

Center for Strategic and International Studies

CSIS Press Briefing: President Park Geun-hye's U.S. Visit

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H. ANDREW SCHWARTZ: We have a terrific briefing for you. Three of our top Asia experts will brief on the visit of President Park for next week. And you can find this later at CSIS.org, the full transcript will be there. We'll also have the video. We'll also have the audio. And you can find us on Twitter at @CSIS and on Facebook as well.

So with that, with no further ado, I'd like to introduce my colleague, Dr. Victor Cha, who is our Korea chair and senior advisor.

VICTOR CHA: Thanks, Andrew. Good morning, everyone. Thanks all for coming this early on a Friday.

So President Park will be arriving next week. This is the visit that was postponed from the visit when she was supposed to come last June, but she postponed because of the MERS crisis in Korea at the time. The visit comes at a very interesting time, because it is right after she has been to China for the Victory Day celebrations, and right after Xi Jinping has come here for his summit with President Obama. And now she's coming here, and there's more I want to say about that in a minute.

In terms of the visit itself, she arrives on the 14th. There's a big dinner for 750 of Korea's closest friends in the Andrew Mellon Auditorium on the evening of the 14th. And then she has a full day on the 15th, including some special time with Vice President Biden, some personal time with him. And then we like to believe that the highlight of her day that day will be her visit here to CSIS on the evening of October 15th, where she will give a public address – her only public address during her trip here. The 16th, in the morning, is her White House day. She'll have meetings in the morning and it will conclude with a lunch. And then I believe she is off back to the – back to Korea.

I mean, in terms of the visit, I guess there are three things that I would highlight. The first is that there's been a great deal of speculation about whether North Korea would conduct some sort of provocation – a satellite launch, missile test, cyber activity, whatever you would want to call it – around October 10th, which is the 70th anniversary of the founding of the party. And I think you've seen in the news a lot of speculation about that. Of course, nobody is 100 percent certain what North Korea will do, even on the clearest of days. So we just don't know. But I think for certain we'll see a big military parade, we'll see the display of all of their military hardware.

And this will, of course, be in the lead-in to President Park's trip here, which would naturally make the issue of North Korea one of the top items in their discussions. Again, it comes at an interesting time because President Park has just had discussions with Xi Jinping in China, most certainly about North Korea and the future of the Korean Peninsula. President Obama had discussions with President Xi here in Washington, most likely, about the same topic. And now the South Korean and U.S. president will be able to compare notes.

I think very clearly, whatever they discuss, the message coming out of that meeting will be one of how the two allies are airtight, there's no daylight, is often the term that's used,

between the two of them on North Korea, despite what I think will be a North Korean effort to divide the allies in a sense that after the August DMZ crisis – loudspeaker broadcast crisis, the North Koreans have offered family reunions to the South Koreans sometime later in October, which obviously gives an incentive for South Korea to maintain some sort of inter-Korean dialogue.

On the other hand, if the North Koreans do some sort of long-range test or satellite launch, that'll put pressure on the United States and all the members of the six-party talks and the international community to go to the U.N. Security Council for more sanctions. So this is a classic North Korea divide strategy among the allies. I don't think it's going to work, but it doesn't mean they won't try it.

I think the second major issue, largely as a result of the news on TPP, will be trade and economics issues. I think this would certainly be an important issue for the two regardless of the recent breaking events, but I think even more so given the agreements that have been reached on TPP. Matt Goodman, my colleague, can talk a lot more about that. South Korea wants to be a member of TPP. And I think this will be an opportunity for the two of them to talk about that.

The third area, I think, will be what I think administration officials have started to refer to as the new frontiers or the new horizons in the U.S.-Korea alliance. At CSIS, we've talked about how it is the U.S.-Korea alliance going from good to great. It's a good alliance, but how does it become a great alliance? And this is the featuring of cooperation on a variety of global issues between the two countries.

And so I expect that we'll see coming out of this summit a lot of discussion about cooperation on cybersecurity. And CSIS has just finished a report on North Korean cyber operations. Cooperation on global health, Korea's the 2017 host of the Global Health Security Agenda and has given – has committed \$100 million towards the effort of global health security. They are researching now a vaccine for the coronavirus – the family of coronaviruses that include MERS and SARS, in cooperation with the United States.

