

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

BECOMING KIM JONG UN -
A FORMER CIA OFFICER'S INSIGHTS INTO
NORTH KOREA'S ENIGMATIC YOUNG DICTATOR

Washington, D.C.

Tuesday, April 28, 2020

PARTICIPANTS:

Introduction:

RYAN HASS
The Michael H. Armacost Chair and Fellow, Center for East Asia Policy Studies
The Brookings Institution

Conversation:

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

SUE MI TERRY
Senior Fellow, Korea Chair
CSIS

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. HASS: Good afternoon, my name is Ryan Hass, and I'm a fellow at the Brookings Institution. It is my honor and pleasure to welcome an audience from across the United States and around the world to this live Webcast conversation between Jung Pak and Sue Terry to roll out Jung's new book, which hit bookshelves today.

Jung's book, titled "Becoming Kim Jong Un: a former CIA Officer's Insights into North Korea's Enigmatic Young Dictator," could not be more timely. The book provides a masterful insight into who Kim Jong Un is, what makes him tick, and what keeps him up at night. The book has already earned wide praise from among the leading thinkers and former policy practitioners dealing with North Korea issues.

And we're fortunate that Jung and Sue will spend the next hour with us, breaking down what we need to know about how North Korea operates, who Kim Jong Un is, and what is going on in North Korea these days.

Jung and Sue bring a wealth of knowledge to this conversation. They both are former intelligence analysts who represent the very best of their previous profession. They each were tremendous colleagues while in government, and they are tremendous friends to me now.

And in addition to being deeply informed, kind, and deadly smart, they are also a ton of fun. So before I turn it over to Jung and Sue, I do want to note that we already have collected many questions from members of the audience, and welcome you to send more. You can do so by sending an email to Events@Brookings.edu or via Twitter at #BecomingKim. With that it is my delight to turn it over to Sue and Jung.

MS. TERRY: Thank you, Ryan, for the kind introduction. Of course we are all in your mutual fan club. Jung and I are also great friends of Ryan. He's a great friend, colleague, astute thinker, and scholar of China and all things Asia. He's one of the most stand-up people we know, so thank you, Ryan.

So let's get started. I know the question that's foremost on everyone's mind is Jung, what did you do? The timing of your book launch is so remarkable it's a bit suspicious. But all kidding aside, what the heck is going on with Kim Jong Un? Whether Kim is alive or incapacitated or recovering.

Don't answer that yet, we'll get to that.

But first I just wanted to give a little bit of a background on us, a little bit more of how I met Jung. I first met Jung in, I don't know, early 2008, late 2007. I was at the time at the National Intelligence Council preparing to go to the National Security Council. I had already left the Agency when I got a call from my boss, my former boss from the CIA. He was breathless about, you know, this wonderful woman who came for an interview and how she made this superb analyst and CIA gave her a conditional offer but they were not able to close the deal, and my mission was to close the deal with Jung.

So I agreed to help him. And when I first met Jung we exchanged emails. And when I first met her it was at Starbucks inside the CIA, and there was this long hallway. And I still remember the very first day I met her was walking down the hallway. Just, you know, she's looking great, always so fashionable. I still remember the suit that she was wearing.

And of course as he predicted, we hit it off. We decided to meet that night for dinner in Washington, D.C. at some wine bar. We met, it was supposed to be a short dinner, she was supposed to have some sort of 9:00 p.m. conference call. Before we knew it, you know, she was taking the call outside of the restaurant in the middle of the street. And then before we knew it it was the wee hours of the morning, and the rest is history.

She's been a great friend and colleague since then, a confidant. We collaborate together whenever we can. She's also a role model for me as a scholar, as an analyst, as a mom. So I can't be happier to share the stage with her launching her book.

So I also want to make a quick toast to Jung. If you can see the champagne. Before the coronavirus era you were planning this book launch event. We were supposed to do it in person at Brookings with the champagne toast and all. So even though we're doing this via Zoom, there's no reason why we can't do a champagne toast as we promised.

So here's to Jung, and congratulations on your book, on this achievement. This is the most thoughtful, insightful assessment of the young, enigmatic leader of North Korea. So timely too, so proud of you, and cheers.

MS. PAK: Cheers. Thank you, Sue, but I need you to turn on your video so I can see you.

MS. TERRY: Okay. How do I do that?

MS. PAK: Thank you so much. You're so amazing, I can't think of a better person to celebrate with. Thank you.

MS. TERRY: So before we start talking about Kim Jong Un and North Korea, I do want to spend a few minutes talking about what it is like to cover a country like North Korea and a person like Kim Jong Un as an analyst.

So your book begins with you talking about the difficulty of analyzing North Korea, the difficulty of your job as an analyst for the CIA, making the hard call. And as you know, I started at the CIA two days before 911, and my years at the CIA covered Kim Jong-il, and of course your CIA career began just after Kim Jong-il had a stroke, and your CIA years covered Kim Jong Un in between us, from Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong Un, we've had two decades of covering North Korea. But we will both agree that North Korea is indeed the hardest of hard target countries.

