Session I: Assessment of Inter-Korean Summit

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KANG INSUN: Good morning, and welcome to the session for “Assessment of Inter-Korean Summit.”

Well, thanks to great speech of Ambassador Cho Yoon-je, I don’t think I need to repeat about the inter-Korean summit. You have concrete facts and details.

So let me introduce – briefly introduce our distinguished panelists today. Dr. Bridget Coggins, adjunct fellow, CSIS Korea Chair. Also she’s professor of political science, University of California, Santa Barbara.

The next is Ambassador Robert King, senior adviser, CSIS Korea Chair, former special envoy for North Korean human right issues at State Department.

And Ambassador Joseph Yun – it’s very long, so I have to be very careful when I’m reading. (Laughs.) He is former special representative for North Korea policy and deputy assistant secretary for Korea and Japan at State Department.

And Dr. Katrin Katz, adjunct fellow at CSIS Korea Chair, former director for Japan, Korea and Oceanic Affairs, National Security Council.

Thank you for being with us today.

Well, it’s been 10 days since inter-Korean summit, and lots of things are going on. And there will be more to come, obviously. And when North Korean leader Kim Jong-un offered olive branch earlier this year, I was not very sure if it’s breakthrough or a trap.

And after the summit, I have a different kind of questions now. Are we at the entrance of entering the role leading to the whole new world where we accomplish the CVID, the complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization? Or are we watching the same movie that we know the end? So I’m somewhere in between. So I think this discussion is very timely and good to understand what was embedded in that summit and that Panmunjom declaration.

Now, as we told, we will – I mean, today’s discussion is a little bit different from the conventional one. So all you have clickers. So when I ask questions, you can answer with clickers. But there are a few types of answers; if they are yes-and-no type of things or multiple choices. So when you click the answers, we can see the result at the moment. So it’s kind of a small but instant poll. Based on that poll, we will discuss the contents of the summit.

So I think basically, by answering with the clickers, I mean, it’s like you are giving us your intuition over current situation in Korean Peninsula. And then our panelists will share their insights with audience what they think about that. So, I mean, the – it’s a great mix of intuition and insights.

So let’s start with the first question. Are you ready with the clicker? The power is on? Yeah. So do you believe that each leader accomplished his objective at Panmunjom peace summit?

MR. : Can I press more than once?

MS. KANG: I’m not sure. (Laughter.)
OK, so is it’s still moving. But 72 percent said both achieved objectives, and 20 percent said North Korean leader achieved his objectives; and 3 percent, South Korean leader achieved these objectives. Neither achieved objectives – (inaudible).

So how about Ambassador King. Do you agree with that result? What is your opinion?

ROBERT KING: It seems to me like the real question is what their objectives were.

MS. KANG: OK.

MR. KING: If they had objectives, they’re going – this is a major step forward, it’s going to lead to a new era in terms of North-South relations, that certainly was not achieved. If the objective was a much more modest objective, i.e. we need to begin a process that will move us in a positive direction, then probably, yeah, they both achieved the objective, if that was their objective.

MS. KANG: OK, Dr. Coggins, what do you think of their objectives – I mean, their – each objectives? Yeah.

BRIDGET COGGINS: I think that Ambassador King is correct in that there were more limited objectives for this initial summit. I think that it was a first step, it was an important step, but it was not revolutionary in what was taken.

MS. KANG: OK.

MS. COGGINS: And so I think that the way to see that that objective was met was that you did see the Panmunjom Declaration appear in North Korean newspapers, besides broadcast obviously in Seoul. And so I think that were they not satisfied with the outcome, you would have seen very different takes from the two sides, and instead we saw something that looked like unity of purpose.

MS. KANG: How about Dr. Katz? What do you think is the most important thing President Moon Jae-in get and Kim Jong-un get out of this summit?

KATRIN KATZ: So I’d agree with what other panelists have said. I think it’s really important to think about what the objectives were. I think a unique thing about this particular summit is that you really can assess it in a short-term sense. It’s almost an intermediate step to other summits, which is unique about this particular inter-Korean summit. As we know, there have been others. But I think if we were looking at others, we would be assessing it more in that long-term sense. So in the sense of assessing this kind of near-term objective, I would agree with what most of the audience has seemed to suggest, in that both it did achieve important short-term objectives. My guess would be that President Moon had some very clear objectives, one of which was to reduce tensions on the peninsula, generally.

MS. KANG: OK.

MS. KATZ: Also to kind of serve as a mediator between the two leaders who will be meeting in the next few weeks, and also to kind of establish kind of rapport with this other largely unknown leader to the north. And so I think he achieved those objectives. I think the North Korean side probably had its own objectives, but achieved those as well in terms of the charm offensive and humanizing the leader. So, again, in terms of short-term objectives, I think absolutely they achieved
those. But we’ll see. It will be a long-term—you know, a longer-term process to assess really what the outcomes are here.

MS. KANG: Ambassador Yun, do you agree with the result of the poll? And whom do you think get more? Who achieved more between Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in?

JOSEPH YUN: I completely agree with Dr. Katz, who was—and I agree with all those who chose C, as did I.

MS. KANG: C, uh-huh.

MR. YUN: I think if you—when we look at the summit, it had a different feel than the two previous summits in 2000 and 2007. I was in Seoul for both of them. And you look at the summit, for politician, is what the reaction is outside. And in this instance, you saw 40 minutes’ coverage by KCNA in North Korea. I mean, that’s unprecedented, to have, to highlight the leader, the first family, the wife, and to talk about in those terms. And so I think as far as the North Korean leader goes, it completely conveyed to the nation that he is changing direction. And I think it was equally successful in conveying that to the international community, and so he clearly did something that was different.