In development – international aid and development, this is another area of partnership between the United States and Korea. There's already been an MOU that's been signed between the State Department and the South Koreans on development, as well as between the two Peace Corps. The United States has the largest Peace Corps network in the world. South Korea – most people don't know – South Korea has the second-largest Peace Corps network in the world. And there are lots of opportunities to cooperate. A third area is space. And by space, I don't mean this space, I mean outer space. I expect that there'll be some discussion, cooperation agreements coming out on space.

And then I think that there will also be some discussion of domestic economics in both countries. In particular, the South Korean government is very focused on trying to boost sluggish growth. Their projections are now under 3 percent. Where they expect – their aspiration point is to be over 4 percent. And President Park has just implemented, or taken a big step towards implementing, structural reform particularly on labor. So I think there'll probably be some discussion of this. And to the extent that President Obama supports the efforts that

President Park is taking at home in terms of structural reform and growth, I think that would be very important.

Finally, on the regional dynamic – and I know my colleague Mike Green will talk about this as well – I think there'll be a lot of discussion about what I see to be Park's efforts at trying to – trying to create more cooperation among the U.S., Korea and China on the future of the Korean Peninsula. As I said, there's been a sequence of summit meetings that is ideal for this sort of discussion – her visit to China, Xi's visit her, and now her visit here – that are followed by a series of multilateral gatherings later this fall.

G-20, Paris – there are a number of multilateral gatherings where there might be opportunities for the three leaders to get together to talk about the future of the Korean Peninsula, which would be an unprecedented thing. We haven't seen anything like that before. And I think the South Koreans are trying to build towards that. And one of the – that was one of the reasons why she went to the Victory Day celebrations. And so I think that'll be an interesting thing to watch as well. I don't expect that they'll say anything concrete on that at this meeting, but I would watching – coming out of this meeting, going into the rest of the fall, I would watch sort of multilateral summit diplomacy opportunities that come up at these various meetings.

So with that, Andrew, I'll turn it back to you.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Great. We're going to go to my colleague Matt Goodman. Matt, of course, is our Simon chair in political economy and senior advisor for Asian economics, CSIS. He's a former director of international economics on the National Security Council in the current administration.

MATTHEW GOODMAN: Thanks, Andrew. Thanks, Victor.

So I think Victor has covered the main points on economics. I'll just reinforce two points. So on the economic side, growth should be topic one between the two presidents, because the world needs demand, needs growth right now. And the U.S. is doing OK but, you know, could even do better. And Korea is definitely underperforming. As Victor said, growth – the IMF is forecasting about 2.7 percent growth this year, which is, you know, substantially below Korea's potential. And so I think getting the world's 12th or 13th largest economy going again is probably the top priority for President Obama on the economic side.

The good news is that President Park knows that this a priority for her, and has talked about trying to shift growth to more domestic demand-led growth, and to promote structural reform, as Victor said, in labor and other parts of the economy. And to get more balanced growth is very important. There's still very heavy dependence on an export-led model, and that's going to be increasingly difficult to sustain, particularly because of Korea's traditional dependence on markets in Asia, especially China, which – whose growth is clearly slowing down. So getting more balanced growth in the economy is also very important, and dealing with, obviously, the specific issues of youth unemployment and so forth. So that's the first point, growth.

The second point is TPP. As Victor said, I'm sure the two leaders are going to talk about that, particularly in light on the development earlier this week with the agreement on a basic text in TPP. I think the president, President Obama, will likely tell President Park that Korea's a strong candidate to join TPP in the second round when the existing 12 members have gotten their initial deal ratified and implemented. I think, frankly, that's going to be at least two years from now before it's going to be possible for any new countries to accede to TPP, just as a practical matter because of the ratification process, the entry into force. And then we're going to have a new president here in the United States. And it's going to take him or her at least nine months to get their team in place and decide on something like this. So frankly, I think it's a two-year proposition at best.

And I think, though Korea's obviously a strong candidate, as many people have commented, the TPP text was very much based on the KORUS FTA model. I think there is a lingering set of issues in Washington that may make it a little more challenging for Korea, including concerns that KORUS – in its early days, there was some implementation problems. I think a lot of those have been fixed, and a lot of the reason why KORUS has not delivered as much economic return in the U.S. as people were hoping is because of the slow growth issue in Korea, as opposed to any problems in the agreement itself. So I think KORUS is doing better, but I do think there's a sort of lingering sense that there are problems there.

