Center for Strategic and International Studies

Schieffer Series: North and South Korea: What's Next?

Speakers:
Ambassador Glyn Davies,
Special Representative for North Korea Policy,
U.S. Department of State

Elise Labott,
Foreign Affairs Correspondent,
CNN

Dr. Victor Cha,
Senior Adviser and Korea Chair,
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Introduction:
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Moderator:
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H. ANDREW SCHWARTZ: Good evening and welcome to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. My name is Andrew Schwartz and I work in external relations here at CSIS. I think this is our 56th sell-out in a row at one of these events. So we've been doing this for five years.

And we have such a great panel lined up for tonight, and we're so glad you joined us on this beautiful evening in Washington. Unfortunately, we tried but were unable to get the U.S. chief envoy to North Korea to join us tonight because Dennis Rodman was not available. (Laughter.) He sends his regrets. (Laughs.) All joking aside, America remains intimately involved in the conflict between the two Koreas, the ongoing. The point is certainly not lost on the families of the 30,000 American men and women who are serving overseas in the Koreas.

I'd to thank Bob Schieffer and everyone at the Bob Schieffer College of Communication at TCU for their amazing partnership in bringing these dialogues to CSIS. We're so grateful to you, Bob, and to the Schieffer school – Schieffer College, and to all of our friends down at Fort Worth. Go Frogs. Finally, none of this would be possible without the generosity and the support of the of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. We are so appreciative of the foundational and all that they do for CSIS and allow us to put on these terrific events.

And without further ado, ladies and gentlemen please join me in welcoming the man who's number one on Washington on Sunday mornings, Bob Schieffer. (Applause.)

BOB SCHIEFFER: What I always say about that is, one Sunday at a time. (Laughter.) We were number one last Sunday. We hope we'll be number one this Sunday.

This is a great panel. You know, when you come right down to it, the news media can generally just handle one story at a time. And we've been kind of all focused so much, and rightly so, on what's going on in Ukraine, as far as foreign policy stories, but this is a reminder that these things don't happen one at a time. Everything in the world today is connected and there's a lot going on in other places. So we really do have a great panel.

Glyn Davies is the special representative for North Korea Policy at the U.S. Department of State. He was appointed in January of 2012 by Secretary of State Clinton to facilitate high-level engagement with our other six-party talk partners. Special representative Davis served as a senior emissary for U.S. engagement with North Korea, oversees our involvement in the talks. He's a career member of the senior Foreign Service, served as permanent rep to the – of the United States to the Atomic Energy Commission Agency before he came to this job, and U.N. office in Vienna. He also has served on the National Security Council staff, and was assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs.

Elise Labott – am I saying that right?

ELISE LABOTT: It's Labott, but I've been called much worse.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Labott. (Laughter.) Well, nobody can ever pronounce my name, so – (laughs) – I'm sorry, Elise, I apologize.

MS. LABOTT: That's OK.

MR. SCHIEFFER: She, of course, as you all know, is the CNN's award-winning foreign affairs reporter. She is based in Washington now, but she's reported from more than 75 countries, has interviewed and traveled with world with five secretaries of state since joining CNN in 2000, over more than a decade covering U.S. foreign policy. She's reported on many major global events. And prior to joining CNN she covered United Nations for ABC.

And then over here, someone who needs no introduction, Dr. Victor Cha, senior advisor and Korean chair here at CSIS. He came here in 2009 as senior advisor. He's also director of Asian studies, and holds the D.S. Song-KF chair in the Department of Government and School of Foreign Service at Georgetown. From 2004 to 2007, he served as director for Asian affairs at the White House on the National Security Council. And we could go on and on. We have more qualification, a lot of great background for all of our people.

Let me just start with you, Ambassador Davies. United States has a summit in South Korea. The president was there. How did that go? And what do you think was accomplished?

GLYN DAVIES: Well, thank you very much, Bob. I appreciate that. And let me quickly give you some background on that. The president arrived just after this terrible tragedy that had struck South Korea, the sinking of the Sewol, a very – in which tragedy perished hundreds of for the most part very young South Koreans. And so the president arrived very shortly after that. And it was a great occasion for the president to express condolences to the people of South Korea, demonstrate the solidarity of the United States, and Americans to the South Koreans as they dealt with this terrible business. So from that standpoint, kind of the people-to-people piece of it, very important.

We have a very broad agenda with South Korea. It's not just about North Korea, though I know that's one of the focuses of today. Our relationship has become almost global, quite frankly, in nature. And so whether it's working side-by-side in Afghanistan, working diplomatically on the Syria issue, dealing with global climate change, nuclear security, regional issues, really the world is now the stage on which South Korea and the United States together act. So it's a very important opportunity for the president to reaffirm our solidarity, our alliance with North (sic; South) Korea, in particular in the face of North Korea's continuing threat, but also an opportunity to discuss all of these issues – economic, security, and people-to-people.

So we had a great deal of progress. It was a good stop by the president. And it, I think, is the case that South Korea is the most visited country abroad for the president of the United States, which tells you something about the importance of the relationship to the United States, and I think also for South Korea.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Dr. Cha, how would you assess – just give us a broader overall view of how you think U.S.-South Korean relations are right now.

