

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT  
Online Event  
**CSIS Commission Report on North Korea Policy &  
Extended Deterrence**

DATE  
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FEATURING  
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Victor Cha:

Good morning, everyone on the East Coast. Good evening to those of you in the Pacific. And good afternoon to those of you across the Atlantic. Welcome to the CSIS Korea Chair Commission report launch.

My name is Victor Cha. I'm senior vice president for Asia and Korea Chair here at CSIS, Vice Dean and professor at Georgetown. And we're very happy this morning to give you the results of a report that the CSIS Korea Commission has put together with regard to "North Korea Policy and Extended Deterrence." Please allow me to give you a little bit of background about the Commission and then introduce some of the folks who will be joining us this morning to talk about some of our findings.

So this Commission – this is the second report of the Commission. The Commission was put together about three years ago, designed to look at recommendations for the alliance for North Korea and for extended deterrence. The first report of the Commission, if you're interested, you will be able to find on the CSIS website. That was released in March of 2021 in advance of the first summit meeting between President Biden and then-President Moon. That offered recommendations to both administrations about how to improve the alliance. And this is – this is now the second report, and the report focuses – this report focuses on North Korea policy and on extended deterrence, two very timely topics, I think as all of our audience would agree.

The Commission is composed of a bipartisan group of experts and former officials. The co-chairs of the Commission are our President and CEO John Hamre and Professor Joseph Nye of Harvard University. And the directors of the report – the project directors of the report were Dr. Katrin Katz, formerly at Columbia and now at the University of Miami, and myself.

So first I want to thank all the Commission members, if we could show the slide quickly. So this group of individuals are the Commission members. As you can see, they are a group of experts on Korea and the Korean Peninsula. They are – it is a nonpartisan/bipartisan group. And we want to thank them for all of their support and inputs as we put together this report. You can pull down the slide now. Thank you.

Second, we also want to thank the Chey Institute in Seoul for co-hosting the meetings that we had as we discussed these ideas with our South Korean counterparts, a group of experts as well as former officials. The Chey Institute was very helpful in helping – in helping us to think through some of these issues, so we're grateful to them.

Before we get started, I should say that the views that are expressed in this Commission report do not – while everybody contributed to it, they do not represent the views of every single individual on the Commission. In other

words, we did not ask every Commission member to sign off on every recommendation, so they should not be seen as reflecting the views of every single Commission member. But again, we thank both our Korean and our U.S. members for the – for the help they provided. And the report is now live on the CSIS website at CSIS.org.

So, with that, please allow me to turn the floor over to Dr. Hamre to offer some opening remarks, and then – and then I would ask Co-chair Joseph Nye to do the same. So over to you, John.

John J. Hamre: Thank you, Victor.

Thank you to my colleagues – Joe Nye, Vince Brooks, Dr. Katz. Thank you for being involved here today with this rollout.

And I should just let our audience know that today is Dr. Nye's birthday. (Laughter.) And so we timed this specifically to celebrate a great American on his birthday. Thank you, Joe.

I'll be very brief. When I have – when I have conversations with Korean friends and during my most recent trip to Korea, three questions always came up in almost every meeting.

And the first question is: OK, it doesn't look like North Korea's going to give up its nuclear weapons. What do we do?

The second question is: Is America's extended deterrence guarantee still credible?

And the third question, which is really interesting – (laughs) – is: You know, should Korea have its own nuclear weapons? And I'm surprised at how – at seeing the polling results that maybe 70 percent of citizens are saying Korea should have its own nuclear weapons. This is a profoundly important question.

And so that was the purpose for this Commission and for the work that we've done.

Let me just – let me just say, and I'll leave it to my colleagues who really are the experts, I think it's crucially important for us to find a way where Koreans have confidence in us or our extended deterrence promise. Extended deterrence doesn't mean we extend you something; it means that our conventional commitment to fight with Korea extends up to and includes nuclear weapons if we have to. That's what extended deterrence means. But we need to convince Korean citizens that that pledge is still valid.

There have been things that have come up in the last several years that have called this into question. I've had Korean friends say: We see how hard you avoided trying to get into a tense situation with Russia over Ukraine. Does that mean you'll avoid, you know, nuclear weapons rather than threaten them on our behalf? And so we've got – there's lots of questioning going on in Korea, and there should be more questioning here in the United States: Is our credibility still intact for extended deterrence? I think our goal with this is to help people understand what that means and, hopefully, to provide the context for why we believe it is still valid and why we want to rebuild that confidence in Korea.

So I think we'll have a very interesting conversation together, especially with these three remarkable colleagues who are with me today. Dr. Nye, let me turn to you.

Joseph S. Nye Jr.: Well, thank you very much, John, and I must say I agree fully with what you said and applaud the work that the Commission has put together on this very important question.