And I think for the South Korean president this was an amazing opportunity to show that he is respected by the North Korean leader. And again, you’ve never seen that to that extent before, where you saw the young leader kind of treat South Korean president like elder, you know, he’s almost like his uncle, you know—(laughter)—and talking to him in that respectful tone. And, you know, to me the most amazing thing was Kim Jong-un’s admission that the road conditions were so poor in North Korea that the South Korean leader, when he comes to North Korea, better drive up there, you know? I made a—better fly up there. I mean, such admission you’re never going to see, or I’ve never seen before.

And so in that sense the public reaction in South Korea was euphoria. So if you judge by these reactions, then this is—you know, I would call it a game changer. Obviously, this is a bit of a prelude to the next summit that’s going to be between Kim Jong-un and President Trump, and I have to believe that you saw a lot of one-on-one meetings between the two on that bridge and afterwards. And there the picture was, you know, of course the kind of older, more mature, more knowledge leader telling the younger leader what’s going to happen. And you better—you have to believe it was all about Trump, you know, kind of telling, you know, this is what he’s going to say, this is how you better respond, you know? And so in that sense, it was completely, to me, almost natural.

MS. KANG: I see.

MR. YUN: And he came across, you know, quite good. So I would give it—for both of them, it was a huge success.

MS. KANG: Dr. Coggins, what’s the most impressive moments when you watched the broadcast live of the summit?

MS. COGGINS: Oh, I mean, well, obviously, the step over the border.

MS. KANG: The line, cross the line.
MS. COGGINS: Yeah. And it seemed spontaneous and it seemed natural, and so that was very positive. I also really enjoyed watching the two leaders without the sound and reading their body language and seeing how they were interacting with one another and probably sizing one another up – for the first time in person.

MS. KANG: I see.

Ambassador King, you know, when we look at all those summit scene, Kim Jong-un looked like a very funny leader, you know, who looked very friendly, and then that just made us to forget about what he had done, like killing his uncle and then – I mean, assassinated his half-brother in the international airport. So how do you think we digest all those, you know, contradictory things?

MR. KING: Well, the one advantage this summit had is that there was a greater sense of intimacy. You see him up close. When you see him the way the – in the pictures, the images are usually shown of him speaking to a large crowd or standing on a platform waving at troops, this kind of thing. This is a much more intimate picture of Kim Jong-un. He’s close. It’s just the two of them. They’re holding hands. They’re stepping back and forth across the border. So it’s a very different image than the kind of image that we’ve seen of Kim Jong-un in the past. I think from his point of view it’s a very positive image, because he’s trying to give – convey this idea that he’s a person you can deal with. So I think from that point of view, the way the imagery came across, it was very positive for him.

MS. KANG: I see.

Let’s move on to the next question. Is this North Korean leader different from the – is that right? Yeah. Is this North Korean leader different from the past two? Which means, is Kim Jong-un different from his father, Kim Jong-il, and his grandfather, Kim Il-sung? Do you think so, yes or no?

MR. YUN: There’s no maybe, huh? (Laughter.)

MS. KANG: Well, I will give you a chance to talk about maybe. (Laughter.)

Well, 77 percent said Kim Jong-un is different from Kim Jong-il and Kim Il-sung. Dr. Katz, what do you think about that? Do you agree with that?

MS. KATZ: I would echo Ambassador Yun’s question of a third option. (Laughter.) You know, since we are in the position where we can answer not in a binary way, I’d say we’ll see.

The interesting thing about this answer is, I think if we put ourselves before the inter-Korean summit, that that answer might look quite different. And so the impression of the North Korean leader changed through seeing him as a human being, but there’s danger in that and there’s hope in that. The moments of spontaneity are what I think is generating the hope out of this summit, these moments of chance that there might be, through the process itself, a new outcome. But there is also danger in that, because as we get back to, like, you know – again, the theme of today is probably this optimism/caution, and that’s a healthy balance and that, in some ways, the publics in the U.S. and South Korea and within our own publics are balancing each other out in these very healthy ways.
But of course, time will tell. If he’s very different, it will mean a strategic change in terms of actually giving up his nuclear program, not using negotiations in the way that his father had used negotiations. And so we’ll only know with time.

MS. KANG: I see, I see.

Mr. Ambassador Yun, I mean, please elaborate your “maybe.”

MR. YUN: You know, so there is a leader who is, what, mid-30s, I’m sure he wants to live and rule in comfort for a long time. And I think he does realize that the only option for him to do that is to change the course. And to me, he reminds me a little bit of his grandfather, Kim Il-sung. And I am personally convinced, in 1994, Kim Il-sung would have changed the course fairly dramatically. He had reached a deal, a good deal in an agreed framework. He was about to have a first-ever summit with Kim Young Sam, and then he died. And so I think he realized that as, after the Cold War, as the, you know, Soviet Union stopped and as there was nothing flowing from the Russian side in terms of goods, that this could not continue.

But it did continue because he died and his son took over. And I don’t think his son was ever as confident as his father was. And so in that sense, I think I do believe Kim Jong-un being young has three or four more decades to look forward to. And I think all this talk about wanting to be a “normal” country, I don’t think we should dismiss that out of hand. I think there is something to him wanting to be a normal country, ruling or being in charge of a normal country.