VICTOR CHA: Well, Bob, as you know, last year we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the alliance. It has been one that has evolved from a relationship between two countries that were really just pragmatic partners in a war, they knew nothing about each other, to a relationship today, as Glyn described, where they are operating together on the global stage, whether it's with regard to climate change or best business practices or nuclear issues, whatever it might be. And so I think this trip was a very important trip, one, because it made Korea the most visited country for President Obama – I think next to Mexico. I think next to Mexico. But considering the proximity of Mexico and Washington –

MR. SCHIEFFER: I said overseas. (Laughter.)

MR. CHA: But more importantly, I think it was – it was, again, just another sign of, first, how much the two leaders get along. I mean, you can never overestimate that in international relations, how well the leaders get alone. And I think President Obama and President Park do like each other at a personal level. But they also were able to use it as a platform to talk about the things they care about, I mean, whether it's with regard to liberal trade institutions around the world or its counter-proliferation, or it's climate change, or global health – all these issues are ones in which the two countries play very prominently on the world stage.

And you know, obviously they had issues closer to home to talk about – North Korea, China, their military relationship – but overall, I think it was just a validation of how strong and deep and robust the U.S.-Korea relationship is.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Elise, what do you think are the main challenges to this relationship right now?

MS. LABOTT: Well, I see two things. And one of the things that came out of the summit, I thought, was that, yes, everything is true, what Glyn and Victor say. And I'm honored to be on the panel with them, two of the greatest minds in this town on North Korea. But I think that – I look at the relationship between South Korea and the United States like I kind of do with the relationship with India or – India is a global power. There are a lot of ways that the U.S. is cooperating with India, whether it's trade, whether it's counterterrorism, economically, people-to-people exchanges.

But the relationship between India and Pakistan and what's going on in Afghanistan, really dominates how people see the relationship. And I think that even though all these things are true, and the U.S. and South Korea have a very robust relationship, you're never really able to transcend the idea that when the president goes to South Korea what is coming out of it, what is making those headlines? And that's what's going on with North Korea. And I think North Korea really plays upon that.

I also think that the tensions between Japan and South Korea really, in some ways, have hampered the U.S., Japan and South Korea alliance from really taking off, at least right now. You know, obviously South Korea very upset with Japan continuing to believe in its colonial – pre-colonial aggressions. And there have been a lot of insults flying back and forth. And for the United States, who wants this cornerstone alliance to really help the U.S. with its so-called pivot

to Asia, which we've heard a lot about the pivot to Asia but we don't see a lot about the pivot to Asia. And I think that has hampered.

In the United States, President Obama has tried in recent months to get South Korean and Japanese diplomats together on a lower level. He hosted a summit between the leaders of Japan and South Korea in The Hague in March before he traveled out to the region. And he's trying to say, listen, you guys have to get rid of your old baggage. We have to move forward. And this trilateral alliance is really the cornerstone of what we're trying to do in Asia.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, talk about that. I'd like to hear both of you and what your thoughts are on that, please.

MR. CHA: I mean, I would – I have to agree with Elise. I mean, you know, many of us in this room have been or are alliance managers – you know, working the U.S.-Korea, U.S.-Japan, whatever, alliances. And it is frustrating at times when there's a very successful summit, you know, they make progress on missile defense, they make it on wartime op con, they make progress on a bunch of different things, it's a great relationship, you know, they're unveiling a new global health security plan.

And then all anybody talks about is North Korea, right? North Korea kind of steals all the thunder and really sort of pervades, you know, our thinking about the Korean Peninsula. And so I think that's a real challenge. It's a real challenge for the alliance relationship. And I think for that reason Park Geun-hye has really tried to talk about what Korea does itself on a global stage and doesn't allow simply the North Korea story to grab all the headlines.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, what about North Korea right now, truly?

MR. DAVIES: Well, we're at an interesting moment with North Korea. I mean, I think the North Koreans are acting in a kind of highly improvisational fashion. It's difficult to detect any real thematic consistency there, except that they seem to be always defaulting in the direction of provocations and threats, and unable to sort of sustain any more kind of positive outreach to the outside world. And that's a huge problem.

They are, of course – we all know, it's in the headlines – they are issuing threats right, left and center. They're attacking the president of South Korea on a very, what's the Latin, ad hominem basis. You know, a very personal basis.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, they're attacking President Obama now on – (inaudible).

MR. DAVIES: President Obama and – exactly.

MR. SCHIEFFER: The language.

MR. DAVIES: So, you know, it's sometimes difficult to divine what it is North Korea ultimately wants. The central challenge that I face in trying to deal in particular with this nuclear problem, is how do we set up a diplomatic process going forward that can deal with what is the

central problem, which is North Korea's acquisition of nuclear weapons and missile technologies, which threaten the region, certainly, but also threaten the world. So it's difficult to do.

We spend a lot of time – I spend a lot of time in North Asia with the Chinese, with the South Koreas, the Japanese meet with the Russians because they're part of this process as well. And we've made a lot of progress in terms of talking about what the – what it is we'd like to see happen. Where we're still working is to decide exactly how that road map works. And of course, you always have in the background, as has been pointed out, North Korea trying to pull focus, provoking, threatening, launching rockets of various ranges, issuing challenges to South Korea and to Park Geun-hye.