There's always been an issue about whether nuclear deterrence can be extended to others. Is a nuclear umbrella truly credible or not? Let me take you back to the classic case in the Cold War where Berlin was an enclave within the Soviet-controlled East Germany with a small number of American troops there. And people kept saying: We will never trade New York for Berlin. It's not credible. We should remove the troops because this extension of deterrence is not credible. In fact, what we learned is 40 years later Berlin was a free and open city, and that Russians or the Soviets never made a serious effort to expel the Americans.

Why is that relevant to the situation we're reporting on in our report? Well, because you could argue that what we had with the Berliners when Kennedy said "ich bin ein Berliner" is similar to what we have in South Korea, which is the presence of enough American forces to help repel an invader but even more – to use a term that's in our report – to make clear that we're involved in a community of fate. There is no way that North Korea can attack South Korea without killing Americans. In that sense, this idea that we will take up our weapons and go home is simply not true because we are wrapped together in a community of fate.

There are things we can do to make that extended deterrence more credible, and that I will wait for Vince and Katrin to describe when they go into the details of the report. But I just wanted to underline or echo the point that you made, John, which is that this commitment to basically the community of fate we share with South Korea is essential to our position as Americans. So I am delighted to see this report showing that there's a good, strong basis

with some policy improvements to make this even more credible than it now is.

Dr. Cha:

Thank you, Dr. Nye and Dr. Hamre, for those opening remarks, again. Special thanks to Dr. Nye since he's actually three hours behind us now, so it's very early in the morning. And I can't imagine a better way to start your birthday than to be talking about North Korea policy and extended deterrence. (Laughter.) So we're very – we're very grateful for that.

OK. So to get us started, please allow me to sort of frame the context of the report. And then we'll go to Dr. Katz and General Brooks to talk about some of the recommendations that the – that the Commission made.

I think it really comes as no surprise to folks that there really have been some tectonic shifts in the external environment for the United States and Korea due to COVID, due to the war in Ukraine, China's rise, North Korean activities that really present a very dangerous and changing landscape for the U.S.-Korea alliance. But rather than fret about this, we also looked at it in terms of opportunities that this could present for the U.S. and Korea to navigate these very difficult currents going forward.

In terms of the war in Ukraine, it's had multiple impacts on the Korean Peninsula. Foremost, it has reminded South Koreans of the importance of having a strong ally – military ally and security patron – in the United States as a buffer against hostility from outside powers. But at the same time, it's also intensified concerns about Korean vulnerability as a nuclear-weapons-free power facing a nuclear-armed state just across the border.

For North Korea, the war in Ukraine really has presented nothing but opportunity. It has amplified the importance of nuclear weapons for their security, at least it appears that it has based on the statements that they have made. Putin's threats of first nuclear use have caused the North Koreans to think about their own ideas about first nuclear use. And then the environment with regard to China and Russia is very favorable to North Korea in the sense that neither appears to be willing to do anything on U.N. Security Council sanctions and neither appears to be willing to sign on to additional U.N. Security Council sanctions against North Korea. In addition to this, the increasing demonstration of capabilities and stated intent by the North Koreans do raise questions about the vulnerability of U.S. national missile defense, particularly when we think about possible multiple independent reentry vehicle technologies of North Korea and our number of interceptors, even as we continue to improve that capability.

At any rate, all of these shifts in the strategic landscape really created a mandate for the Commission to reexamine some of our approaches to the

North Korean nuclear issue and to devise ways to think about how we can increase the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence.

The work of the Commission started before the election of the new president in South Korea. So the new president in South Korea President Yoon's positions on North Korea and regional issues appear to align much more closely with those of the Biden administration. And this, too, presents opportunities for the alliance to pursue new initiatives that can enhance the stability, security, and prosperity of the region.

So, with that, this – the bipartisan committee put together these recommendations to – on North Korea policy and on extended deterrence in these very uncertain times. And I'm going to now turn it over to Dr. Katz to give us a readout – a laydown of the recommendations on North Korea. So, Katrin, I'll turn the floor over to you.

Katrin Fraser  
Katz:

Thank you, Victor. It's an honor to be here and has been truly an honor to work with this esteemed group for the past number of months. Thank you all for your excellent framing remarks.

I'll be – I'll be brief because I hope that, ultimately, people will read the report for the details. But my main mandate is to go through some of the specific North Korea recommendations.

So I'll start with a broad point. Victor already covered kind of generally the state of urgency that drove the report. I'll start with a broad point about what drove the North Korea recommendations. So, as Victor noted in detail very effectively, the war in Ukraine has, you know, made the North Korea, you know, already difficult problem even worse, even more difficult. So I won't go – I won't repeat Victor's points on specifically how that's happened, but what this, you know, Commission did, as we – as we got together, you know, first of all several months ago was to say: You know, how can and should the U.S. alliance – U.S.-ROK alliance, as well as other alliances in the region of course but specifically for this report focused on South Korea, step up to meet these problems, these urgent problems?

