

Center for Strategic and International Studies

Welcoming Remarks and Session I: Prospects for the Trump-Kim Vietnam Summit

Moderated Discussion

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TIME

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LOCATION

CSIS Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

WELCOMING REMARKS:

H. Andrew Schwartz,

Chief Communications Officer, CSIS

MODERATOR:

Nick Schifrin,

Foreign Affairs and Defense Correspondent, PBS "NewsHour"

FEATURING

Richard Johnson,

Senior Director for Fuel Cycle and Verification, Nuclear Threat Initiative; Former National Security Council (2013-2015)

Laura Rosenberger,

Director, Alliance for Securing Democracy; Senior Fellow, The German Marshall Fund of the United States; Former National Security Council (2012-2015)

CSIS EXPERTS

Victor Cha,

Senior Adviser and Korea Chair, CSIS; D.S. Song-KF Professor of Government, Georgetown University; Former National Security Council (2004-2007)

Mark Lippert,

Senior Adviser, CSIS Korea Chair; Vice President, Boeing International; Former U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea

Sue Mi Terry,

Senior Fellow, CSIS Korea Chair; Former Senior Analyst, Central Intelligence Agency; Former National Security Council (2008-2009)

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Andrew H. Schwartz: Good morning. Welcome to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. I'm Andrew Schwartz. I'm our senior vice president and chief communications officer. So glad to have all of you here for this terrific panel – or panels. One thing I wanted to alert you all to is we have this new podcast. It's called "The Impossible State." If you haven't heard it, it's Victor Cha, and Sue Terry, Mike Green, other – Bob King – other experts here. I host it. It's all about North Korea. We do it almost every week. You can find it anywhere you get your podcasts. With that, I'd like to bring up our first panel. Please take – Nick, do you want to bring everybody up and we can start? Great.

Andrew H. Schwartz: Thank you all for being here.

Nick Schiffrin: (Off mic) – much, everyone. My name is Nick Schiffrin. I am the foreign affairs and defense correspondent for PBS NewsHour. And welcome to this amazing event, this hour and the next hour. For the next hour, we're going to be talking about potential outcomes for the summit, prospects for denuclearization, prospects for some kind of political declaration to end the war, and the economic implications of the summit for Northeast Asia. And I don't think our panelists really need introductions, but I will do so quickly.

Nick Schiffrin: Victor Cha, CSIS Korea Chair, director for Asian affairs at the National Security Council staff during the George W. Bush administration, deputy head of the U.S. delegation during the six-party talks. Laura Rosenberger, the director of the Alliance for Securing Democracy and a senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund, former policy advisor during the Hillary Clinton campaign, and senior advisor to then-Deputy Secretary of State Tony Blinken. Mark Lippert, vice president at Boeing International, former ambassador to South Korea, and a former intelligence officer. And I predict that question may come up.

Nick Schiffrin: Sue Terry, senior fellow for the Korea chair here, senior – former senior analyst on Korean affairs at the CIA, and former NSC staff at the end of George W. Bush, beginning of Obama, for Korea, Japan, and Oceanic affairs. And last but not least, Richard Johnson at the Nuclear Threat Initiative. He's the senior director for fuel cycle and verification. He led the Iran nuclear implementation at the State Department and was the director of nonproliferation at the National Security Council staff during the Obama administration. So thank you all for being here and thank you guys for having this fantastic cast.

Nick Schiffrin: And, Victor, let me – let me start with you. And let's start by talking about the expectations, first, for North Korea, during this summit. And you've said this: That they'll probably be willing to negotiate their past, be willing to negotiate their future, but not their present. So explain that and explain why that's such a concern for you.

Victor Cha: Sure. So, first, thank you, everybody, for joining us this morning.

Victor Cha: So what I mean by that is essentially that North Korea has programs that I think that they will be willing to give up next week in Hanoi, but they are things that they've already talked about giving up and, in fact, have stopped operations at

right after the Singapore summit. And, you know, my guess is that they're going to allow the United States or some international body to go in and sort of monitor the decommissioning of these sites. And as we saw in Kim Jong-un's new year's speech in January, he has put forward the idea of stopping further production in the future as well as a pledge not to transfer any capabilities or knowledge.

Victor Cha: So if you think about those things, that is negotiating your past, things that you don't need anymore; and it's negotiating your future, things you promise not to do in the future. So you're actually not really giving up anything. And in the meantime, I'm pretty certain there are going to be clear demands for the United States to give up things very much in the present, whether that's exercises, whether it's the deployment of troops, sanctions, you know, a variety of different things.

Victor Cha: You know, it's a smart strategy. I mean, if – you know, if I were the North Koreans, like, the North Koreans are not stupid. They've got a smart strategy about how they want to do this. But in the meantime they are keeping their present, if you will, which are, you know, 20 missile bases that we at CSIS have been studying – short-, medium-range, intermediate-range missile bases; their current stockpile of weapons, anywhere between 20 and 60 nuclear weapons, probably on the higher end; you know, and other sorts of capabilities – WMD, chem/bio capabilities. So, you know, I think that is sort of the situation that the president's walking into, and so he just needs to be aware of that.

Nick Schiffrin: Mark Lippert, does the U.S. have leverage? The situation, as Victor just said, that the – that the U.S. is walking into, does the president of the United States have leverage in order to get that much or even more?

Mark Lippert: Good question. I would say yes, he still does. I think the multilateral sanctions, there's no doubt the North Koreans want relief from that. And I've always been a believer of the theory that the model that Kim Jong-un has in North Korea, while allows him to stay in power, is not sustainable over time, especially vis-à-vis the rise of internal markets, which I think are slowly but surely reshaping the North Korean side, bothering the regime; information flow; and then the isolation he faced early on in the Trump administration and late Obama administration in terms of diplomatic space; and then, finally, I would say, you know, the military forces arrayed against him.

Mark Lippert: Now, the question is, I think, some of that leverage or some of the pressure has been reduced after the Singapore summit. And the question is, can we use what is left of our leverage, number one? Number two, what is – what we have in the way of incentives. And, number three, I would say couple that with the other relevant parties, mainly the other members of the Six-Party Talks, give or take, to try to cobble together a deal.

