

Center for Strategic and International Studies

ROK-U.S. Strategic Forum 2017: Now and the Future of the ROK.-U.S. Alliance

“Session II: Northeast Asia and the Alliance”

Panelists:

**Kim, Joon-hyung,
Professor,
Handong University**

**Kim, Heung-kyu,
Director, China Policy Institute,
Ajou University**

**Sohn, Yul,
Professor,
Yonsei University**

**Dan Blumenthal,
Director of Asian Studies and Resident Fellow,
American Enterprise Institute**

**Laura Rosenberger,
Director, Alliance for Securing Democracy;
Senior Fellow, The German Marshall Fund of the United States**

Moderator:

**Michael Green,
Senior Vice President for Asia and Japan Chair, CSIS; Chair, Modern and Contemporary
Japanese Politics and Foreign Policy, Georgetown University**

Host:

**Lisa Collins,
Fellow, Korea Chair,
CSIS**

Location: CSIS Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

Time: 1:15 p.m. EDT

Date: Tuesday, September 5, 2017

*Transcript By
Superior Transcriptions LLC
www.superiortranscriptions.com*

MICHAEL GREEN: Welcome back from your break. I'm Michael Green. I'm the senior vice president for Asia, and Japan chair here at CSIS, and a professor at Georgetown. And like Victor Cha, a veteran of the long-forgotten Bush administration.

This panel is going to look at our alliance in the context of Northeast Asia. The previous panels touched on bilateral defense issues, on ways to deal with the rising threat from North Korea; those issues will come back in this panel. But what I hope we can do for the next hour and 15 minutes is provide the larger geopolitical context within which we're now working.

The North Korean nuclear challenge cannot be divorced from the larger geopolitical memory and vision for the future of Northeast Asia. And we are confounded, we are obstructed in our effort to find a diplomatic solution by the fact that there are different ideas in Northeast Asia about what the region's past was and what the region's future should be, views as diverse as Chinese President Xi Jinping's speech in Shanghai several years ago where he called for a Northeast Asia without blocs, which I think most people accurately interpreted as meaning without alliances, a vision of a sort of lower U.S. presence, the diminishment or end of the alliances that held the U.S. and regional stability and prosperity together after the war, toward something new, more defined by China.

Others talk about the danger of a split in Northeast Asia, a divide between the continental and maritime powers with China, Russia on the continental side, perhaps the U.S., Japan, India, Australia on the other side and Korea as a peninsula stuck in between.

Others articulate the vision for building on 70 years of progress and stability in the long run. We obviously had the Korean War, the Vietnam War where we had struggles, but ultimately Asia is prosperous because of the rules and the structures we've been building. And so another vision is one that continues spreading and foraging deeper ties based on the rule of law and an open international order.

There are very different visions for the future of Northeast Asia, very different interpretations of what the past meant. And it's precisely because of those differences that we find it very difficult for the major powers to align on the North Korean nuclear problem. And of course, North Korea uses these fissures and splits to try to maximize its own position, its leverage and its threat. So we'll come back to the North Korean nuclear issue in this panel, but I think we'll want to put it in the context of larger geopolitical trends, visions, memories that shape the region.

And we have a panel of American and Korean experts who will talk about how our alliance figures in all this. We'll begin in the order you see with Professor Kim Joon-hyung from Handong University. He's an expert on Northeast Asia and has had various roles advising the government. Then we'll turn to Laura Rosenberger, now at The German Marshall Fund, who served with great distinction in the State Department in the previous administrations, plural. Then Professor Heung-kyu from Ajou University, who has particular expertise on China. Dan Blumenthal from American Enterprise Institute, known to everyone here, doing a lot of work on Chinese grand strategy and the future of Northeast Asia. And then Professor Sohn Yul from Yonsei, who also has a broad Asia background, but particular expertise in Japan.

So we'll hit the major powers, we'll hit the trends in the region and we'll talk about our alliance. Because in these different competing visions about the future of Northeast Asia I started with, probably the variable that will control those futures the most will be the U.S.-Korea alliance. This

alliance began in the wake of the Korean War in the front line in the battle against communist expansion. It is now an alliance that will be perhaps more decisive than any other bilateral relationship in determining how the U.S. and China, Japan and China and the larger spread of Northeast Asian power plays itself up, so we have to get this right as allies. And hopefully in the next hour and 15 minutes we'll start to point to some of the ways we can do that.

So I'm going to ask each of the panelists to give us a three-to-five-minute top-line, key-takeaway set of points on their talking memos, which are in the conference panel, and then we'll come back and try to get some debate and disagreement going and then open it up for your questions.

Professor.

KIM JOON-HYUNG: OK, this is a huge job. I wrote this, like seven pages, but I have to talk to you in three minutes. And the question is, the big picture of Northeast Asia and the U.S. alliance, such a huge task. But actually, I rewrote, almost rewrote, in the morning when I heard I have five minutes. OK.

As you all know, the present East Asian security structure is much more complex and it is therefore multidimensional overall, totally different from the dichotomous structure of the Cold War. But somehow, the appearance remains the same, the northern triangular kind of alliance – even though it's not really an alliance, you know – North Korea, Russia, and China; and southern triangle still kind of have at least a skeleton, or these days as (picking up ?).

So, in a way, the good part is it's easy to draw cooperation from all the allies. The bad part, it's harder to solve the problem because the problem is on the other side, North Korea. So in this complicated situation, we are tempted to dichotomize the problem and then at the end of the day maybe we are in the position that it didn't solve it or failure.

There are two main variables, U.S.-ROK relationships. One is thought. The second issue is divergence over North Korean policy. The interesting point is, the thought issue is kind of a litmus test paper between U.S. and ROK because the Trump administration and Moon Jae-in administration have some suspicions and some doubt, mostly from U.S. toward Moon.

Second, divergence over North Korea. Supporters, main supporters of one government, wants a divergent approach toward North Korea. This is the test paper, litmus paper that Moon is not going to betray his voters. So he is kind of in between, sandwiched by these two, so how to solve this problem can decide U.S.-ROK relationships. Early, beginning stage, I think the first test is more satisfactory, that means the U.S. is literally satisfied with Moon's approach, but not the second.

And I think I spent half of it on going to raise four questions, very provocative, but I want to raise these questions. First, we have been talking about co-working, U.S.-ROK consultations. But to me and to liberals, why only on pressures, emphasizing consultations only on pressures? You know, for example, in this grave situation, I'm sure the U.S. tried to have some contact toward the North, like contact in New York, but I don't think this is pre-consulted with South Korean government.

Second question, I know the situation is so bad, but even it seems immoral to talk about engagement now, but we need so many for choice after the sanctions. So nobody is talking about engagement issues, not many menus are ready.