So the problem with North Korea, of course, at least in its current posture, is that it's clear, you know, it's very hard to address this urgent problem of nuclear capabilities and growing nuclear capabilities directly with Pyongyang. It currently has no interest in engaging. It's clearly still interested in pursuing weapons development and, you know, at a – at a new exponential pace, as we all know from the – from the New Year's comments from Kim Jong-un, so – despite – you know, despite the fact that the Biden and Yoon administrations have, you know, said repeatedly: The door is open to diplomacy. We're ready to engage. So this urgent problem, the sense of urgency driving this report is, in many respects, stuck.

So I'd say the kind of banner and bold kind of comment overarching our recommendations in this area, the biggest one, is not – for the U.S. and South Korea not to wait for North Korea, or China for that matter, to start working on this issue. And so this involves in the broadest terms looking for areas where the allies retain agency at this very difficult moment of North Korea kind of doing its own thing, and prepare for diplomacy even if distant, and work with allies in these areas to both deter North Korea from more serious provocations and incentivize Pyongyang to return to a negotiation process.

And of course, the foundation for all of these actions is a strong alliance defined in terms of both strong defense and deterrence capabilities, but also more generally in strong alignment between the allies, strong coordination across a number of issue areas. And this all kind of comes into this issue of trust in the comments that Dr. Hamre noted, in the questions that he's getting in the region. So that's generally what drove the report. There's this frustrating issue of its being stuck, but there's plenty that the alliance can do.

So on the specific recommendations themselves, again, I won't read through them all, but I think it's useful at this point to maybe divide them into four general categories.

The first recommendations and issues areas that really are stuck, but – you know, at present but we still think a good idea to pursue. Most importantly – and of course, the topic of the question of – the third question Dr. Hamre gets in the region: Is North Korea really going to denuclearize? I think that was the third one. You know, the report recommends that we retain the ultimate policy objective of complete denuclearization. Of course, that can be a debate in and of itself. There's certainly a policy debate on whether that's realistic. I think most people think it's not realistic, still worth pursuing. Can get into the details of that in discussion if others are interested. But, importantly, to maintain that as the – as the long-term objective for the allies and sort of the North Star.

Second, prepare for eventual return to negotiations and keep signaling openness to diplomacy, as the allies are doing, including but not limited to preparing roadmaps with interim steps like a test ban in return for partial sanctions lifting, opening a separate but parallel track once the testing freeze, you know, is achieved. That's ambitious in and of itself. But to address issues outside of denuclearization negotiations like mutual threat reduction, political normalization, peace regime, et cetera. And then moving on after that, perhaps, if there's success there, on to other steps. Of course, this is all hypothetical because we're stuck, but the allies can still work together in envisioning what this roadmap might look like with the general principles of making sure the steps are reciprocal, not overly complicated, requiring North Korean verification. So a test ban is much easier to verify

than something like a fissile material production freeze. And lastly, being open to two tracks and kind of relationship-building and political steps and peace regime, as well as denuclearization, but not putting those first – not putting them upfront, kind of doing them step by – also, not putting them at the very tail end. So those are kind of the concepts that are kind of driving the recommendations around this ultimate goal of denuclearization.

Another stuck area that is in the report and another big recommendation is increasing support for humanitarian assistance and human rights, separate from denuclearization. Here, the main recommendations involve offering immediate assistance to improve conditions for North Korean citizens, but the main obstacle here being, of course, in the present moment, North Korea's unwillingness to accept the assistance.

So those are some – two of the recommendations of things that, you know, aren't really moving, but we still think it's important to get out there and make clear that these are the positions on these – on these issues.

The second broad area, on a more hopeful note, is almost like checked boxes. There are a number of recommendations – we've been working on this for months – that are already done or in process. The existence of this, I think, you know, we'd all agree is a good sign – those of us working on the report – that the Biden administration and the Yoon administration, you know, are well aligned with the approach of this report, and it perhaps increases the chances that it will be read and implemented, which is – which is all very good.

So I'll list a couple of those in the report, but again, like, already in process in a good sense.

Resuming joint exercises is a big one to enhance military readiness. Of course, they had been, you know, toned down and even canceled under prior – under prior administrations. So getting those going again, as they have been, as we all know, including expanding the scope and nature of the exercises. And I think something really kind of critical in the current moment is especially in areas that will increase – or, increase the credibility of extended deterrence.

And another very important recent development is increase in trilateral defense cooperation. This is also a part of the report recommendations. A number of those are already underway, things like considering additional forms of military cooperation to deter North Korea. Notably, the November 2022 trilateral statement from Cambodia, the first – the first of its kind, first trilateral U.S.-ROK-Japan leaders statement – notes that the leaders intend to share DPRK missile warning data in real time. So this is an element of

information sharing cooperation that we recommended in the report and are very heartened to see is already, you know – it's already underway.

Lastly, the trilateral statement also discusses trilateral sanctions coordination, another area of recommendation. So it's great to see that's already, you know, a part of new areas of very robust trilateral coordination.

A couple other things already kind of in the mix.

Support South Korea's military improvements like the kill chain, additional THAAD battery. This doesn't – you could go into the separate issue of nuclear, but the issues of the Three-Axis system, areas of missile defense cooperation – the U.S. and ROK – you know, we recommend that the U.S. support those.

