Center for Strategic and International Studies

“CSIS Korea Chair 10 Year Anniversary Celebration”

Speaker:
Dr. John Hamre,
President and CEO,
CSIS

Award Presentation by:
Ambassador Lee Sihyung,
President,
Korea Foundation

Introductory Remarks:
Cheon Joonho,
Embassy of the Republic of Korea to the United States

Featured Panel Discussion – “Prospects for the Alliance and Nuclear Diplomacy”
Panelists:
Max Boot,
Jeane J. Kirkpatrick Senior Fellow for National Security Studies,
Council on Foreign Relations

Gen. Vincent Brooks (ret.),
Former Commander,
UNC/CFC/USFK

Victor Cha,
Senior Adviser and Korea Chair, CSIS; D.S. Song-KF Professor of Government, Georgetown University; Former National Security Council

Ambassador Kathleen Stephens,
President and CEO, Korea Economic Institute of America;
Former U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea

Moderator:
Ambassador Mark Lippert,
Senior Advisor, CSIS Korea Chair;
Former U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea

Host:
Marie DuMond,
Associate Director and Associate Fellow,
CSIS Korea Chair

Location: 2nd Floor, CSIS Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

Time: 5:00 p.m. EDT
Date: Monday, June 24, 2019

Transcript By
Superior Transcriptions LLC
www.superiortranscriptions.com
MARIE DUMOND: (In progress) – honored to, on behalf of CSIS and the Korea Chair, offer a most sincere thank you and welcome to some special guests who have helped make tonight’s celebration possible.

Our gold sponsor, the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry, our silver sponsor, the American Chamber of Commerce in Korea, and our special sponsor, Corstone. And of course, we thank the Korea Foundation and Ambassador Lee for being our co-host throughout today.

With that, please direct your attention to our screens as we share with you our congratulatory video.

(A video presentation is shown.)

(Music.)

VOICEOVER: High-level policy discussions. Cutting edge research. Mentoring the next generation. Ten years ago, CSIS’s Korea Chair began changing the strategic study of Korea, with initiatives like these. Since then, the Korea Chair’s nonpartisan objective research has shaped the public policy debate on Korean issues that matter to the American and Korea people. The Korea Chair pursues its subject through everything from predictive analytics, satellite imagery studies, and senior policy groups, to a stunning custom website and a much-followed presence on multiple social platforms.

Since its inception, it has been led by Dr. Victor Cha, director for Asian affairs on President Bush’s National Security Council from 2004 to 2007, Dr. Cha is the go-to Korean affairs expert. As inaugural chair, he has continued to drive the program forward to the international renown it enjoys today.

The CSIS Korea Chair was the first permanently endowed policy studies program on Korea at major U.S. national security think tank. Often imitated, never surpassed. Tonight, we celebrate the chair’s past 10 years and toast to its next decade of continued growth and success.

RICHARD ARMITAGE: It has been 10 years since the inauguration of the Korea Chair here at CSIS. That chair has been occupied so ably and so well by Dr. Victor Cha, who has become the preeminent voice concerning Peninsula of Korea affairs, as well as northeast Asia.

HARRY HARRIS: For a decade now, the Korea Chair’s program’s innovative research has made valuable contributions to the policy discussion on the Korean Peninsula – one of the most pressing U.S. national security priorities.

KATHLEEN STEPHENS: I well-remember when the Korea Chair at CSIS was established ten year ago. I was serving in Seoul as American ambassador there. And so I’ve seen what CSIS Korea Chair has done over the last decade, right from the very beginning.

THOMAS HUBBARD: As former ambassador to Korea, and as chairman of the Korea Society in New York, I’ve been a regular attendant of CSIS programs. I’ve often participated myself. And the Chair has made a very valuable contribution to understanding of U.S. Korea relations.
ROBERT GALLUCCI: Well, we depend upon the Chair, we depend upon your leadership, convening power here at CSIS, and certainly the leadership of Victor Cha.

ANDREA MITCHELL: Victor Cha has been a key partner, with imagery, with interesting information, with all of the updates. I’ve even been to Pyongyang with Victor Cha. And we really are so grateful for everything that you do, for all the valuable information you provide to our country.

ALEXANDER VERSBOW: John Hamre and CSIS should be very proud of the tremendous achievements of the Korea Chair during its first 10 years. Under Victor Cha’s strong leadership the program has become the most influential source of research and analysis on our important defense relationship with Seoul, on Korea’s evolving strategic role in Northeast Asia and, of course, on the North Korean nuclear issue. Those satellite imagery analyses are literally beyond parallel. Who needs the CIA?