Could you talk a little bit about your job as a North Korea analyst in the U.S. intelligence community, how you analyze the vast array of information and misinformation, connecting the dots. You talk about how North Korea analyst job is like putting together a piece of a puzzle, we see it at different times, different places, different pieces of the puzzle mixed in and so on. Can we start with that?

MS. PAK: Yeah. And so thank you to Ryan for that amazing introduction and for those kind words. And to Sue, I can never get tired of your telling people about our first date. This is a rated PG conversation, so she left out a lot of stuff in that opening.

So, Sue, thank you for doing this. You know I'm so glad you were able to do this as least virtually with our audience though we can't do this in person.

So I think what's so interesting about how our paths crosses is that you covered the father and I covered the son and our paths crossed at the Agency. And I think even on the CIA website, the recruitment website, you can see things like, you know, work for us at the CIA, help us learn to connect the dots. And this is like a puzzle where you have different puzzles coming in at different times from different periods, from different places, and then you have to figure that out.

But I think in the North Korean issue, and we see this now when all of this fragmentary information that's coming in about whether Kim Jong Un is alive or ill or whatever the case may be, is that

because of North Korea's specific practices on operation security and their information security, it makes North Korea the hardest of the hard target. And as you know, this is something that always ran true throughout the building in Langley.

So I think, you know, North Korea doesn't want to, the regime doesn't want information to get out to the outside or within North Korea itself. And because of that you have only a small circle of advisors, maybe a handful, that might know where or what Kim is doing at any given moment. I think that is designed to make sure that no one gets any crazy ideas about starting protests or getting together or colluding against the regime. But it's also to make sure that the people on the outside, the United States, Korea, China, also to keep them in the dark about where the regime is.

So given all of that, I think a lot of improvements have been made over the years, but given all that the North Koreans operation security, their tight hold on information, makes it really difficult to actually look unless you're an insider.

MS. TERRY: Yeah. You know, in your book you talk about Richard Huer's book, you reference his book on how intelligence analysts knew to work through the weaknesses and biases in our thinking, how we need to continually test and review our key assumptions. And I found that to be very true. I mean I think that's one of the most thoughtful things about your book, about the need for checking our assumptions, right?

MS. PAK: Yeah. And you know this book, right? I mean we probably had five or six different copies given to us at any given point. And so everybody, if you walk into any CIA analyst's office, former or in Langley, you'll see this book on their bookshelf, whether over to the side or somewhere. But it reminds me of, you know, one of the things about being a North Korea follower, North Korea analyst, is that it's extremely frustrating, right?

MS. TERRY: Yes.

MS. PAK: So you have to live with all of this ambiguity and provide answers when there are no answers. So it's a lot of mental and also emotional, gymnastics to try to get at this target.

And the stakes are high, right? I mean there's a reason North Korea is a target, North Korea is a hard target, and the reason that we study North Korea so much is because it has nuclear weapons and its position in the middle of the most economically vibrant parts of the world, in Asia. It sits

between China and South Korea, that's also where the U.S. troops are present, in South Korea and in Japan. And so given all of those factors, and the fact that we don't have very much absolute insight into the leadership's intention. That makes this a very dangerous place and it really requires a lot of checking of the assumptions. Otherwise we're just following a wrong path.

MS. TERRY: One more question on CIA before we move on to North Korea. What do you think is the biggest misperception people have about the Agency and what is it like not being in the government anymore? What do you miss and not miss? Is it weird not having top secrets, access to top secret sources?

MS. PAK: Yeah. So when I arrived at Brookings in September of 2017 after almost nine years at the Agency, I remember sitting at my desk and looking at my one screen, remember how we had multiple screens?

MS. TERRY: Yeah.

MS. PAK: Just looking at my one small screen and feeling I was deaf, dumb, and blind. What do people do for information, I mean what are they listening to, what are they seeing, talking to them. And what is the government saying? And so that was a really difficult transition, that now you have to find other sources of information. I mean I think you found that too that when you left that it was difficult to acclimate to new information environment. What did you think when you left?

MS. TERRY: No, no, like what do I not know? Like I mean I felt, you know, you become information obsessed. So now you don't have it, so you go through this withdrawal. Right?

Okay. So moving on to Kim, I know we'll get to the status of his health, and all that later. But in your book you mention that there's a tendency by analysts and scholars and media to portray Kim Jong Un as a cartoon figure, right, a 10-foot tall baby. And there's a tendency to simultaneously underestimate/overestimate Kim's capabilities. And you say with his capabilities, with his intentions, questioning his rationality, and of course Kim Jong Un is not the only one who is caricatured. I remember when I was covering Kim Jong-il, we similarly caricatured Kim Jong-il. He was portrayed as a cartoon figure too, making fun of his bouffant hair, his platform shoes, his obsession with films and womanizing and so on. Remember Team America, I'm so lonely, you know.