Lastly, expanding U.S.-South Korea space cooperation to enhance reconnaissance capability.

Again, these issues are detailed much more thoroughly in the report, but those are the general areas that are somewhat in the works. Some of it's not really public. Of course, we don't even know. But just moving in this direction.

Quickly, the third and fourth areas, things that the U.S. and ROK haven't yet done but we think should. Might be next on the list. Might be already in process and we just don't know because we're not currently in government. But these are things that there don't appear to be huge apparent obstacles to, but would help in achieving the overarching goals of increasing deterrence and stabilizing the situation with North Korea to eventually, hopefully, down the road return to negotiations.

So these include things like, you know, on the kind of deterrence side and defense cooperation side, updating wartime operation plans. Establishing new military directives to incorporate broader conflict scenarios, really just to kind of make sure we're addressing the realities of the moment – the very fast-shifting realities of the moment. Developing a broader counter-missile strategy involving strong missile defense coordination, and the report details what that would mean. Investigating new concepts of missile defense such as boost-phase systems, which would help overcome the limitations of current U.S. national missile defenses. And in the trilateral space, even though there's a lot of great cooperation going on, pushing that to trilateral briefings about their respective defense improvement plans. Of course, we know there's a lot going on in Japan right now as well, but to engage each other on those plans, as well as the developments related to extended deterrence, looking for areas – one, information sharing and looking for

areas of potential coordination. So this would be, you know, a step further in that trilateral cooperation space.

Also, importantly for the U.S., appoint a special envoy for North Korean human rights as soon as possible. This seems like something that, you know, should have happened a while ago, and that we certainly support that happening as soon as possible.

OK. Fourth, and then I'll wrap. Things not to do is kind of the last category of recommendations.

Perhaps the most important one and maybe the discussion that will get the most attention is do not under current circumstances redeploy U.S. tactical nuclear weapons to the peninsula, nor condone the acquisition of nuclear weapons by South Korea. Both of these options, as we know, have serious downsides that could be discussed further. Overall, however – and I'll leave it to General Brooks to discuss the issue of tactical nukes perhaps more in the extended deterrence space – but overall what the Commission members saw is that support by – of these policy options within South Korea is driven largely by doubts regarding the credibility of extended deterrence. So this can be addressed through, first, alternative policy initiatives that avoid the downsides of these options.

The next question, of course, is: What more can we do in this space? What can we do while avoiding the downsides? And I'll leave that to General Brooks to discuss further. But that's an important kind of under current conditions – big caveat, under current conditions – do not do in the report.

OK. So that's just a rough overview. Again, I hope those tuning in will read the actual report to get further details, and of course that policymakers in Seoul and Washington will, too; and also hope, of course, these recommendations that, you know, this wonderful group and Commission members not on this – on this event today as well – it was all of that input and all of those insights that really made this report so strong. So hope they move the ball – hope to move the ball forward on these issues that were tough and are getting even tougher in this – in this very difficult issue – the land of lousy options, as people often call it.

So I'll turn it over to you, General Brooks, or Victor if you'd like to –

Dr. Cha:

Thanks. Well, thanks, Katrin. That was terrific. That was a terrific summary of the recommendations on North Korea in the report. And as Dr. Katz said, please go to the report on CSIS.org to read the detailed recommendations on all the things that were discussed.

Now we'll move to the recommendations for the second half of the report which focus on U.S. extended deterrence. I would say that when we brought the Commission together initially that the initial idea was to focus on policy recommendations for North Korea, but as we had conversations among the group and with folks in South Korea and in the region it became increasingly clear that we needed to offer some recommendations on extended deterrence since this is the area – as Dr. Hamre and Dr. Nye noted at the beginning, this is the area where there's a lot of conversation and a lot of discussion both inside and outside of government – the governments these days.

So, with that, let me – let me turn it over to General Brooks. Thank you so much for joining us, General, this morning, and I'll leave it to you to talk about our recommendations on extended deterrence.

General Vincent Brooks (Ret.):

OK. Well, thank you very much, Victor. And what a – what a great privilege it is to be part of this Commission. And tremendous insights were brought to bear, but certainly with the leadership of John Hamre and the ageless Joe Nye and his keen insights, as well as the extraordinary coordinating effort of Victor Cha and especially to Katrin Katz, who put all of these ideas together into the Commission report that we now know and see available. And I do encourage everyone to read it because there's great, great material in there.

I will do my best to highlight some portions of what we discussed on the second focal point, and that is extended deterrence. And you've heard that expressed several times today in this session how important it is to address both the physical and the psychological dimensions of extended deterrence. It has to be credible from a sense of it really exists physically, and it must be credible in terms of it's believed that it exists and will be used appropriately at the right times and circumstances.

You know, as John Hamre introduced, we're talking about extended deterrence, and that is a commitment to South Korea in this case that Washington pledges itself to devote – and these words are important – the full range of its military capabilities, including nuclear weapons, and with the purposes of deterring and, if necessary, defeating an external attack against South Korea. Now, those words have been communicated very clearly and consistently, particularly in the current administration in May of 2021 and again in May of 2022.