AMBASSADOR CHO YOON-JE: The next 10 years will be a crucial period for all of us as we work together for lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula. I truly hope that the Korea Chair will continue to make constructive contributions. I look forward to seeing the Korea Chair, Dr. Cha, and his team continue to play a prominent role in the future.

MARK LIPPERT: Dr. Hamre, congratulations on an overwhelmingly successful 10 years of the Korea Chair. Dr. Cha, let me just say, as someone who’s worked deeply on the Korean Peninsula and throughout Asia, there is no more important, influential, and impactful think tank than CSIS and the Korea Chair.

ANNA FIFIELD: Congratulations, Dr. Hamre and CSIS, on the 10th anniversary of the Korea Chair. Victor Cha and his team have been an invaluable resource to us, journalists, over the last decade, and we look forward to working with them for another decade to come.

OH JOON: When I was working with Victor on North Korea, I was always impressed, not only by his cool-headed, brilliant analysis of what’s going on in that often incomprehensible country, but also by the warm and humane approach he takes towards North Korean defectors and refugees.

MR. ARMITAGE: I congratulate Dr. Cha and Dr. John Hamre for the success of the past decade and look forward to even greater successes in the decade to come.

MR. GALLUCCI: John, I want to congratulate you and CSIS for ten wonderful years of the Korea Chair.

MR. HUBBARD: I’d like to congratulate John Hamre and his team here at CSIS for the success of the Korea Chair.

MS. MITCHELL: Congratulations to CSIS for the 10th anniversary of the Korea Chair.

MR. JOON: I wish the Korea Chair even greater successes in contributions in meeting challenges on the Korean Peninsula and securing peace on the peninsula at this critically important time.

MS. STEPHENS: I am so grateful for all you’ve done, and all you’re going to do in the next decade. Congratulations to John Hamre and everyone at the Korea Chair.
MR. VERSHBOW: So as a former ambassador to the Republic of Korea, let me just simply say chukahabnida.

AMB. CHO: Chukahabnida.

MS. FIFIELD: Chukahabnida.

MR. LIPPERT: (Speaks Korean.)

(Video presentation ends.) (Applause.)

MS. DUMOND: Minister of Public Diplomacy Cheon will now share some remarks from ROK foreign minister.

CHEON JOONHO: Hello, everyone. My name is Cheon Joonho. I’m minister of Korean embassy here. It is my personal honor to be here with you today. As we have observed, the peace process on the Korean Peninsula is making meaningful progress as many important actions are taking place in the region. Especially I’d like to note that today’s forum is both timely and important, as we are expecting another successful ROK-U.S. summit this weekend in Seoul.

As I congratulate the 10th anniversary of the Korea Chair, I wish continued success in its future endeavor by playing a constructive role to strengthen our great alliance. On that note, I am pleased to deliver the congratulatory message by Her Excellency Kang Kyung-wha, the foreign minister of Korea, who regrets that she could not be here today.

As the first Korea chair in a U.S. think tank, the CSIS Korea Chair has played a truly invaluable role in helping the people of U.S. gain a deeper understanding of Korea’s foreign and security partnership. Not only has it deepened the intellectual exchanges between our two countries, but it has also expanded the scope of its work, now ranging from security to economic agenda, and the global issues such as health and cybersecurity.

In this regard, I would like to convey my deepest appreciation to Dr. Victor Cha for 10 years of hard work as the Korean Chair. It has been inspiring to note his dedication and the contribution to raising awareness on Korea-related issues among the American people. I am confident that the CSIS Korea Chair will play a constructive role in promoting the current peace process on the Korean Peninsula. Through its extensive networks, I hope that the Korean Chair will continue to offer great wisdom and insight, thus playing a crucial role in harnessing support for complete denuclearization and a permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Extending my heartfelt congratulations to the CSIS on the 10th anniversary of the Korean Chair. I look forward to honor the 10, 20, 30 more years of golden accomplishment. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MS. DUMOND: We are now honored to invite Korea Foundation president Ambassador Lee back to the podium for our next section of our ceremony. Thank you, Ambassador Lee. (Applause.)

LEE SIHYUNG: Sorry to do the same thing twice a day. (Laughter.) I’ve been in other conferences where there were bigger audience than today, but I’ve never seen this big audience who
have been sitting from the morning until the end of the day. So I believe you all are staying in this room just to congratulate 10th anniversary of Korea Chair, CSIS. Well, after listening to the congratulations from almost everybody whom I want to – I may have wanted to listen to, you all picked the right people to congratulate the 10th anniversary. But I still have a few words of my own congratulation, since I have prepared it, consuming many hours on the flight. So let me just congratulate, following my text.