And then the other one is currency manipulation, which I think hangs out there as a – as a perennial problem with Korea. And I think that issue, beyond Korea, is still very much part of the political discourse here in Washington, and may get worse if there is a pattern of currency weakening against the dollar across the region, which is – which is possible. And so I think there is a – there is a possibility that that's going to in some ways infect the conversation.

I don't think there's going to be any immediate announcement or action that Treasury has to announce its latest foreign exchange report – manipulation report, as it were, on October 15th, which happens to be the day that President Park is here. My guess, based on my experience, is that Treasury will find a way to delay that – release of that report by a day or two. I don't think that report will call Korea a manipulator, but I think it might hit quite hard on those issues. So I think that's basically the economic story, which largely is about growth and TPP.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Great. I'd like my colleague Dr. Michael Green. Mike, of course, is our senior vice president for Asia at CSIS. And he's also our Japan chair, former director for Asian affairs on the National Security Council. Mike, please join us.

MICHAEL GREEN: Thank you. Thank you for coming early in the morning. Dr. Cha and I have to teach our courses at Georgetown at 9:30 and we appreciate you coming early. So this is a bilateral alliance that's in very good shape. The numbers in both Korea and the U.S. supporting the U.S.-ROK alliance are at historic highs. President Park is in a strong political position, with over 50 percent in some polls.

And U.S. trust in Korea is high. It's only about 49 percent when Americans are asked, do you trust Korea? But that's actually quite high for the American public. Our public doesn't trust

many countries. And as Victor said, on the North Korea problem are probably as closely locked together as we have been in a long time. And on global issues, highlighted by this new frontier concept, we are very closely aligned with a global Korea that is stepping up and playing a major role in a range of issues, from development to technology.

What I want to talk about is regional diplomacy. The U.S. and Korea have very closely aligned objectives and interests and values with respect to the future of East Asia. But our actual diplomacy is not as well-synced as it is on global issues and on the North Korea problem. It's not a crisis in the alliance, but it is an area where I think President Park and President Obama can quietly sync up American and Korean approaches better than they have been advanced so far.

The one issue, of course, is Japan-Korea relations, which for the United States is a high priority, regardless of party. Democrats and Republicans alike hold the view that our position in Asia, the advancement of our common norms and values and interests with both Korea and Japan, are better reinforced when the U.S.-Korea-Japan trilateral relationship is strong. And U.S.-Japan relations are very strong. U.S.-Korea relations are very strong. And as you all know, the Korea-Japan link is weaker than it should be given common interests.

There is small progress. Former Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro went to Korea on the 19th of September and had a good session with President Park. The foreign ministers had a trilateral on September 29th. And President Park and Prime Minister Abe briefly saw each other at the U.N. And there is now a broad consensus, thanks to President Park's meeting with Xi Jinping in September, that there should now finally be a trilateral summit of China-Korea-Japan, late October, early November.

And that's good progress. But the poll numbers still show deep distrust of Korea in Japan, deep distrust of Japan in Korea. Some of the basic bilateral agreements that would make trilateral cooperation easier – GSOMIA, an information-sharing agreement and so forth – are not going anywhere. The Korean side, I think, has some sense of optimism that there can be an agreement on comfort women, the most sensitive issue between the two countries.

Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se, President Park is not making this a condition for the trilateral summit expected in a month, or necessarily for a bilateral meeting between Park and Abe on the margins of that. But my sense – and Victor may not agree – but my sense is in Seoul there's a belief that they're very close – very close to getting something on the comfort women with Tokyo, not as a condition for that summit, but as part of the warming of relations.

I have to be honest, I don't see the same optimism in Tokyo. The prime minister, Prime Minister Abe, is also in a very strong political position. He's under no great pressure to do something on this. In the wake of his August 15th statement, in a way the pressure's off in respect to the history problem. And the political advisors around the prime minister don't necessarily feel the urgency that is felt in Seoul.