It's important to recognize that it doesn't mean that it's just nuclear weapons. It includes nuclear weapons and it's the full range of capabilities. This is an important part of building confidence and understanding as well because quite often some of the conversations go to only the presumption of nuke for nuke as a retaliatory response system, and that's certainly not the

case, especially as we're thinking through what does it take to deter the use of nuclear weapons.

Now, the Commission really emphasized that there are two central purposes to extended deterrence. The first, as you might imagine, is to deter aggression by North Korea and other externals in all of the forms that they might use.

But the second – very importantly – is to prevent nuclear proliferation. And that means, in this particular case, making sure that South Korea has real alternatives to developing their own nuclear weapons to meet their security needs, and they have legitimate security needs and concerns, as one can only appreciate, by living in range of hundreds of weapon systems on any given day.

Let me say that the – as the Commission looked at this, we did highlight what Joe Nye brought up, and that is that the core of extended deterrence is that community of fate between the United States and the Republic of Korea. So it begins with those 28,500-plus U.S. troops who are stationed in South Korea, those who come through on exercises or other deployments, and I would add to that the broader set of U.S. expatriates who live, and work, and educate, and study in the Republic of Korea.

So we have a shared destiny, a community of fate. And certainly one could extend that to recognizing the large Korean and Korean-American diaspora in the United States as well, should the United States be threatened. So if something happens, we're going to experience it together. And I think that becomes then the core of this extended deterrence concept.

But there are things that can be done to really improve the mechanisms for extended deterrence. And I'll just throw out a few of those that we highlight in the report. First, it's joint planning and execution. There is a need for creating a framework for joint, binational nuclear planning. This is not something that happens at the present time with South Korea, but it's needed. This is a mature alliance relationship with two very capable allies working in the closest possible way, and this last aspect needs to be added to the mix of what it is the two countries do together.

Now being clear all the while that nuclear control is different than nuclear planning, but we certainly put forward as a Commission that there is a need for a framework for joint nuclear planning. And this would be drawing lessons from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which has a Nuclear Planning Group, but it must be uniquely configured for the Korea-U.S. alliance. And no doubt that has deterrence signals by itself, but it improves the physicality of the credibility.

There should also be efforts by the two countries to sustain those practices that enable cooperation. Dr. Katz talked about that – how important it is to enable cooperation in extended deterrence, and that cooperation itself deepens confidence. An example is maintaining a South Korean senior officer as the liaison to the United States Strategic Command where most of the nuclear planning is done, at their headquarters. And that has been done before, and it's something that needs to be maintained.

Or perhaps continuing the high-level Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group. This is a body that was created a few years ago but stopped in its meetings, but having that meet and engage on a recurring basis to talk about the policy-level aspects of extended deterrence and to build that confidence is very, very important.

Another one that we talked about in the report is streamlining the protocols that enable information to come from the Space-Based Infrared System – or SBIRS, as it's called – to have that information directly accessible to South Korea when some event occurs like the start of a missile launch. That creates signals that can be sent then to South Korea very directly and immediately, as well as other commands. And the U.S. does this with some other countries as well, and South Korea should have that direct access.

And finally on this point, it's important to supplement the extended deterrence dialogues that happen from government to government with a broader set of dialogues, particularly trilateral ones between South Korea, the United States, and Japan, in a track 1.5 format; that is, current government officials meeting with former government officials and having conversations on these issues, and having representation from all three countries. And that kind of an exchange helps to keep the three countries informed about the developments in each country as well as to identify the opportunities that there are for coordination.

Now there's a need to continue to improve the physical conditions, as well. This includes posture adjustments, where are the U.S. strategic and nuclear assets at any given time. And while some of that will not be revealed, the clear positioning of them for purpose is what is at stake here. And to the extent that that can be shared, it should be. So there's a regional posture; there's a global posture, and how has that been applied directly to this extraordinarily complex problem set dealing with North Korea.

This could also talk about, you know, the continued presence in the region of submarines who are – U.S. submarines who are equipped with nuclear cruise missiles, or strategic bombers that are in the region and periodically demonstrate their presence; also working on infrastructure to receive dual-capable aircraft in South Korea. Some of those systems are in place, but

making them so that they are indeed dual-capable where both countries where both countries could engage in operations if they need to.

Then I would add one additional point that it's very important in this posture consideration, in the physical positioning of assets, to continue improving our U.S. national missile defense capabilities. And Dr. Katz again alluded to that. And so whether it's the deployment of next-generation interceptor technology or, as Katrin talked about, boost phase missile technologies, things that can allow interception at boost phase more effectively than they can at the present, or even the addition of the restoration of funding to pursue U.S. nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles. That's an important program that needs to be added to the equation. We highlight that in the Commission report.