So could you talk to us a little bit about that, Kim Jong Un being portrayed as this cartoon

figure and the consequences of the implications of doing that.

MS. PAK: It's easy to character the Kim regime. As you know, you've seen this all your life in your career. And I think it's because of that absence of deep knowledge about North Korea. And I think so when the two Kims are very easy to character because of the way they look. And that's one of the things that I wanted to do this book is to provide a fuller picture. And it depends on where your gaze is. I think this is where Richard Huer's comments about mirror imaging, that you can't be projecting your own assumptions or your own beliefs, and what I would do in that situation, into their position.

And so I think the whole crazy moniker that goes to how can they do this, why would they do this, don't they know we would hit them and the U.S. would destroy them? This doesn't make any sense. But when you look from the North Korea or the Kim perspective it's not crazy. And that's something that I try to explain, like what are the drivers of all of his actions, what is his historical baggage, what is he mindful of, what does he aspire to, and how does that evident or manifest in his actions. So what might seem crazy and unpredictable and irrational to us is actually rooted in rationality on the part of Kim.

MS. TERRY: So in writing your book, what most surprised you about Kim Jong Un? Has your view of him changed over the years since, you know, since he took over? Has he exceeded your expectations?

MS. PAK: You know, 2018 was really jarring. Remember that when Kim did this abrupt switch and everyone seemed to be talking about how he is different. Yes, he is different from his father and his grandfather. He's different, in doing a pivot at the Olympics and engaging with South Korea and the United States after years of holding his neighbors at bay, that he was different. You know, he studied in the west and he has a wife and, you know, he wants to be more modern, and so we have to grab this opportunity. And, you know, that was disconcerting. And again, this goes back to how deeply uncomfortable it is to be an analyst of North Korea is that it made me challenge my assumptions about Kim. You know, what are we seeing and what does that mean, and what is really driving this outreach in particular.

And I remember we were at a conference, Sue, and there was a really blustery frightening statement, you know, after the pivot, and all of us were like oh, yeah, that's the North Korea

that we know, right, the issuing of threats and the telling us that, you know, that they're going to use their weapons, all that.

But I think, you know, I try to get in the book is to show that he's still learning from us, he's still growing, he's still adapting, and that we have to be ready and be flexible to adjust our analyses based on the situation.

MS. TERRY: Do you have a fun fact that people don't know about him, most people don't know about him? Like for example, Kim Jong-il, I know that his favorite food of all time was sushi. But not only sushi, fatty tuna.

MS. PAK: I think as I was writing, and you know how sometimes when you write, the more you feel like you're learning from the writing process. What I thought was really interesting is the role of women in North Korea and his use of his wife. So I thought that was what was really interesting. This is different too because Kim Jong-il did not have his wives or his consorts out in the public, they tried to keep them in the back, keep the women in the background as much as possible. But I thought that was, I mean there are many reasons why he would bring his wife to the fore. And one is that he was young and his father told him to get married just before he was, you know, in 2009, told him to get married because, and although this isn't explicit, because it would make him into a man, right?

And in Korean culture you're not a man until you get married and have your own family. And so that gave him that gravitas of being this married, stable man. And I think, and I know we're going to be talking about other, you know, what's happening now, but I also think that the reason his wife's so present in his rule or that he introduced his wife at all is that he wanted to be sure that this is a (inaudible).

Kim Jong-il had a ton of women, right? And Kim Jong Un, we don't know if he had, you know, he's messing around. But once they have this image of a family centered man, so I think that what I suspect he's thinking ahead. He's thinking ahead in terms of succession, there should be no jockeying in the background over which line of the family is going to be the next in line. And so I think that, you know, it makes me, again, I think it's apparent to the world is that he thinks ahead and he's not this, you know, funny something year old kid anymore but he's a 36-year old man.

MS. TERRY: That actually was one of my favorite part of your book is your observations. One in particularly on that chapter on Kim Jong Un's wife, First Lady of North Korea, and, you know, her

role. You link her role with North Korea's soft power engagement with Kim teasing the world with a promise of a different, more peaceful, pliant, charming and modern North Korea, that's your phrase. How she normalizes Kim's status, not just as a leader of North Korea's nuclear power, as a nuclear power, but you mentioned as a husband, as a father, as a legitimate ruler on par with people like President Moon, President Shi, you know, President Trump.

And you write in your book, I have a quote here I wanted to read to you. "The carefully curated public appearances of Ri Sol-ju provide the regent with a softer side, a thin veneer of style and good humor to mask the brutalities, starvation, and depravation endured by the people, while reports about the existence of a possibly multiple children hint at the couple's propensity."

MS. PAK: But, yeah, I think that was definitely illuminating.

MS. TERRY: So then let's talk about his sister a little bit, Kim Yo-jong too, because now everybody's talking about her potential role and possibly succeeding if something were to happen to Kim Jong Un. You have thoughts on his sister?