I hope there's some breakthrough. I hope there's some agreement. But I think that where the Korean side see the football at the five-yard line, the Japanese side thinks it's somewhere around the 50-yard line – that we're still far away from an agreement. And that's important to

the U.S. And I suspect, while it will never be part of the public discourse during this trip, it will be an important part of the summit discussion between President Obama and President Park.

Then there's the architecture of Northeast Asian diplomacy. President Park has advanced several interesting ideas. One is the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperative Initiative, NAPCI, which would bring together presumably the U.S., Korea, Japan, China, perhaps Russia, and then North Korea's a big question mark. The NAPCI concept has not been rejected by the administration. There's a senior official, Sung Kim, who's the representative in charge of it. Victor hosted a very interesting discussion on the concept here at CSIS. A lot of experts on the region think it's a good idea.

But my candid impression is that it does not have a lot of traction in the administration. One reason is it's President Park's initiative and there's some question about whether it would continue with the next Korean presidency. And when the U.S. commits to these kinds of things, when we don't go everyone blames us. So there's a natural hesitation to get committed until they're sure it has legs. There's also the question of the Japan piece. You know, this concept would need to be based on a core set of understandings with U.S., Korea and Japan.

So I think there may be some discussion on this. I think the concept, certainly from our perspective, is worth advancing. I'm not sure it will be a major feature in the summit, giving some of the hesitation in the administration. The other idea that's come out of Seoul, one of President Park's initiatives, is this idea Victor alluded to of a U.S.-China-Korea trilateral process. This one's also very complicated for the Obama administration. President Park's hypothesis is that closer Korea-China relations are pulling Beijing away from Pyongyang.

And in diplomacy, that's true. Xi Jinping is treating Kim Jong-un very badly in diplomatic terms and treating President Park very well. So in the historical background of the North Korea-South Korea-China dynamics, this is a revolutionary change. But in the actual substance of what China is doing to help on the North Korea problem, it still remains to be seen if this investment will pay off. And as Victor has pointed out elsewhere, if there is a provocation tomorrow, what China does will really be evidence of whether President Park's investment in relations with Xi Jinping were worth it.

The other question is this actual U.S.-Korea-China trilateral summit idea. In 2013, when it was advanced, Prime Minister Abe sent a very high-level envoy to Washington to ask the administration not to do it, not to have a U.S.-Korea-China trilateral that excluded Japan. The Korean side did the exact same thing in 2006 when Prime Minister Abe proposed a U.S.-Japan-India-Australia quad summit. And a very high-level Korean delegation came to Washington and said: Don't do this without us. You can't talk about the Korean Peninsula without us.

The problem is, with this U.S.-Korea-China trilateral, is that the clear intent for Seoul is focusing on North Korea. But the Chinese side will never agree to any public description of this trilateral as being about North Korea. It will have to be about Northeast Asia. And if that's the branding, then of course the Japanese side is going to be unhappy and protest. So it's a real dilemma.

In 2013, the administration and the Park government had a partial solution to this by having Victor Cha and me run a 1.5 track with officials and scholars U.S.-Korea-China meeting in Seoul in July 2013. We were just trying to remember when it was. We were scratching our head. It was July 2013. It was a good discussion, but a bit more academic. I think it will be – it will be difficult for the administration to agree to a more formal trilateral process – U.S.-Korea-China process – until the Japan piece is figured out.

So these are some of the regional dynamics I think that will be perhaps not part of the public speeches and joint statements – although there will be little evidence of movement – but I suspect it will be an important part of the discussions inside the Oval Office.

MR. SCHWARTZ: With that, we'd like to open it up to your questions. Right here.

Q: Hyo-dong Roh with the Yonhap News Agency.

There have been some concerns and displeasure within Washington for President Park's attendance of a military parade in Beijing last month. So some say there should be a kind of clarification from President Park on the attendance, and how to engage China. So what is your expectation for that?

MR. CHA: So a couple of thoughts. The first is, yes, I agree there's been some nail-biting, hand-wringing, head-scratching when they saw that picture of the three of them. I think very clearly, from President Park's viewpoint, there is a strategy there, right? And it's all about how she's standing next to President Xi, where the North Korean leader should be standing. And the North Korean representative is back in the cheap seats somewhere, not having a front-row seat. So I think, as Mike said, it's clearly about trying to pull China closer to South Korea. But there is the other dynamic, which is the idea that the Chinese probably don't perceive it that way. They perceive it as pulling President Park closer to him, and away from the, you know, traditional U.S.-Japan-South Korea trilateral alliance framework.