For me, one of the most impressive actors in this entire tableau is this still relatively new president of South Korea, who seems to have a really excellent feel for the problem, and seems to understand how best to try to get at it, despite North Korea's recalcitrance. So remains a work in progress. On the nuclear piece we've been at it for 25 years. I think Victor himself has written eloquently about the challenges that various administrations have faced in getting at it. And I just happen to be the latest guy kind of carrying the ball and let's call it the senior working level. But I remain optimistic. I think there are ways to get at it.

MR. SCHIEFFER: And, you know, they were saying they were going to do another test here.

MR. DAVIES: Right, right.

MR. SCHIEFFER: And then they kind of postponed that. Some people say maybe they wanted to wait till the news kind of quieted down before they do that. Is that –

MS. LABOTT: Well, also, I think that, you know, they know that the South Koreans are really diverted with this ferry disaster. And so they – you know, what we've seen is that the North Koreans want to have maximum bang for their buck if they say – so when you say that the news dies down, not only the news about the threats about the possible tests, they do like to keep everybody off-guard, but they also want to have maximum attention.

And so if there is a big crisis in Ukraine or there is this thing with the Nigerian girls. I mean, we talk about the fact that, you know, North Korea's this isolated place. But you can rest assured that the leaders of – that the leader and his cronies definitely are watching the news – the news climate. And they want to make sure that if they're going to do this, this is going to have – this is going to have South Korea's full attention. And right now, I don't think – I don't think that they do.

I just want to answer what Glyn was saying about what do – we don't really know what the North Koreans are up to. In terms of the – obviously denuclearizing North Korea is the biggest problem that the U.S. and its allies face in the region. But I think possibly in their quest to really go after the denuclearization, they're not figuring out what the North Koreans really do want. And if he loses his nukes, what is the most important thing to Kim Jong-un? No one

really knows about this young leader, but they know that regime survival is the most important thing.

And so there are platitudes about, you know, we're not trying to get rid of the regime, but I think the United States and its allies have to make a choice about whether they do want to get rid of the regime. If they don't, they need to make that clear and provide, you know, not just lip service, but engagement and guarantees that they're not trying to go after the regime, and maybe that's how you start. And then, if you feel more comfortable and there was some kind of engagement, then you go after the nuclear program.

If you do, look, we're trying – North Koreans are starting to get things smuggled into North Korea, DVDs, USB sticks. They're learning more about the outside world. Eventually that country will topple. And the United States has a lot of activities that we've been reading about in Cuba and other countries that they could help in this regard. So I think we have this tendency to focus on the nuclear issue, but maybe we've had this myopic focus and it's not really working here.

MR. SCHIEFFER: But I'm interested in this. I mean, would they really be, I don't think sophisticated enough, I think that's the wrong word. But would they be following the news so closely that they'd say, we're going to wait till we have a good, slow news day before we're going to do this nuclear test? I mean, because that's obviously what has been suggested by some.

MR. DAVIES: I think the answer is yes.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Really?

MR. CHA: Yeah, well, I think you know – well, part of it, I think – part of the answer, I think, is yes. I mean, I remember when I was working on this issue with the White House they did, still to date, their largest series of ballistic missile tests on basically July 4th.

MS. LABOTT: July 4th.

MR. CHA: Yeah, which was July 5th in North Korea, which was President Bush's birthday. So they had two meanings for them, right? (Laughter.) And then, of course, the first nuclear test for the Obama administration was on Memorial Day, right?

MR. DAVIES: I remember that.

MS. LABOTT: So do I.

MR. CHA: Yeah. You remember that. (Laughter.) So I don't think they just pluck these dates out of the air. I think there is – there is some tactical decision making that's done. At the same time, though, I mean, we should never discount the fact that there clearly also is not just the military, but a scientific rationale for their timetable for testing. So it very well could be that the reason they may have postponed, Bob, as you said, or it appears as though they have

postponed is because they might have encountered some technical problem or they may be trying to do more with the next test.

And I think one of the things that's very clear today, that was less clear when I was working this issue and people before, you know, there was much more of a debate in the policy community, in the think tank community, and the academic community about whether the North Koreans were pursuing these weapons for the purpose of negotiation, or whether they were really pursuing them because they wanted to be a nuclear weapon state. And you know, in a room of this size, you could 50 percent of people saying it's just a bargaining chip and that's why they've picked these dates, because they want to get the maximum of attention so that they can negotiate. And the other 50 percent would have said, no, they're doing this because they want nuclear weapons.

And I think today probably if you polled this room it would be more like 90/10. Ninety percent of the people believe that they are clearly focused on becoming a nuclear weapon state. And therefore, these tests, whether it's missile tests or nuclear tests, are not just to negotiate or bargain, but because they want to be a nuclear weapon state and they want to be acknowledged as a nuclear weapon state. And this became very clear under this new leadership, because they announced something called the Byungjin strategy, which is basically saying, yes, we would like economic reform and development because our economy is a basket case.

But at the same time we want to do this while being a nuclear weapon state, which poses a real problem for Glyn and negotiators because for 25 years the U.S. negotiating strategy was you can have economic development, political recognition, all these things, in exchange for your nuclear weapons.