Well, first of all, President John Hamre, and, well, I see many former ambassadors here and generals, I just would like to appreciate all of their attendance. Very good evening. It is my great pleasure, again, and honor, to be part of this occasion to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the U.S. Korea Chair. I would like to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to President John Hamre for the insight and determination he has shared since we decided to install the Korea Chair at CSIS.

The Korea Foundation has been closely collaborating with CSIS to promote greater global awareness and understanding of various issues regarding the Korean Peninsula, even before the Korea Chair was in place. In 2009, CSIS and the Korea Foundation then established the Korea Chair for the first time, not only in the think tanks of America but in the world. It was possible with the help of other donors from Korea, including KITA, which is Korea International Trade Associations, and FKI, the Federation of Korean Industries, and the Korean Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Well, today I congratulate this anniversary also on behalf of these donors – donor organizations from Korea.

Well, then 10 years have passed. Well, when I watched the video, 10 years looks so fast. But there is an old Korean saying that goes: 10 years is long enough for the landscape of the mountains and the course of the rivers to change. Well, in fact, over the last 10 years that the Korea Chair has been in existence, many changes have occurred, and for the better, changes of which we are very proud.

Korea-related research has become more vigorous and a greater number of policy experts have come to understand Korea’s view and positions. The Korea Chair at CSIS has also proved to be a cornerstone for similar positions in both the U.S. and in Europe. Well, in 2017, we proudly installed the KF-VUB Korea Chair at the Free University of Brussels. And with us today is the current chairholder, the inaugural chairholder, Dr. Ramon Pacheco Pardo. Thank you for coming, joining. The RAND Corporation in Santa Monica will also hold a launching ceremony for their own Korea chair on Thursday. I’m sure it will contribute to in-depth Korea-related research on the American West Coast.

I’ve always admired – well, actually, not only myself. Many Koreans have admired the meaningful contributions of other countries chair to institutes in the U.S. and Europe. And I am proud that this has become a reality for the Korea chairs as well. Although we are still in the beginning stages, I am highly confident that the Korea Chair at CSIS, along with its younger siblings, will continue to provide insights into the solutions for issues related to the Korean Peninsula, including peacebuilding. In doing so, the chair plays an important role in solidifying Korean-American relations as an unwavering alliance.

Before I close, I’d like – I would like to express our utmost gratitude for the concerted efforts of CSIS and its staff for operating this Korea Chair. My special thanks go to Dr. Cha for his contributions over the last 10 years in helping the Korea Chair to build deep root at CSIS. I’m sure that today’s event wouldn’t have been possible without him. With all my gratitude, and from the bottom of my heart, I
would like to present a humble certificate of appreciation to CSIS through President John Hamre on behalf of the Korea Foundation.

John, please. Congratulations. Thank you, Dr. Hamre. (Applause.)

JOHN J. HAMRE: Let me just say a few words of thanks. Well, let me just say just a very few words of thanks, because we have a very interesting program coming and I’m not going to be interesting, so I’ll be short.

You know, one of the great injustices in life is that the boss gets the credit for things that really the talented people do for him. So this wasn’t anything that I did. This was Victor and his colleagues that have over 10 years created a remarkable program. And I’m so grateful for their work, and very proud to be associated with them, and thankful for the support that we’ve received from the Korea Foundation, from the other supporters in Korea that made this possible. Frankly, my eye looks around the room and I see many people that helped make this possible. So we owe thanks all around.

This is a very important thing for me personally. I was – I was born eight days after the start of the Korean War. My whole professional life has been really connected with Korea. And I remember the first time I had a chance to visit, how impressed I was at Korea. That little enclave of people fighting so hard for peace and prosperity for them and their families. Is aid, we have to be a part of this. And I’m so grateful you gave us a chance to be a part of this.

So I have an emotional tie to Korea. I’ve got a Korean godson. And he’s in my prayer petitions every night. But I also have an intellectual commitment to this, because I am convinced that more than ever the strength and independence and the prosperity of Korea is crucial to the survival of democracy in Asia – absolutely crucial. And that’s crucial for us, for America. So our work is still in front of us, Victor. I’m going to stay as close to you as I possibly can, because I think it’s been good for CSIS, certainly, but it’s been great for the American-Korea relationship.