MS. PAK: Yes. I think it's clear that he doesn't trust anybody else. He trusts his sister at lengths. They share a mother and a father, and, you know, Kim went through the process of years of pruning the family tree, getting rid of the side branches or marginalizing the side branches. You know it's anyone's guess, but Kim Yo-jong, the whole sister is in a position to be potentially in a regent role for Kim Jong Un's children as they grow up and potentially take over.

But this is anyone's guess. So, you know, there's a lot of speculation about where Kim is and who might take over if he is incapacitated or dead. But these are real questions. I mean North Korea, regardless of where Kim is, whether he's at his beach resort or somewhere else, North Korea still has nuclear weapons, they have a cache of biological chemical weapons, they have sophisticated cyber capabilities. So North Korea is a danger and a threat and I think that this is a reminder, Kim's absence is a reminder about how we should be preparing for all of these various scenarios.

MS. TERRY: What is your best estimate of what is going on in North Korea right now? I mean I know that we have so many conflicting reports and nobody knows, but what is your best, I mean what's your take? What's going on?

You are frozen. Hello? Jung? I think Jung is frozen. Can you hear us? Okay. Hold

one minute. Let's wait a minute, I think Jung got disconnected and she's trying to reconnect.

Can everybody hear me? Can people see me?

MR. HASS: Yes, they can see and hear you.

MS. TERRY: Okay. So maybe while we wait for Jung to get back on since we're having technical difficulties, maybe I should talk a little bit about what I think is going on since everybody's already on watching this.

Just to talk a little bit of my sense of what's going on. I mean obviously there's no confirmed reporting so no one knows. That's the answer, no one knows what's happening with Kim. But there are a couple of data points that I do find it interesting. Since April 11 Kim Jong Un has not been seen, we know that. And while he has been out of public view in the past, it is highly unusual that he did miss two very important events, including April 15th celebration of his grandfather's birthday, and the Army Day celebration just on Saturday.

Now missing this April 15th celebration is significant because Kim Jong Un has I don't think has ever missed that even since coming to power. So that is noteworthy.

And another interesting fact I would think is that it's curious that North Koreans are very quiet about all of this. You would think that, you know, they do monitor the news coming from the world, and they could come out and say, you know, this is all fake news, but they're not doing that. So that is also curious that North Korea is so quiet about all of this.

Is Jung back?

MS. PAK: Sorry, I think it was the North Koreans trying to cut off our webinar early. So sorry about that everybody.

MS. TERRY: Can I have your views? I don't see you somehow, I don't see your face for some reason. Now I can. Anyway, go ahead.

MR. HASS: She should appear in just a minute.

MS. TERRY: Okay. So, Jung, where were we? I was asking you what your best estimate on state of Kim's health was. And while you were gone I was just trying to sort of, you know, talk about, you know, just basically saying that we don't know what's happening, but it is curious, some things are, you know, things are unusual.

MS. PAK: Yeah. Something is off, but we're not going to know what it is. But the questions remain about what the implications are of his absence. And I think it would be in Kim's interest to show up sooner rather than later. The borders and the information penetration is not what it was like in 2014, it was not what it was like in 2008. And so rumors are going to get around.

I also think it's interesting that all of this chatting is going on in the Chinese chat rooms and so, you know, all of this information, all of those rumors, are going to get out. And I think it would probably be to Kim's benefit and advantage to show up sooner rather than later.

MS. TERRY: But you do think that Kim Yo-jong is most likely to succeed Kim Yong Un if something were to happen to him?

MS. PAK: I think so. I think given all of the resources that the government, that the regime has afforded to elevating that family line, the blood line, the Mount Baekdu family line. And in their propaganda, in all of their histories and all of their education and all of their landscapes and their museums, it would be hard to not have a Kim family member, a full Kim family member at the head. And even if that person was a bigger head or not, I think there would have to be a full family member at the helm.

MS. TERRY: And what kind of ruler would Kim Yo-jong be? Do you think she would pursue her brother's policies, you know, with a woman's touch? What kind of ruler would she make?

MS. PAK: So I mean let's look if we take a look at history. Look what Kim Jong-il did. He got rid of five of the seven people who were helping him, you know, at the funeral procession of his father, and he marginalized the other two by the time, you know, the first two or three years. And I think that, you know, the Kim family is not strangers to brutality and repression, and they have to use it to make sure that they maintain their survival.

And when we talk about regime survival we're talking about the Kim family's survival, and not the entirety of the government.

MS. TERRY: But if she were to take over do you think North Korea would survive, would the regime be stable?

MS. PAK: You know, I think in the near term the elite would be very self-conscious about sticking their head up and raising their hand or trying to collaborate or collude, you know, to their buddy

on the West Coast or the East Coast. I understand Kim's purges of all of those, you know, over the past few years, hundreds of officials, as a way to keep the elite off kilter and to try to make sure that no one's support or no one's networks get very, you know, get very ulcified or hardened into something.