MS. KANG: I see. Well, this is a hypothetical question that usually the government officers do not answer, but you are not any more, so you can say that. (Laughter.) If Kim Jong-un had – Kim Il-sung had had a chance to talk with the U.S. leaders at the time or South Korean leader, do you think that things have changed wholly?

MR. YUN: Yeah. I mean, I do think that Kim Il-sung was powerful enough. He had so much, you know, respect not just from North Korea, but from South Korea as well, that I think he would have changed course a lot more dramatically had he not died in ’94. I think the summit between Kim Il-sung and Kim Young Sam – of course, Kim Young Sam comes from a fairly conservative camp – would have been a much more successful one than the ones that followed.

MS. KANG: I see.

Ambassador King, how different do you think those two, those three are, Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, Kim Jong-un?

MR. KING: You know, the thing that probably is the most important determinant of a person’s behavior is their experience. And Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il had very different kinds of experience. The current leader was a child of privilege. He grew up and everything was given to him, everybody respected him. He had no qualms a year or two after taking power of executing his uncle. These are not the kind of – this does not reflect the kind of behavior of a person who wants to get along with other people. This suggests a person who is used to get his own way and if he doesn’t get his own way he throws a tantrum.

Now, it may be that he’s reached the point where he can say I can’t throw a tantrum, maybe he’s learned that he can’t get everything with a tantrum and he’s got to use more positive means to try
to effect the change that he wants, i.e., economic development and lifting of sanctions in order to be able to move forward.

He is a different person than his father and his grandfather. But to say that that’s positive, I’m not sure that we’re there yet.

MS. KANG: I see.

Dr. Coggins, do you agree with Robert?

MS. COGGINS: I’m not sure.

MS. KANG: Really.

MS. COGGINS: So I think that there are – I think that there are things about Kim Jong-un that seem very much like especially Kim Il-sung. I mean, they – he is quite literally modeled after Kim Il-sung, right? This is why he dresses the way he does, this is why he apparently started gaining weight was to – was to look more like his grandfather. And so that points us in the direction of thinking that maybe Ambassador Yun is correct in that he is going to be more open to change potentially.

On the other hand, he was selected by his father instead of his two brothers. And that might – that might lead us to think that he was more hardline and less flexible, and so perhaps more like Kim Jong-il than we suspect. The truth is, I think that we just don’t know.

We have this – I’m an academic and we have this hypothesis called the contact hypothesis, which is that when you’re in entrenched conflictual relationships, you often don’t – if you don’t have contact, it self-perpetuates. But when you start to engage and contact, it’s easier to talk about real issues and substance.

And I think that, regardless of what his personality is, the contact is going to lead us to better understand what the – what the issues are in front of us and to kind of come to terms again with these real – these real issues that need deciding, regardless of personality.

MS. KANG: Then do you think that kind of differences make Kim Jong-un have more of a chance to talk with the United States or South Korea better than their predecessors did?

MS. COGGINS: Well, sure. I mean, for five years, we haven’t really heard anything from Kim Jong-un outside of the formal press, so this is – this is a new opportunity in that respect for sure.

MS. KANG: I see. Let’s move on to the next one. Which is likely in the next two years: North-South peace regime, less to see provocation, or multiple summits?

It’s a little –

(Pause.)

Well – (inaudible) – going up. OK. Seventy-five percent said North-South peace arrangement will happen in the next two years. Ambassador King, you are very skeptical about that.
MR. KING: You mean the multiple summits?

MS. KANG: I mean – multiple summits, yes, yes. Yeah.

MR. KING: It seems to me that that’s the safest guess. (Laughter.) Whatever happens, there’s likely to be more than the one meeting that’s taken place between North and South. There’s obviously a summit coming up with Trump. The other questions go further in terms of whether these summits actually produce anything. And I think that’s the real question. I think the – I’m – I don’t see this as the second coming. But there is a possibility that things could work out. A North-South peace regime – it depends on what you mean by a peace regime. I think there is a West Sea provocation. The North Koreans have been willing to stage provocations when they’re needed. War – that becomes the most difficult one. I’d say that of all the options, A, B, and C are likely – or, I mean, A, B, and D are likely. C I hope is not. But it’s too early to start prognosticating about what’s going to happen, other than additional meetings.

MS. KANG: Dr. Katz, how do you explain that result? What’s your analysis of that poll?

MS. KATZ: A couple things. First, in terms of predictions, I think we’re in a unique moment with, you know, a time of unpredictability, with two leaders about to meet and value unpredictability as an asset and, indeed, as a source of leverage. So I would say that the best way to deal with questions like this right now is, in some ways, to predict the more unpredictable outcomes, seems to be a stretch. (Laughter.) Though, in this case, I would hope not, because war is, you know, clearly the least – in terms of what we hope for, I think that would be the lowest.

Just in terms of responding to these results, also in terms of thinking about what this summit did, a hypothetical, thinking about how that might have looked different had Moon and Kim not met, and how the outcome they did. You know, over the last couple of weeks, indeed over the last year, we were in a moment where we were hearing talk of war more so than any other time in dealing with this issue. So this is hopeful. This is hopeful to me. (Laughs.) I think there’s a lot of hope that goes into predictions right now. And that’s OK, because the process will define the outcomes in many ways right now. But I think it’s a fairly safe bet to say multiple summits will come out of this.

MS. KANG: I think multiple summits are too easy answers, right?

MS. KATZ: (Laughs.) It’s a safe bet.