Third question, domestic politics, because leadership here, U.S. leadership, including the president or senators, even some experts, their voice is much louder in Korea, but sometimes inconsiderate. I know America is a democratic country, but better to be more careful and considerate because it is much more exaggerated and louder in Korea, and considering Moon's position among supporters.

Finally, the Korea-China relationship. I talked about the geographical pictures, similar to the Cold War, but totally different in substance. But still, you know, a good China-Korea relationship is really important and constructive to solve this problem. But somehow, always trilateral cooperation is going on between and among U.S., Japan and Korea, not Korea, China, U.S., which is, I consider, really important to solve the problem.

MR. GREEN: That was great, thank you. We'll come back to some of those. You introduced some really important themes.

Laura.

LAURA ROSENBERGER: Great, thank you. I want to sort of – I think Mike did a really nice job of laying out the different visions for the future of Northeast Asia. And I want to sort of plunge into this by talking about the importance of U.S. leadership, continued U.S. leadership in seeing that that direction continues in what I believe is in the interests not only of the United States, but of the alliance and of many of the really important values, rules that we have worked together so hard to cultivate over the past few decades.

Let me just start by talking about Korea which, as Mike pointed out rightly, sits in a very challenging location geographically. And Korea has been doing a lot of work to try to get the balance right between its economic relationship with China and its security relationship with the United States. This is a constant struggle and it's a constant balancing act.

And I worry that if U.S. commitments to Korea ever became in doubt, that would play into – it would strengthen China's hands, it would lead to greater economic dependency between Korea and China and would make Seoul less able to resist the kinds of pressures that we have seen from China on things like that and other questions about U.S. security posture and the alliance.

Looking to Korea's other direction, we know that a lot of progress has been made in Korea-Japan bilateral relations and on trilateral cooperation, which I believe U.S.-Japan-Korea trilateral cooperation is incredibly important for dealing with the North Korea crisis, it's also incredibly important for managing the rise of China. I think it's essential to U.S. security interests in the region. Absent U.S. leadership in that relationship, I don't think we would see both the progress we have seen over the past few years, but I don't think it would continue in the direction that I believe is in our collective interest.

We all know the perils of China filling a vacuum in the region if U.S. leadership were to be in question. We've already seen China asserting its own vision for an economic framework for the region in the absence of a TPP agreement with the U.S. participating. I think that there are other ramifications for the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris climate accord, that China is certainly seeking to claim that mantle of leadership. I worry about playing into China's hands to allow it to set different rules for the region.

And finally, I want to just highlight the role of Russia in the region, which is one that sometimes gets forgotten, but I think particularly recently we have seen Vladimir Putin flexing Russia's muscles in the region. We saw, of course, the Bear bomber flights around the peninsula recently. A lot of statements from Putin frankly that sound very reminiscent of what we've heard from the Chinese about THAAD and other missile defense systems in the region.

I think it's really important to bear in mind the role that Russia is playing in the region and certainly will seek to play if the U.S. were to pull back in any way on its commitment to our allies' security.

So I say all of this not to sound pessimistic, because indeed I am extraordinarily optimistic about the U.S.-Korea alliance. I'm extraordinarily optimistic about the Northeast Asian region. But I think it's incredibly important that here in the United States we continue to put ourselves on a course for sustained U.S. leadership in the region to ensure that the region continues to develop in the direction that we, gathered in this room, I'm sure all want to see it continue to do so.

And I also, as somebody who believes very, very strongly in our alliance, know that our Korean colleagues will continue also to carry that mantle of leadership when it comes to the international rules, norms and values that the region is so dependent upon.

MR. GREEN: Excellent, thank you.

Professor.

KIM HEUNG-KYU: I had grown up at the University of Michigan while reading Michael Pillsbury's writings, and it's a great honor to make a presentation in front of him.

Under President Xi Jinping, China is profoundly changing its foreign policy with its new identity of a great power. Xi has brought new ideas, new strategies and a new concept in China's foreign policies.

Xi Jinping suggested an equal partnership with the United States. His Korea policy orientation was in favor of South Korea. He has emphasized establishing a normal state-to-state relationship with North Korea. Xi Jinping is also formally opposed to North Korea's nuclear ambitions as well as to her provocation.

China has adopted an increasingly active and audacious stance on the Korean Peninsula as you see Wang Yi's proposal on parallel negotiations in 2016 and then also the temporary suspensions in 2017. Xi Jinping also approached Putin to strengthen collaboration on North Korea in their summit meeting on July 4th this year.

The United States and South Korea should carefully evaluate China's foreign policy shift under Xi Jinping and its implication. Xi's new policy orientation to the Korean Peninsula may bring about greater cooperation with the United States and South Korea on the North Korean case. The trilateral cooperation really matters for the stability and peace in Northeast Asia.

The most challenging question is how to resolve the third issue to drive China's cooperation. Since the new government of Moon Jae-in came in South Korea, China's opposition to this third has

been more test flights. The bilateral relationship between Seoul and Beijing is not likely to improve soon unless both are able to find out the solution.

Xi Jinping even identified the south issues as a core national interest when he met Korean President Moon Jae-in in Germany on July 6th of this year. In this case, acquiring China's cooperation on the North Korean issue will become a tremendously serious challenge for South Korea.

I am also afraid that the feud with China may ruin South Korea's economy, the fundamentals of the ROK-U.S. alliance. I suggest as follows. While deploying the THAAD on South Korea to protect the U.S. Army and facilities from the attacks of North Korea, South Korean president must provide an assurance to China's President Xi Jinping that South Korea and the United States would not utilize the THAAD against China, and South Korea, in supporting as agreed policies, not take China as an adversary based on the agreements between South Korea and the United States. And I hope the United States also needs to provide the technical assurance to China in a similar vein.

The alliance must alleviate China's apprehension that their North Korea policy might be pursuing collapse of North Korean regime. In fact, call on Moon Jae-in's coexistence policy to North Korea and Tillerson's pledge of full North policy – no regime collapse, no regime change, and no reunification, and no advancement of the U.S. Army over the 38th Parallel – almost identical with the Chinese call on North Korean policies.

In spite of the United States and China increasing pressures and warnings, on September 3rd of this year Kim Jong-un tested their hydrogen bomb with ICBM capability. Kim obviously revealed he would not pay any respect to Chinese interests as well as the United States. As a consequence, Northeast Asia is drastically falling into grave security dilemma situations, nobody knows the outcomes.

What is urgent is to establish trilateral strategic cooperation among South Korea and the United States and China. They need to understand each other and increase mutual trust. The ROK-U.S. must establish a civilian and expert-based strategy dialogue, then both and the three need to agree upon the intent on North Korea's acquisition of nuclear weapons and ICBM capabilities, the method to deal with these issues, and crisis management mechanism, and also the end state of the Korean Peninsula.