Let me jump forward a little bit. We do talk about how important it is to ensure the United States communicates its willingness to use all of its capabilities to defend it. And this begins to address the psychological dimension – we've already talked about the physical dimension of that, but there must be belief and assurances of both capability and will. And so there are, really – there's six specific policies that we highlight in the report, and we will let you dive into those in greater detail, but I'll just highlight them to you very quickly, six different tracks.

The first is a public communications track. That's for the purpose of providing the reassurance and clarity on the existing as well as any new U.S. capabilities.

Joint planning and execution – I've already talked about that one and how important it is to continue to expand that even further.

Trilateral discussions and operations, so that means exercises, coordinated events, and real-time missile warning sharing as an example of an operation.

The fourth would be the adjustments to posture – the military postures.

The fifth – and this is where Katrin was very careful to say, under present conditions the Commission does not recommend the return of U.S. tactical nuclear weapon systems to the Korean Peninsula or the development of those systems by South Korea. But it is always necessary to consider what happens if conditions change, if the present conditions aren't the future conditions. And can there be a pre-decisional groundwork effort to prepare for possible deployment of U.S. tactical weapons? That, too, sends a very important signal that if conditions don't improve or if they continue to go in the wrong direction, we may have to look at that as an alternative.

And then finally, the sixth recommendation is then ensuring that the two countries – and I would add by extension Japan and other allies in the region – are coordinating their positions on China. Both need to see the relationships with China in the same ways and understand the perspectives of one another on how important their relationships with China would be, and the impacts of those relationships with China must be part of the consideration.

All these efforts, as we bring them together, help to bolster both the psychological and the physical aspects of extended deterrence, and often that's done simultaneously. But it does move us forward on this path of deepening the credibility, as John Hamre talked about, of extended deterrence promises.

That's what the Commission concluded, and we certainly look forward to the feedback as well as any questions today. So thank you very much, Victor – back over to you.

Dr. Cha:

Thank you, General, for that laydown of the policy recommendations on extended deterrence.

Again, for listeners, viewers, you can read the full report at the – on the CSIS website at CSIS.org.

So we do have some questions that have come in that I'd like to get to. We have a little bit of time left. And so one of these actually comes from Chile, and it says – well, they thank us for the clarity of the presentation, but they have two questions. The first is, taking into consideration that North Korea doesn't want to talk directly to the U.S. any longer, and South Korea has been considered its major enemy, who is going to do the diplomatic job, then, with North Korea? Is there a place for other states or a groups of states to play a role alongside the United States to try to make inroads with North Korea?

So Katrin, you may want to address that, but let me also offer some thought. Let me step out of the role as moderator and step in as a member of the Commission and offer some thoughts on that.

I think – I would say in response to that, the Commission thought very long and hard about what we could do in terms of North Korea policy to induce diplomacy – both carrots and sticks; both pressure and dialogue, fully cognizant of the fact that the Biden administration has made numerous attempts to try to bring the North Koreans into dialogue.

And so in that respect, the main thing that we could offer is that, while there was no immediate prospect of dialogue, we should not sort of sit on our hands and rest. We should actually be proactive with South Korea, with

Japan, with other countries to try to come up with a plan that includes both diplomacy as well as pressure as needed to prepare for the eventual return to dialogue.

One of the things that we didn't talk about in the summary but that has increasingly become more important, and has been noted publicly by the Biden administration, has been on the sanctions side, North Korean cyber activity and cyber theft of both banks around the world and cryptocurrency to gain hard currency for the purpose of proliferation financing. The Biden administration, last April, actually downgraded some information to publicly state that this is a major concern and that these cyber thefts are being used for – are being converted to hard currency and being used to finance the weapons program. But that sort of recommendation we understand fully requires the cooperation of China and Russia, which is certainly very difficult.

So part of the answer to the question is, you know, other groups that could be involved most certainly are, you know, the Chinese and the Russians as they have been involved in the past, but that looks very difficult right now.

I think – personally I think there is certainly a role for Europe. European countries, in particularly the human rights issue in North Korea, resonates very much in European capitals across the board. And many of the European countries that have missions in North Korea are pre-positioned now – they were kicked out during the COVID lockdown, and they are pre-positioned now in South Korea waiting for the opportunity to return to North Korea, and have asked the North Korean capital for the ability to come back in. So I think they could certainly play a role as well.

Katrin, I don't know if there is anything else that you want to add to that.

Dr. Katz:

Sure. Thanks, Victor. You know, you really covered it very well, and thanks for the great question. It's wonderful to know we have listeners on multiple continents.

Just to tack on to your points, Victor, the report in its guiding principles on North Korea policy does mention the North Korean – as a guiding principle, the North Korean nuclear threat is a regional and global security problem, kind of as a statement of fact. This is something that President Yoon has mentioned recently as well in his public statements.

And so certainly one of the recommendations is to look for opportunities to engage with stakeholders within the region and beyond the region; I think the key point being those who have the means and the will to add pressure on North Korea to denuclearize. And that certainly would be a welcome development. Of course the question would be modalities and organizing

those types of efforts, but it's something that – this intractable problem needs new types of solutions. So that's something the Commission recommends and is certainly open to, you know, next steps on.