MR. DAVIES: Can I just – I'm in agreement with much of what Victor said. I mean, I think that's right. This new leader has done us the favor, in a backhanded fashion, of making quite clear that he has no intention of meaningfully denuclearizing. And that presents a problem. But it also is a clarifying kind of moment because it's now quite obvious what we're dealing with here. A clarifying moment he decided to purge and execute his uncle, pretty much on YouTube, all except the execution part, which we labeled – instantaneously we said this was – this demonstrates the brutality of the regime. It was kind of like we x-rayed – we all saw what North Korea's all about.

And we haven't just concentrated on the nuclear issue, although that's what I am paid to worry about every day. We've also spent a lot of time on all other aspects of this. Proliferation is a big part of it. And that human rights is key. And I think, you know, long after these debates are over about what – how well we did or didn't do on denuclearization will be the question, what did you do for the 25 million people of North Korea, outside the hereditary elites of Pyongyang. The other 90-plus percent, you know, did you do enough to keep faith with them and find ways to sort of put up in lights what it is they're doing to their own people. And so there are a number of areas on which we work. It's not just the nuclear issue, as important as that is to our security.

MS. LABOTT: There is an envoy for human rights that, you know, once in a lifetime gets into North Korea and is able to have some meaningless discussions. I mean, the North Koreas are not interested in what anybody thinks about their human rights record. I mean, this is the way that they maintain control over their people. I'm just wondering whether, you know, there is another way of approaching the problem, even though that is true. There is human rights, there is proliferation.

The main concern of this administration is, and of the allies, is the North Korean nuclear program. And basically, isolation isn't working. The sanctions continue to leak. I mean, how – what is the administration's strategy? It seems as if there is a kind of crisis-oriented fragmented way of dealing with the problem. You know, it's kind of – I'm not – Glyn, obviously, is working hard every day and having meetings and traveling. But it doesn't – it's not clear to the outside world what the strategy is for our – is the six-party talks, are they going to bring them back? Are they going to have another round? Are they going to try again? Is there a way to reach the leader? I don't think that's really clear.

And I also think that – I think that maybe the media is responsible, and the academics are responsible, that in a way this is a – this has become – yes, it's a crisis. But it also has become a little bit of a sideshow, North Korea.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, what is – well, let's just talk about that. What is the strategy now?

MR. DAVIES: Well, the strategy is to ensure that, starting with the three allies, but in this case because the problem is on the peninsula, particularly with Republic of Korea, extending out to the five members of the six-party talks, we call them our partners, there be as great unanimity as we can achieve on what it is North Korea must do. We've made great progress on that. Sadly, a lot of diplomacy does have to happen behind a curtain. A lot of our talks with the Chinese we're not in the business of retailing to everybody, as tempting as that is.

MS. LABOTT: As much as we try.

MR. DAVIES: As much as you try. But we have achieved a level of success in hammering out what it is we need to see happen. The problem becomes in working through what we like to call the road map, which is the how and the when of North Korean denuclearization. And the truth is, no secret, that the interests of the five parties are not perfectly congruent. That's just life in the North Asian mix. And so while the Chinese are mostly seized of the problem of stability because this is on their periphery, we are mostly concerned with the problem of security.

So the argument we've sought to make with the Chinese, and I first did it back in December of 2011 on my first trip to Beijing, is to point out to them that their so-called stability concerns and our security concerns really are kind of converging as the North Korean weapons of mass destruction program and their bad behavior, their provocative behavior, continues. And it's on that track of seeking a common appreciation and a common plan for the way forward where we've made a great deal of progress.

But we're a quarter century into this, as Victor's pointed out in many of this writings. This wasn't done in a day. And as President Obama pointed out on Seoul, you know, this will remain a problem of which we are seized in the United States government. I'm an optimist. I actually think there's no solution to this except a diplomatic solution. And I think we'll find a way forward. And I think we're making some progress.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Do you see the six powers talks restarting? I mean, it's been a while, right?

MR. DAVIES: You know, that's up to North Korea, it won't surprise you to hear me say, because North Korea needs to decide whether it wants to go down this path, rejoin the international community, live up to its obligations and its promises, its responsibilities. Or, does it wish to continue to isolate itself, seek to go its own way, acquire these technologies in contradiction to the worldwide consensus.

Remember, the most widely subscribed treaty in the world, pretty much, the Nonproliferation Treaty, the result of the big 20th century consensus among some very wise statesmen and –women, who decided: We need to come up with a nuclear bargain and prevent the world from facing a couple of dozen nuclear weapon states by the end of the 20th century. Most of the bright lights of the '50s and '60s believed that by the end of the century we would have dozens of countries with nuclear weapons.

We didn't. Why didn't we? Because they set up this regime – the Nonproliferation Treaty regime, the IAEA. It actually worked to a great extent. And we didn't have that kind of breakout. But there is one country among the 189 or so – one country signed the treaty, walked away from it, tore it up. The only country on the face of the Earth that's exploded a nuclear device in the 21st century is North Korea. So this isn't a U.S.-North Korea polemic that we will live up to our responsibilities. It's about the entire world community keeping up the pressure on North Korea. It's about China, Russia, the United States, Japan, Korea in the first instance, but it's about everybody else as well, both in the region and overseas.