Before the Minerva's owl flies over the horizon, we need to move with fresh ideas and determination. This is my suggestion. Thank you.

MR. GREEN: Great topics for us to come back to.

Dan.

DAN BLUMENTHAL: Yes. Thank you very much and I'm very happy to be here. I can only imagine, with all our Korean friends here, how nerve-racking and distressing a time it is in Korea; it's obviously for us in the United States here, too. But living with this kind of threat, with this kind of person in charge, this must be awful and my heart really goes out. And I think we will find a solution over time.

Geopolitically, I think the context, number one, is that since the end of the Cold War, president after president has said the greatest threat that the post-Cold War world faces is terrorists or rogue

regimes getting WMD. Well, what we've found out is that it can happen and it did happen. So that's a huge failure of the post-Cold War strategy, to the extent there was one.

If you're a dictator hellbent on getting nuclear weapons, you will get one. And that has enormous geopolitical consequence. It has geopolitical consequences for the Middle East and it has geopolitical consequences here. I can come back to this later in Q&A, but the idea that we're treating North Korea as a state rather than as a mafia organization or a terrorist organization with nuclear weapons to me boggles the mind. It's not a state in any real sense of the term. It should be treated as it was treated for some time in the Bush administration as a mafia organization trying to get nuclear weapons. And that has all kinds of implications for policy.

The second big geopolitical context here is China and really the end of the Deng period of reform and opening up of Xi Jinping. It ended probably 10 years ago really, the reform period, but Xi Jinping's put a big exclamation point on it and is changing the Deng consensus before our eyes, at the same time that China actually has some of the most ambitious foreign policy plans it's put forth in the last 20 years. So less resources, reform and opening-up period ending, but yet an expansive territory that goes from the eastern parts of Afghanistan all the way to claims near South Korea, and that in itself is the geopolitical context.

When it comes to Korea, the first unit of analysis with China has got to be that it's an empire. You know, it's an empire with this expansive territory that still views very much – it's not all it is, but it's the first unit of analysis and it views Korea very much through that lens. So I'm sure to Koreans, echoes of the way they had to pay tribute in the imperial era were repeated when all of a sudden South Korea got enormous pressure not to deploy the THAAD system and not to take care of its own national security interests. That's how it views maritime East Asia, it views it as civilizationally part of the Sinosphere and that very much impinges upon its current strategy inside the maritime East Asia, including Korea.

Korea has been historically and always will be, I think, the geopolitical cockpit of history. Certainly for China, that's where the century of humiliation really began, it was through Korea with the fight with Japan. And all of that explains, I'm not trying to justify it, but China's reluctance to do what I think everyone knows needs to happen, which is to work towards the unification of the Korean Peninsula under the ROK.

Here, the U.S. has dropped the ball, I think, on values and leadership over the last 10 or so years because we haven't been really employing a humanitarian policy or a policy that speaks to Koreans on both sides of the peninsula or moves towards what has been stated. Certainly, under the last administration, it is the policy of the United States, which is to support the unification of the peninsula.

I'll stop and that's a huge issue, obviously, and we can talk about that, but, you know, certainly, at the very least, we need to be prepared for that.

I'll stop with this and I'll say, look, from the point of view of the Department of Defense, Korea and Japan will get everything they want. I mean, they'll get – they'll have strike capabilities, they'll have every missile defense capability. The alliances will be tighter than they've ever been, they are tighter in some ways than they've ever been, and, you know, that's fine, you know, in certain ways. It's certainly fine with respect to the competition with China.

But we're getting to a very heavily militarized Northeast Asia with very distinct possibilities of a nuclear breakout and a lot of offensive strike capabilities. Again, it's fine, to a certain extent, in terms of pushback with China, but without an end state to all of this, without an end state that leads to unification and demilitarization, I think it could be very dangerous over the long term. So I'll stop with that.

MR. GREEN: Thanks, Dan.

And finally, Professor Sohn.

YUL SOHN: Thank you. I'm bringing up the Japan issue in the context of U.S.-Korea relations and in Korea's foreign policy in general.

President Moon's Japan policy, he made a speech, roughly two weeks ago on August 15th, a national independence day address. Usually, it's an independence day, you, you know, speak about Japan. This time, he made a very careful, you know, wording over Korea-Japan relations. I, you know, picked up two points. One is that he mentioned that Korea-Japan relations need to move beyond bilateral relations and cooperation and towards cooperating for the peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia. So that means you want to move beyond, I mean, the existing approaches to Japan, which is strictly bilateral, but now you want to, you know, broaden the scope for cooperation with Japan on several other issues. That's one point.

And the second point is that he said it is undesirable that the history problem continuously drags down the future-oriented development of the bilateral relationship. The previous president, Park, also mentioned this, but this is something that you have to translate the words into action. In other words, this is a so-called dual-track approach, that you want to cooperate on political, security and economic matters with Japan while, you know, separately discussing the history issues.

So the next, you know, question is whether President Moon will be able to do this. So those are the two points that I want to discuss today here.

Like I said before, Japan-Korea relations have been overwhelmingly, you know, characterized by bilateralism, that, you know, primarily dyadic things have been developing economically, politically and security relationships and obviously overshadowed by very particular historical legacies.

So the relationship has often been called a special relationship, that it is not an ordinary one, but special, so the incentives for cooperation also derive from the cost/benefit analysis in a very narrow, particularistic bilateral context.

But, you know, we are entering the 21st century and those ties have been far more complex than before as the strategic conditions are changing and globalization has proceeded, you know, multilateral ties developed. So these new contexts have reshaped the stage on which our two, you know, countries play and the incentive structures that guided their choices before. So actually viewed in the bilateral, strictly bilateral context now, you know, political, security, economic incentives for cooperation with Japan have relatively, I mean, decreased as China, you know, plays a big power and, you know, economic benefits, incentives for cooperation in Japan have declined as the Japanese economy is stagnant.

But, you know, there's an increasing need for bilateral cooperation in a minilateral and a multilateral context. You know, we have constantly discussed trilateralism, U.S.-Japan-South Korea security cooperation in the region, so Korea-Japan security cooperation, not in the bilateral context, but in the trilateral context we have to do this. So that's a very important question.

But here, the challenge, one, is that, you know, there is the lingering problem, bilateral problem, you know, drive from history between Korea and Japan, how you, you know, get over this issue, I mean, perennial issue or problem here. And on the other hand, trilateralism is good for, I mean, it's absolutely crucial for, you know, deterring North Korean, I mean, handling North Korean issue. But if that is redirected to China, sort of, you know, containing China, this is the realm that South Korea has to, you know, avoid.