And so given that I mean I would expect to see purges. But I think in the near term I don't think the elite are going to start rising up or anything to that extent, but, you know, I think we have to be careful about thinking of the regime as this fragile, it is fragile but also there is a lot of resilience because there are a lot of entrenched interests, money or otherwise, money, power, that keeps the elite pretty much along the lines of what the regime's line is.

I also think that given all of the things that have been happening so far in terms of, you know, the North Koreans, Kim has been pretty clear that North Korea cannot trust anybody except for Kim to protect them. And if anything, I think what the past few years have shown is that the U.S. is not a reliable partner, South Korea is not a reliable partner, China is not a reliable partner. And that's something that I teased out in the book about how the regime has learned over the decades that the other countries, allies or not, will turn their back on you if push comes to shove.

MS. TERRY: So let's talk a little bit about North Korea's policies toward the United States and the U.S. policy towards North Korea before getting to audience questions.

So first, if Kim is not, if he's not incapacitated or dead, indeed is alive and well, what can we expect from Kim in the future? Do you think he will conclude a deal with Trump this year, or do you think he prefers to deal with Trump instead of President Biden? What's Kim's next steps?

MS. PAK: Next steps this year or in the coming years, if he shows up.

MS. TERRY: Right. He's alive and well.

MS. PAK: So I think, you know, what's interesting is that he came onto the scene in 2011, 2012 with a lot of swagger. He said North Koreans didn't have to tighten their belts anymore, you know very well, Sue, that that was his father's line, you know, during the famine. And that when he introduced his policy in 2013 of a dual track policy, Kim said that, you know, we can have nuclear weapons and economic prosperity. But what's interesting in the past year is that he told his people that there might have to be some belt tightening, that there is going to be a prolonged struggle with the United States, and that things are going to be hard, and people are going to have to work harder, longer, faster.

And so it seems as though, you know, that Kim has closed the door on, or at least kept it a little bit open, on engaging with the U.S. But I don't know if he would make any big moves now given the U.S. elections coming, it's going to be (audio drop) there. It would not be in his interest to make a deal at this point given who knows what might happen after the election and that these deals, whatever it is, would not be implemented.

So I think what we're going to see is I think we're probably going to see more nuclear missile tests as the North Koreans have been testing, this is something that they do to try to improve their capabilities. I think we're going to see ramped up cyber activities. I think a panel of experts and private research companies and think tanks have documented this very well. That's a low cost way of generating revenue for the regime.

And so I think that's what we're going to see. Kim is going to try to maintain his weapons, is going to try to bolster his role, maintain his strength or at least the optics of his strength, and muddle through in the way that the U.S. will probably muddle through with North Korea policy in the coming months.

MS. TERRY: Usually in an election year there are provocations. I agree with you, I don't think it's going to be a major provocations such an ICB or more nuclear tests, but I do think there's going to be provocations when Kim Jong Un comes back when he is recovered. He also needs to show that he is strong, right, that he is not a weak person.

And if you look in March and there was all these short-range missile tests, that I think he was gearing up to that, to more provocations. Do you think he prefers to deal with President Trump second term, or President Biden?

MS. PAK: I think things look pretty good for Kim in terms of foreign relations. He has a U.S. president who has praised him for his leadership and ignored his human rights violations. We don't have a human rights envoy to North Korea. President Trump and the Trump administration has turned a blind eye toward the various, the shorter range ballistic missile tests and other provocative actions. The U.S./South Korea relationship is not great, the burden sharing agreement is still outstanding and there are thousands of Korean workers at the U.S. bases furloughed. Things with U.S./China are not great, you know, they're trading barbs over who started corona and who's doing a worst job.

With respect to the coronavirus, South Korea and Japan are fighting about, you know, there's a trade dispute that blossomed into a full-scale conflict that turned into, seeped into the security and economic realms. And so based on how some of the disarray in the region, the absence or the lack of U.S. leadership at the highest levels in the region, the fact that Kim has had pretty much a free reign in terms of these weapons testing, I think it would, you know, if there was more of this kind of environment that I think that these are net positive for Kim.

MS. TERRY: So what should be our policy towards North Korea? You write in your book that ultimately Kim is not a businessman. And wealth, in President Trump's sense of the word, is not what Kim, and presumably the North Koreans too, this is not what they are looking for. And that President Trump's mirror imaging led to policy making that did not comport with realities, right? So Kim is highly unlikely to give up nuclear weapons in order to get a McDonald's franchise in Tongyang, as you say.

What is the right approach then? What would you recommend for either President Trump's second term or President Biden? What we should be doing?

MS. PAK: I don't put that up front in the book so, you know, I let the story develop. And looking at some of the episodes and looking at various parts of his personality, various parts of his life, and various parts of North Korea's history, and I build to that, toward policy recommendations. And that was designed to show that, you know, Kim is not just about security guarantees, and that he requires a hostile outside world to try to justify his reign.

And the problem with President Trump's approach about this, you know, these beach front condominiums and having great real estate, is that Kim does not want American entrepreneurs running around in his countries setting up McDonald's franchises. He does not want people building railroads or fixing their infrastructure for him because he doesn't want non-North Koreans who are uncontrollable inside the country and infecting his people with crazy ideas about market economies and democracy and good governments.