Mark Lippert: So I do think we have leverage. I think there's an open question whether it is enough leverage. And I think the more leverage, in my view, you have in the situation, it essentially forces the North Koreans into choices they wouldn't want to make – in other words, perhaps give up the present – more of the present, as

Victor talked, sooner, and as well as probably on the economic reform basket as well. And I'll stop there.

Nick Schiffrin: For those of you who know, at the "NewsHour" we try and have debates, and so I will try and create division on this panel. (Laughter.) And so, Sue, does the U.S. have any leverage anymore?

Sue Mi Terry: Well, you are trying to make me debate? (Laughter.) I think we had leverage when we pursued maximum pressure in the fall of – what is it now? – 2017, it was about. We had leverage. We saw for the first time China actually implementing sanctions, doing things that actually surprised me. I wished that we had continued – when we had that leverage, continued that pressure. I didn't like the "fire and fury" rhetoric, but I liked the sanctions and pressure.

Sue Mi Terry: But I think we gave away that leverage too quickly by having Singapore summit when we were not prepared. I'm not against trying this out at the highest level, but I thought when we were just getting going we let go of that leverage and met with Kim. Didn't really get anything out of the Singapore summit; it was just – really just an aspirational statement that we got. And you can argue that not much has really changed.

Sue Mi Terry: Yet, right now I think that sanctions implementation, we know we are getting reports that that's being loosened by China. They're not just – there's just a lack of incentive there. Kim Jong-un has been engaged in diplomacy and summitry; met with Xi Jinping, what, four times, President Trump, and three times with President Moon Jae-in. And he's out there now legitimized, normalized, and I think he has everything going for him. And my concern is – long-term concern is I think we are actually heading towards the direction – we are on a path to accepting North Korea as a nuclear-weapons power.

Sue Mi Terry: I do think there is going to be some sort of interim agreement that's going to come out next week, but that's not denuclearization. That's really a freeze proposal. It's an arms-control negotiation, which is what North Koreans have always wanted. So by having some sort of freeze deal and eventually even a deal on ICBM(s), that's exactly what North Korea wants. And I think we are on that path, and I don't know if there is any leverage now that we can stop that.

Nick Schiffrin: Richard Johnson, can you – can you respond to that? Are we just on the path of accepting North Korea as a nuclear-weapons state? And you and I spoke the other day and you had a good line, that the process of denuclearization has to be done with North Korea, not to North Korea. Can you explain that?

Richard Johnson: Yeah, that's absolutely right. I mean, I think if you look at the history of any other country that's given up a nuclear program, whether they had weapons or not, they didn't – with the rare exception of Libya, they didn't basically say come in, fly out all of our things, put them in a box, and send them to Tennessee. They were done by the country in question, and often with the assistance of one or more other countries. Look at the Iran deal, for example. Look at what happened in the case of the former Soviet Union, where the United States and

others came in and helped to secure nuclear facilities, move missiles, move nuclear weapons back into Russia. So I think the idea that has been put forward by some that you might be able to just come in and in one fell swoop just sort of clean it out is very well – very misplaced, I would say.

Richard Johnson: In terms of, you know, where are we heading, I think we get caught up sometimes in these debates about accepting North Korea as a nuclear state. I don't actually think that at least the current administration position is to accept North Korea as a nuclear-weapons state, which by the way, you know, would run completely counter to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. That's just sort of impossible from a legal perspective.

Richard Johnson: I do think, though, that it makes sense to acknowledge that North Korea has a nuclear capability, probably has nuclear weapons – though we've never actually seen a real one, potentially, in person – and so we have to figure out where we can start. And in my view, where you can start is, essentially, talking about a freeze. It's not ideal, but it's a starting point. And if we can see North Korea, which is currently producing highly-enriched uranium and plutonium as we speak, if we can see that production ceased in a verifiable way – and of course, there's a question about how you can verify that – that would be a positive step.

Richard Johnson: But it's certainly not the only step. And I think the bottom line is this is not going to happen in a year. It's not going to happen in two years. If it happens at all, it's going to happen over many years.

Nick Schiffrin: So just to put a point on that, you're talking about a freeze, not just what we see now – informal freeze, basically, on testing. But you're talking about fissile material production freeze.

Richard Johnson: I think the essential next step is a fissile material production freeze.

Nick Schiffrin: Laura, let's talk about the U.S. approach and what the priorities are. As we all saw, probably, Steve Biegun, the lead negotiator for the U.S. on this, gave a speech at Stanford a few weeks ago. It was really his first time where he's laid out exactly what they're thinking. And he made a couple points which a lot of us picked up on which were a little different than what the U.S. has been saying over the last year. He said full inventory only has to be provided before denuclearization can be final. That's a different approach than the inventory coming at the beginning. He talked about parallel and simultaneous action, again, rather than frontloaded. And he really presented North Korea as having a future in Northeast Asia. So, if that's the Steve Biegun approach, is the U.S. on the right track?

Laura Rosenberger: So I think broadly speaking I don't have major concerns with that approach. I might quibble or tweak a few things there. You know, for instance, while I don't think a declaration needs to be the first step, I mean, we know in the last round of the Six-Party Talks, in fact, what was really the final sticking point was the question of a declaration. So I think it's reasonable to not ask for that to be the first thing, but I have concerns about it being too far toward the end of the

process because how do we really know if we're getting to the end of the process if we don't know what we're looking at? So one piece of that.

Laura Rosenberger: On this parallel and simultaneous, my question there really comes down to what are we talking about in terms of sanctions relief, assuming that that would be one of the major steps on the U.S. side. I would be fine with relaxing some of the more economic-focused sanctions, if we were to do that in exchange for real steps on denuclearization – like, meaningful steps, not symbolic steps. But I think it's really important to recall that the core of the sanctions regime actually remains focused on nonproliferation. It's not – you know, there's an economic pressure aspect of the sanctions. There's a whole host of those sanctions that are in place to prevent material for the nuclear and missile programs from flowing into North Korea and for those materials – from flowing out of North Korea. Those have got to remain until we can be completely confident that there's not a proliferation risk.