So the question is, you know, how to promote trilateralism, kind of, you know, defining it in terms of the North Korean threat and if you want to extend this trilateralism into a more inclusive security, multilateral security system that includes, obviously, China. So that's a daunting task for, you know, promoting this trilateralism.

And the second is the trade issue that – I mean, we have a separate trade panel today, you know. Here we have a Trump risk. And, you know, the free trade – I can't say that there's a free trade regime in the Asia Pacific, but we have a liberal regime – a liberal regime has been established, but it's been severely disrupted by the new American government, who ordered America's exit from TPP and also, you know, indicating repeal of Korea – I mean, KORUS FTA. So the two countries really need to develop cooperation – cooperative action for the region in terms of, you know, sustaining the liberal trade regime here in the region. So we need to reactivate a CJK FTA or regionally oriented multilateral free trade negotiations, and also TPP minus of whatever you call it, so that, you know, we hope that the United States might be back to this liberal regime.

The final point is the history issue. We still have a challenge from history, which is resilient. As you all know, you know, bilateral relations have been really down to the bottom during the past four or five years. And we had a, you know, December, you know, comfort women agreement. It was concluded, but I should say that it has largely failed because, you know, now we have the public opinion survey. And in Japan and Korea, both countries, the public regard that agreement largely as a failure, even the Japanese people think it that way. And that issue, because of that, the issue now has been highlighted by the new government, the Moon government. So how to, you know, reactivate, you know, a dual-track approach is really, you know, predicated on this particular problem.

And actually, President Moon's dilemma is that he actually promised to seek a renegotiation of the agreement during the campaign, but it was just, you know, a campaign thing, just a pledge. And now he is much more careful that, you know, he shows a careful approach, not explicitly mentioning the renegotiation at the moment and promising to take action after. You know, currently, the comfort women task force was established by the ministry of foreign affairs and the results reportedly will be coming out toward the end of the year. And then the new government will have to make a decision after that, and it's going to be very interesting to see whether Moon will continue to keep this, you know, pragmatic approach of if he more caters to the populist, you know, demands for renegotiation or a harder approach toward Japan. So I will stop there.

MR. GREEN: Thank you, Professor Sohn.

Thank you all for very concise, very precise descriptions of the bilateral web of relations and the geopolitics. A number of issues came up, which I would call tactical or operational or the means rather than ends. Several speakers said THAAD is the most important thing; THAAD is not the most important thing, that dialogue is the most important thing; dialogue is not the most important thing.

I agree completely with your excellent analysis of the opportunity and need for trilateralism. It's not the most important thing. These are all mechanisms. What we really on this panel should focus on is our objectives and our vision for Northeast Asia as allies.

And if I can spend a few minutes stress testing this group of liberal and conservative Koreans and Americans, I want to see if there's a divergence between the U.S. and the ROK, or within our binational panels, on some of the big questions about what we want.

You know, I want to ask, what do our Korean friends want from the United States relationship with China, from the U.S.-China relationship? I want to ask the Americans, what do we want from Korea's relationship with China? These are the kind of unspoken sources of doubt about Northeast Asia and our alliance. And none of us are in the government now and probably don't have to worry, some of us, about that happening anytime soon, so I think we can try and put those out candidly.

So the first question. We have various descriptions of North Korea and the Korean Peninsula itself. Some panelists praised a formula, which I don't know if Secretary Tillerson would actually own it, but a formula where there's no regime change in our policy.

So the first thing I just want to test for the panel is, in your own view, in your lifetime, what do you want to see as the end state for the Korean Peninsula?

And I'm going to start with you, Laura, because you started writing first. (Laughter.)

Now, private view, you're not representing The German Marshall Fund or the Hillary Clinton campaign or, you know, Penn State or wherever you went to undergrad. But in your view, what is the end state on the Korean Peninsula you'd like to see?

MS. ROSENBERGER: The best part about leaving government and leaving politics formally is to get to be just me. So I will be just me.

MR. GREEN: Yeah. We like just you, so let's hear it. What's the end state?

MS. ROSENBERGER: To me, the end state is a North Korea that is reunified with the south, that is denuclearized and that is a player in line with the rules and norms that we believe are what will continue the peace, prosperity and security of the region. I don't believe – I know that that is extraordinarily aspirational and there are a lot of challenges to getting there. But in terms of the vision, that is what I believe is in all of our collective interest.

MR. GREEN: Does anybody want to add or subtract or disagree?

You didn't mention the U.S.-Korean alliance, I think. Should a –

MS. ROSENBERGER: So, yes, I would, that should have been implied. But yes, by continuing to be, you know, carrying for the rules, norms, values, to me that is absolutely tied up directly with the U.S.-Korea alliance.

Now, you know, at some point as the security situation in the region evolves, I think there are conversations that can be had about what the particulars of the security aspects of the alliance would look like. But I see no future for the region that continues to develop with the rules, norms and values that we so deeply believe in that exist without the U.S.-Korea alliance.

MR. GREEN: Do you agree, disagree, Dan?

MR. BLUMENTHAL: Yeah. So unification under the democratic rule of the ROK and an alliance with the United States as a piece, and I don't think it's too aspirational. I don't think we've ever even tried. I don't think one can even say that the U.S. is pushing values in Asia when Korea is one big slave-labor camp. So, you know, so I think we pay lip service to pushing values in Asia, but then we say, you know, Korea, let's not deal with the humanitarian issues, let's deter on course, but let's continue to have them have a big concentration camp as their country.

I'd add one thing to that, though, in terms of the grand strategy with China. For now, as China – and forget how we view China. China views us as its number-one geopolitical foe. In terms of what I've laid out before in terms of China being a continental maritime power, I would say longtime alliance with a unified Korea because our grand strategy should be to hold the line in the maritime areas while pushing China to do more on the Asian continent and be much more nervous about Russia than it is today.

MR. GREEN: So a unified Korean Peninsula under Seoul, democratic norms, allied in some way with the United States, integrated in an Asia that's underpinned by open rule of law. Is that a vision that any of the Korean – and it's your peninsula, not ours. I shouldn't have started with the Americans. But is that a vision that, Dr. Kim, Professor Kim, Professor, an end that you would disagree with as the ultimate end state we're aiming for?

MR. KIM J.H.: Of course. It's actually this is such a word, like a sacred word, that if you talk about the unification you have benefits. You know, former President Park Geun-hye, you know, talked about it.

MR. GREEN: Jackpot.

MR. KIM J.H.: Yeah, jackpot, yes. But, you know, I want to quote this, you know, West Germany's foreign minister – (inaudible). Once he said in an interview, said – he's called, like, Kissinger in West Germany – he said we never mentioned the word "unification" toward East Germany officially because it can be considered as, you know, some kind of conspiracy that, you know, because always West Germany has the upper hand.