Thank you for this honor. And I’m just very grateful that all of you would come and share this evening with us. Thank you. (Applause.)

MS. DUMOND: Thank you, Dr. Hamre. And now for our featured session, I would like to invite Ambassador Mark Lippert and our distinguished panelists for the session entitled, Prospects for the Alliance and Nuclear Diplomacy. Please give them a warm welcome as they come to the stage. (Applause.)

MR. LIPPERT: Thanks, everybody. Is my microphone on? Not yet? OK, there we go.

Well, thanks, again. Victor, Dr. Hamre, congratulations on a – on a really remarkable 10 years. And it’s a great honor to be back here again with such a distinguished panel. I think people that really – this panel needs no real introduction, but I’ll just quickly go down the line. We have Ambassador Kathleen Stephens, who was ambassador at the time of the Korea Chair founding, and moreover became really the most famous ambassador in history in terms of public diplomacy. Especially, I think, her bike is still in the embassy somewhere there.

General Vincent Brooks, the last USFK commander before Abe Abrams – as I joked today, before – Abe and I were close in the Pentagon – before Abe kind of wrecked the place. But well-done in getting us to that point. I’m kidding, but in all seriousness, long distinguished career in the U.S.
military. Punctuated by tours as the head of all Army forces in the Pacific, United States Forces Command, several tours in Iraq and in the Middle East. It’s a long – and the Joint Staff as well.

Max Boot, we have one of – literally we’re lucky to be graced with one of the preeminent historians, analysts, of the exercise of American foreign policy. And we’re really lucky to have him here today. It’s a prolific list of articles and books that you’ve written, many of which are critically acclaimed at the highest levels. So well done, Max, and thanks for being here. And last but not least, Victor. Victor, we saw all the accolades. Welcome back to your home court.

And with that, I’ll get us underway. Let’s go to the first slide. I wanted to bring up one slide, if we can do that. OK, so we’re – on the theme of 10 years, this is where – there’s a couple of things from 10 years ago that put us back into 2009. First, we have President Obama sworn in as president of the United States. And then the photo next to him reciprocal visits by President Lee Myung-bak, president of the Republic of Korea, and President Obama that year. Ambassador Stephens right in the middle of it.

We have Secretary Gates ordered the swap-out of military commanders in Afghanistan, and the president ordered 17,000 more troops into Afghanistan that year. So the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were central, I think, to foreign policymaking here in Washington. And the reason I have Ridgway and MacArthur is that at least one article I read said that that swap out of a military commander in Afghanistan was the first time that that had been done since the Korean War in a combat theater. Not sure if it’s completely accurate, but I’ll be ready to be stand corrected by General Brooks. But that was interesting, to make the connection between Korea and Afghanistan.

Remember too, President Clinton’s – next line down – President Clinton’s visit to Pyongyang, to free to American journalists. We had the second North Korean nuclear test as well. We had family reunions at Kumgang that year. And on pop culture, American Idol was the number-one show in the United States. (Laughter.) Extra points if you can figure out the winner there. And the number-one show on Korean TV was Queen Seondeok, as – I don’t watch Korean dramas, but I’m told it was very popular. Final line, Beast, which later because Highlight, the K-pop bad was founded that year, and still exists, doing well, thriving, despite some members who had to do military service.

Skipping over the nuclear test that ended up in this last row, you had two funerals, two state funerals in South Korea that year of Kim Dae-jung and President Roh. And last, but not least, the KIA Tigers and the New York Yankees both won their respective baseball series, and they are the two teams in their leagues that have won the World Series or the K Series the most. So that’s 2009 in a nutshell, just to remind people of where we were a decade ago.

So let me just set it up with this. Ambassador Stephens, while you were in the middle of this flurry of activity, we had this – we had obviously a state visit – or, not state visit – but a visit by President Obama to Seoul in November 2009. And The New York Times wrote an article saying: Obama Takes – headline – Obama Takes Stern Tone with North Korea and Iran. Let me just read you two or three quotes from that. It said, “On the North, Mr. Obama said he was sending his North Korea envoy to Pyongyang next month for talks designed to get the nation back to the bargaining table. But we warned that even getting the North back to the table would not be enough.”

On the alliance, South Korea – quote, “South Korea quickly proved true to the predictions that it would be more accommodating to Mr. Obama, with whom Mr. Lee has been cooperating closely on key issues, including efforts to eventually halt North Korea’s nuclear program.” And last, on trade, the
only point of potential contention on the visit was that Washington was still not moving to ratify a free trade agreement agreed upon two years ago. Mr. Obama said that he wanted to get it done, but acknowledged that, quote, “there’s obviously a concern in the United States of the incredible trade imbalances that have grown in the past few years.”

