleeping and they are just on their way to wake up.

So my question is, compared to that era, we have tons of alliances and there is some

framework, and there is some cooperative security platform to check and balance the China rising. So I think just reinforce and supplement the current system could be the optimal policy to counter about China's rising. So do you have any limitation on our current system?

MR. PARDO: Okay.

QUESTIONER: (Inaudible) from John Hopkins SAIS.

My question in the interest of linking security dynamics in Europe and in Asia relates to Russia-China relations. The French president has said we need to anchor Russia into Europe somehow, have this rapprochement to prevent them -- to not push them into the arms of China basically. So I'm just curious, either from a European or an Asian perspective, what is the (inaudible) any Russia-China denser security partnership?

MR. PARDO: Beomchul, maybe we can start with you.

MR. SHIN: Okay. Let me start with Russia-China relation. I think they are indeed in cooperation of a strategic partnership. In the European matters, China supported Russia's position, I think. In the ASEAN matters, Russia supports China's position. With that kind of supporting mechanism, they compete with the United States. That might be an ultimate goal of the two of them.

Going back to the first question, because China is considering China's size and their economy, and their capacity, I think that we should enforce the current system and mechanism? I think so. But there will be many challenges because China is not stupid. They are very strategic. And they always think about the long-term strategic perspective. So they try to decouple the alliance mechanism and regional mechanism.

When it comes to ROK-US alliance, China's demand probably demand North Korea that their goal of denuclearization, the first step is decoupling. So North Korea's perspective of the Korean Peninsula denuclearization concept, that was a retreat over USFK and dismantle of ROK-US alliance. Then, that's the benefit of China. Maybe in the Southeast Asian countries, I think almost the same.

So it's not an easy thing. It will be very tough. During that process you must muddle through China's pressure. And then because of China's market, it's not easy to refuse their proposition. So it's a very difficult thing when you wrong the government because the administration always evaluated

the result of the economic situation. Not the security situation because security doesn't always give you a benefit. It always realizes it's a very difficult situation. But in ordinary times, always economics matters. So it's not easy.

The first question is not mine. Okay.

MR. PARDO: Actually, the first one was for you, Lynn, so maybe we can come to you now.

MS. KUOK: On Singapore's perception of China 2025, I don't have a clear idea of how it actually felt, how it actually thinks about the issue. But I think if one argues or reasons from first principles, I would say that Singapore would have no trouble with China seeking to develop itself as a technological power. But the problem is less the sort of capabilities that China has but more its strategic intent that Singapore would worry about. And because, I think, you know, there's a saying that, "The devil alone knows the mind of man," you can't actually tell what a country's strategic intent is short of what they say or what they do. And in this respect, I think China's actions in the South China Sea have been very worrying for Singapore, as well as domestically, China's political influence operations seeking to influence parts of Singapore's population to China's cause whether, you know, on the belt and road or the South China Sea or just, you know, in terms of where China stands vis-à-vis competition with the United States. I think those are all red flags for the Singapore government.

And I think if we look at two issues, well, let's just look at Hong Kong. I was actually surprised. I was back in Asia over the summer and I was actually surprised by the sort of narratives that China has spun and people in the region believe. So when I first heard China accusing the United States of interfering in Hong Kong and hence, leading to these protests, I thought that's a silly story. No one is going to believe that. You know, I've heard that in the South China Sea apparently the U.S. is meddling and that's why there are problems between Southeast Asian countries and China. I thought it was absolutely a silly story to spin in respect of Hong Kong and I found it rather insulting for the two million students and young protestors, or old protestors as well, fighting against -- fighting for a cause they believe in and against a regime that they didn't quite believe in. But there will be many in the business community, in Singapore and other Southeast Asian countries that I have spoken to that actually believe

this story and they say, oh, now I get it. Now I know why these protestors are protesting when there's clearly no interest or when they have no interest in doing so, it's because the U.S. is meddling.

So, you know, if we look at China's strategic intent, that's worrying, and we look at its actions, that's worrying, and we also look at how effective those actions are in persuading some of the local populous, that's also worrying. So that's a long way of answering your short question.

And I don't know the actual answer to devolving from principles.

And the other question was about Russia and China. I think we saw the Russia-China cooperation when, you know, the two countries jointly conducted edules (phonetic) above the East China Sea earlier this year and that had everyone in a frenzy about this potential Russia-China support or grouping.