Because in a globalized world, where when you Google how to make a nuclear weapon you get whatever it is now, 14, 16 million hits, this is serious stuff. And this is the vision the president laid out in his Prague speech. And North Korea becomes a particular challenge that everybody – all nations in the world need to work on. South Korea, the Republic of Korea, has been particularly valiant on this front. They seized on this idea. They hosted the second Nuclear Security Summit. They get it. More and more world leaders do. Eighty countries and international organization condemned North Korea for their last nuclear test. So that coalition of concern is growing. And that's what I think, at the end of the day, is going to make a difference.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Victor, let me ask you this. We knew almost nothing about this man when he became the leader of North Korea. Have we learned anything of significance about his since he came there?

MR. CHA: Well, he likes Dennis Rodman. (Laughter.) He –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Do we know why? (Laughter.)

MR. DAVIES: He watched a lot of basketball.

MS. LABOTT: His father also liked basketball.

MR. CHA: Yeah, he likes basketball. I mean, stylistically there are big differences from the previous leaders. And in a sense – in that sense, I guess one could argue that he is more attuned to Western things, and clearly shows an affinity for them. But, you know, what we know of him is largely what we know of North Korea, which is very little. And so policy often is reacting to the behavior rather than trying to figure out, you know, what is driving the behavior.

And you know, one could say that's a flawed policy, but when you're talking about the hardest intelligence target in the world, at the policy level you don't have much of a choice but to react to what the behavior is. And I think for that reason the administration, rightly so, has focused on – you know, when they did change leaders, has focused on, look, we don't care who's in charge. We care about the behavior. And when we see good – when we see good behavior and genuine commitment, we're ready to engage. I think that makes sense.

You know, I – you know, I, with Glyn, I think diplomacy is the only way to resolve this. No one wants to see it resolved in any other way. Having said that, I do think – and I was a part of the six-party talks, part of the 2005, 2007 agreements. I'm just not sure how much of the six-party talks is left. Your title is envoy for North Korea, right, not six-party talks? Or both? Is it both?

MR. DAVIES: I'm not the six-party guy, strictly speaking.

MR. CHA: Right, you're the envoy for North Korea, strictly speaking. But I know you cover it all.

MR. DAVIES: If it starts, I think I'll be there.

MR. CHA: Yeah, I would – I hope so. (Laughter.) But I mean, the last meeting was 2008, I think. It's been six years. If you don't do something for six years, you probably don't do it anymore. And I think the reality, of course, is that the North Koreans really only want to talk to one country. You know, they may talk to South Korea on occasion. They're flirting with Japan right now a little bit. But there's only one country that they really want to talk to. And it's not China. You know, it's the United States.

And in fact, I think one of the – and it's kind of a – it's kind of a vicious circle, because one of the successes of U.S. policy over the past years, both in this administration and the previous, has been the ability to work with China on the North Korea problem. But the closer that we work with China on the North Korea problem, the less the North Koreans want to deal with the Chinese whether it's in the six-party format, which they host, or whether it's in a bilateral fashion.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, that's interesting. What do they want to talk to us about? I mean –

MR. CHA: Well, I mean, so I think their talking point is that, you know, they would like normalized relations with the United States. They would like a peace treaty. They'd like economic assistance. They'd like to be removed completely from all the sanctions, going back to the Korean War, all this sort of stuff. The problem is, in exchange for what? And I think whether it's this administration or the past administration, if they were genuinely committed to putting their weapons on the table, anything is possible. I would say that's the case for this administration, at least my reading of it. I would say that was the case for the past administration, contrary to what people might think.

The problem is that North Korea essentially wants to have its cake and eat it too. It wants to be recognized by the United States. It does want a peace treaty. It wants all of these things. But at the same time, it's like to keep its –

MR. SCHIEFFER: It wants to be a nuclear weapon –

MR. CHA: Right. And to the extent that they want to engage with Ambassador Davies, they would likely engage with Ambassador Davies not on denuclearization talks. They'd like to engage with Ambassador Davies on arms control, just as the U.S. and the Soviet Union did during the Cold War days. Now, that's a pretty far-out proposition. But you know, as the negotiator, that's the matrix that you have to deal with. And it's – I mean, it's challenging. I mean, it's really difficult.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Let me – you know, you all touched on this a while ago. And I'd just like to ask all three of you. And that is, when you talk about China, their main concern – they don't want to see this government collapse. They don't want to see this economy collapse. What is the state of North Korea? Is that likely, that this whole thing might just fall in?

MR. CHA: Well, I think it's – the economic situation is not good. In the two years that the North Korea – new North Korean leader has been in power, the most disappointing thing, in my opinion, has not been the nuclear test and missile test and the provocations, because we expect those. It's been the absence of any real sign of economic reform. You know, small things here and there, but no real sign of economic reform. For a guy who supposedly was educated for part of his life outside of North Korea, and there are many theories bandied about in think tanks and academia about how you had this younger generation of leadership that would be interested in opening, all that's gone, right? Nobody believes that anymore.

And so the economic future is not good. I mean, the only thing that they have going for them right now are, you know, a group of economic agreements they did with China in – like, from about 2008 onwards – that extract a lot of minerals out of North Korea into China. So there's money flowing in through that, but there's not a broader answer to the economic problem. And meanwhile, on the political side, you know, as you mentioned, this leader executed his uncle, right, the number two in charge. Now, is that a sign of power consolidation

of a guy who's fully in control, or is that a sign sending a message because things are not OK inside of North Korea?