I think when I've talked to administration officials about it, I don't sense a lot of anxiety. I think they understand what she's trying to do. I think we all understand also the true test of whether this is going to work will be when the next North Korean provocation comes, because part of the reason President Park's relationship is so good with Xi Jinping thus far is that their relationship really has not been tested by a major North Korean provocation, like Cheonan sinking in 2010, or Yeonpyeong Island in 2010. So I think that's the first one. The second is the – so I think – so I think that it's not that she will have to explain to President Obama why she went, I think it'll be more the two of them exchanging notes on both of their meetings with Xi Jinping, and their discussions about North Korea and the Korean Peninsula, in addition to other issues.

The second thing I would say on this, both her – the strategy of, you know, basically building block summit diplomacy to try to get this trilateral – this U.S.-Korea-China trilateral, as well as the NAPCI concept – I think for both of these things, which I neglected to mention, I'm glad Mike mentioned it in his presentation – on both of these things, I mean, the Japan piece is important because NAPCI is about functional cooperation on regional issues. And you can't

have functional cooperation on regional issues unless the Japan-Korea relationship is good. And then I think that it would be much easier to push forward on a U.S.-Korea-China trilateral summit if the Japan piece is in place too.

In other words, if there's a – there's certainly a U.S.-Japan-Korea trilateral that preceded that – that preceded any trilateral summit, the U.S.-Korea-China trilateral. And there is a sense that – a real confidence among Washington, Seoul and Tokyo that the three-way relationship is back in full swing and operating the way it should be. I think that that would then open a pathway – a much – a wider pathway to this idea of a trilateral with China.

MR. GREEN: Last year, CSIS did a survey of experts – international relations experts, scholars, thought leaders – in 10 Asian countries about the future of Asia. And we had – I think we sent close to 3,000 surveys out and we got 600 back, which is a pretty high response rate for an internet survey. And one of the questions was, in the future should order in Asia be defined by – and then we had five choices – China, U.S.-China condominium, et cetera, et cetera.

Korean experts – close to 90 percent of Korean experts said it should be shaped by a U.S.-led order. That was more than the number of American experts who said it should be shaped by a U.S.-led order. And it was more than the Japanese, Australians or anyone. So among Koreans, the intellectual elites, there is a very strong identification of Korea's interests with an open, rules-based, democratic order in Asia. And we asked other questions about norms. And Koreans aligned very closely with the U.S.

I don't think anyone who follows this is worried about Korea's future definition of Asia or Korea going to China or anything like that. And I think it's a colossal mistake when the Japanese Foreign Ministry publishes a Blue Book that says: Korea does not share common democratic values with Japan. It takes that out from the previous issue. It's wrong. The problem is this, Xi Jinping has articulated a vision in his speech in Shanghai last spring and more recently, of an Asia that is – that has no blocs, meaning no alliances – an Asia with no alliances, of an Asia for Asians. It's increasingly the Chinese side – at least Xi Jinping is articulating – a future of Asia that diminished the U.S. role and is problematic.

And President Park's diplomacy with China is not against U.S. interests – it's not. And I don't think most American officials or experts are worried about Korea going to China. The problem with it is that to much of the region, and I worry within Beijing, it looks like somehow Korea's very neutral on this question. And if you look at the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperative Initiative, if you look at the September 3rd visit and sitting in Cheonhaman (ph), it looks like Korea's diplomacy is value-neutral, which when you're engaging China to some extent you have to do.

So my advice – not that President Park or the Cheong Wa Dae will listen to me – my advice is I don't think President Park has to explain her China strategy publicly in Washington. I think she should talk to the president about it. And the president should explain whatever his China strategy is in the same meeting privately. Publicly, I think what would be very important is for President Park to explain a vision for the future of Asia that shows that – what we all know – that Korea is committed to an open order based on rule of law and democracy and no coercion.

And you know, I don't think the president has to talk about China. But it's very important, given the narrative coming out Beijing, that that kind of message be sent at some point from the Korean side. Then things like the September 3rd visit or some other issues will be in a context that will be understood better. That would be my advice.