But I think at the end of the day, Russia, at least at present, my reading of it is Russia is still very much a bit player in the region. I think its main influence in the region has been over like arms sales but not so much its strategic position and role. And I think it's also quite interesting that in some respects Russia and China have departed or are playing a game of almost brinkmanship because Vietnam has quite savvily, remember I told you earlier how Vietnam was threatened by China for drilling for oil and gas in its own exclusive economic zone. It was threatened when it was working with a Spanish company, twice, and it was also threatened when it worked with a Russian company, Rosneft. And while Vietnam stopped drilling for oil and gas with its Spanish company, it continued I think with the Russian company because the Russian company I believe is banking on the fact that China would not want to offend its only friend in the South China Sea, namely Russia, but for how long this is going to continue because, you know, Russia is basically drilling for oil and gas in Vietnam's EEZ zone but China thinks it belongs to China. For how long that can continue and how long China and Russia can remain bedfellows in this respect is an open question.

MS. DESMAELE: I think I can just add a little bit on the separate question. Perhaps actually also on the industrial question. I think it also kind of, but it's not only a reaction to China but I think it's also triggered some reaction in Europe in a sense that because precisely this technological and this Huawei issue has now really come into forefront on this competition between the U.S. and China. I

think this has also partly led to kind of a renewed debate on the EU industrial policy. I mean, this is not a new issue but now I feel like there's a renewed debate also perhaps on creating some sort of European industrial champions to be able to compete with Chinese companies, but also actually to some extent with American companies. So I do think it has actually also triggered a reaction outside of Asia.

Then for the question on how to deal with China. So do we have to strengthen the current system? I would say yes, but I also think, although I'm not quite sure how that would work, it also has to be adopted because if we think, if we look at all these, I mean, I'm a big believer in multilateralism and all of that, but if we look at all these institutions, of course, they also reflect, I mean, they were set up in a different time when China was simply not as powerful and when the power relations between these different players and these institutions were different, so I do also think that now the position that some countries have in institutions does not necessarily reflect the current power base they have, so I do think there's a mismatch there. So even if I think that I continue to believe in these institutions and I think that we should continue to strengthen them, I also think we should to some extent adapt them to better reflect actually how the world has evolved because otherwise I think you also create situations in which countries like China will just start building alternative institutions next to it and then smaller countries don't have anything to say anymore.

And finally, on the Russia-China partnership. So I'm really not an expert on Russia-China relations, and I think Lynn has already discussed quite a bit on this, but I think from a European perspective, of course, we could be somewhat fearful of a good relationship there because if Russia feels that it's backed by China, this could embolden Russia to be somewhat more assertive in certain instances. But I think from a European perspective, if we want to look at the triangle between Russia, China, and then bring the United States back in, I would also be perhaps not concerned but at least interested in how the U.S.-Russia relationship develops because there have been some people making the case for improved U.S.-Russia relations to kind of create a front or something along those lines against China. And I think in that respect, the United States might be willing. I mean, there are important constraints that is important political reasons and domestic reasons why I don't think this will happen tomorrow. But if it would kind of go in this direction, this could be I think detrimental to Europeans

because the United States might be willing to give Russia something in Europe that is perhaps not of vital interest for the United States in exchange for Russian cooperation on China, so to speak. And I think the INF story is somewhat of an illustration of this I think in the sense that the argument was also made by some people that by withdrawing from the INF also because the administration is not all that keen on treaties and all of that, but by withdrawing from the INF, it was not as much about Russia but it was also a lot about being able to develop these weapons in competing with China. So maybe the United States was thinking, okay, let's have some instability in Europe but if it will strengthen our position in Asia.

So I think this triangle can be looked at from different directions, and I think actually we're getting in a situation where everybody wants to line up with Russia.

MR. PARDO: For now we have one, two, three people. Next to you, actually.

MR. STACY: Joe Stacy from a previous administration.

This whole event is really much more about China than Russia. I've got an article coming out that is much harsher on Russia than China.

But be that as it may, first, Ms. Desmaele, it may be too soon to talk about permanent shifts in the U.S. All of Donald Trump's republican rivals and all of the democratic slate would basically put things back the way they were. And on the Hillary campaign, we made a decision that her first trip, had she been elected, had Russia not interfered, would have been to Brussels for an unprecedented joint NATO-EU summit on the theme of democracy, and it would have been specifically aimed at Russia. So don't give up on us yet.

But in light of the Asian slant to all this which is quite appropriate in another sense, Dr. Kuok, Dr. Shin, I'd like to ask you a couple of quick questions about some earlier strategic moves in the region.

Was the -- Dr. Shin, you mentioned the rebalance and the pivot. Was this, as many Chinese nationals who are abroad and out of the reach of the Chinese state we think, almost unanimous in their view that the U.S. essentially caused the hardening in Beijing with the rise of Xi, the fact that he skipped over his senior military commanders and hired all hardliners for each of the branches of the military. And then another one, the move on the outlets and the buildup of them, was along the same

lines potentially not in an ultimate sense but approximate sense, was it the West's failure to stand up to Russia with regard to Ukraine that was perhaps the proximate reason that Xi decided it was time to move on those islands and essentially show us in direct contravening of his promise to the Obama administration that he would not do that and then finally advanced? What is your view on that?