So you know, I think there have always been debates about the extent to which North Korea is ready to reform, or it's about to collapse, right? I think there have been more predictions about reform than there have been about collapse. Those predictions about reform have been wrong. So what does that leave you with, right? (Laughter.) It leads you only with one thing. And you know, I think to the credit of a lot of countries they're thinking – you know, they don't talk about it, but I think they're thinking about it a lot more. We, as analysts, are thinking about that a lot more now. Though no one can predict an Arab Spring in North Korea, you know, you're thinking about it a lot more just because all the variables are just lining up in a direction that tell you this is not going in a good way.

MS. LABOTT: Well, I mean, I don't think that anyone's predicting an Arab Spring in North Korea, but I don't think anyone predicted an Arab Spring in the Arab world. And who would have thought that Hosni Mubarak, Muammar Gadhafi in particular, eventually, you know, I think everyone hopes Bashar al-Assad, will fall? And as Victor said, I mean, there is a very big power struggle, I think, going on that a lot of us don't know about, obviously, the details. But you can see from the execution of his uncle, from the fact that he also sacked another – the number two in the country, just recently one of the major military generals, and is trying to replace with his own people.

Recently we interviewed – CNN interviewed a former insider of Kim Jong-il, the father. And he said that Kim Jong-un – it's not the same, because Kim Jong-il had this institutional framework, this intelligence network that they called the good old boys network, that these were the ones who helped him get things done, that they protected him, that that's where he took his power. And it built up over his life. But Kim Jong-un doesn't have power that he earned or that he earned any kind of respect. He was given the power symbolically. And this gentleman said, well, he may have friends, you know, in Swiss boarding schools, but he doesn't have any friends inside North Korea. And so as he continues to purge, he has even few people to stand by him, to help him get things done.

And as North Korea, even though we call it the hermit kingdom, it is opening up in the sense that some people are watching the – looking at the Internet, watching Western films and South Korean films. I mean, eventually this will continue to permeate. And as that continues to rise, and Kim Jong-un's power continues to fall, I think, as he has less and less people around him, I think we have to predict some kind of collapse at some point.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Really. All right, well, let's take a few questions. Here's one right here.

Q: Mike Mosettig, PBS Online NewsHour.

I want to focus this back to the South. They have been through a terribly traumatic experience which has revealed stem-to-stern failures in society and government, from regulation to the inept performance of the coast guard. Is this going to lead to real change in governance

and society? Or are they going to just let things go back to business as usual after the hubbub dies down?

MR. SCHIEFFER: Who'd like it?

MR. DAVIES: This is totally a Victor question.

MR. CHA: Yeah, Mike, it's a good question. You know, I think you're right, first of all. I mean, this has been – I mean, President Park when she came into office, she was preparing for a crisis. But this was not the crisis she was preparing for. I mean, she was preparing for the last crisis, which was North Korean provocations and creating a government mechanism to respond rapidly to that. You know, two national security advisors, all this sort of stuff. And then this thing comes along, which is completely unexpected.

You know, I think they're still going through a very difficult period right now. They still need to recover all the bodies, all of this. But I do expect to see some major reforms in terms of public safety and qualification of people who operate these sorts of vessels. I mean, one of the things that I think you can say about Korean society and Korean institutions is that, you know, they go at 100 miles an hour, and something breaks down. But when that thing breaks down, they really try to fix it, right?

Whether you're talking about Korean corporations after the financial crisis, or, you know, a new ROE when it comes to North Korean – rule of engagement when it comes to North Korean provocations. They have a system that will focus on this and will try to fix it. So I think that it's not going to go back to business as usual. We're probably going to see some major, major reforms inside of the country when it comes to thinks like public safety.

MS. LABOTT: I think it's not only on the kind of ferry industry, but also in terms of, you know, north – or, South Korea has seen this massive growth over the last few decades. And at the expense of that has been kind of the regulation that the government has kind of looked the other way in a lot of terms of the regulation. And I think a lot of people in South Korea are asking, like, what has been the cost for all of this growth? You know, is it – do we need to slow down and pay more attention to, you know, quality rather than quantity?

And I also – CSIS came out with a very interesting paper in the last few days about the economic impact of the ferry disaster on South Korea, that this has really rocked the nation and people aren't going out as much, they're staying home, they're cancelling travel plans. And this is going to affect business. And so I think that this has been a very profound tragedy and has had a profound effect on the country. President Park's approval rating has dipped, I think, about 11 percent till – before the ferry disaster, till about 48 percent, which I think is an all-time low.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Do either of you have any doubt that if the North should take some provocative action – and I don't mean just firing shells into the sea or something like that – but something like happened in the previous administration, that this president will react and react strongly?

MR. DAVIES: Well, let me just – I think that one of the strengths that President Park has brought to this has been a real kind of clear vision about how to deal with North Korea. And I think she's taken a very principled approach. She laid it all out before she came into office in a famous article in Foreign Policy. And it's called trustpolitik. And I think she's been tremendously sure-footed and astute about her approach to North Korea.