Regarding Moon's policy, I think Moon – and he's similar to Kim Dae-jung rather than Roh Moo-hyun – peace first, and then unification comes as a process. So I think right now, Korea, you know, unification is farfetched and far away, but not war, too extreme, you know. In between is peace management versus balance of terror. So right now it's balance of the state like a security dilemma and having more weapons is kind of an arms race. But he's trying to have this peace management.

You know, always we forget because there's, you know, pride among Koreans, especially conservative. They try to have, like, a nuclear weapon and tactical weapons and things like that, the balance, the good part. But terror is the bad part. We don't want to live in a terror kind of state.

MR. GREEN: Right. That's what Dan – so Professor Kim Heung-kyu, you're a China expert, comment on what you've heard. But also, in your view, can Xi Jinping and the Chinese leadership live with a democratic, unified Korean Peninsula that's allied with the United States, that, you know, underpins the rule of law that we've been describing? Or do they get a vote? (Laughter.)

MR. KIM H.K.: Yeah, I support a peaceful and democratic and prosperous unified Korea without the nuclearization. But the relationship between the United States and China also has been changed. And then also, they must adjust to the new, you know, structural change as well.

So, as Michael Pillsbury mentioned, I think both country has kind of great, you know, capabilities in dealing with these kind of issues. Their level of strategic communication and cooperation is much higher than we, you know, ordinary people see. So I anticipate they are going to find a certain way. It's not a zero-sum game, it's not a kind of, like, atomic world. So we want to coexist with these two giants in the world. And these two giants must find a way for the rest of the world in a certain way to coexist and be prosperous.

And then, also, China is changing. China is also being much more plural and democratic, even though Xi Jinping amassed now power, but I think it cannot prolong forever. So we have to still see patiently and keep our eyes watching very carefully on every inch of China's move. But I am quite sure the United States and China can find a certain way out for the better.

MR. GREEN: You've now cited Mike Pillsbury's book twice as often as he cited my book, so I'm going to have to cut you off. (Laughter.) Thank you.

MR. BLUMENTHAL: Mike Green has an excellent book and this is why he's asking the strategic questions.

MR. GREEN: So let me follow up. So I'm trying to unbundle what you said.

MR. KIM H.K.: OK.

MR. GREEN: Are you optimistic that we can convince China to accept the future for the Korean Peninsula we all agree on? Are you optimistic that we can convince China to accept that?

MR. KIM H.K.: I believe in the capability of the United States to do so. But, you know, we are not sure how –

MR. GREEN: Counting on us?

MR. KIM H.K.: – in the short-term period and we have to still work on it.

MR. GREEN: Dan, what do you think? Do you think China accepts this future now? Do you think –

MR. BLUMENTHAL: Well, no, it doesn't.

MR. GREEN: And how do we get to that point? Is it through reassurance?

MR. BLUMENTHAL: Yes.

MR. GREEN: Is it through accommodating on things like that or is it by just saying this is the way it's going to be?

MR. BLUMENTHAL: Yeah. So the Chinese would have to be – and I think the policy right now that they agreed to and the administration, as I understand it, a few months ago is to tie North Korea around China's neck as a liability to the point where China feels so much pain of the relationship with North Korea. The problem is, of course, mixed messages and taking regime change off the table and not talking about end states. If you were there, you would obviously get them to focus on end states.

But the deal with China at the end of the day would have to be, look, you know where this is headed. You know, this is punishing you terribly, and we'd have to get much tougher on the kinds of sanctions and the kinds of money we go after in China, which is doable, and this militarization. I mean, Japan with strike capabilities, which is going to happen, Korea with strike capabilities, which is going to happen, and, you know, China saying, OK, enough is enough, the deal is the deal, you know, we'll help get rid of him, you know, give him a nice villa in Shenyang or whatever with Dennis Rodman as his companion, or whatever it takes, you know, but then comes the strategic tradeoff. Right?

Because if we do that, which I think we should do, it'll be more difficult to get an allied Korea. So we may get a unified, democratic Korea with no WMD, but it might be a much tougher negotiation because we would have to give China assurances about what we do in Korea militarily. So that would be a strategic tradeoff.

MR. GREEN: But it sounds like you do think it is possible for the U.S. and China to reach an agreement –

MR. BLUMENTHAL: It's possible, it's possible.

MR. GREEN: – on the future of the Korean Peninsula.

MR. BLUMENTHAL: China would have to feel so much pain of its relationship with North Korea, which we haven't even begun yet, including our own aversion to taking on Chinese state-owned enterprises that aren't directly in North Korea, but whose sister organizations also supported by the party are. The CCP would have to feel like this is the biggest risk and liability we face before they do a deal with us.

MR. GREEN: Do you think it's possible, Laura? Can we, the U.S. government and our allies, muster enough pressure to force that choice on a Chinese leadership that clearly would, above all, prefer not to make a choice, at this point at least?

MS. ROSENBERGER: So I'm a little bit more pessimistic than Dan on the ability to do that. I don't disagree with the direction and the tactics that Dan laid out. I think that that's certainly what we need to be pursuing. I've always been of the very strong view that this is not – that U.S. and Chinese

interests when it comes to North Korea are never going to align, and so it's not a problem that we can simply outsource to China. U.S. leadership, U.S. role is going to have to continue to be the case and be very active. So I'm not convinced that we can ever shift the Chinese far enough.

I actually think in the Chinese minds there's – we talk a lot about their concerns about stability of the peninsula and, you know, not wanting to have U.S. troops north of the parallel and, you know, all that. I think one of the things we forget about the Chinese is that they are a communist party, they are a communist state, they are a communist party leadership. And there is something that is actually regime threatening to the CCP about supporting regime change in the North. And I think that that's something that is existential and I don't know that that can ever be something that they can be reassured on.

I do think that much greater pain on the Chinese is necessary, in part because it will, at some point, have, I hope, a strategic effect in Pyongyang. Part of the reason we've never been able to turn the screws tight enough pressure-wise internally in Pyongyang is that we've never been willing to go after the kinds of companies that Dan was just saying.

I would just add one very final point, which is that – sorry, not that I have any views on this – I just think it's very important when we talk about these things, and I know Dan was not implying that we would do this without our South Korean colleagues at the table in this conversation, but the idea has been floated by some in the past of a U.S.-China direct dialogue to sort this out that would then later bring in Seoul. And I think it's really important that the idea of “nothing about us without us” is incorporated into any conversation around this. Seoul has to be a part of this conversation.

MR. GREEN: Let me hear from our three Korean colleagues, and then I'll wrap up and we'll get some questions. So Professor Kim, Professor Kim, Professor Sohn.

MR. KIM J.H.: I do agree with her a little bit more because I'm a little pessimistic. I'm not completely pessimistic because, you know, a repeated behavior becomes a pattern and a repeated pattern becomes structures.