MS. KANG: It just – yeah, it doesn’t have any direction. So it seems to me that, like, just, you know, keeping multiple summits again and again, and then people feel that, you know, the leaders are doing something, so – but we don’t know what they’re doing. So, how about Dr. Coggins, could you – I don’t know – listen to more about North-South peace arrangement possibility in two – next two years? Do you believe so?

MS. COGGINS: Yeah. Well, so, I like the everything but C answer. (Laughter.) I think that – I think that it’s very likely that there will be multiple summits. I think that it’s likely that maybe not a West Sea provocation, but there will be some sort of provocation that occurs. And I think that the Moon administration is very serious about a peace regime. And I think that they do have a very short time table for that. I think that perhaps in the United States we don’t realize just how much of a road map has already been laid out, and how high expectations are. So maybe not within – not within this year, but I think that they’re anticipating that within the next couple years that there is a peace regime.
MS. KANG: I see. And what do you think about peace regime, Ambassador Yun?

MR. YUN: Peace regime. I think there are two elements to it. One is a peace declaration. Declarations are easy. Just say: I declare. You know? I think to actually get it to a peace treaty will be very complicated. It will take much longer than two years. You know, when – before the summit meeting or as a summit meeting goes on – so, if you’re working on it, you normally write a talking point on what to say afterwards, you know? (Laughs.) And if you say we had frank exchanges, it means it’s a failure, you know? (Laughter.) Frank exchange, kiss of death, you know? We say, we had productive meetings, that’s OK. Kind of C-minus meeting, you know? If you say we had made great progress, then it gets better. And of course, you know, if you can tweet this is best ever, you know – (laughter) – then, you know. And then that’s pretty good.

I think I really cannot see, as we saw North-South summit, as well as U.S. summit, anything but a good meeting, and something that happens afterwards, that is another meeting. And let’s be frank about it. There is nothing wrong with multiple summits. It certainly keeps diplomats employed, you know? (Laughter.) And it keeps all of us, you know, in forums like this. But more than that, it means they’re talking. And as Bridget said, I think when you’re talking, you learn, you get to the bottom line, and you know, I’m reminded that we were in a very, very different place November and December last year, you know? And all the talk about blood and oaths, Victor should know about it pretty well. And so we don’t want to go back there. We really don’t want to go back there. And so this, I think, is a good development. And even if there are just more talks, that’s fine.

MS. KANG: Yeah. Well, let’s extend that time frame to, like, 10 years – in the next 10 years. Anyone could see something different beyond that? Do you – do you have something?

MR. KING: The one thing that is the complicating factor here is that the North-South Relationship is not an isolated relationship. And the biggest issue is, for South Korea, what is the relationship with the United States and how does that relationship evolve as there’s an effort made towards improvement in the relations with the North? The one thing that I think is particularly encouraging is that President Moon’s approach has been very positive in terms of working with the United States. Coming to the United States, his first visit here after he was officially inaugurated, coming here immediately after his summit with Kim Jong-un. These were all very, very positive. He’s tried very hard to keep the United States on board.

During the period of the last two summits, this was not the case. I remember sitting in a meeting with President Roh and a handful of members of Congress. And I mean, this was one of the most difficult meetings I have ever seen members of Congress have with a foreign leader. And it wasn’t just that the members of Congress were obnoxious. That’s given. (Laughter.) But there was a real clash in terms of what role the United States should play, the importance of the North-South issue. So I think that on the Korean side, there’s a real benefit in having President Moon and the sophistication with which he has approached this issue. On the American side, there’s room for improvement. But I think that that’s going to be the key in terms of the scope within which that relationship can evolve.

MS. KANG: I see. Anyone want to add an in 10 years perspective?

MR. YUN: Well, if I may.
MS. KANG: Yeah.

MR. YUN: You know, denuclearization process or discussing denuclearization is now, what, 25 years old. And it’s taken 25 years. And I mean, quite clearly we have not succeeded. And this is because North Korean determination to get there. And one aspect of this is that they’ve gotten there. And they now have nuclear devices. Their September 6 test was, what, 250 kilotons, which is about 10 to 15 times the size of the bomb that went off in Hiroshima. And their test of ICBM, Hwasong-15, in November, you know, practically can reach anywhere on the Northern Hemisphere.

And so we have to admit – and this is the difference between 25 years ago and now – we have to admit the price has gone up. And we are not going to be able to buy them off at the price we did at the six-party talks, at agreed framework. And in that sense, you are going to need many summits and many meetings just to get to what they want. And you have to address what they want. And if you believe that they should only address what we want, I think that’s a very, very mistaken path.

MS. KANG: I see. I see.

Let’s try our fourth question. Is this – is this Panmunjom declaration different from past inter-Korean agreements? Yes, very different; somewhat different; not different; same wine, different bottle. What’s your opinion?

Yeah, OK.

MS.: Or maybe no one wants to weigh in on this one. (Laughter.)

MS. KANG: Did everyone do the clickers? Yeah. You should turn it on, the clicker, and then push your answer.

MR.: There are a lot of people who don’t want to answer that – don’t want to allow for an opinion.

MS. KANG: Again, please make sure that your clicker is on – power on.

MR. YUN: It’s anonymous, right? It’s not recorded whose vote. (Laughter.)

MS. KANG: Your fingerprints – (laughs) – answer, yeah. OK, very different is 14 percent. Somewhat different is 47 percent. Not different – same wine, different bottle – is 39 percent.

Dr. Coggins, what’s your opinion?

MS. COGGINS: I like – I like answer C.