And she said, while the president was there just in the very recent past, that should the North Koreans provoke, engage in a so-called strategic provocation, a nuclear test or long-range missile launch, that it would put in jeopardy certainly the immediate prospects for six party, and that there would have to be a very, very strong reaction to that. And she would, I'm sure, do everything she could to ensure that the ROK was in the forefront of that.

So I think the North Koreans have the message that if they decide to do that again they're going to find themselves in world of hurt. And –

MR. SCHIEFFER: But I mean, what if – what if they sink a ship or something like that?

MR. DAVIES: Well, if they – if they go back to the kinds of actions they took in 2010, sinking of the Cheonan, the corvette, the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island and so on, it's my belief, I'm not a military expert, but that the ROK would be prepared, and they've said this publicly, to react very sharply, strongly, and disproportionally to that. And they've tried to message that in, you know, stereophonic sound to North Korea. So I think that may be one of the reasons why there could be some hesitation on the part of regime in Pyongyang to engage in that sort of thing.

MR. CHA: Yeah, the thing that worries me is – Bob, in terms of your question – is that, you know, the North Koreans do another exercise, and they mean to sort of pound water, and then you get a stray shell or two that hits an island and basically kills South Koreans. I think, you know, that – in a situation like that, I worry very much about it. Because I think she will. She will respond immediately and vigorously and perhaps disproportionately. I don't know. And then you get a terrible escalation dynamic.

I mean, I agree with everybody here. She's very clear-headed on North Korea. She is the only South Korean president that has come into office who has already visited North Korea and met with the leadership before she ever became president. She did it as a politician. So she doesn't come into office, as previous presidents, with this obsession, before they leave office they've got to make the pilgrimage – (laughter) – to the North and show that they're trying to create unification.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Been there and done that.

MR. CHA: Been there, done that. So she – it's very different, I think, for her in that. And she's a lot more clear-headed about it.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Right here. You had asked – right here.

Q: This spring, the U.N. Human Rights Commission came out with an unprecedented report about human rights in North Korea, including unbelievable descriptions of concentration camps, indistinguishable from Nazi Germany or Pol Pot. And I'm trying to figure out why news guys haven't shined a light on it. I mean, even if these nuclear weapons are bargained away, those camps will endure. And the ultimate atrocity would be to offer this regime some guarantees of noninterference, of preservation. That would be the ultimate human atrocity. Why can't we get you guys to shine a light on that report? It's just –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, I'll throw the light to Elise.

MS. LABOTT: You can take it if you want, Bob. (Laughter.) It's really hard to get into North Korea. I'll be completely frank. It's much easier to report about North Korea and the human rights abuses outside of North Korea. Once in a while, we're lucky and we will get a defector that comes out. A lot of times we'll – you know, we'll – if journalists are allowed in the country you have a minder –

Q: I'm talking about the report itself.

MS. LABOTT: I think that there was some – I mean, clearly not enough. But, as Bob said in the beginning of the – beginning of the session, you know, a lot of times international news kind of is dominated by the news of the day. I'm not – I'm not disagreeing with you. I'm just saying that that's a reason why it wouldn't – if it was a slow news day, maybe it would have gotten a lot of attention.

Recently, you know, we did something – you know, we a lot of times will use that as an opportunity to take a lot of things. You have these drones over the last week that were found in South Korea that were believed to be from North Korea. You have these racial slurs that were coming back and forth about President Obama, President Park. And then we used that to look in the Human Rights report. This was around the time that a French photographer was able to smuggle some really shocking images of, you know, the famine and widespread damage to infrastructure and everything that's coming out.

It is really hard to report on North Korea. We should do more. We kind of do talk about the human rights as kind of on the periphery of what's going on with the security challenges. It is a challenge. I won't lie to you.

MR. SCHIEFFER: It's a valid criticism. But, you know, it's a criticism you can always make. There's always some story that we ought to be giving more attention to that, for one reason or another, we're not able to. And right now, I mean, we're just so overloaded with news about other things that that hasn't gotten the attention. I think you're right.

MR. DAVIES: If I could just – oh, I'm sorry, Bob. The president of the United States did talk about this. I think this was a landmark report done by Justice Michael Kirby, the Australian jurist who led the effort, along with a group from the international community. It was a great day when the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva could get this thing launched. And you may know some of the machinations that went into making that possible. This needs to

be followed up on. The government of the Republic of Korea has said, signaled, that they'll host this office – permanent office to take names, hold account of those responsible for these depredation.

I mean, this is just the beginning of this process. And it is something that we need to talk about, part and parcel, of this tableau, this issue, this problem, this challenge that is North Korea, that is the most significant, egregious outlier in the international system. So we're talking about it. We're talking about it. But there are many facets of this issue, and we've got to deal with all of them. As the president said in Seoul, we can't pick and choose among the issues that –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Right back here, the lady.

Q: Hi. Rachel Oswald, National Journal.

Ambassador Davies, if you could just comment on possible changes in U.S. policy toward a return to the six-party talks. It had previously been stated that the United States needed concrete proof of North Korea's intent to permanently denuclearize. But recently there have been unconfirmed reports coming out of some of the bilateral talks I believe you've had with the Chinese, that you could accept a return to the so-called leap day agreement, the moratorium?