So he doesn't want that. He's not a subcontractor that a hotelier from New York would get used to working with. But his drivers are different, his incentives are different, and I think we have to recognize that.

I also think that we do a great disservice to our policies and to the North Korean people. And I know you're a strong advocate of this too, Sue, is the idea that we don't treat the North Korean people as an entity or as actors themselves. And that I think, and a lot of scholars and activists and think tank people are working on this. The problem with human rights is that it's not a key U.S. government priority. It's always on the lowest rank of priorities, you know, issues like that are seen usually as secondary or tertiary issues, if at all. And it's clear that this administration does not see human rights issues in North Korea as a priority at all. But I think we need to ramp up information penetration, give the people what they want, use technology, work with technology companies and activists to try to get more information into North Korea.

MS. TERRY: Yeah. On human rights actually, President Trump did begin with, you know, when his term began he did focus on human rights. I remember when he went to South Korea, you know, gave the State of the Union Address, talking about North Korea's human rights abuses. Remember when he had a State of the Union, you know, address, he did invite the North Korean defector and all of his family. And then all of a sudden that switched when he turned from all this, you know, this maximum pressure to peace offensive and diplomacy and symmetry, all of a sudden he's completely dropped it.

I completely agree with you on this information penetration. You know, for me it's like it's such a key to get information in to North Korea to help the people break free from this information blockade. I agree with you on that.

Okay. So we have a few minutes before we turn to the audience, so I'm going to ask you just one last question. If Kim is alive and well and you got to spend some quality time with him, what would you say to him?

MS. PAK: If it was quality time.

MS. TERRY: What would you ask him, what would you say to him?

MS. PAK: So this was a surprise question that you were going to --

MS. TERRY: Yeah, you know, free people, I mean like, you know, what should he do? Like what would you say if you got to spend some quality time with him?

MS. PAK: You know what I would like to ask, you know, is what is the legacy that you

want to leave behind? And what is the legacy that you want to leave behind? And I think that, you know, most people would prefer that he would say I want to have this peaceful North Korea where everybody's prosperous. And I suspect that when he was younger maybe he had some of these thoughts. But I wonder if, you know, how have his ideals or his goals changed from 2012 to 2020, and what has he learned, you know, how optimistic was he in 2011, 2012 versus 2020, given the fact that he hasn't had a sanctions removal, he hasn't had very much success on that front. So I think that's what I would like to -- but, you know, that's something that I think would be really interesting to find out from him.

MS. TERRY: And if he did make a case to do better for his people. But what if he did die or pass or is incapacitated, if this is it, what is his legacy then?

MS. PAK: I mean it's the worst of what North Korea has to offer in that the alleged equality of Communism or Socialism is gone as people can't rely on the state for their daily necessities, they have to -- it's almost Hobbesian in that, you know, you eat what you kill in North Korea.

I mean I think about this when we talk, when I think about COVID in North Korea. There's no way, despite what the North Korean regime says about it, that there's zero infections. But the elite can get testing I'm sure. The elite can go to the hospitals.

Kim Jong Un is building this massive Pyongyang general hospital in anticipation of having to treat the elite. But it's really, the vast majority of the 25 million people in North Korea who are without safe water, they're scrounging around for food, and they have to rely on smuggling, human trafficking, sex slavery, to try to scrape by. And there are millions of stories in North Korea in terms of all these defector stories, I think which are so, you know, they're so poignant about the triumph of the human will versus all of the burden and the repressiveness of this particular regime.

Do you remember over the summer there was a woman who died in her apartment in Seoul with her child. They were North Korean defectors and they had died of starvation in South Korea after they had defected. And I wish that we could offer an alternative vision. And I think, you know, Thae Yong-ho, one of the most prominent defectors, his winning a national assembly seat, I think provides that sense of alternative vision.

You know we're good at talking about lots of things. We're good at talking about, you know, nuclear weapons, how to do non-proliferation and corrosive diplomacy, etcetera. But I think we do

a pretty bad job of showing North Korea what could be possible. And I think we really do have to ramp up the information penetration and focusing on how to get different ideas into North Korea.

MS. TERRY: I can't agree with you more. And I was very happy to see Thae Yong-ho win because I do think it sends the right message to the elites and potential defectors.

MS. PAK: Yes.

MS. TERRY: There is an alternate path to them. There is a life that's possible in South Korea.

Okay. So we're going get some questions from the audience. First question, we have a foreign affairs analyst from Federal government. Sounds a lot like an Intel person. Remember this "We're from the U.S. government." So this person asks: To what extent do you think Kim's appetite for risk has grown over time?

You do talk about Kim Jong Un's brazenness and high risk tolerance in your book. Has his appetite grown for risk, has grown over time?

MS. PAK: Yeah. One of the premises of the book is that Kim is watching us as much as we're watching him. And he learns from what we're doing and what we're not doing.