Laura Rosenberger: On the future in Northeast Asia, again, that's something that's actually been on the table in the past, even in the six-party process. I think the question there, though, is, you know, that really comes down to not just the question of the nuclear issue. Obviously we're going to have a whole panel next on human rights abuses, which are a real concern. There are other nefarious North Korean activity – for instance, it's ongoing cyberattacks that have been quite destructive. Really impressive report came out October – in October from FireEye detailing all of that activity, which I think is a real significant concern.

Laura Rosenberger: So I would want to see those kinds of things be a part of this conversation. So for me, I think the question is not do I have a problem with the approach that is laid out there as such, but it's sort of what's not there? And the last point that I would make on this is that in addition to the substance, process really matters here. And I know that that always sounds like an inside, like D.C. wonkery point. But one of the things we've seen repeatedly over the past year is that Kim Jong-un has realized that he can just go straight to the top, and that he doesn't have to deal with anyone beneath him.

Laura Rosenberger: And I'm worried in the run-up to this summit, that we're starting to see the same thing. You know, reportedly President Trump said to Moon Jae-in the other day that Trump is the only one who can solve this. You know, we see another one-on-one meeting happening. We see mixed messaging coming out, with the president saying he's in no rush for denuclearization while a different official on a background call yesterday said that they're looking to move quickly and in very big bites. So we have inconsistent messaging, a lack of a process, and the undercutting of the negotiating team. Unless we actually have a real meaningful process in place, the substance isn't really going to matter.

Nick Schiffrin: Sue Terry, is there a meaningful process? And if President Trump is the one to make these decisions do you have faith that he won't give away too much?

Sue Mi Terry: No, I don't have faith. (Laughter.) No, because Laura's absolutely right. There's no process, there's no coordination. I mean, so one of the biggest

concerns that I have is President Trump giving away alliance equities. And if you just look at his decision to pull troops out of Syria, that was not coordinated. That was not coordinated among – it was not what his, you know, all advisors supported. He even considered pulling out of NATO. He consistently talked about, you know, U.S. troop presence in South Korea as some sort of – you know, he didn't support it. He didn't support – this is something that he believed for years, questioning why we have troops in rich countries like South Korea.

Sue Mi Terry: Even though I do think that because the Special Measures Agreement between U.S. and South Korea has been just reached – even though I have a concern that it's only a one-year deal – that now the president sort of promising Kim or declaring that he's going to pull U.S. troops out of South Korea, that probability has now decreased that this is going to happen next week. However, I don't doubt – I mean, I do have doubt that President Trump could potentially tell Kim, he has two days, that this could be on the table in the future, because of just his consistent belief and questioning about, you know, why we have troops in places like South Korea.

Sue Mi Terry: I do think one good news is that there is no support in the U.S. government to pull troops out of South Korea. I think there is bipartisan support for a continued troop presence. And so when you look at McCain – John McCain Defense Authorization Act last year that was passed in August, it stipulates that we cannot pull troops out. We cannot reduce it below 22,000 unless secretary of defense says it's in the national interest. And I think that's all good sign. But I don't – I don't – I don't – I can't – I don't have faith that President Trump – because he doesn't believe in this process; it's not a normal government where there's policy coordination – that he's just going to be able to sort of do what he wants to do and kind of just, you know, do whatever he wants to do without coordinating – or, without listening to his advisors.

Sue Mi Terry: And I think that's truly the wildcard when it comes to next week's summit. That's my biggest concern.

Victor Cha: Can I just piggyback on that?

Nick Schiffrin: Sure.

Victor Cha: So – you know, so – I mean, so just so you don't think we're all a bunch of, like, you know – you know, turds in the punchbowl – (laughter) – for Hanoi next week. So, look, OK, so we are in a negotiation, right? That's better than we were in 2017, right? You have this president, who is personally committed to this and really wants it to succeed. I mean, he won't say a bad word about Kim Jong-un. He won't tweet a bad word. I mean, he is committed to this like we've never seen before, right, and, you know, all of us have worked in past administrations where the idea of a leader-level meeting was really not – well, I don't know about for Obama but it was not – (laughter) – it really was not – certainly not for President Bush. You know, it wasn't in the cards. So, you know, so those are all good things.

Victor Cha: However, at the same time, this is the thing that you worry about. The president goes to – goes to Hanoi next week. You know, he's got Biegun and Pompeo that have tried to negotiate excruciatingly these small little steps forward like, yes, you can go in and see the rocket test stand or you can go see the missile – the nuclear test site – you know, these excruciating small steps. And the president comes in there and he's, like, this is small ball, right. This is – I want big steps so I'm going to put big stuff on the table, right, and in part because he really wants it.

Victor Cha: I mean, he really wants us to succeed but also, as Sue said, it's also informing this desire for big steps to succeed. Not for this to be small ball is a deep lack of appreciation of the importance of the alliance, right – a deep lack of appreciation of the importance of not just the U.S.-Korea alliances but alliances in general.

Victor Cha: We're going to publish something this week that basically catalogs all the statements that Donald Trump has made about troops overseas in Europe and in Asia going back three decades, right, and if you go back three decades it is very consistent, right. Why are we paying for rich nations' security? They should be paying for their own security. At the same time, they're beating us on trade so why do we have these forces there? It is consistent going back to 1990. And the one thing you know – we know about President Trump is if he believes something he really acts on it, right. He really acts on it. So I think that's a thing that we worry about.

Nick Schiffrin: Richard Johnson, can you respond to that? Is small ball OK and is the – you know, when you listen to Steve Biegun they are talking about, you know, simultaneous steps. They are talking about a lot of small ball as a way to get to the big things eventually. Is that OK?