MR. DAVIES: Yeah. Leap day is history. I mean, leap day was a valiant attempt at kind of minor key to get at this problem and kick start six-party talks. It was never meant to – not even on paper. It was declaratory deal that we – that we reached. And we hoped to create space to restart the six-party. So we don't talk in terms of leap day or returning to leap day.

We'll see about six party. It does depend on whether the North Koreans will make the right choice and move back in the direction of the five parties position, which is that denuclearization, which is the bedrock of the six-party process, the sine qua non of it, the centerpiece of the September 2005 joint statement. You know, will they accept the fact that that should be the premise to it?

And in terms of the sequencing and what has to be done beforehand, what has to be done afterward, but all I'll say is that it's a canard, it's ridiculous to suggest that the United States is insisting that North Korea must completely denuclearize before we go back to six party. That's not true. But we need earnest money. We need to see that North Korea's serious about this. We need to see that they accept that this is the fundamental premise of six-party talks. We'd like to see them take concrete actions. It's important that they do so.

The stuff they got to do, they know what they have to do. And what they do, quite frankly, in the initial stages would be perfectly reversible steps that they would take – declaratory steps. So the fact that they're not interested in going back in that direction, the fact that they're not even interested in resolving the cases of Americans who have been imprisoned in North Korea, tells you something about their current interest in going back to multilateral diplomacy and six-party talks.

So our position hasn't changed. It's been consistent over five years. We're going to stick with it. We're going to stick with our partners, our allies, and the other members of the five parties. And we're going to hold North Korea to account. That's where we are and where we'll be.

MR. SCHIEFFER: How about on this side of the room? All right, right here.

Q: Hi. Sydney Freedberg, BreakingDefense.com.

The interests of the five parties are not perfectly congruent, to say the least. I mean, we talk about, you know, Russia and China – Russia has obviously been a little bit problematic lately on its western border. And there are repercussions on the east. China is increasingly, it seems, provocative, including, you know, claiming bits of Ieodo Rock, as well as Japanese territory, with the Air Defense Zone. I mean, zooming back from the immediate problem of North Korea, it seems like the region context has gotten a lot more complicated and a lot harder than it was, you know, the last time we did the six party thing since, you know, one third of the six parties are now making a lot more trouble than they were.

MR. DAVIES: Well, can I take that on quickly? Is that OK?

MR. SCHIEFFER: Sure.

MR. DAVIES: Just to say that you've just helped describe the degree of difficulty of the six-party talks, to some extent. But there is one issue on which we all agree, and that is this issue of the necessity of denuclearization occurring on the peninsula, which means North Korea giving up its nuclear weapons. And you know, despite these regional differences which continue to bubble up and sometimes bubble over, we are still able to talk to Russia about North Korea, to talk to China about North Korea.

I had talks just in recent weeks with my opposite number, Ambassador Wu Dawei. The first trilateral meeting at, call it, ambassadorial level after the president of the United States brought the prime minister of Japan and the president of South Korea together at The Hague was my hosting my Japanese and South Korean counterparts in Washington. So there is still enough commonality, and I think it's growing, and I think it's sufficient, that despite the differences at the margins that we have in terms of our strategic interests, this can be done.

Diplomacy can work. There is really no magic in it, but it does come down to presenting North Korea with a choice, where it really only has one choice, and that's to go down the peaceful diplomatic path of denuclearization. That's what we're working on and I believe that someday we'll succeed. I hope I'm the guy, you know, who's around to see that happen. My father, who was a diplomat in the late '40s through 1980, Sovietologist. Ended up in Poland as our ambassador, retired, 10 years later he saw the wall fall.

I mean, this stuff takes time, folks. And the president of the United States tried to explain that Seoul. It's not self-evident. It's not easy. You got to use all elements of your national power – military, diplomatic, your so-called soft power. And you got to bring it all together and

you got to work your alliances and you got to make your arguments, and you got to try to win people over the notion that there is a better way forward, and here's how it works, and here's how you – wherever you are, I don't care on what continent – can play a role in this thing. So that's what we're doing.

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right. One more question. And this lady right here.

Q: Good evening, everyone. I'm Jennifer Chan with Shanghai Media Group.

My question is: Under the current situation, what do you think that exactly the international community can do to help the people in North Korea, and especially on human right issues? Thanks.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Sure.

MR. DAVIES: Let me try that real quick, which is to send a strong unified consistent message to Pyongyang that they need to change their behavior and how they treat their people. That's key. And I think it's also important to tell other regional actors, including China, what they think about the situation inside North Korea. So you can bring about change, but it can only be if the world speaks with one voice and demands it.

MR. CHA: Can I just say – I mean, so I think it was mentioned – so the COI report is a watershed. I think that's a very important moment and a very important platform on which to build more international consensus, more international recognition of the human rights problem as being a major impediment to North Korea's joining the world community. It's not just about nuclear weapons. And so I think the – everybody should be pivoting, if you will, off of the CIO report.

I will just say, as the last up here, is that CSIS is going to be doing that. And very soon we're going to be announcing, releasing a new project that we'll be working on with regarding to looking at what the practical policy implications are that come from the Commission of Inquiry report. So just, sorry, a little bit of advertising there. (Laughter.)

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, on behalf of CSIS and TCU, I thank you all for coming. I learned a lot. I hope you did. Thank you. (Applause.)

(END)