So a little it past is prologue. So just let’s look back over the last 10 years. That was 2009. This is then. You had responsibility over the broad swath of every facet of the relationship. You’re now deeply in the middle of all this at KEI. I’m you’re a chairman. Where are we? Where are we on these key issues? Set us up. Where have we come in the last 10 years? Where are we today?

MS. STEPHENS: Well, Mark, thank you very much. If you ask me where have we come, I’m afraid if we’re going down memory lane I’m going to go back even a little bit further. But, first, I also want to say congratulations to John Hamre and Victor, and the Korea Foundation, for this extraordinary collaboration over the last 10 years. And if I may say, and all the praise to Victor is all well deserved. One other thing I would notice, I noticed in the photographs, is that what’s happened over 10 years is you now actually have a few women here and elsewhere working on Korea. That’s a great accomplishment, and I think it’s going to deepen our expertise and dialogue, and I congratulate you on that too, and thank everyone who’s involved in putting this together.

Yeah, I thought you were going to go – show us another slide. I have to prompt him.

MR. LIPPERT: Oh, that’s right. I have – well, I have a second slide. I was going to save that for Brooks, but go ahead. Please bring up the second slide, yeah.

MS. STEPHENS: Oh, you want to save it for later?

MR. LIPPERT: No, it’s OK. Bring it up. See there –

MS. STEPHENS: Because I remember – you may not recognize me over there – but that one of the left, that’s all of us 10 years ago, right?

MR. LIPPERT: That’s right. So here are the panelists in ten years. I was going to do it for General Brooks because he was on the podium there.

MS. STEPHENS: Oh, I’m sorry.

MR. LIPPERT: On the big red one. But that’s everybody 10 years ago. Kathy, you’re looking very ambassadorial there, leading the charge I would notice. That’s why I picked that. We have General Brooks there, giving – I think it was at a birthday ceremony, believe it or not. That’s what was on the internet. Max, you were giving a talk, that’s what the description said. And, Victor –

MAX BOOT: All I can tell, Mark, is that I had a lot more hair back then. (Laughter.)

MR. LIPPERT: And finally, Victor, that is – that’s the photo from you in the The Chosun Ilbo announcing the formation of the Korea Chair, so.

MS. STEPHENS: Oh. It’s all very significant. Well, you’d sent me this slide. And so the reason I was kind of prompted by it was because it did make me recall, that’s November 2009, just as President Obama was leaving after his visit – his first visit to Korea ever. And it had gone very well.
And it was set up, as in The New York Times, as I was the last stop on a trip that had taken them to China, Singapore for APEC – or, Japan, I think, first, and then Korea.

And he’d had a bit of kind of a rough ride in the press, if you like, in each of those places. And it was almost like as he got to Korea there was kind of an audible sigh of relief, because he found: Now, I can talk to people. Now, you know, it’s not so much a game of gotcha. We’re actually working together on something. I’m not saying it wasn’t that way in Japan or Singapore, but that was – it as the end of the trip after a kind of a tough time in China. It was a very good visit.

But this is as he’s going out to depart in November. I want to say, it’s very, very cold. And what I remember about his is he was practically jogging to the plane. And I was trying to say to him: Next time you come, I really want you to give a speech to students. I had this long list of all these things I wanted him to do. And he said: I need to get back and see my daughter’s play. (Laughter.) Because I’ve been away for 10 days, or it was quite a long trip. But it did go quite well.

And of course, it made me reflect, and you asked me to be a little bit personal about this. And we’re all – it made me reflect, I was just coming to the end of my first year there as ambassador. I mean, I had a very unlikely journey. I’m not going to tell you all about that, but it certainly made me think, as I listened to our new president talk about the U.S.-ROK relationship, what I had personally witnessed.

I first went to Korea in 1975 as a Peace Corps volunteer. I lived in the countryside. Wasn’t involved in high policy. But I was very aware of some of the things that were going on, and of course learned about some of it later. And what were the issues on the U.S.-ROK agenda in 1975? One of our predecessors as ambassador, Richard Snyder was there at the time. And he was saying to the South Koreans: Give up your nuclear weapons program or we’ll end the alliance. So nuclear weapons in South Korea was a big issue, or a fledgling program, I guess we’d say.