Dr. Cha:

The one other thing that I would add is that, in terms of the recommendations – and this is a place where other countries can play a role, too – we're very clear that we believe the U.S. policy should remain complete and verifiable denuclearization. Cognizant of some of the debates, and discussions, and pieces that have been written after North Korea's latest volley of ballistic missile tests, there has been a voice out there that says, well, the United States should just accept North Korea as a nuclear weapon state, and go back to the table and negotiate arms control.

So we did talk about this within the group, and with a number of the Commission members having been deeply involved in negotiations with North Korea in the past. And we came to the view that denuclearization should remain the goal for the United States, and that – but that that does not necessarily mean some of the steps that would be taken in a negotiation would be things like a test freeze, as Katrin said; a test ban, a control on the production of fissile material, the dismantling or disarming of some of the reactors, the removal of fuel rods – these sorts of things all are part of a denuclearization agenda, but they are also a part of an interim threat reduction, and if you could even call it, arms control plan.

So we did not really see that this was an either/or situation. It has been framed in the public as either/or: either you go denuclearization or you go arms control. But the reality of a negotiation is that once we get into one – if we ever were to get into one – there is no really big-bang solution. That was tried under the previous administration with no success. And the reality is it is an incremental, you know, yard-by-yard negotiation with interim benchmarks that basically amount to threat reduction and arms control. So that's where I think the group sort of really stood.

There is another question here which I will paraphrase. It says that the media has mostly – has focused their headlines on the report allegedly recommending the U.S. consider redeploying nuclear weapons to Korea, but it appears when you read the report that it says – it focuses on why Korea – why tactical nuclear weapons should not be redeployed at the current situation, and how South Korean nuclear weapons acquisition should not be condoned, although TTX or joint planning could be done for psychological reassurance regarding the reliability of U.S. extended deterrence.

So the question – and this comes from NK News – is can you clarify the Commission's view on that. I think it's pretty clear, but Vince, do you want to respond to that? I'm happy to respond, too, but would you like to respond?

Gen. Brooks: Sure, I'll take first run at it, and please come on in.

The Commission was very clear that, under the present circumstances, especially given the second purpose of extended deterrence, which is to prevent proliferation, that nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula – U.S. being added or South Korean being developed – is not helpful at the present time or needed.

Now the one door that was left open that I talked to in that fifth recommendation is, if conditions change, do we have to look at it differently? And how can we signal that? And perhaps that's creating a degree of confusion, but the position of the Commission was not needed, don't do it.

Dr. Cha: Yeah, I would – yes, I think that's right. I would just add that the – you know, the recommendation where we ended up here was the idea of pre-decisional work or pre-decisional table setting for how we would think about this problem should the conditions change.

This is – you know, we think this is a reasonable recommendation. Again, the focus is on pre-decisional, so this can be – these can be exercises that are done at the working level or even in a non-official format. But the idea being that there – you know, there are opportunities for discussions on things like this, and the Commission thought of these recommendations. And there are other experts, as well, in the community that have had similar recommendations with regard to this, as well.

I don't know if Joe or John – do you want to – would you like to make any comments about either – any of the discussion thus far? Joe? (Pause.) You're still muted, Joe.

Dr. Nye: Is it now clear? Sorry about that.

I agree with what's been said. I think one has to ask the question that Vince put, which is how much would the actual deployment of U.S. tactical nukes or development of South Korean nukes change the situation in Pyongyang, and I think it would not. In other words, I think we can accomplish what we need to do, which is contain and deter, and then move toward a long-run solution of denuclearization without them. So the question is would you really enhance our position, would you really change the position of North Korea. I think the answer is no.

Dr. Cha: Thanks, Joe.

Dr. Hamre?

Dr. Hamre:

Well, yeah, I would just say, you know, to my friends – my Korean friends that ask should – you know, should Korea have its own nuclear deterrent, I always say, you already have it, you know, but we're the ones that are the custodians for it. You have our guarantee that we're going to support and defend Korea. Would Korea be safer if it abandoned its moral high ground and decided to pursue nuclear weapons? I think that opens up an incredible set of questions, you know, about how China would react, how Russia would react, how the world would react. You know, I think those are – those are – those have to be part of the calculus that Korean friends would want to have before they make a step like that.

And then I'd also say, you know, there's just – you know, it's easy to build a warhead. Building the warhead is not a difficult problem. The difficult problem is having positive control over a nuclear arsenal. Remember, you are going to turn the nuclear warhead over to a 26-year-old pilot, OK? How do you feel about that? How do you have confidence in positive control? How do you organize an establishment – a defense establishment to appreciate the astounding complexity to make sure it never gets into somebody's – a bad person's hands, you know? So there are custody issues, there are control issues. There are positive – there's intelligence issues. All of that you have already because it's through us.

So I think the issue is can we find ways to strengthen your confidence – Korean confidence in the United States. I think that's how we should proceed at this point.