Richard Johnson: I think you have to play small ball. I'm a National League guy so, you know – (laughter) – that's just how I think about things. But, I mean, in seriousness, I think – look, I hate to say the diplomatic weenie answer but you need both. You need to know what the long-term goal is here and I do think it's useful that Steve Biegun and others have said things like there's a place for North Korea in Northeast Asia and that, you know, we're not looking to pull, you know, troops out of South Korea. We're not looking for regime change per se. You do need to send a vision to Kim Jong-un in Pyongyang to say this is kind of what we're looking at down the road. But you're not going to get there without dealing with these nitty-gritty issues and if you look at previous successful arms control nonproliferation agreements, they're very detailed. I hesitate to utter the five letters JCPOA in this town. But if you look at the Iran nuclear deal, that's something –

Nick Schiffrin: Which you were involved with, so –

Richard Johnson: Which I was involved in. It's something like 140 pages long. And it's very, very detailed, down to citing specific texts of which part of U.S. Code sanctions will be revoked; you know, how much uranium has to go from which location to another location.

- Richard Johnson: So, you know, another reporter asked me yesterday; they said, what do you want to see as an outcome from this summit? And what I said was I'd be OK with no deliverable, if you will. I would be OK, though, if there was an actual negotiating process that was launched at the working level – at the Biegun-Kim Hyok-chol level – and the two leaders said, hey, these are your two folks. You guys go back, write a real document and start exchanging these papers back and forth. I don't care if you cross all the lines out and rewrite it a million times. But we have to get into the really hard work of negotiating these texts, and unless you get into detail and substance, you look back at – I just wrote a paper that's coming out I think today that says that if you look at all of the previous North Korea cases a lot of them fell apart because of misunderstandings about what the words actually meant because they were so vague.
- Richard Johnson: And while ambiguity can be great and a diplomat's best friend sometimes, I think when you're talking about technical issues you want specificity. And so I would think that as difficult as that is and as naïve as that sounds, I think that if you really want to see a process succeed that's what you need to do.
- Richard Johnson: And one last point I would add is a sign if that is actually happening is if you start to see technical experts added to future delegations. In the Six-Party Talks, in Iran, in Russia you had people from the Department of Energy, from the national labs, from the Department of the Treasury, from the U.S. Mission to the United Nations dealing with sanctions. If those folks start getting added to delegations, that will make me think we're going somewhere. If it stays at the political level, that's hard to do.
- Nick Schiffrin: So we'll say a senior administration official told a lot of us yesterday that there were technical experts as part of Steve Biegun's last trip. They didn't divulge where they were from, so they might all just be people from State, but we'll see. (Laughter.) But –
- Mark Lippert: (?): How come we don't love State? (Laughter.)
- Nick Schiffrin: But, Mark, let's go into that. So let's get beyond ambiguity. So what the same senior administration official said specifically about the three priorities that the U.S. had coming into this summit yesterday: developing a shared understanding of denuclearization; a freeze on WMD and missile programs; and a roadmap, that real kind of what is the future going to bring, with some specificity. Is that enough to get beyond that ambiguity?
- Mark Lippert: I mean, you know, let me just maybe dovetail off of what we were just talking about and take a little bit of a contrarian view just for argument's sake since you want a debate, you know, on the – on kind of the leader versus working level, because I think it gets to the point.
- Mark Lippert: You know, I think on the leader issue, I mean, we all have worked in offices where we're both, you know, grateful for all of the access to principals, but then terrified what the principal will actually say when we get there. (Laughter.) So

this is not a totally unique problem to the Trump administration. But I would say what seems unique here is that – and so that's point one.

Mark Lippert: The second point is I do think having come from this from a political background versus sort of a diplomatic background, I tend to be a little more biased that leaders really matter, right? And you get leaders in a room and they can change paradigms quickly. Will it happen here? I'd say lower probability. And, you know, Sue's points about giving away leverage, I think, come into play. But I think it's important to not discount the fact that leaders in a room do tend to – can change paradigms. Let's put it that way. They do have unique vertical integration challenges within the Trump administration, as Scott Snyder has said. And they do have to marry this up to process at some point because, as we were all discussing, the program is just too big, it's too complex, there are too many details, and moreover it's married – all the nuclear issues are married up against, you know, peace and security in Northeast Asia, the inter-Korean process. So you've got to get some process around it.

Mark Lippert: You know, is this enough? I think, to me, I would say it sounds like a good – a decent start, right? And I think the trick, though, is that we've spent a lot of time, two summits, and it's not – you know, it's probably enough to play another hand, but is it really what you would hope for after two summits at the highest level? And then the question becomes, to your point: Is there – it's kind of Laura's point, which I think is an excellent one – which is you can have all of the sort of top-level agreement, but the devil is in the details, to paraphrase Laura. And how it's implemented, is there a roadmap, is critical to see if you play another hand.

Mark Lippert: And finally, I think the issue here, too, is, as much as I really think leaders do matter and I do think summits are really important, then the trick becomes: How do you get this out of, you know, the leader-to-leader conversation, right? Every – you know, I'll use a football analogy – every handoff to the fullback, three yards and a cloud of dust, that's the president's problem, right? I mean, you've got to start devolving this down and accelerating.

Mark Lippert: So I think, you know, I'll just stop here and say, is it enough? It could be. It could be interesting. And the details, implementation, and how you devolve this down, are really critical.

Nick Schiffrin: So, Laura Rosenberger, how should the details evolve? How should we look at this summit and be able to judge whether this was successful or not on the senior administration official's specifics, right – developing a shared understanding of denuclearization, getting a freeze, and creating a roadmap?

Laura Rosenberger: So I think there's a couple of different things to look at, both in the immediate sort of do-outs or outcomes of the summit, and then what happens afterwards, right?

Laura Rosenberger: So one is, you know, the backgrounding from officials indicates that there may be some kind of joint statement coming out. That certainly requires a whole lot of detailed negotiation, as many of us who have been through negotiating joint

statements before know. You know, but what my concern – and I think, frankly, that would be a great sign if we're actually able to get to a point where there's a joint statement that's negotiated in advance, it's detailed in some way, that's then agreed to by the leaders. Color me a little skeptical that that will happen, but I would absolutely love to see it.

Laura Rosenberger: But what I think we also need to see is that when the president and Kim Jong-un presumably come out and have a press conference afterwards, that the president's messaging is consistent with what is in that statement, because if we rewind the tape back to Singapore, folks may recall that there were three points in the documents – which it was a very vague document. But then the president also then went further. And in particular, the question of military exercises was not anywhere in the document. That was purely something that he riffed on in the press conference, and then took on a life of its own after, I would say. And so in many ways, I think that it's both what's in the document and is President Trump consistent with what's in that. Because if he's not, Kim Jong-un will see no reason to follow the letter of what is in a – in a statement and will just go with where President Trump goes.