Human rights as a huge, huge issue, with lots and lots pressure coming on that. The South Korean fear of abandonment in the aftermath of the Nixon doctrine, the withdrawal from Vietnam. And still many security concerns. You’ll remember it was 1976 that the – that the U.S. military officers were killed very viciously by – with an ax by Panmunjom.

What I really remember from that time in the ’70s, I won’t linger too long, is sitting in a little Chinese restaurant in Gyeongsang Namdo, having my jajuangnim (ph) for lunch. And there was a little black and white television in the corner. And the news came over that president – Jimmy Carter had been elected president. And everyone else in the – in this little restaurant – and, again, this is a time when there wasn’t, say, a lot of freedom of press or a lot of debate – turned to me and said: We understand that President Carter, now that he’s been elected, is going to withdraw all troops from South Korea because of our human rights. But don’t you know that that means, you know, that North Korea has much worse human rights? Said, I’ll take that message back.

But in any event, I say that to – I left Korea then, and I went back in the 1980s as a young diplomat at another time of great change, continued economic growth. But Koreans now – and I was a political officer. I was political. Koreans, many of them, young people, very angry at the United States. Thinking that we had not helped to promote democratization in the aftermath of Park Chung-hee’s assassination, blaming us for a lot of the things that had gone on, and at the same time this great energy on the part of Koreans to say, well, by the time we have the Olympics – and you’ve written
about this – we want to have democracy. So a very thrilling, inspiring, challenging time, which really shaped me as a diplomat.

But I left in 1989. So now I’m fast-forwarding 20 years later. And you can think that everything I did in Korea was kind of infused with this sense of this is so extraordinary to see where – not only where the Republic of Korea has come, as John talked about, but where the U.S.-ROK relationship has come, and where we are. And one of the things that President Obama said in 2009 on his visit which was not reported by The New York Times, but was I think I repeated again and again – maybe this is public diplomacy, maybe it’s – (laughs) – is: President Obama said, the U.S.-ROK relationship is stronger than it’s ever been. You know – (speaks in Korean).

And I – you know, you’re supposed to be the biggest cheerleader for the relationship as the ambassador, right? I never dared to say that, because I was always sensitive about overselling the relationship. But he said it. And so the other – the other I guess rule of being an ambassador – well, at least until lately – is you quote your president. (Laughter.) And so, you know, I’d quote him. But then I would sort of ask the Korean audience, actually sort of do you agree, and if so, why? That’s a little professorial, I suppose. But then of course, being a – really practicing to be a professor – then I’d tell them the answer. And I’d say, here’s why I think maybe it is stronger than ever.

And at the top of the list was Korea’s democratization. And the fact that that democratization – imperfect, incomplete, as I guess we would also say about this country at this point – had meant that the United States and the Republic of Korea had had shifting administrations from across the political spectrum in both countries, and we had managed to work together on a lot of issues, including trade.

So that kind of fast-forwards me into where we were in 2009. You’re right, people kind of forget, the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, back in the news like Iran and North Korea just over the last year or so, it was signed under the President George W. Bush and Roh Moo-hyun administrations and then not ratified. I mean, Victor remembers this well. Finally it was ratified a year after I left as ambassador. So I didn’t get to enjoy the ratification, but under different administrations in both countries. It took a long time, but it got done.

From 2009 to the present, and I know this continues and I saw it at that time, all the areas in which we work, the kind of global areas – and you worked very much on this, grew, not only because of Korea’s greater economic heft and because of its own global presence, but, again, because of shared values about development, about human rights. We – and I think the public opinion overall just turned much more positive.

I always thought about – that the Achilles’ heel, at least in South Korea, of the relationship was broad public opinion. We always had the elite. You know, we had the English-speaking elite, which understood the relationship. But there was always an ambivalence and a divided country where we had tens of thousands of troops over the years. And how did we reach that? Again, a free press, demonstrations, changes of government, and dialogue helped with all that. Maybe bike riding too, I don’t know.

So I think what we’ve seen over the last 10 years is that our relationship has become, our alliance, more institutionalized based on shared values. But I do see coming up to where we are now – and I think we’ve already talked about this earlier today, really looming new challenges. Now, some of them I think we’re well-prepared for. And the one thing I wanted to say, especially with Victor here, is I think another thing we learned in this period of – this is a little bit before 2009 – so 2005, when you
went to the NSC, and I was at the State Department. And we got started on the six-party talk effort in the second term of the Bush administration.