And so there were many, many redlines or, you know, alleged redlines that he crossed, right. And you're seen this through Kim Jong-il's period too, right? From one nuclear weapon to two, to six, to eight. And based on what he's done, I mean he's been very aggressive too in pressing the accelerator on the nuclear weapons program and conventional training, etcetera.

But there have been, other than sanctions, which the air was let out with the summits, he's still standing. He did three ICBM tests in 2017. That long ago was a redline that North Koreans would be inviting trouble if they did that. But they got sanctioned, and so did a massive nuclear test as well. He threatened to, during his reign he's threatened to hit South Korea, he's done night training for commando raids, he has had mock displays of the South Korean Presidential Blue House so that they can do, you know, training on how to raid it. He has done, you know, he's done some pretty brazen things I think, but the punishment has been pretty subdued. There were sanctions, they thought the maximum pressure campaign was a good policy, but I think all of that kind of went away when President Trump said "I don't even believe in maximum pressure," and that he's, you know, dismissing North

Korea's human rights violations.

So I think he's become bigger, badder, fatter, and bolder because he has perceived a lack of political will to respond to him or punish. And you know this, Sue, that sanctions are hard to implement. You have to have China on your side, you have to make sure that all of our partners across the globe or wherever North Koreans are have the capacity to find out illicit activities that are taking place in their country. So I think, you know, I think he has a bigger acceptance for risk.

But I also wonder, and this is something that I'll be watching for is how much of the economic issues might tame that. What I worry about is that his default is aggressiveness, right. It's not, you know, being chased and being self-reflective about what he needs to do, but that sensing weakness in one sector of the economy that he might go all in on the other sector, which is the nuclear weapons program and military readiness.

MS. TERRY: And the economic situation is even more uncertain with the measures they have taken to prevent coronavirus. Now they've taken some draconian measures effectively like, so there's a secondary effect to that. So implications to the economy and we see it. So particularly also if he was sick or he had a major surgery and he recovers, I wonder if that would make him more risky in the future in terms of his actions or what? I mean it must have a psychological impact, right?

MS. PAK: Yeah. And he has to show strength, otherwise how do you keep the elite in line, how do you keep the military in line? Which is strange to say for somebody who is, you know, overweight and has these issues. And it's striking to me how the inconsistency or the cognitive distance of this Kim Jong Un with his protruding belly, smoking a cigarette, and ordering the North Korean Navy to strip down and swim in the ocean for an impromptu drill, right? But he has to show strength, and his perception of strength is in doing these actions.

MS. TERRY: Okay. A State Department Fellow from Institute for Defense Analysis asks: It is said that North Korea's senior military leaders fear Kim Jong-il but did not respect him. What is your view of Kim Jong Un?

So of course as you know, one of the reasons why the regime survives is, you know, one of the key pillars of stability is elite support, right? So we know that the elites have supported Kim I, elite loyalty, there was elite loyalty towards Kim il Sung, elite support to Kim Jong-il. What do you think of the

elite's views of Kim Jong Un? How much do they really support him?

MS. PAK: I'm not sure, I'm not sure that that's exactly the best question. It's more are they willing to, I mean they're willing to support him in the way that he protects their lifestyle. And I think that's something to be mindful of is that as odious as Kim Jong Un might be in his treatment of his people, there are still interests that are tied to him. And the way he has purged people and he has demoted and shuffled leaders around, that also means that they have a stake in the North Korean economy as it is. You know, the military and the party are very much involved in money making operations, and the closer you are to the regime the more money you can make, the more opportunities you can have.

And so I think you have to think of it in terms of not loyalty to Kim Jong Un himself, but what he represents, that kind of stability and the privilege that they're used to.

MS. TERRY: Okay. Do we have more questions? Someone was asking about how, this is more book related, Jung. How are you handling that in a book? I know today was a big day, you were hoping for a book tour. How are you handling that? And I'll just ask a follow up question to that.

This is your first book. What was the best part and worst part about writing this book?

MS. PAK: Yeah. So I was nervous, obviously, about the book tour and not being able to, you know, show people what I'd done and what I had produced. But I think, you know, there's always a silver lining, and I think that having this Webinar with you, Sue, is different from having it in Brookings in our auditorium, you know, that hold maybe 150, 200 people. But with this we can reach hundreds of people across the country who can share, you know, in our conversation and hear about North Korea, especially given what's going on in the news.

I think the worst part, the worst part was writing late at night. It was having my Brookings day job, coming home, putting the kids to bed, you know, after dinner, and then starting work at 9:00 p.m. and then working until 3:00 a.m., and doing that for a year. And now I still have that schedule where I can't sleep until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning and I get up at 7:00.

MS. TERRY: I thought you got that heavy blanket.

MS. PAK: I got the gravity blanket, and it's not helping.

MS. TERRY: Okay. Oh no. Okay. A question just says from Washington, DC, so that question you just answered is New Providence, New Jersey. This question is from Washington, DC.