Laura Rosenberger: So that's in the sort of immediate outcome phase. In the follow-on phase, if we, again, go back to after Singapore, there was agreement in the statement that there would be follow-on meetings and channels between agreed officials – although it was a little vague on the North Korean side. And we really didn't see much activity, right? We saw fits and starts. Secretary Pompeo had some trouble getting access at points. Steve Biegun wasn't able to meet with his negotiating counterpart. Well, there was turnover, first of all, and then, second of all, it really wasn't until there was essentially apparent agreement on a second summit that we really saw Steve Biegun getting access to his counterpart in direct negotiations.

Laura Rosenberger: And so those conversations weren't as a follow-up to implement the previous summit agreement. They seemed to be in terms of a preparation for the second summit. That can't happen again. We need to have immediate follow-up conversations at the agreed working level to begin to implement whatever, hopefully, comes out in some kind of joint statement.

Nick Schifrin: Sue Terry, one of the follow-up conversations, one of the follow-up actions that are likely to come out of this summit are some kind of verification, some kind of inspection. Can you talk about whether you have any faith that that's going to be significant and legitimate? And how should we judge any kind of agreement that the North Koreans will make about verification and inspection going forward?

Sue Mi Terry: I don't want to sound like the biggest pessimist in this group, but I do think – actually, I do think there's a couple things that North Korea is going to put on the table. And this is exactly what Victor was talking about. So it's going to sound and look good enough for a joint statement, by the way. There's Punggye-ri, there's Sohae/Tongchang-ri, and then they're going to put Yongbyon mega – five-megawatt reactor. It's going to be good enough for a joint statement.

Nick Schiffrin: Just quickly explain just in one or two sentences each of those, just to make sure that everyone –

Sue Mi Terry: Oh, the nuclear test site, and the satellite launch site, and Yongbyon. But it's not going to be all of Yongbyon. So they're going to – so I think they will allow – if this is a deal, I think that's what they're going to put on the table. And our corresponding measures would be something like a peace declaration, some easing of sanctions by allowing South Korea to go to United Nations to get the exemption needed to reopen Kaesong Industrial Complex and Kumgang and so on and opening of the liaison office. There's going to be some sort of a deal.

Sue Mi Terry: In terms of verification, I think—I think North Korea could even agree to a roadmap for those sites, for those things. And this is what Victor was talking about. The path – you can argue whether this is big enough or not, but I think they can even agree to a timeline or verification or allow inspectors in for those sites. So I guess the question then is, or the debate is, is that good enough? Is that – but I don't see more than that. I don't see North Korea has not – North Korea is not going to go beyond that. I think these three sites are going to be good enough, from North Korea's perspective, to just drive this.

Sue Mi Terry: It's going to take a lot of time, because each one can be negotiated in terms of getting people in, I mean, this is going to a time-consuming process. And that's going to be enough to last the entire Trump administration. And I think that is North Korea's game plan. We can then debate whether this is a good enough deal or not.

Nick Schiffrin: Richard Johnson, as you know, this is a complex problem. What's wrong with an agreement or at least some kind of framework or roadmap that does admit that this will take years?

Richard Johnson: I don't think there's anything wrong with that. I think that's the agreement you want. And I should say that I completely actually agree with everything that Sue said, but I don't think it's that bad, in the sense that you're shutting down Yongbyon – which, by the way, Yongbyon is a much bigger site than just the five-megawatt reactor and even what we know about enrichment there. But if you're getting at parts of Yongbyon, you're starting to shut down their nuclear material production. If it can be done in a verifiable way.

Richard Johnson: And I think your question about verification is key, because it matters what the verification is, who's doing that verification. And I think expectations for verification are really key. One of the mistakes I think we made in the six-party talks was we put off verification until later phases, and we kept saying, that will come later. There were reasons we did that, that politically made sense. But at the end of the day, I think that was a mistake.

Richard Johnson: We risk doing that again here by doing this kind of step-by-step approach if we don't at least signal to the North Koreans: Look, at the end of the day what we're going – you were asking about a roadmap – at the end of the day, what we're going to look for is the IAEA having a comprehensive – what's called a

comprehensive safeguards agreement with you, signing up to the additional protocol, which is the highest standard of nuclear safeguards, and being able to confirm that you don't have any nonpeaceful nuclear activities. That's what we're going to want from you eventually.

Richard Johnson: We're probably not going to get that at the outset, but they need to know that that's coming so that they can't claim, oh, you're moving the goalposts on us, we don't want to take you to undeclared facilities. So that being said, if the announcement next week in Hanoi is some sort of shutdown in Yongbyon, with real verification – which, by the way, includes letting the IAEA go in and start to assess how much material was produced there – that would be OK.

Richard Johnson: And one last thing I would add, going back to a discussion earlier on declarations, I just agree. I think it was Laura that said it. I really agree that you don't need the declaration right away. And I would argue, you don't need one declaration. You want a series of declarations. And it can start with whatever the deal is in this round. If the deal is Yongbyon, then the North Koreans could declare Yongbyon, declare what they're freezing, how much material they made there, and use that as a starting point for verification.

Richard Johnson: A lot of people forget, they gave us a declaration in the six-party talks. It was sitting in my safe for a while. It wasn't a very good declaration, but it was a starting point. And I don't think that we should discount when that declaration comes out that if it's incomplete that we should say that this whole process is a joke. No declaration when it first comes out is complete or correct. In this case, they will be holding things back from us intentionally. But you can use the process to get more at what they're not telling us.

Victor Cha: I have a slightly different view, since you want, like, some discussion, debate. (Laughter.)

Richard Johnson: This sounds very familiar to me. (Laughter.)

Nick Schiffrin: And, by the way, so we've got five or six more minutes before I'm going to turn it over to questions for the audience. We could go on forever, but we do want to hear from you. So think about what you want to ask. And we'll go just Victor and Mark.