A lot of that was about alliance management, you know? President Bush and President Roh Moo-hyun were pretty far apart. And there was quite a bit of tension in the relationship about how to approach North Korea. We were able to work together in the six-party talks. And I think one thing I hope we’ve learned going forward, and I hope we keep in mind now, is that North Korea’s challenging enough, but we do need to find a way to work together. And those are – those are easy words to say. We all say them. It’s much harder to do. And I think we did that to some extent in the six-party talks.

But now I think the challenge is – and I’m sorry to be so long here, but you gave me the floor first – is, one, the nuclear issue is clearly much harder. You know, when we agreed to the statement of principles in 2005, North Korea had not yet tested. It was only the second test in 2009. Now we’re at a very different place. And another thing about 2009 that wasn’t in here, and I’m not – implied in your slides – wasn’t there, in 2008 Kim Jong-il had a stroke.

You know, we went through a period of great uncertainty in North Korea. And I think that’s an important point, not just as a fact of – historical fact. But, you know, tend to kind of intellectualize so much about our own roles and our own policy, we forget that other places have agency and influence too. And North Korea was going through – let’s say, quite a change for several years.

So with that, I think we’re in a much obviously more difficult place with the nuclear issue. I do think that President Trump has broken the taboo on high level meetings that, if I may say, if a Democratic president had ever done it, he probably would have been impeached. But I can say these things, because I’m not in government anymore. But he did that. And I do think it means whatever administration follows, the aperture has widened in terms of the kinds of diplomatic approaches you might take. I think that’s a good thing.

But it’s going to remain very challenging. And the second thing I worry about is what the earlier panel talked about, is strategic flux, strategic uncertainty. You know, the whole sense that the role of the United States in East Asia, the U.S.-led world order, is in a state of some challenge. Not least from within our own country. And that will, and is, having an impact on the alliance.

MR. LIPPERT: No, thanks, Kathy. Really a great opening, really sweep of the landscape, soup to nuts, and a lot of insight and history there. I just wanted to turn to General Brooks now. And General Brooks, you, like Kathy, also served in Korea early in your career. If I’m not mistaken, the second ID in the 8th Army, right? And then came back as USFK commander later. Feel free to pick up on any of the threads that Kathy addressed. But the one thing I wanted to ask you is: Take one step back. Kathy talked a lot about the peninsula, talked a lot about domestic politics in South Korea. Your – the job you had before USFK was you were in charge of all Army forces in Asia. Gave you a broad sweep of the Asian landscape.

And I just wanted to read to you from that New York Times article in 2009. Said, quote, “The South Korean government officials and diplomatic analysts said that the visit of President Obama represented a chance for Seoul to raise its profile with the Obama administration by stressing its reliability as a partner in Asia.” So maybe taking a step back, could you address where the development in Asia have been over the past decade, how South Korea fits into that, and then the dynamics on the Peninsula, as a result of all those machinations that you witnessed and dealt with firsthand, both as commander of all forces Army and as USFK commander as well.
GENERAL VINCENT BROOKS (RET.): Well, thanks, Mark. And, of course, it’s great to be with you again. A great teammate while we served over there in Seoul. And couldn’t have done it without you. So I really appreciate it. It’s good being with you, and with such a distinguished panel. Congratulations, Victor, on 10 years. And to John Hamre, early happy birthday, since we’re now at the – really at the anniversary of the state of the Korean War. It was tonight in Washington. And so eight days from now you have a birthday, so an early happy birthday to you. (Laughter.)

But as we think back to that time in 2009, really so much was going on in the world. The picture you showed, I was in command of the First Infantry Division of the U.S. Army at the time. And it’s something that I certainly greatly enjoyed and appreciated having the privilege of doing, but was carrying with me the experience of being a battalion commander at Camp Casey close to the demilitarized zone 10 years or so earlier. It was 1998 where I came out of command. So just a little bit over 10 years, not quite 11 at that point in time.

And that shaped me considerably in terms of understanding the importance of the missions overseas, candidly, how little was known about Korea and what was still going on in Korea at that point in time – 56 years after a temporary armistice agreement was signed. It’s still in effect, yet still temporary, after all these many years.

And so to zoom out a little bit, I think about the deployment of Korean forces to Iraq. So that’s where I was heading with that division. I took my own division back into combat in Iraq in 2009-2010. And we were at the end of the, quote/unquote, “surge,” which I’d also been present for in a different unit just two years before that. But the Zaytun Division was also there at the time. The Republic of Korea had committed forces into a hostile environment with the United States as part of a larger coalition, just as they had done before in Vietnam and, of course, our time serving side-by-side in Korea and on the peninsula.