SCHWARTZ: Questions? Right here, please.

Q: Thanks so much for doing this. Thanks so much. My name is Atsushi Okudera from Asahi Shimbun.

I'd like to ask and discuss a little bit more the importance of this – President Park's visit to the United States at this time, at this moment. Could you tell me how and why President Park's visit at this moment is so valuable, in terms of particularly after, as you said, President Park's visit to Beijing, and also before the trilateral summit between Japan, U.S. – oh, no – Japan, China and ROK? So this timing, why and now important, particularly the, you know, for the ROK? And also, what kind of role is the United States to play in this summit meeting? Thanks so much.

MR. CHA: Well, I think that the – I mean, the importance of this meeting at this particular time is that it will help to lay the groundwork for certainly consolidation of the U.S.-Japan-Korea relationship because, as you said, there is the Japan-Korea-China trilateral coming up. And so, as I said before, this fall we have a whole sequence of summit meetings that are taking place that I think will produce – my guess is this particular meeting is important because it's going to help to produce a normalization of the U.S.-Japan-Korea trilateral relationship, because I think there will be opportunities for the three of them to meet. But it also may produce something new, which is the U.S.-Korea-China meeting.

So I think this one's very important because it lays the groundwork for that. As Mike said, the message coming out of this has to say a couple of things. It has to be – sort of show very clearly that South Korea has a view of the future of Asia that is in line with democratic values and very a prosperous and stable post-World War II order. But also at the same time, as she has said, she believes very strongly in regional cooperation. And a very important part of that, a very important contribution by South Korea in that respect, will be to improve the relationship with Japan. And third, that they also want to use regional diplomacy, all the parties, to break new ground. And that is much more genuine and frank regional discussion about the future of the Korean Peninsula and the problems in North Korea. So I think that's why this particular visit's important in that regional diplomacy context.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Mike.

Q: Mike Mosettig, PBS Online NewsHour.

Can you talk a little bit about domestic politics in both countries? Last time President Park was here she spoke to Congress. Maybe she was prescient this time and realized there wouldn't be anybody to introduce her. But did – your schedule didn't indicate that she's even going to go up there for any private meetings or anything like that. Secondly, what are you

hearing from the Koreans about the now-extremely more complicated U.S. ratification process for TPP? And then the third part is, it wasn't that long ago when her ratings were really down, after the ferry business and all that. How has she managed to get them back up to 52 percent?

MR. CHA: On the last question, I mean, she has North Korea to thank for that. I mean, her – there was the landmine crisis in August, where these two soldiers – patrolling soldiers got their legs blown off by a landmine in the DMZ, which then led to a standoff between the two Koreas. And I think most people believe that what came out of that, the way she handled that and the way they came out of that, was – worked greatly to her favor. And her popularity went up dramatically after that, to – as Mike said, to over 50 percent.

So she's coming here at a time when she is – she has very strong ratings, she is, you know, embarking on some important structural reform on labor. We don't know entirely how successful it's going to be, but, you know, they have legislation that they're trying to put through their National Assembly by the end of the current session, which is early December. So, you know, I think she's coming here as a very – in that sense, a very strong leader. She's got the wind behind her – wind at her back.

I'll let Matt answer the question about TPP. In terms of her schedule with the Hill, I'm not really certain. I would imagine there might be some interaction, but – you know, the Hill is a bit distracted right now by other sorts of problems. She had her moment then when she came the last time, when she spoke before a joint session. Yeah, and this visit is much more of a – you know, her last visit here was sort of all the bells and whistles, with the speech before Congress and on all the nice stuff that comes with that. This is sort of an official or working visit. And so there's – it doesn't have the same bells and whistles, but it's very rare that a leader will come twice in one president's term and have the same sort of visit all the time.

So while – I mean, I like to compare it to the Xi Jinping visit, which was, you know, all this pomp and circumstances, because the Chinese really wanted it. But in many ways, it was to sort of cover up for a very difficult relationship that's going on between the two. And this is much more of an intimate summit between two friends. It's sort of like a very fancy dinner party where you don't know your dinner guest well, and it all looks very nice but the conversation is very stilted. But in this case, it's sort of like coming over for a barbeque and the two of them, you know, kicking back and really being able to have a good discussion. So I think that's the difference with this.