Victor Cha: So the – you know, if they give up the things that Sue is talking about, and they will probably allow some sort of verification of it, right? and that'll be because they will have cleaned out everything that was in there. So during the 1994 Agreed Framework, you know, there were questions about another facility in a cave that there were concerns about. We finally got access to it, but long after they had cleaned it out. Literally there was nothing. It was just a cave, right? And obviously the intelligence agencies would not have said, we want to look at this site, unless there was something in it. So they may have cleaned it all out.

Victor Cha: Now, from a practical perspective, look, if that's what they're going to give us in a negotiation, OK, maybe we can build on it, like Richard said. Maybe we can

get, like, some sort of declaration, not a good one, a stepping stone. The key question to me then is what are we giving up for that? And we should not be giving up too much for that. The process can continue, but we should not be giving up, you know, too much for something along those lines.

Nick Schiffrin: We haven't done South Korea yet. So, Mark, you can respond to that if you want, but I also want you to talk about how you've been following the South Korean politics on this, and concerns or what you think about how President Moon is approaching this moment.

Mark Lippert: No, and thanks for this. It often gets lost that in addition to the denuclearization issue, which is a very international-oriented process, we have this inter-Korean process that's going on that, in many respects is linked, explicitly by President Moon, but also an argument that's posited by the summit in South Korea is that if you make progress quickly on the inter-Korean process, that will spillover into the denuclearization. So they're more linked than they have been in the past, I would argue. That's the first point.

Nick Schiffrin: And Biegun has explicitly said that.

Mark Lippert: Exactly. That's a good point too. The – just quickly on where they are, I guess what I would say is that for those who don't follow South Korean politics closely – I follow South Korean politics and Korean baseball a lot, so. (Laughter.) The left is in power. They've been out of power for 10 years. President Moon was never elected – was elected with – never got above 42 percent in the entire time he was running for office but had this big bump after this summitry started. The bump has started to come down. He got another bump when there was another summit, but the bump wasn't as high. And his big problem in South Korea is the economy. And the economy is rapidly deteriorating, especially among young people.

Mark Lippert: And with that, the disorganized conservatives are starting to – I'm probably a little more optimistic than some – they're starting to congeal and they're starting to tick up in the polls, right? How much that is is a matter of great debate, depending on which poll.

Nick Schiffrin: Well, they lost a recent election, didn't they, I mean local election?

Mark Lippert: Yeah, but look, their polling numbers are coming up, there's no doubt. And some are saying it's by a lot, some are saying by a little. So I think that's the array.

Mark Lippert: And I think the question here is two things: One, will this inter-Korean process, where the South Koreans really want to get Kaesong reopened, Kumgang – the ski resort – the rail system up and going sooner rather than later, will that cause frictions within the alliance? I think that's point one, I think something to watch. And the second point is: As this process goes on and if it doesn't produce some tangible results – and I think part of what the South Koreans want out of this is

end-of-war declaration, Kaesong, Kumgang, to show results – will Moon Jae-in and the Blue House become more constrained over time and less free to act?

Mark Lippert: And final thing – and I'll stop here – is that I think you've already seen a slight nod to this with the Moon Jae-in presidency in that his New Year's Day speech was principally about the economy, right? Now, there hasn't been big economic policy change in South Korea, but it's starting to show, I think, at least an acknowledgement that the South Korean public, while supportive of this and quite interested, there are real bread-and-butter issues that are, I think, starting to come into play in this – in this inter-Korean process, and quite frankly could spill over into some of the alliance issues.

Nick Schiffrin: So we've done three rounds. But just in one minute plus one, Vietnam. U.S. officials are beginning to say that, hey, North Korea, look, Vietnam is a communist state that's stayed communist, opened up to the West economically and diplomatically, and look how good they're going; isn't that a model? What is the response from the North Koreans about, hey, Vietnam is the model for North Korea's future?

Victor Cha: Right, right. And that is – so that's absolutely correct, but that's not the way the North Koreans see it, right? (Laughter.) I think the North Koreans in general feel insulted whenever there's a comparison of Vietnam to them because they see themselves as an advanced industrialized country and they see, you know, Vietnam as a small, poor Southeast Asian country. So we may look at it that way, and you know, perhaps the president will talk about it that way, and perhaps Kim will be polite and not say it, but inside he will be thinking "don't compare us to Vietnam." (Laughter.)

Nick Schiffrin: All right. On that note, we have taken our 45 minutes. So just – hi there. Just open – or just raise your hands and we'll see if we can get to everyone here. So I think I saw you, sir, in the third row as the first question.

Q: I'm Peter Humphrey, a(n) intel analyst and a former diplomat.

Nick Schiffrin: If you can just stand up, please.

Q: I'm Peter Humphrey, intel analyst and a former diplomat.

Q: I'm wondering why – the very first thing you do when you shut down the nuclear program is stop the uranium mining, and I'm wondering why that hasn't even gotten on the viewing screen of any of us. It doesn't come up as a demand, a suggestion. I mean, shouldn't we raise that one right to the top as soon as possible?

Nick Schiffrin: Yeah. Richard, do you want to take that one? That's probably –

Richard Johnson: Yeah. I'm not sure that I would agree with that. I think if you look at other programs – I think part of the question is what do you mean by shutting down a nuclear program. And we had this debate about denuclearization and definitions.

If North Korea is going to continue to have a civil nuclear program, I wouldn't necessarily start with the uranium mines. I would also add that the uranium mines are the least proliferation part – concern of their program because natural uranium, yellowcake, you really can't do anything with from a proliferation perspective. I would say that the place you want to start when shutting down a nuclear program is fissile material production because that's what can go into a bomb.

Richard Johnson: Now, the JCPOA provides a model that Iran was required to have enhanced monitoring over their uranium mining and their uranium production, and I do think that's something that could be adapted to a North Korean model. But if I had to pick what do I want to see first, it wouldn't be the mines and, in fact, by the way, those mines might be able to be repurposed into something else. We know that North Korea has potentially a very large cache of rare earth minerals that could be very useful economically and maybe they want to change those mines into mining not uranium but something else.

Nick Schiffrin: Deb Riechmann from the Associated Press. To your left there.