MR. MARK: Yeah, Ken Mark, retiree.

We frame our relations with China in terms of competition and rivalry. Do the Chinese frame the issue in the same sort of zero-sum terms?

MR. LEE: Thank you for your insightful discussion today. This is Jeong-ho Lee from South China Morning Post.

Just a quick follow-up question about the China-Russia relations. Japanese media Kyoto Today actually reported that China and Russia are currently undergoing a discussion to form a formal alliance, and China has already deployed Russian radar that can detect U.S. long-range missiles. I was just wondering, how do you think this would actually impact the U.S. alliance in the region? And also, what additional role do you expect Korea and NATO and Southeast Asian countries to play in this era of new alliance?

MR. PARDO: Lynn, do you want to go first?

MS. KUOK: On the cause of China's buildup of these islands and ROK's in the South China Sea, I don't know what I would place my finger on as the actual cause, but I do think given how extensive and how integral it seems to be in China's interest, I don't think it was a reactive measure. I don't even think it was because the West failed to stand up to Russia and China is going to proceed. I think that certainly didn't help. But I think China has been planning its moves in the South China Sea steadily. And so in 1995 already it moved against Mischief Reef and that was decades ago. The United States didn't really feel it had skin in the game then. And so when ASEAN actually decided to make a statement about China's moves against Mischief Reef which is a low tide elevation in the Philippines EEZ, the United States really had to be persuaded to make a strong statement against this Chinese action. And again in 2007, we saw China start to threaten U.S. companies for drilling for oil and gas in Vietnam's EEZ. And at that point as well, this is all in WikiLeaks, at that point in time as well, the U.S.

ambassador to Vietnam at that time was saying, you know, this is something you need to resolve bilaterally with China and even though U.S. companies were in the fray.

So I think China has been taking moves first quietly and largely unnoticed in the South China Sea. And then come 2013, it made its biggest move reclaiming the (inaudible) but I think it's all part of a bigger -- it's a bigger long-term plan.

MR. PARDON: Thank you.

Linde?

MS. DESMAELE: So perhaps I can only say something if I understood the question correctly about NATO's role in Asia Pacific or was that not at all the question? Was that kind of the question? Okay. That was kind of the question.

So when it comes to NATO's role in the Asia Pacific, I think my personal impression is that I don't really think there's going to be a role for NATO really physically in the Asia Pacific anytime soon for different reasons.

So first of all, I think, especially from a European point of view, the Asia Pacific is still far away. And when it comes to security challenges for Europeans, those countries more in the East are way more concerned with Russia than they are with China. Those countries who are in the south are then more interested in the Mediterranean, in North Africa, and all of that. So I think there's already a lot going on very close at home for NATO to actually then start stretching its resources even further into the Asia Pacific.

And I also think precisely because in Europe we do not have this as strong view, I mean, definitely not a strong view on strategic competition with China, that there might also be some reluctance on the part of some European countries to really start playing a role there because they don't want to also create the impression that we're all ganging up on China because there are several countries that are still very interested in maintaining positive relations with China. So it really depends on the individual country you're going to look at. So I think first of all, I mean, I don't really think NATO has the bandwidth to do that even if it would want to at this point, and second, I actually don't think it wants to, or at least not everybody wants to.

MR. SHIN: Okay. I think, let me first say I love China. (Laughter)

But anyway, China is improving, getting better. But under the Xi Jinping time, I think it confused (inaudible). So I hope China will find their own way to muddle through (inaudible) country.

With regard to Russia, I think in the Asian region, in particular the Northeast Asian region, they want to play as a veto power. They understand their power is limited in Asian countries.

In the Far Eastern area, which is the eastern side of Siberia, only 10 million people live in that region. So their economic power is limited, and even their military power is not as (inaudible) as the Cold War time. They retreat to major military facilities capability from the east right after the Cold War.

So they want to play as a veto power. Without agreement or without the approval of Russia, no country in the region is getting through their goal. For example, in the North Korean nuclear issue, Russia played a certain role. So they can hamper. They wanted to show they can hamper the negotiations. But that's the limited role of Russia. So they need a cooperation partner. That is China in the Northeast Asia region.

So the second question is China seeking zero-sum international relation and whether there is zero-sum -- I think so. Because China believed it. They tended to think about their history. First, the history of wonderful days of China. They are the center -- their Chinese country name was Center Country. They are the center of the world. So they believed that those times of European countries, like U.K. and these days the U.S. dominance over the world, it is from China's perspective, it is something not acceptable to them. So they wanted to restore their prosperity, their influence over 200 years ago probably. So they think about the international relations more basically under zero-sum games. So they tried to push the United States away in the Asian-Pacific region. That's my understanding.