MR. GREEN: On the – on the politics, all three of us have worked on summits like this in the NSC in the past. And you have two contradictory instincts. On the one hand, you want the summit you're working on to be on the front page of the newspaper. On the other hand, you want a substantive discussion. And those are often mutually contradictory because when there's a lot of pressure – like there was with the Xi visit on cyber and the South China Sea – you manage the media and you try to avoid a disaster and you occasionally get things done.

In this case, there is no high-pressure issue. The issues I mentioned in East Asia diplomacy are really issues of coordinating common interests better. But that's a plus, because they can get to some really important issues. In Washington right now and next week, the

Republican meltdown in the House is going to be front page news, for sure, presidential elections, the Russian intervention in Syria, and the U.S. military's advice that we not get out of Afghanistan. I mean, these are huge stories in an American context and those will probably dominate the headlines. The only way I see this summit getting in the front page is if North Korea makes it a front-page story.

But it's also important – to answer your question, why now – because I don't think the administration has been focusing very much on the North Korea problem. The strategic patience line is really kind of a cool way of saying, do nothing. And meanwhile, the North Koreans are continuing to develop their ballistic missile capabilities, their cyber capabilities, and nuclear. And so I hope that in this summit, whether North Korea misbehaves or not, President Park really uses the meeting with President Obama to think about how to deal with this North Korea problem, and get it at a higher level of attention in the administration. That may not be headlines, it depends on what North Korea does, but it's really important right now.

MR. GOODMAN: Just very quickly on the TPP ratification question, I don't think any of us, including either of the two presidents, is going to know a whole lot more about the TPP process next week than we know now. A lot of things have to happen, there are a lot of uncertainties. You know, the text of the agreement itself has to be scrubbed and finalized. The president has to – President Obama has to notify Congress of an intention to sign the agreement. And then all these congressional questions about who's going to actually be in charge and looking at this thing have to be resolved.

And, you know, I think the earliest possible time for Congress to look at this thing – actually, legislatively the earliest they can look at it, I think, is late January. It's more likely to be at least March. The sort of general, popular thesis is that once the primary – presidential primary process has winnowed the field down to one candidate on either side, then there will be a greater opportunity to talk about something as, you know, challenging as trade, because the two candidates will have more incentive to move to the middle where, you know, it may be possible to have a conversation about getting a trade deal one. But there's just too much uncertainty. So I don't think they're going to be talking much about that process in specifics.

MR. SCHWARTZ: I wanted to ask a question, just in the middle of this. This week, David Albright estimated in a revised report that the North Koreans have enough fissile material for 22 nuclear weapons. It seemed to sort of – you know, as Mike said, there's so much going on in the news – including next week the first Democratic presidential debate, a lot of speculation around that – an issue like this seems to sort of float below the surface. Will that be something on the table specifically discussed with the president and President Park?

MR. CHA: Yeah, I mean, I certainly think so, Andrew. I mean, I don't know if they'll discuss Albright's estimate, but I think the broader dynamic that you're alluding to and that Mike painted, I think, is true, that the administration currently has so many things on its plate. One of the most important things about a visit like this is to refocus attention of the president on the problem of North Korea. The senate just introduced a bill last week – a new North Korea sanctions bill, that is actually urging the administration to exercise – it's basically codifying the authorities that were created in the presidential executive order after the Sony hack to – for

sanctions, not just for nuclear proliferation, but for human rights abuses as well as for cybercrimes. So –

MR. SCHWARTZ: And you testified on the Hill this week to that effect as well.

MR. CHA: Yeah.

MR. SCHWARTZ: This on our website, by the way, if you want to access it.

MR. CHA: So I think it's – it is a good opportunity to try to get the whole White House machinery to focus on this issue, at least for a few days, whether there is or isn't a North Korea action, so.

MR. SCHWARTZ: We have time for one last question. Let's go right over here, please.

Q: Thank you. My name is Yoshi Oka (sp) from Japanese Public TV, NHK.

I want to follow up on the question by my Korean colleagues about ROK and China's relationship, which has been discussed this morning quite intense. As Victor just said, the administration is not that concerned because, of course, U.S.-Japan-ROK's relationship is quite solid, of course. And President Park has a long-term strategy which is reasonable from her perspective.