MS. KANG: OK.

MS. COGGINS: But I like a positive spin on answer C – (laughter) – which is not think about it as wine but to think of it as scotch.

MS. KANG: OK. What’s the difference?
MS. COGGINS: Drinkability. The difference is that I think that it’s – I think that it’s very positive that it’s – that there’s a clear history that this comes from and that it’s not so dissimilar from previous meetings. That suggests that we’re on the same page in terms of – that North and South, at least, are on the same page in terms of what the expectations are, what the problems are, what the ultimate goals are, even if there isn’t a very clear path to getting there yet.

And so the real question that remains is, is this a declaration that has come of age? Is it ripe now to actually get implementation and verification and all of the really difficult things that come along with it? And so it looks the same, but will the results potentially be different?

MS. KANG: Does it mean that there’s some improvement in that?

MS. COGGINS: That’s right, yeah.

MS. KANG: OK. How about Dr. Katz? What’s your answer to that question?

MS. KATZ: I like that there are three answers. I like that there’s that middle ground. I think that you could answer it in different ways. You could look at the text itself and you can see echoing kind of references to previous agreements, both denuclearization agreements as well as Inter-Korean Summit agreements. So on that level, I would say certainly, you know, not so different.

What might make this declaration different is the context and the circumstances surrounding it. So some of those things we’ve already referenced. One, North Korea being a de facto nuclear state is one clear difference. That makes the stakes of this bigger. Secondly, you know, kind of some of those vague references to, you know, a number of things; notions of long-term peace, unification. That – sorry, I just lost my train of thought – that the change – (inaudible) – itself in the fact that North Korea has become a nuclear state and that we’re in the summit process will make those declarations mean something different, and that if we – if this declaration actually doesn’t get implemented, that we walk and we’re in a completely different setting. So in that sense, it’s maybe not so different in terms of what we’re seeing in the writing, but the implications are quite different because of the circumstances.

Lastly, there’s a level of uncertainty on the U.S. side that is quite different. So we’re used to uncertainty coming from the North Korean side. We’re not so used to not knowing what the U.S. might be willing to offer for denuclearization. And so all those things make this declaration potentially very different.

MS. KANG: I see.

Ambassador Christopher Hill said it’s just copy and paste. And the other experts say that even though it looks the same, but they put some articles like denuclearization is a common goal, even though it’s short of all the concrete means. So in that sense it’s progress. So what do you think about Ambassador Hill?

MR. YUN: Well, I would agree with that. I think what is clearly different from this summit than previous two is this summit is leading up to the next summit, which is the U.S.-North Korea summit, which is completely unprecedented. So in that sense, you know, I don’t think we can look at
this summit separate from the U.S.-North Korea summit, and because this summit is anticipating the next summit.

So I would very much say the language on denuclearization is important. And to me, that language hints at something that is quite different in Pyongyang than in Washington. I think Washington expectation is very much for concrete, immediate steps towards denuclearization, and while Pyongyang, you know, putting the denuclearization at the end of declaration, and also the language that goes with it makes it clear that it is much more synchronized, action for action, kind of confidence-building steps.

So therein lies what could be quite interesting next stage, which is how do you make these two consistent? And, you know, there are a lot of ways to make it consistent, because denuclearization is not yes or no. You know, it’s not black or white. There is ton of room between. And so I would hope that’s what we get into. And I do believe the declaration, unlike previous one, is a prelude to getting into that.

MS. KANG: Dr. King, is there something that South Korea should have done more when you look at that Panmunjom declaration? Is there something else?

MR. KING: I think focusing on the declaration is not where the focus ought to be. The real problem is the text hasn’t changed that much. Conditions have changed. And the real question is this is a nice sort of blanket agreement that talks about all kinds of things. We’ve included something that makes everybody happy because all the topics are there. But the real question is, will they be implemented? And what is the next step, and where do they go?

The text of the declaration is a nice beginning, but it’s only a beginning. And the real question is, how does it –

MS. KANG: After that, yeah.

MR. KING: Where do we go from here?

MS. KANG: OK.

Now, let’s move on to our next question. That is, what is the next step, aside from the U.S.-DPRK summit? Is your clicker power on? Could you check it, please? Wow. Well, it’s almost done. So 59 percent said a trilateral U.S.-South Korea-North Korea summit. And the second one is South Korea and China will look for sanctions relief. The third one is that South Korea will seek reduced U.S.-ROK military exercises, and the last one is Japan-DPRK summit.

Dr. Katz, do you agree with that or – yes.

MS. KATZ: Well, I think I’m – predicting more summits is still the safe prediction. (Laughter.) Clearly.

One more note on the summits, in and of themselves, though, and how multiple summits is – yeah, it’s an easy answer, but it’s also unique to the moment as it’s the modality. It’s how multiple stakes in the region that are going to ultimately affect the outcome are being integrated, and so in an organic way, maybe we don’t know exactly which summit is to come, but we’ve tried different paths.
We’ve tried bilaterals in the mid-’90s, which were, you know, sort of – in a multilateral sense implemented. We tried having everyone at the table through multilateral arrangement in the six-party talks. So both of those just say, you know, it’s a tricky issue because it’s not just the two leaders who are at the table that matter. It’s multiple countries with stakes – and even if you don’t invite them, they will figure out a way to, from the outside, be spoilers or to be a part of the process.

So the interesting thing about the present moment is I think that it’s happening in an organic way, but that it’s inevitable that in some way the multiple stakes – the multiple countries with stakes in this issue are going to get in on the action. So I would say you could also predict A, as well, in terms of summits.