And then the discussion forming alliance between China and Russia. Nominally, China opposed any type of alliance. That's their argument. Because that kind of alliance system hurts the other partners, the other countries' security. So I believe China would not make a formal alliance treaty with Russia. However, things are changing. Maybe five years later, 10 years later, their position might be changed. In fact, that kind of a change brings the United States more opportunity to make a more cooperation leader alliance partner because those countries in the region all feel China's influence and

the alliance between China and Russia is getting more influence over the region. They kind of bring more fear of their influence. However, there is one challenging thing that this U.S. sentiment of isolationism – retrenching -- because President Trump did a unilateral withdrawal from Syria, that is the kind of issue that whether we can trust the United States. Many people in South Korea are starting to think about that. So I believe the United States needs more commitment. Not “America First.” Maybe America Second. And the United States still maintains number one in the world.

MR. PARDO: Lynn, we are going to give you the final word. You wanted to add?

MS. KUOK: Yeah, thank you.

I just wanted to touch on that and then make my point.

I don't think the issue necessarily is “America First,” because I think, you know, lots of countries put themselves first, and I think that's the whole point of national interests. You know, “America First” is almost normal. Singapore First, Malaysia First, I mean, that's normal. The problem with “America First” in my view is that President Trump or his administration has taken a very narrow and shortsighted view of what puts America first. And I think, you know, the issue of the rule of law, like not talking about international law as much, you know, the issue of multilateralism, those are all problems with the “America First” approach, not the actual “America First” policy that is the problem.

And I wanted to touch, I didn't answer the gentleman from the South China Morning Post, your question earlier on the role of countries like Japan or South Korea even.

I look at them as a group of like the middle powers, I suppose; right? And in my view on the area that I work on, the South China Sea, what can be their role?

So I think first and foremost, I think we need to have these freedom of navigation operations, or I think I prefer to call them insurgents of maritime rights and freedom. These should be continued and they should be done by as many countries as possible who have the capacity to do that. I think the importance of this is that it helps to take the sharp edges off just the U.S.-China competition respect. It shows that there are countries with skin in this game that countries beyond the United States care about ensuring that the seas are open. So as many countries who have the capacity, who are able to do that, I think that's important for them to do.

In this respect, Germany talked about there was some news about Germany sending a ship through the Taiwan Straits. Unfortunately, I spoke to some German officials who say, no, that was misreporting, and they have no immediate intentions or near-term intentions to send a warship through the Taiwan Straits, which I think is unfortunate.

The other country I would like to see more from especially is India. Because India is a so-called Asian country and China has been making this point about how, you know, we Asians can look after ourselves. But if India is involved in this as well, it shows that India, too, disagrees with how China is viewing the South China Sea as a Chinese lake and I think that's important.

On top of these insurgents of maritime rights and freedoms we need to have joint military exercises. More of them are a good thing. I think in May or June, South Korea was actually involved with the United States, Japan, South Korea, and I think it was -- which was the other country? Australia as well. So the three port entries as well as South Korea. And I think that's very important that these joint drills take place because as I mentioned earlier, under the code of conduct, China is trying to seek to exclude external powers from conducting military exercises in the international waters of the South China Sea.

Second, capacity building. We need countries, middle powers to help with capacity building in the region as much as the region can absorb. It should be helping. And I think this is important to deter problematic actions in the South China Sea, but also to build up the confidence of regional countries in its dealings with China.

Third, I think China should -- these middle powers have a role, if they might not have enough military might, they have very much -- they have sub powers. They have the powers of persuasion and can they seek to persuade China that its long-term interests as a growing military naval power and as a country that increasingly has interests across the globe, both economic as well as military interests across the globe, its interests lie in preserving freedoms of the seas. And so, you know, middle powers who have that sort of background and experience, they can provide a persuasive force, knock until the door opens. Right?

And then the fourth way, I think, you know, middle powers can contribute to regional

stability and the rule of law is that they should help with promotion, and this goes broader than the South China Sea, they should help with promotion of development in the region that has dire need for infrastructure development and broader development goals in general because how countries decide to position themselves vis-à-vis China or the United States, or even how they position themselves in terms of adherence to the rule of law will depend on how they view the strategic winds, strategic and economic winds are blowing, and insofar as, you know, middle powers and the United States and its allies and partners are able to convince countries that there is a future with us and it's stable and a law-abiding future, then, you know, these countries would feel more reassured about lending its hand to this cause.

MR. PARDO: Thank you very much.

On that note, I want to thank a few people. I want to thank the panelists for the stimulating discussion. I want to thank Jung and her team and Brookings in general for hosting us and Asan Institute for their support, and for hosting us in Seoul next year. And the Institute for European Studies for giving me a job, I guess, and for supporting this initiative as well. Thanks to all of you for being with us this afternoon. Thank you very much.

(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