Q: So, quickly, two questions. One – two questions. One, you mentioned that you were worried that he was going to give up too much. So in Vietnam, what would be giving up the store in terms of Trump? And, secondly, anyone who's negotiated with the North Koreans, I'm wondering what is the hardest thing about negotiating with the North Koreans in a working-level situation?

Nick Schiffrin: Sue. I think the first one was to her.

Sue Mi Terry: Well, yeah. I would just repeat that's alliance equities. That's giving up too much. Initially, I think also, like, there's going to be a peace declaration. It's just a political statement. It's not legally binding, and I understand that and I think it's – I think we're heading in a direction where we're going to regret that. I was just a little bit concerned, though, that if you don't have a real understanding of what that means – we saw this problem before when even just the definition of denuclearization from the Singapore Summit there was a different interpretation of what that meant, right. North Koreans means South Korea and the U.S. troops and everything else and we meant denuclearization of North Korea.

Sue Mi Terry: So if there's a peace declaration, I think it's extremely important that we have – we spell out what that means so we don't leave with Washington and Pyongyang having different interpretations of that. So if that means there's no change to armistice, no change to the United Nations Command, no change to the U.S.-ROK combined forces, fine, then we need to spell that out. I think it's dangerous if we leave and we have different interpretations.

Sue Mi Terry: So, first, I was very worried about, potentially, President Trump pulling alliance equities, pulling out U.S. troops thing on the table. I think the chance of that has now lessened. But now with peace declaration, I would like to see something very concrete and very detailed.

Q: (Off mic.)

Sue Mi Terry: Otherwise, it now leaves room for a different interpretation and we know that's a problem. We saw that with the Singapore Summit even with the definition of denuclearization.

Nick Schiffrin: Laura, did you want to take the –

Laura Rosenberger: Yeah. Well, just I also – I'm so glad Sue made that point because I think it's – I couldn't agree more. We've had all these conversations about what does denuclearization mean. I think the – you know, for us, the peace declaration and the war declaration does feel very symbolic. I think the North Koreans have something much more specific in mind and I do worry that the ambiguity will allow them leverage to be able to come back and say, well, what you're doing is not consistent with an end to the war. You need to stop doing X, Y, and Z. I think we really need to guard against that.

Laura Rosenberger: On the question of negotiating with the North Koreans, I would just make two points. I think all of us probably have some fun stories. But two things to keep in mind. One is that the North Koreans – I mean, they have had – they have actually had some significant changeover in their negotiating team, which is notable from the past. Previously, it had really been the same people for years and years and years and years and years.

Laura Rosenberger: Now, so some of this may change with that turnover but, in general, they know us and our negotiating history with them better than we know ourselves. The nature of the turnover of our personnel both at the political level and the career level just with rotations around through different positions means that they tend to be able to dredge up all kinds of stuff that we may not even really recall. It's really important for anybody who's negotiating with them to know the history inside and out. That's number one.

Laura Rosenberger: Number two is, on the flip side – and this does get to Mark's point about why the leader-level piece of this is interesting – is that oftentimes it's been difficult at the working level to get empowered counterparts and some of that is about, you know, power structure from the top there. Part of that is, frankly, the foreign ministry within North Korea is not a particularly powerful ministry at all and so dealing with negotiating counterparts who may or may not actually have, you know, the guidance from the top or the ability to make decisions can lead to very drawn out decision-making processes.

Nick Schiffrin: Did you want to jump in quickly about that?

Victor Cha: Yeah. So just quickly. So, you know, if you had to draw a picture for the president, since he likes pictures, right, you'd have a big red line down the middle, say, and here are alliance assets – you don't negotiate those, right, because they are not to be given up in return for denuclearization. On the other side of that line it's things like sanctions, right, maybe liaison offices – things of

that nature. Those are things – if North Korea wants sanctions relief, you don't give them U.S. troops. If they want sanctions relief, the sanctions are on them for proliferation and for human rights abuses. So if they do something on those ends, then you get comparable sanctions relief.

Victor Cha: And this gets to your second question about negotiating with the North Koreans. One of the challenges are sometimes we want success so badly we start falling into their negotiation loops, right? And so one of their classic negotiation loops is this end-of-war declaration, right? They want to be in a position where we declare an end to the war and then for that reason we should also lift sanctions, right? Because we're not at war anymore; why do you have sanctions on us? So that's, like, falling into their negotiation loop where, no, the sanctions are on them for proliferation behavior and human right abuses. They improve those things, then you lift some comparable sanctions.

Mark Lippert: Let me just make one point on that, not to answer the question directly but just to underscore something that I think we've all sort of touched on but not explicitly. But, you know, you get the end-of-war declaration. You get liaison offices. You have the two presidents – or the president and the chairman negotiating or talking at a summit level. That starts to look like de facto recognition of a nuclear-weapons state. So I think there is a proliferation concern embedded in all of this, too, that I think is worth underscoring as well.

Nick Schifrin: I think I saw that hand, third row there in the middle. Yeah.

Q: Yes. I'm Bill Brown. I'm retired from the government. I work – I'm a nonresident fellow at KEI and I follow North Korea quite closely on the economic side.

Q: One thing I wondered if you all could address, we have – we like to talk about Trump, but we don't talk much about Kim, what's going on with him. The way I'm looking at it right now, looking at trade data, for example, last year, I suspect North Korea's trade with the rest of the world was at the lowest level since the Korean War. Imagine that. Trade with China officially was down 88 percent. I mean, their ability to export to China was down 88 percent. To me, since Singapore there's been a lot of pressure – huge amount of economic pressure from these trade sanctions, and that's what we've seen them reaching out for. But other things are happening there, too. I'm wondering if it's quite fair to say they haven't really – nothing's happened since the Singapore summit.

Q: Hugely important to me is the propaganda regime, where they're not – apparently – I don't know for a fact, but apparently there's much less anti-U.S. propaganda in North Korea, kind of a paradigm shift there where instead of treating America as the enemy they're sort of laying off. That seems like a pretty important thing to be happening, that plus the markets are growing like crazy. The place is changing rapidly.