MS. KANG: I see. I mean, while we were doing six-party talks a long time ago, I thought multiple talk, multilateral talks is the only way to save the world. I mean, it was – it was known then, at the time. And then now, suddenly we are talking about summit, it’s all of us summit. So why do you think it changes so drastically? Ambassador Yun, yeah.

MR. YUN: I think the key mover on this has been President Moon in South Korea. He was probably, more than anyone else, worried about hostilities on Korean Peninsula, and he reached out in a major way to North Korea. And probably even to his own surprise, North Korean leader reacted with equal enthusiasm, you know, and so I think that’s why where we are today.

So if you look at, you know, what Dr. Katz has said, what are the equities, you know, it was in the six-party talks context. Right now you have to say the big, big winners are South Korea and North Korea. I think U.S. probably kind of, you know – not yet known whether it’s a winner or not. I think probably significant one in the negative column is Japan because it has been, you know, quite left out. And probably in that six-party context, to some extent, Russia, but I’m not sure they care very much, you know?

So moving on I think it will be interesting to see whether that column changes a little bit, but right now, unquestionably the winners are, you know, North and South Korea.

MS. KANG: So do you think it’s well-designed or it just happened that way? Kind of – there is a series of summits still going on, yeah?

MR. YUN: Well, I mean – and if the U.S.-North Korea Summit is held in DMZ, it will be – that will trilateral summit. I don’t think, you know, you can doubt that. It can be a meal, it can be meeting, but there will be a trilateral encounter, so that’s – you know, that’s a(n) easy thing to predict.

If it’s outside DMZ or outside Korean Peninsula, it is still possible that seems quite likely, but I – also seems at some point China has to enter in the scheme of things. I think China is in tiny bit of a negative column, and so they will want to rejuvenate, and they have already done, and they have just huge equity, so they will need to make their presence felt.

MS. KANG: I see. Dr. Coggins, what is your answer to that question?

MS. COGGINS: I think that they are very contingent.

MS. KANG: OK.
MS. COGGINS: I think that if – if – and it’s a big if – if everything goes well with the United States, then more summits are likely. And Prime Minister Abe already has fear of missing out, right – FOMO? And so we know that that’s – that that might be in the works, but I do think that it’s contingent on how things go with the United States’ bilateral.

Aside from that, I think it’s hard to talk about sanctions as though they are a bundle, as though they are just one thing, because unilateral sanctions by the United States are different things than the United Nations sanctions. Even if South Korea and China would seek sanctions relief from the U.N., that will take a long time to unwind. That’s a significant policy change for the United Nations; it’s not something that will come quickly. And I don’t think that the United Nations as a whole is particularly predisposed to give North Korea the benefit of the doubt that it will make good at this point.

And so I’m much less convinced than many people in the audience that, even if sanctions relief is sought, whether or not they’ll get it – get what they want.

MR. KING: With regard to the six-party talks and the six-party structure, I think we should not underestimate that. The six countries that are involved are the six countries that have the most at stake, and I don’t know that we need to continue in exactly the same form, but certainly involving, in addition to North and South Korea – who obviously are key to the whole thing – you have to have the United States, you need to have China, you need to have Japan. Russia is more peripheral, but it’s helpful to have the Russians involved. So that, you know, I don’t see two Koreas and the United States playing well with the Chinese or the Japanese, and I think, if there’s going to be a success, it needs to be a broader kind of framework that includes others.

The other thing in terms of sanctions – the sanctions are largely United Nations sanctions, and the United Nations structure has played a very important role in shaping the sanctions and in making them more broadly international, and so you can’t ignore that element to it as well. So I think it has got to be broader, but I think we have to be careful about excluding parties who have strong interests.

MS. KANG: Yeah, but somehow these days maybe bilateral, you know, talk is kind of more easy – I mean, easier to decide something.

MR. KING: Oh, yes.

MS. KANG: I may simplify the situation too much, but when there’s a six-party talks I have seen those – I mean, every day there’s another round of the conference – I mean, the meetings, and actually there’s not much noticeable changes after that so, yeah, I have a kind of concept that maybe bilateral is much easier to get to somewhere, you know.

And do you think South Korea will say could reduce the U.S.-ROK military exercises? Do you think so?

MR. YUN: Me?

MS. KANG: Yeah. (Laughs.) Ambassador Yun.

MR. YUN: I was hoping someone else. (Laughter.)

MS. KANG: (Laughs.) Yeah.
MR. YUN: It’s interesting the whole question of the troop presence in South Korea, and there have been tons written on it. I think, on the one hand, there are group of people who really do believe that North Korea wants the troops in South Korea. I mean, I don’t believe that, but there are those, and I think apparently Kim Jong-il told President Kim Dae-jung that, you know – that American troops are needed in South Korea – or on the Korean Peninsula, you know, to keep the two Koreas separate as well as to check on China.

And so strategically I think there is – has been a lot of questions asked, and to me, I tend to imagine that eventually – you know, and I think Professor Moon Chung-in said this – eventually, when everything is set, I would imagine there will have to be questions on the troop presence. I mean, clearly in South Korea also there is an extreme group of progressive(s) who do believe that Koreans won’t have full sovereignty until there are no foreign troops in South Korea. And I think it’s a standard belief among many of us that if there is a peace treaty, certainly China and possibly North Korea will demand that there will be no troops there. So it’s been a question. I mean, it’s become a question within the United States.