As we all can see, this right now, these structures, you know, a rivalry between the U.S. and China, and we are actually witnessing it's so hard for the U.S. and China to cooperate to solve this problem.

I talked about, though, that today is a lot of test cases. This can be the test case, I think. At this moment, I don't think it's one man's decision, even Trump cannot decide this. Let's say these days, you know, strong leadership and nationalism, Abe and Putin, everybody, these are the best conditions for consolidating their power. It's not easy to give up. So in that case, it's not going to be easy, you know, for strong leaders. These days, domestic politics affects international politics more than the other or vice-versa. So it's not very easy to do that, so pessimistic about that.

MR. GREEN: Thanks.

Dr. Kim.

MR. KIM H.K.: OK. I think we need kind of tradeoffs, right, to achieve to Korean unification, especially between the United States and China. And my question is, what kind of tradeoff the United

States is willing to provide to China and what kind of, you know, tradeoffs they can exchange. That's the concern of Koreans.

MR. GREEN: You're concerned the U.S. will give away too much?

MR. KIM H.K.: Yeah, of course. And then, you know, great-power politics always and then middle powers or super powers, so worried about that kind of negotiation and the end of the deal, what it's going to be.

MR. GREEN: So just to push on that, would it be better if Dan Blumenthal's idea was put in a box and the U.S. and China don't have a dialogue on resolving the North Korea –

MR. KIM H.K.: Of course, they have to, but the problem is how to communicate between the United States and South Korea well.

MR. GREEN: To Laura's point.

MR. KIM H.K.: Yeah, right. That's very important. So always, whenever we have a, you know, strategic dialogue between South Korea and China, also we have to have communication with the United States well and then that reduces a kind of distrust and the level of kind of uncertainties between us. That's very critical.

MR. GREEN: Who on the panel thinks we are communicating strategically well right now?

MR. BLUMENTHAL: With?

MR. GREEN: U.S.-Korea.

MR. BLUMENTHAL: I mean, it's a mixed bag, I think. I mean, in some ways, on the military side, Pacific Command and DOD –

MR. GREEN: USFK, yeah.

MR. BLUMENTHAL: – and even the conversations between – I mean, you've lived through the conversations between Bush and Roh Moo-hyun. And in some ways these are better than those, I mean, between Moon and Trump. I mean, there are difficult times when you have two governments that are not in the same philosophical vat, but it's a mixed bag.

And certainly on the strategic questions about end states, I don't know that we even raised the –

MR. GREEN: That's the –

MR. KIM J.H.: A higher level, yes, but the lower level I don't think is there.

MR. GREEN: Is not there yet. Good. Well, we're showing them the way with this panel.

Professor Sohn, you get the last word at this point.

MR. SOHN: Well, I am not an expert actually on that issue. I might would say that, you know, here's the security track, but also in terms of economic security nexus in the region, I think it is useful for, you know, stakeholders in the region to be able to, you know, establish an economic, you know, cooperation network, for example, you know, be that TPP or RCEP. It is important that, you know, China, Korea, Japan and others, you know, the middle powers, will be able to sort of, you know, revitalize the trade networks there. And then that will, you know, create some new positive impacts, I mean smoothing impacts over security discussions. And in the end, the United States will also be able to come in.

So in terms of regional architecture, we have to look at not just, you know, strictly security issues, but also non-security issues and expect to have more harmonious regional networks.

MR. GREEN: The reason I'm pushing on this with the panel is because I think that the Chinese decision-making on North Korea is not set. And I personally think that one of the most important variables in the debate within Zhongnanhai and within Beijing will be how they view the long-term strength of the U.S.-Korea alliance. And if the U.S. and ROK appear to be diverging over that long-term view, we're going to enable Chinese decision-makers to avoid decisions or we're going to empower those within Beijing who think time is on their side. And in the long run, China will have enough economic influence over North and South Korea to control the ultimate disposition of the peninsula in ways that favor Chinese power in Asia at the expense of the United States.

And so we can have disagreements, but I think it's important, it's vital for the U.S. and Korea to have this dialogue as we have and to make it clear that while we may have some tactical disagreements, there's no difference on the end state we've all agreed on, on the peninsula.

And the problem with making THAAD or dialogue or specific things too much of the debate or, put it another way, the problem with trying to find the perfect solution to satisfy China and the U.S. in these specific issues is the signal to Beijing can be the U.S.-Korea alliance is in play, it's in flux, the Korea position is in play.

I personally don't believe that, but I'm quite confident, as I think others who have engaged in dialogue with China and, by the way, with Japan, I think you'll agree that very often people viewing the peninsula, not only in Beijing, but often in Tokyo, think that the U.S.-Korea alliance is much more wobbly in the long run and that there's much less solidarity in our vision than is actually the case, as this panel clearly demonstrated. So it's important that we have these dialogues.

Let me turn to the audience, we'll come back to the panel, but take some questions from you.

I think we have microphones, Lisa and Matthew and company.

So raise your hand and I'll call on you. And no speeches, please.

Right up here in the front. You're going to have to – sorry, microphone is coming.

Q: Hi. Tim Shorrock. I write for The Nation and the Korea Center for Investigative Journalism.

I've got a question mostly for the Korean panelists. I spent quite a few months in South Korea recently and over the last few years and I have never heard Koreans talk about forced unification under

South Korea. I hear Koreans talk about wanting to visit their families, wanting to have unification in some way, not forced unification under U.S. pressure with U.S. troops throughout Korea. That's not what most Koreans I encounter say or even think. How do you Koreans view that? I mean, this doesn't seem to be a very reliable policy.

MR. GREEN: Well, I'm glad you don't hear that because you didn't hear it on this panel. I didn't hear anyone say we should force unification with American troops everywhere on the peninsula. But it's a good question. We're talking about the end state here.

Q: I heard it. I heard it, I'm sorry.

MR. GREEN: I didn't say it. I don't know who did. But we're talking about the end state here. We're not talking about – I'm trying to separate the end state from the tactics and the immediate policies for a moment.

But, you know, let's ask if any of the Korean panelists want to answer how the Korean public – of course, we know from –

(Cross talk.)

MR. GREEN: You're all too modest to speak for the Korean public. Of course, public opinion polls show there's no consensus on this at all, but let's hear some views.

Professor Kim?

MR. KIM H.K.: I don't think the United States is willing to take this kind of option as well, so this is not an option. And if, you know, you are very close to the North Korean, you know, artillery within 48 kilometers and living, millions of people, over there and also the Korean economy within the distance of the artillery, you don't want it.

And also, we cannot, in the 21st century – we can find better alternatives. And also, the United States and South Korea can find another way out. And this is still what I believe, so I don't think it is, at this moment, the options.