But I have a slight concern at the same time not only the intellectuals or the administration of both sides, but the public sentiment in ROK, looking into the media reports about Xi Jinping's visit to the United States, less concerned than the Japanese media, a little bit kind of like – not praising, but positive kind of reports. And also, like I've heard from a former Korean ambassador to the United States saying we should treat China as one of us, just like U.S.-ROK-Japan, which is, like, well, there might be a kind of perception gap. And Washington is not that aware of it, or do you have – what's your say about this?

MR. CHA: I guess a couple of things. The first is that the – I think in the Korean public, there is a – in the Korean public, I think there's generally been a very Pollyannaish view of China. We saw it really from normalization in 1992 onwards. So there's always been a very – you know, I think a little bit rose-colored glasses view on China. And so when they see a visit like Xi Jinping or with their president or with the U.S. president, I think they probably think about it in a little less of a strategic context.

But I think if you talk to the strategy folks, like Mike was referring to some of the CSIS surveying that we've been doing, and you poll countries on who do they think – you poll countries on who do they think will be a major power in Asia in 25 years, they all say China. And then you ask them, how comfortable are you with that? Many countries say not very. And among the top in those countries is Korea, not very comfortable with a Chinese-led order. But I think this is natural. You sort of see these sorts of things all the time.

In general, I think as you all know, that Korea has a very complicated and complex view of their relationship with China. You know, on the one hand there clearly are value gaps between the two – between the two of them. But at the same time, they have this problem of North Korea, where they feel that it cannot be resolved without deep and genuine cooperation with China. And this is not even considering the economic picture, right, between the two countries.

So I think strategically there has always been this desire to try to develop genuine trust with China, because of the North Korea problem, but at the same time at the strategic level and understanding that their primary partner in the long term is the United States, and that's who they would like to see continue to lead the order in Asia. And these things kind of clash all the time, and that's why you get sort of these very different views of China coming out of different parts of the South Korean populace.

MR. GREEN: When foreign policy experts or former officials like us travel in Asia or have visitors from Asia, and I think when President Obama has visitors from Asia or the Defense or State Departments, almost every country in the last year or so is expressing more concern if not alarm about China. It's true for India, Australia, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia. And there are exceptions. And Korea's the biggest exception.

You don't hear that from Thailand, because they're preoccupied with their internal difficulties. And Thailand also has a kind of complex history with China. Singaporeans are very careful. But Korea does stand out in Washington because on balance Korean experts and officials are pushing the U.S. to be more relaxed about China, whereas almost every other meeting – not just Japan – Asian officials and experts are pushing us to be more concerned about China.

So I think in the tone of the discussions, Korea does stand out. But that's why I said earlier I think it's very important for President Park to demonstrate that she and Korea have a vision of the future of Asia that's very much aligned with the U.S. And that's not just about peaceful resolution of disputes and multilateralism. It's about what kind of rules and norms over time will define Asian order, because the tone is different.

The other thing I would say is, you know, after the Cheonan incident and Yeonpyeong, the Asan Institution did a poll – Victor will remember – where the Korean public was asked: Should Korea put more pressure on China over North Korea, even if it damages economic relations between Korea and China? And you'll remember the number, but it was something like 60 or 65 percent said yes. So the Korean public's views change quite a lot, depending on what's happening.

And right now, President Park's investment in China relations seems to be paying off, at least in terms of the summit diplomacy and the way Xi Jinping is treating Pyongyang. But, as we both said, the real test hasn't come yet about how reliable China will be on these problems. I mean, from U.S. interests I hope China's a good, reliable partner if North Korea does a provocation. It's in our interests and Japan's for China to, you know, move quickly and resolutely with us if North Korea does a provocation.

I hope that's the outcome, but it just remains to be seen. And I think the Korean public will react to that and judge relations with China from the context of what happens and what North Korea does, not just the diplomacy that's happened so far.

MR. SCHWARTZ: With that, we're going to wrap up today. Thank you for coming to CSIS this morning. We will have a transcript out to you later this afternoon. And please call us at my office if you need to request to speak to any of our experts. Thanks very much.

(END)