MS. KANG: OK.

MR. YUN: And it’s been, you know, historically, that has always been true, too. I mean, you remember Jimmy Carter wanting to reduce the troop presence, and you also remember that early on in the Iraq-Afghanistan war, you know, they were very receptive in Washington to troop reduction. So this is nothing new to have this debate.

I guess the latest round has been triggered by, you know, by the Trump administration saying that maybe the burdens of SMA, maybe, you know, with a peace treaty, you know, can we think about scope for reducing troops or withdrawing troops? And so that’s – you know, there is history and discussion over all of that.

But the reality, I think, is that the public on both sides of the Pacific support, very strongly support troop presence on the Korean Peninsula. In South Korea, if you have a public poll, typically about 70 percent still support U.S. troop presence there. Likewise, in the U.S., it is very strong. So, to me, this kind of discussion would happen when we’re looking at options, we’re looking at possibilities, but it’s not a discussion that is firmly founded in reality.

MS. KANG: I see. I see. Well, I’ll ask the last questions to Dr. Katz and then we’ll move on to a Q&A session.

And while we are moving toward the eventual goal of denuclearization of North Korea, then at some point do you think we need to touch upon the status of U.S. troops in South Korea?

MS. KATZ: So, yeah. I think – back to the question of troops, which is a really important, critical issue right now – in projecting what President Moon might do, you know, so far, if we can kind of judge on past record, he’s been very careful to coordinate very closely. Instead of pressuring the U.S. to not do exercises, he’s been, you know – we’ve been coordinating very closely and very careful about those statements.

The interesting thing about this moment is all this uncertainty on the U.S. side. That’s very new
MS. KANG: Right.

MS. KATZ: – you know, certainly around the SMA discussions and things that President Trump has said in the campaign. So there’s a question of whether the U.S. would be willing to put that on the table.

I think ordering is critical. It’s something that the United States has always been willing to consider, but after denuclearization and after certain happen and the facts on the ground have changed. And I think this is something that resonates generally with the South Korean public as well.

I think it’s kind of a misconception to think that it’s a positive thing in South Korea for the U.S. troops to go home. Certainly, we’ve had our moments of, you know, anti-American sentiment and kind of tragic incidents in terms of our U.S. troops in South Korea. But generally, there is this firm, you know, understanding of the importance of the U.S. troop presence as long as the facts remain as they are in terms of keeping up deterrence.

And so it’s – I think that probably President Moon would have that understanding. And that if there is a sense that the U.S. wants to get ahead of that, that that would be something that they discuss privately. But that would be, in some ways, you know, maybe the reverse of what folks might think.

MS. KANG: I see. I see. Thank you.

And then now we will move on to the Q&A session. So question is on the floor. Yeah.

Q: Thank you very much. I’m a reporter from Hong Kong Phoenix TV.

My question would be, what role does China play in achieving the denuclearization goal?

And the second question would be, after the summit between the United States and North Korea, would that lead to direct or indirect talks between the United States and China? Thank you very much.

MS. KANG: Anyone? Dr. Coggins? Whom do you want to answer?

Q: (Off mic.)

MS. KANG: OK. (Laughter.)

MR. KING: Go ahead, you’re on.

MR. YUN: So what was the question?

MS. KATZ: Role for China.

MR. KING: Role for China.

MR. YUN: Role for China.
MS. KANG: Yeah.

MR. YUN: Yeah. I think as I alluded to before, China is a major factor with huge equities. And I think you saw this, before, you know, in fact Kim Jong-un met with either South Korean or the U.S. leader, he met with Xi Jinping. I mean, it’s kind of interesting because, according to North Korea, Kim Jong-un asked to go and Beijing accepted. According to Beijing, they asked – they told Kim Jong-un to come and he came, you know. Probably both are true, but it speaks volumes to the relationship.

I mean, we all know how much trade goes through there. And clearly, without support of China, North Korea cannot survive. And at the same time, China needs a stable North Korea that is separate from South Korea. So I have no doubt that this relationship will continue.

After the summit, any solution to denuclearization or peace treaty has to involve China. And I think, to me, strategically, one of the key reasons why Kim Jong-un is doing this is because China has prioritized denuclearization higher than before and has prioritized instability, the likelihood of instability, higher than before.

You saw that very clearly in China joining in a number of or in fact you know, virtually all U.N. Security Council resolutions. And so I think that’s where the pressures come from. So I fully, fully expect China to play a bigger role after the summits.

MS. KANG: OK.

Well, we are running out of time, so I will take three questions together and then answered together, too.

Maybe here, yeah.

Q: I just want to thank all the panelists for their insights today.

Ambassador Yun, you mentioned President Moon acting as a sort of coach for Kim Jong-un regarding the upcoming summit with President Trump. What’s your best guess at Moon’s top Trump tips?

MS. KANG: OK. Please have your name and affiliation for us. Thank you.

Q: My name is Alex Burns, I’m a Korea analyst.

MR. YUN: Best guess for what, sir?

Q: President Moon’s top Trump tips for Kim Jong-un.

MS. KANG: OK, and the next one is – yeah.

Q: Michael Marshall, Global Peace Foundation.
There’s a lot of emphasis on the complete denuclearization. The phrases that are also in the declaration were, from the North Korean side, an end to hostile policy, the U.S. hostile policy, and security guarantees.

Ambassador Yun, you said that now that North Korea has nuclear weapons, the price they ask would be higher. How do you see them interpreting those two phrases, the security guarantees and the end of the hostile policy?