Dr. Cha:

Thanks. And I would add just two quick points to that. The first is that I think this discussion, as it has grown in South Korea – as John and I said from our last trip, this used to be something that was talked about at the very end of the day after maybe a few drinks. Now it comes up first thing in the morning over breakfast when you meet with folks.

But education I think is an important part of that. It may not sound like a very dazzling or satisfying recommendation, but when we start moving into the realm of acquisition of nuclear weapons or even return of tactical nuclear weapons to the Korean Peninsula, there is a level of knowledge that is required among certainly experts in South Korea, but also the general public about what the implications of this would be more broadly for how Korea thinks about its own defense. And I don't think that level – the level of sophistication and discussion has reached that point yet. So that's, I think, a very important aspect of this, and in many ways it's good that the conversation is taking place because there are opportunities for people to learn more about that.

Just as an example, if we talk about returning tactical nuclear weapons to the Korean Peninsula, you know, many – at least it's reported; we actually don't

know for certain, but it's reported that many Koreans are talking about this, according to some polls. I think there also needs to be better polling of this; not just of the general population but of experts and strategic elites to shape public opinion and know something about these issues.

Even if you are talking about the return of tactical nuclear weapons, there has to be an understanding that that makes – that also makes the South Korean territory now a target in many ways, and also invites the potential for a first nuclear attack on South Korea targeting these weapons. So that's a big risk that is entailed when you – one can think about the positive side of this, but the negative side is it creates new vulnerabilities and potential for new first-strike incentives for others with regards to these weapons on the peninsula, even though it also may convey more credibility at the same time.

So it's very nuanced and detailed, and sometime counterintuitive discussion that education is, I think, is an important – an important part of that.

I think – maybe I'd like to go to Vince and Katrin to see if there are any other thoughts before I go to John and Joe to close this out because we're nearing the end of our time here. So Katrin, is there anything you would like to add?

Dr. Katz:

Sure. I just – you know, this is – not to repeat the great points that have been made, but the value of the conversation – you know, whether we call it a pre-decisional framework or a conversation on this – is such that we're not just seeing it in headlines that are kind of cancelling each other in different capitals. I mean, that causes it some confusion. There should be some kind of means to talk about these issues that are very much in the daylight, and they are not going away.

And the three things that you all noted already that we need more education and understanding on are the downsides as well as the upsides. Why would this be a good idea, and why would it be a bad idea?

Secondly, through that conversation, getting a stronger understanding on where the credibility concerns are coming from on the South Korean side. That's a positive externality of this conversation and something that is the benefit of holding a type of conversation – OK, let's get to the details of this.

And then when you do get to the nuts and bolts, you learn things like how long would it take if conditions changed and we wanted this option. Could we do it tomorrow? Well, no – not that anyone simplifies it that much. But in the report we note things like if we were to get to committal physical steps toward redeployment, like building storage facilities – of course that's way down the pike – the process could take a few years. So if we even think of it as an option, you know, what would we have to do? I think it's, you know,

somewhat irresponsible to not think about those things and talk about it fully in the abstract.

So I don't think we should be fearful of talking about the thing itself, and I think there is a little bit of that right now. There is not much noise of it in the media; there should be a lot more between the allies themselves, and not the fear that talking about it is going to somehow make it happen. I think that creates its own problems.

So, again –

Dr. Cha: Thanks. Thanks. Vince?

Gen. Brooks: Just one quick point, and this is an extraordinary alliance, and when both governments operate with one another from a position of mutual respect and mutual trust, all of these issues can be addressed. And I'm confident that they will be addressed.

So it's good that the posture is that way right now, and that is something that we all want to support and ensure that that continues – that mutual respect approach to the relationships between the two countries.

But thanks once again for the opportunity to participate.

Dr. Cha: Thanks. Dr. Hamre?

Dr. Hamre: Just to say I would like to thank the Chey Institute for, you know, helping support this, and the way they've given us networks of really fine Korean scholars to interact with has been very helpful.

Special thanks to you, Joe, for partnering on this, and to Dr. Katz, General Brooks for participating today, and especially you, Victor. You have guided this all along the way, and I want to say thank you.

Dr. Cha: Thank you. Joe, you're – yeah, there you go.

Dr. Nye: I want to end where I began, which was by stressing the particularly important nature of the alliance, but the fact that we are a community of fate. With 28,000 troops stationed in South Korea and many, many American civilians mixed in transnationally with Koreans, there's no way of thinking that we wouldn't extend deterrence. Basically, we are a community of fate. And I hope the report has made that clear.

Dr. Cha: Thanks. Thanks very much, Joe.

Yes, the report has made that clear. It is definitely the foundation of everything that we are talking about.

So with that we will call it a wrap. Thank you, everybody, for watching. Again, you can view the report, read it in its entirety on the CSIS.org website, and on behalf of the Commission, we want to thank you for joining us.

On behalf of the Commission and the hundreds who are watching, Joe, we want to also wish you a happy birthday so that you can get on with your day. (Laughs.) Thank you, everybody.