How was Kim introduced to China as a young man? Did he travel to China, does he have China advisors? Chinese advisors I guess what they're trying to say.

MS. PAK: Yeah. One of the first things that he did as leader, as he was consolidating power, was that he killed his uncle, by marriage, in 2013. And one of the criticisms of him in the indictment was that he had too many contacts with the Chinese and that he was more subservient to the Chinese and working with the Chinese. And that's something that you want to avoid when you're an official under a threat of having too much foreign contact is that it makes them highly suspicious.

And of course there were rumors during the grooming process that he went with his father to China. But the Chinese government was pretty open about this. There was no criticism from the Chinese government. Beijing was the first to say congratulations Kim Jong Un on taking over after your father's death. And so I think, you know, that was, you have a Beijing at that point that was very cautious and sensitive to making sure that they have their contact and making sure that they didn't offend Kim Jong Un.

And so this is kind of like the tyranny of the week, as one scholar has said, that even though you have this very relatively weak country, you have people that, you know, there is a sense that, you know, without North Korean stability, you need to have access to Kim and have some sort of relations with him.

MS. TERRY: One question was: Has it become easier to analyze North Korea from the time of Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong Un given that we have so many defectors running news services, sneaking cameras into North Korea and presumably better technology.

MS. PAK: Is it easier? Yeah, I think there is a lot of information, absolutely, in terms of how much because of technology. And this is all good, the result of, you know, activist work and defector organizations' work, and organizations like the National Endowment for Democracy, as well as the State Department. So I think there is a lot of information coming out.

And some of the things that we hear about the regime in this grassroots way is you get a flavor of the atmosphere and some of the things that give us a flavor or snapshot of what's going on in a particular part of the region.

And there's a lot of complaining, and I think this is great information to come out of North

Korea, but what we see is there is a lot of anxiety, there's a lot of, you know, some isolated criticisms of the regime. But the problem is that these criticisms are not connected, but these are isolated incidents of critiquing the regime and not the harbinger of something, of a people rising up.

MS. TERRY: We have just time for one last question from the audience. And that is: Given the fact that information on the outside world has been leaking into North Korea over the years, what are your thoughts on why there has not been yet an uprising from its people or an inside assignation similar to the death of former South Korean President Park Chung-hee? So why has there not been an uprising?

MS. PAK: Yeah. The people are too isolated, they're not connected in that way that would spur a collective action. And collection action against, or protest is, you know, when the Arab Spring happened, that there was a sense that, you know, this is the start of a new era where the people will rise up as a result of technology. What we've seen in technology in North Korea is that they're not connected to each other and that these are heavily monitored, and that people are still very careful about what they say.

So the horizontal connections that are necessary for any kind of protest, you're not going to see. And I think there is, and this is the irony of all of this, is that I think that North Korean people are so resilient that they're able to adapt. That so many decades of living under the Kim family, they've lived through the famine, they've lived through weather events, they've lived through a period of want, and they're living through this regime.

And the difference now is that they're making money, and they're making lots of it. And so you're not going to see massive uprisings as a result of the fact that there are enough people earning money.

And I have to say this one point too is that Kim is trying to encourage that. Kim is trying to encourage the, you know, you too can make it big by having Pyongyang become the center of cosmopolitanism and modern luxuries. And it's a way of trying to keep those desires contained and directed inward toward your self-improvement versus outward in overthrowing the regime. And if the regime can keep up to date, keep people's aspirations and hopes, then I think you're going to have the status quo.

MS. TERRY: Okay. Well I think our time has come to an end. Thank you, Jung. Did

you have any final comments?

MS. PAK: No, just to thank you for everything and to Brookings and to Valentine and to all of you in the audience who joined us today. I'm really grateful and really proud of this book, and I hope that you like it as much as I enjoyed writing it.

MS. TERRY: So I also want to thank everyone for joining. Again, kudos to Jung for the most insightful book on a subject that is very timely and of great importance for U.S. national security. You know, writing a highly informed, substantive, objective analysis of one of the least known leaders in the world, that's not an easy task.

And I have to tell you, you know, this book is also highly readable in terms of history and broad narrative on North Korea. I promise it will resonate with everyone whether you know a lot about North Korea or you know nothing about North Korea. I personally found it very enlightening because of Jung's very just passionate in a way but very thoughtful, insightful analysis.

And what I really loved about the book is that she goes into explanation of why and how she came to her assessment and evaluation. So her analysis of Kim Jong Un and developments and all of that are not only interesting, it's very revelatory, even too I think so for North Korea experts.

So, for example, you know, if you're talking about let's say describing Jang Song Thaek's execution and what transpired. She doesn't just talk about it, she elaborates on what happened, but what the event reveals about Kim Jong Un, and so on. So the book is very revelatory.

Again, thank you, Jung, for writing this book. Thank you all for joining us today.

Now go out and get this book and enjoy reading it.

MS. PAK: Thank you, Sue.

* * * * *

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