MR. GREEN: Other questions? Let's get over on this side of the room.

Q: Steve Lande, Manchester Trade.

Two quick questions, but much more based on today's news. Everyone talks about – President Trump and the Koreans talk about fire and damage and the picture is that President Trump talks about bringing fire and damage to North Korea and everybody speaks about the ability of North Korea to rain rockets down on Seoul and have a tremendous casualty rate at the end of the first day.

And the second issue that is not talked about, but is thought about, and that's the idea that maybe China, perhaps with the – that China and the U.S. quietly will go into North Korea and try to destroy the North Koreans' nuclear facilities before they really are able to develop a bomb.

Key question, how is that felt? Is there a possibility of this fire and damage on either side? And two, is there any possibility of a very quiet China and U.S. agreement to perhaps knock out the nuclear facility before it really does create something that can be delivered to any place? Thank you.

MR. GREEN: So odds of I guess you mean a preemptive strike, like, fire and fury?

Q: Yeah, I mean, whether that's a concern and what's the policy about it if it is a concern?

MR. GREEN: Is there a real possibility of, I think you're asking, of a preemptive military strike –

Q: You got it.

MR. GREEN: – of U.S.? And is there a real possibility of China taking care of this problem for us?

Q: And the U.S., working together.

MR. GREEN: Yeah.

MR. BLUMENTHAL: If I could, it's an interesting point you raise. So this is not a static issue by any stretch. So unification or change is, one way or another, going to happen, I think either because of intense pressure by a global embargo that cracks the Kim regime, you know, if we do all these things that everyone now is suggesting.

And China is going to go in and take care of its interests. I mean, that's – I think none of us have any doubt about that. And China, part of the reason that China has invested so heavily in North Korea, particularly in some of the natural resource areas, is because they're slowly, in my view, carving out a sphere of influence for themselves on the peninsula, you know, whether we here on this panel decide that unification is the right strategic end state or not.

So one of the more – the reason Korea, I think, is always the geopolitical cockpit of history and the reason that great powers fight wars there is because, you know, China will do what it believes is in its national interests, whether we get our act together or not. If Kim starts to crack, if they can't stand him anymore, they may do things unilaterally and we have to be very prepared. We have to be prepared for unification and regime collapse no matter what, I guess, would be my answer to that.

On preemptive strikes, you know, yeah, I hate to say. You know, it's very unlikely, it's extremely unlikely.

MR. GREEN: Yeah.

MR. KIM H.K.: Of course, we have to prepare for any, you know, contingency situations, especially the worst scenarios. And we will fight back if North Korea threatens us with nuclear weapons.

But before that, we have to think about all the other, you know, better options. Also, I question the American side and whether you are really willing to, you know, have preemptive or preventive strikes. And are you capable of it? And are you recognizing where the North Korean nuclear bombs

are located? Otherwise, it is kind of, you know, insane to have that kind of, you know, option. So that's my question.

And then China also these days is increasing their kind of preparation, military preparation to control or manage the North Koreans' WMD, which is closely located to the, you know, Chinese border. And I'm quite sure they are doing exercises.

But the key question is whether the United States and China has kind of compromised agreements to who is going to be, you know, in and then, you know, or when they are going to take that kind of action and still without the kind of consensus or agreements. And then, who is going to be taking that kind of, you know, initiative? This is my question.

MR. GREEN: Well, let's answer his question briefly. But basically I would agree with Dan on preemption. I think it's very unlikely.

Your question was, is the U.S. capable of preemptive strike? And the answer is absolutely yes. Your next question was, do we know where everything is? And the answer is absolutely not. And so a preemptive strike would be, well, less than effective in terms of eliminating the programs and the threat and, of course, entail enormous risk in terms of the danger of a wider war.

That said, I personally believe that if Hillary Clinton were president right now or Jeb Bush or Marco Rubio, they would also be sending a very, very tough deterrence message and they would also be deploying, you know, strategic assets in U.S.-Korea exercises, and they would also be looking at preemption options. Because this has reached a stage where it's the only prudent thing to do and we, the U.S. and the ROK, need to demonstrate clearly that even though Kim Jong-un may have some new capabilities, it has not changed our fundamental commitment to defending the Republic of Korea and our interests and that we are fully prepared, as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, to go to war, as we always have been. This doesn't change that at all.

So a lot of the saber-rattling that you see, although it has a little bit of a world wrestling foundation feel when it comes out on Twitter, is actually, I think, probably the kind of prudent deterrence messaging that any administration would have done at this point – Laura is shaking her head – stylistically maybe.

Well, go ahead, go ahead.

MS. ROSENBERGER: Well, I was about to say I can – so I can confirm in fact –

MR. GREEN: Set yes on the Twitter.

MS. ROSENBERGER: No, no, no, no, no, no, you can't set aside the Twitter because –

MR. GREEN: You're right.

MS. ROSENBERGER: – he's the commander in chief and his words carry the strongest possible weight.

As you were saying, they are heard more loudly in Seoul than they are even here. You cannot put his words aside.

I can confirm that all of those options that you laid out would have in fact been part or at least were in the planning and transition documents for a Hillary Clinton administration. And so in terms of where we are strategically, I think that that's absolutely the case.

My biggest concern, and this relates to the Twitter phenomena, I do think we would be sending very clear deterrent messaging, but deterrent messaging in order to be effective has to be credible and it has to be consistent and it has to be clear. And what has worried me about what we have seen is that it has been mixed, it has not been clear. Nobody really knew what "fire and fury" meant. Nobody really knew what "locked and loaded" meant. Nobody really knows what many of these things mean. I'm not even sure the president himself knows what he means by them. I think that's incredibly dangerous.

What I worry about is not actually, you know, either North Korea taking preemptive action or, I mean, look, the United States should absolutely be exploring these options, but they are very bad options. What I worry about most is miscalculation. There's two miscalculation scenarios that worry me the most. One is in fact that because of a lack of clarity in deterrent language that something is said that is misinterpreted potentially in Pyongyang. And so something is said that leads Kim Jong-un to believe that a U.S. strike is imminent, whether it's decapitation or some other kind of strike is imminent, and so Kim Jong-un acts out of what he believes to be preemption. That, I think, is a very dangerous scenario.

Scenario number two is in fact – you know, one of the reasons that it's been always considered to be so dangerous of North Korea obtaining this capability is in fact not that it would necessarily use it, but that it's much more – it increases the risk of North Korea taking conventional action against the south. And so whether that's something like the Cheonan or the Yeonpyeong shelling or some other kind of activity, I think that we have seen the risk of that go up incredibly as this capability has developed.

And so in a time when messaging is unclear and there is a high risk of miscalculation, this is why I think alliance coordination is of utmost, you know, importance right now. What we can't have is for some scenario like that, of conventional action against the south to take place where the U.S. and Korea don't have a clear expectation of exactly what the response is going to be and who is going to be backing up, working on that.