MS. KANG: One more question.

Q: Hi. I’m Ashoum Unger (ph). I’m a student.

My question is, how does any progress in negotiations compare up against North Korea’s founding war narrative and it’s – and it’s kind of – it has to be stuck to the war, to the Korean War, and that’s the founding myth of the country. How could Kim Jong-un actually act against that?

MR. YUN: Should I start –

MS. KANG: Yeah.

MR. YUN: – and then we can – I think the tough question, you know, Katrin, you know, can answer. (Laughter.)

I think on coaching tips, I mean, your guess is as good as mine, you know. And I think there was some – someone said there was some lip movements that they’ve done analysis of. I haven’t seen it yet. Maybe Chosun Ilbo has seen it? No?

MS. KANG: No. (Laughter.)

MR. YUN: I haven’t seen it. But I would imagine it would be letting him know the expectations in Washington and really how to deal with, you know, with President Trump in person.

Regarding the second question on security guarantees, quite frankly, I don’t know, it’s still a mystery to me. I mean, for me, whenever I talk to North Koreans, they do really trot out the problem they have with hostile policies. And I try to pin them down: What do you mean by hostile policies? And, you know, for them, it is everything. It is what, you know, Bob King worked for so long, human rights. You know, why – you know, this is our domestic issue. Why do you care about our human rights, you know? And so it gets awfully difficult. I mean, they even complain about – I see Mark Landler here, New York Times, you know? So, Mark, you’re going to have to do something, you know? (Laughter.) And so it is just a whole slew of things, which is why what we need is more interaction and, you know, kind of a trust or confidence, at least minimum. There is none now, you know?

And last question on Korean War. You know, of course it is very relevant. The war ended with an armistice. And surprisingly, a lot of Koreans don’t know that it’s not a peace treaty, let alone Americans, that there is not a peace treaty. But peace treaty’s way more than just a treaty, and which is why I think it’s going to take so long. You know, how long did we take to get to the Vietnam peace treaty? That’s about nine, 10 years, and because there are many issues there. And so I think it’s going to be complicated. The big question of course is what comes first: denuclearization or peace treaty.
And for me, it would be a real mistake to have peace treaty come first, then denuclearization, because that is clearly an open admission that you’re dealing North Korea as an acknowledged nuclear weapon state.

MR. KING: With regard to the question of security guarantees and assurances that the United States might make that could ultimately lead to progress in this regard, the real difficulty is going to be the credibility that President Trump brings to this discussion. We’re in the process, by the end of this week, of having a decision on whether the United States is going to withdraw from the agreement on Iran. And when you look at that issue in the context of North Korea, what assurances does North Korea have that any promise or assurance or guarantee the United States makes will in fact be carried out? And I think the real difficulty that the United States is going to have in terms of the role that it plays in this process is what kind of assurances and what kind of form do those assurances take to convince the North Koreans to begin the process of moving towards denuclearization and towards improved relationships.

MS. KANG: How about Dr. Coggins?

MS. COGGINS: I echo that. And just on the United States side in particular, we, I believe, are very underprepared. And there is not a lot of history in the team that it looks like we have diplomatically going forward. And I hope that I don’t embarrass anyone in the room, but I would feel a lot more comfortable if we did have some experienced diplomats that were working on the United States’ behalf at this critical moment. I think that the history is important. I think that people who have experience dealing with the North Koreans, that those that they’re familiar with are much more likely to be treated as credible, thought to be credible interlocutors. And so I think that that’s one piece of advice that I would give. It might not be what President Moon gave.

MS. KANG: I see.

MS. COGGINS: But something that I would recommend to the United States.

MS. KANG: So the last was for Dr. Katz, please.

MS. KATZ: A couple of thoughts, I guess. In terms of advice to Kim Jong Un for dealing with President Trump, of course if we were better lip readers we would know what he said. But if I had been President Moon, I would encourage him to figure out how to establish a rapport, to be able to – as a foundation for real progress. You know, even things like the symbolism of this visit, that it in some way is able to match if it’s going to be a hard thing to – you know, after the really symbolic jumping over the border and things, to match. And in some ways, that sounds like making light of this summity, but it’s actually – it’s quite important to ensure that we don’t reach a dead end. And of course, you know, talks for the sake of talks get a bad rap. That’s not what anyone is interested in, but to really have, you know, an abrupt end or kind of not good chemistry between these leaders would, I think, be a loss for everyone at this stage. I think that’s safe to say. So if I were President Moon, I would, you know, figure out – I think that both leaders, from what I understand, can be, you know, quite human, quite cordial, quite charming in person, and to run with that and to think of some ways to have some nice photo ops – again, not to make light of the summit as just a photo op, but just to have as a foundation for the dialogue, for the process that we all hope can take root.

On the very good question and interesting question on kind of national narratives, you know, in some ways leaders are bound by the narratives that they, you know, over time produce. But the
positive thing is if those narratives are produced by leadership, they can also be altered by leadership. And so particularly in a situation of authoritarian government – we’ve seen the new photos in the newspapers, you know, actually being reported to the North Korean public – that’s really important. And so we might actually see, you know, in a hopeful sense, a national narrative changing in North Korea.

MS. KANG: Well, thank you for sharing your intuition and insights. It’s really a great moment to understand the situation behind this inter-Korean summit. Thank you. (Applause.)

LISA COLLINS: Thank you again to our panelists. A very informative session. We will now have a very short transition to our next panel if the speakers would please make their way to the stage. Thank you.

(END)