- Q: I guess what I'm asking: What do you all think is going on in Kim Jong-un's mind and in his regime since Singapore? Are they – are they really feeling the pressure, or are they feeling like they're strong and able to deal with America?
- Nick Schiffrin: And I'll just break that into two, economics and propaganda. So who wants to take economics?
- Victor Cha: So I'll just say that I think we have to – I think we would all agree that there are economic changes taking place in North Korea. Again, we just released a study that geolocated the 431 official markets in North Korea. So there's clearly stuff happening.
- Victor Cha: But you – I think one has to – one can accept that that is, in fact, happening, but at the same time also accept that the regime's intentions with regard to political control, human rights abuses, proliferation have not changed either, right? And one good example of that is what's happening with cellphones in North Korea, right? There are now, what, 5 million cellphones in North Korea, dramatic increases, but at the same time – I don't know if Nat Kretchun is here from InterMedia. They've done a great report that shows that the North Korean government is now trying to monopolize the cellphone market. It used to be, you know, the Egyptians and the Chinese. They're trying to monopolize that market because they are trying to put stuff in to control, you know, through cellphones this sort of activity. So you can see both things that look like economic modernization and liberalization, but at the same time see the same political intentions to control on the part of the regime.
- Mark Lippert: I'll just – just two seconds on the economic piece, which I do think that comes down to why I probably have a slightly different view than Sue on the leverage question, right? I do think that there is internal pressure through markets and all of that to get some sanctions relief because it is changing the society. The regime wants to maintain control, as Victor says, and sanctions really complicates that. So you're right, I think we talk a lot about the leverage we have on the U.S. side, but I think it plays into their calculation as well.
- Mark Lippert: On the propaganda piece, you know, I'm not an expert. I do know some guys in Seoul who do nothing but this propaganda stuff. And having been featured in a couple of propaganda things, they – (laughter) – they came running up to me and saying, did you see this, can you autograph this? (Laughter.) I say, sure, you know. But it did – I did talk to them a lot about it.
- Mark Lippert: Look, I would say – I guess what I would say is interesting development, so deeply engrained. And so it's going to take time to see whether or not this is just a temporary toggle or something more meaningful.
- Nick Schiffrin: All right. Who wants to ask a very quick question and then we get quick answers? Anybody on this side? No, OK. Yeah, back – the back row.
- Q: Hi. I'm – (off mic).

- Q: (Comes on mic.) Hi. Troy Wells (sp), Georgetown SFS.
- Q: Let's say Trump comes out of this and is actually able to negotiate everything he wants and we have like a Libya-style denuclearization, theoretically. What then? Like, what – do we open up an embassy there? Do we just forget about them because they don't have nukes anymore? Where do we go from there?
- Nick Schiffrin: All right, 30-second lightning round. Everybody take a shot at that.
- Richard Johnson: You're not going to get a Libya deal. That's physically impossible. I think that you – if he got, quote, "everything that he wanted," I think that you are having to do that roadmap of what is the future of U.S.-North Korea relations. And I don't know what that looks like if North Korea doesn't feel integrated to the region. So I think the short answer is you got to get the regional partners involved at that point.
- Nick Schiffrin: Sue?
- Sue Mi Terry: I think there's a less than zero percent possibility – (laughter) – that we're going to get a Libya-style deal. First of all, Libya is just the wrong model for North Korea and it's a very different situation. North Korea is already a nuclear-weapons power. So I don't see that happening at all.
- Sue Mi Terry: Then just one more thing with just linking with the econ question. I don't think – I don't disagree that North Korea wants to reform and economically improve and Kim Jong-un wants all this. I mean, Victor always said if he can have his cake and eat it too, why not? But it's not economic reform instead of nuclear weapons; it's economic reform and nuclear weapons. So this is why I don't think it's – we're not going to see that happening next week or anytime soon.
- Nick Schiffrin: Quickly?
- Mark Lippert: If all of this happened – I'll stipulate to the skepticism. If all this happened, I think there would be a lot of interest in investment, especially from South Korean companies, probably Chinese companies. The real question then will become sort of rule-of-law questions and all of that because it's a terrible investment and climate right now. And how much especially the South Korean – (inaudible) – and government would want to put in into a highly risk – high-risk situation is an open question, and that doesn't even – in your hypothetical you got to build in all the human rights sanctions and everything else, too.
- Nick Schiffrin: Laura?
- Laura Rosenberger: I'll just pile onto that. (Laughter.) I noted earlier the concerns about North Korean cyber activity. They are significant. They are aggressive. They are growing. They are hugely problematic. North Korea has shown repeatedly, particularly under Kim Jong-un's leadership, his willingness and ability to use various asymmetric tools that challenge the international system and can prove highly destructive. In addition to the cyber piece there is, of course, you know,

the fact that not so long ago North Korea conducted a chemical weapons attack on foreign soil in a civilian location that could have imperiled hundreds and hundreds of people. So we are talking about a regime where the nuclear issue is not the only barrier to having it as a normal nation in the – in the international community.

Laura Rosenberger: If I could add one other last point while I have the mic, we've gotten through this entire conversation without talking about China. And so we could have a whole other conversation about China and the dimensions here, but I think it's really important to bear in mind whether it's talking about the economic development piece, whether it's talking about sanctions relief piece, whether it's talking about the end-of-war declaration, China has an enormous interest in all of these things. And in some ways I actually think that North Korea is sometimes actually carrying some of China's water, in part because North Korea has an interest in getting certain things from China. You know, China, Russia, and North Korea had a vice ministerial statement last year calling for sanctions relief. There are a number of different interests that are at play here that go beyond just North Korea when we start to talk about some of these potential gives on the U.S. part that we've got to keep in mind.

Nick Schifrin: Victor, last word?

Victor Cha: Yeah. So the question was if President Trump succeeds in Hanoi next week. I think the answer is in his own mind he has already succeeded – (laughter) – and it will be a huge success. (Laughter.)

Nick Schifrin: All right. On that note, thank you very much to the panel. Sorry we didn't get to all the questions, but thank you guys very much. (Applause.)

MS: We will not have a formal break. If you could just sit tight for about two minutes we're going to transition to our next panel on human rights and humanitarian issues. Thank you again for this panel, which was very insightful.

(END)