MR. GREEN: Dan?

MR. BLUMENTHAL: Yeah. On the credibility question, where I thought where we might be going, is we have decimated our military for the last eight years to a point where it's going to take a long time to build it back up. So for those who argue for a containment deterrent strategy, we are well-behind the curve on missile defense, decimated in the last eight years, well-behind the curve on everything from tactical aircraft to long-range strategic bombers, well-behind the curve on enough Marine and Army units in place to do the WMD stability operations. And actually, that is one of the legacies, I think, that hurts us the most over the last eight years. And I don't see any improvement along the way.

And so the South Koreans are asking for all kinds of assets to be emplaced right now, not to mention that we thought over the last eight years or nine years that we were going to, and we did, we cut our nuclear arsenal, that nuclear weapons would become less important.

The South Koreans are asking for a lot of strategic assets to be put in place. You could probably get them there, you know, but at a huge risk to other parts of the world. And I think that's not discussed enough. I think the Congress and the president have a chance to fix this now, but it's not been fixed.

MR. KIM J.H.: Do you want me to –

MR. GREEN: Yeah, Professor Kim.

MR. KIM J.H.: Yes. You know, Americans are surprised. You know, the Korean people are so calm, even in the crisis, but there are reasons. Because, you know, if it's war, it's the end of the day, whether it's a nuclear bomb or other conventional war, so that's why, you know, this crisis is not different from all. We've been in the same situation for the last half a century, so maybe we are immune.

But these days, we are really worried, starting to worry because of the Trump factor, not the Kim Jong-un factor, in a way. So really, you know, President Moon lamented a few days ago. He said, you know, President Trump can say whatever he wants, from preemptive strike to peaceful dialogue. If I say something different and I consider – even if I declare peace and no war without our permission, things like that. So I'm asking that, to him, to Trump, unpredictability of the policy may be his strength, but at least for the alliance it's not good. At least he is concerned, at least it's predictable to Korean policymakers.

MR. GREEN: So, yeah, please, Professor Sohn.

MR. SOHN: I think here, the North Korean issue, now we are entering a new phase in which the United States takes this as a national security issue because of the missiles and everything, so there's a discussion over, you know, surgical strikes and others. But, you know, to many Koreans, the North Korean issue or the problem is not only the national security problem, I mean the security problems, but also it's about, you know, the economic problem of North Korea and human rights problems and many other things together. So we have to solve not just North Korean nuclear missile problem, but also the North Korean problems per se, then the surgical strike or, you know, this kind of, you know, military action may be a part, is a part of the solution, but not the ultimate solution.

So, you know, that kind of, you know, discussion or discourse of surgical strikes and these things kind of, you know, giving you a sort of, you know, cleavage of interests between South Korean people and American strategists.

MR. GREEN: So Laura is worried that the – so I think we are in agreement that the sort of more robust deterrence posture was inevitable, given North Korea's action, short of anyone other than maybe Bernie Sanders being elected, and maybe even then.

I won't put you on the spot on that one.

But the tweets and the declaratory policy are a problem.

And you're worried a little bit that Kim Jong-un may believe it. I'm actually worried that he won't. I worry about the sort of inconsistency and cavalier manner of the president's declaratory

policy actually weakening what is an enormous instrument of national power, which is the voice of the American presidency.

I also worry, I think we all do, about the position this puts President Moon Jae-in in. There are, I remember well, as would Dan, from the Bush-Roh Moo-hyun years, there were some pretty big disagreements between the two presidents. But at least for President Bush's part, he never voiced them in public, never.

And I think President Trump's going to have to and his team is going to have to – and maybe this most recent phone call is the beginning of that – exhibit a lot more discipline in terms of how we talk about our ally. Because as we were talking about at the beginning of this panel, to the extent the other big players, China, you mentioned Russia, in this, and Japan, to the extent the other big players that are on the peninsula, not to mention Kim Jong-un, think the U.S.-Korea alliance is kind of in flux or that we're not united, we really, really weaken our hand and, of course, Korea's as well. So the declaratory policy does matter.

MR. BLUMENTHAL: I would take issue. I don't think the declaratory policy has been a – I think that there's inconsistencies in timing with KORUS and all the rest of it. But as I said before – first of all, I would say two things, and it's a problem with a strategy of a long-term deterrence of Kim. We have no idea what deters Kim Jong-un, no idea. And that's very scary.

You know, when people bring out the Cold War, that it's very revisionist, we knew Stalin, Kennan lived in Moscow for 20 years. They were a Cold War ally, we had some sense. And even then, there were near misses. So to sit here and say that the right declared – and I'm not – I don't mean to make light of what people are saying. But to say that just the right declaratory policy will deter Kim, I don't agree with that.

MR. GREEN: I'm not saying that all. I'm saying the role of declaratory policy will weaken our deterrent posture.

MR. BLUMENTHAL: I understand that. What we need to do and what we have done effectively is scare China. And I've never seen China this scared on this issue before in my life. And what we need to do to get to the strategic end state, in my view, that we all agreed here on, unification, is to have China very, very scared and its heels about what we're going to do and what we're capable of doing.

MR. GREEN: So this raises a really important question, back to our original geopolitical discussion. You used the word "scares" China. I would substitute "incentivizes" China, motivates China, you know, shakes China out of its complacency, out of calling for dialogue and restraint on all sides. What does that? Fear of a U.S. attack does that. I think that's sort of where you're going.

Another thing that does that is a recognition that contrary to some strategic expectations in Beijing, U.S. alliances are getting stronger, not weaker. There's a tension between those two, because if the belligerent, rhetorical line is not credible or if it creates tensions with Seoul, then we may win in the short term in the being scary about preemptive strike, but lose in the longer term in terms of the solidarity of our alliances. That's a very subtle balancing act, which comes back to the theme we keep hitting on, which is why these two presidents have got to get in lockstep and our two governments have got to be on one page on this going forward.

We could do this further. This is really interesting. I appreciate all the views. We've had some big disagreements, but also some really, really strong agreements on the future we have for the Korean Peninsula. And I feel like too often when we do these panels in Washington or Seoul we don't get to that fundamental vision that we share. And I'm glad we were able to do it and then tease out where there are tactical differences or differences of interpretation. So it's been a really good panel, I appreciate it.

We get a 15-minute break, I think. Is that right? I don't want to give away a break if we don't have one.

LISA COLLINS: Yes, correct. Yes. We have a 15-minute coffee break. Everybody reconvene here at 2:45. Thank you.

MR. GREEN: Thank you all.

MS. COLLINS: Thank you for our panelists. Please give them a round of applause.
(Applause.)

(END)