And so they had already proven themselves, in my view, as a reliable partner in international security and being committed to things where likeminded nations needed to come together and put themselves at some degree of risk. The Zaytun Division had just come back a few months before this, returning in December of 2008. I think at that time there was – I see General Sharp up there walking with Ambassador Kathy Stephens and with the president. There was already discussion about transforming the relationship of the military aspects of the Korea-U.S. alliance, a change of operational control of forces, putting South Korea into the lead of the combined command for the first time, a maturation of that process, and perhaps a reduction of the type of role and activities of the U.S. forces there. And a plan was laid out for doing that.

So the OPCON transition plan, as it’s referred to, but also the creation of a successor organization to U.S. Forces Korea, Korea Command, and changing the structure. A discussion about creating a new base that pulled the U.S. forces further to the south. All that actually has happened in the last few years, has gone into fruition. Perhaps on a different timeline then envisioned then, which is, I believe, the important point about how things looked in 2009. It looked like things were maybe going to get better for a period of time, and that some risk could be taken in terms of how the security structure was arrayed on the Korean Peninsula.

In the meantime, we saw changing dynamics around the region. And certainly the perch that I was upon as the commander of U.S. Army Pacific, responsible for all Army forces from the west coast of the United States to essentially the west coast of India, and from the Antarctic to the Arctic Circle.
So about 52 percent of the world. And most of the world’s population inside of that. Actively engaging with them and trying to explain to them in a military support to public diplomacy role what the United States was thinking as it used terms like “pivot,” or “rebalance,” or both. What does it mean? What does it look like? What’s the reality of that? And how important it would be for other countries in the region to be contributors to security while also working with an emerging China?

China’s rise was evident at that point in time. Their economy was now beginning to pick up the pace significantly. And that was causing questions throughout the region about what would China be? The U.S., at that time, certainly hoped that it would be a China that was living within the rules-based order, contributing to peace and prosperity throughout the Indo-Pacific region. And in some measures, that was happening. But in other measures, China was creating a different arrangement, a new great-power relationship, is what they were beginning to seek and beginning to talk about, as early as then.

Now, certainly from then up to the present, we’ve seen this course navigating in very different ways, which leads us now into a position of labeling China as a security concern in the most recent Indo-Pacific strategy. A threat to a free and open Pacific is what has emerged. And I think perhaps dangerously, and perhaps even narrowly, causing the U.S. to focus on a China in a certain role, and not seeing that there’s more to the relationship than just the competition.

So we have this now happening in the background, which then causes other countries in the region to, on one hand, question what the U.S. commitment is going to be. Is the U.S. too involved in the Middle East now? Will the U.S. ever be able to bring an end to that? And if it cannot, how do we hedge our own security concerns, our own economic concerns, realizing that this China is growing? That’s what I think opens the door then to the comment about South Korea being a reliable partner in security in Asia. The reality has been since then, especially with the period of time that I was there in Korea as the senior commander from 2016 to 2018, it was a time for South Korea to turn its attention away from Korea.

Very clearly, South Korea’s attention had to stay focused on the Korean Peninsula as they went through an impeachment, as their democratic institutions survived incredible internal pressures, and emerged from that, while still under great pressure from North Korea, and then later under pressure from China, and under pressure from Japan. A very complex circumstance emerged for Korea in a period of time that people thought were going to get a little bit better. And they didn’t, until early 2018.

And certainly the 2017 window looked like it was going to get a lot worse before it got any better, that we might be at the brink of war and tipping over the edge. Having been a part of that, we can talk about that in some more detail a little bit later, but it was very interesting to see that shifting occur where what we were seeking was North Korea’s calculus being changed, for them to think differently about how they pursued their future. And that change came. But it took some risk in doing so. So that brings us up to the recent years.

And a lot has changed during that period of time. The alliance, thankfully, has endured all of that. And it has had considerable pressure applied to it internally and externally, within the alliance and from beyond the alliance, and still, in my view, remains very strong. I support the comment of it being an ironclad relationship. I really do. Doesn’t mean it doesn’t get rust or barnacles, doesn’t need scraping off from time to time. Doesn’t need painting over again. But it’s still intact as a solid entity. And it’s remarkable when you think about that. And it’s unique inside of the world.
So I would just stop with that, and give the time to my colleagues on the panel before we get into deeper discussion.

MR. LIPPERT: Well, thanks, General. I want to come back to you with follow ups, but I’m going to turn to Mr. Boot here, and maybe if you could pick up on General Brook’s thread. You obviously – your specialty is – you look back at your long list of extraordinary publications. In 2009, you’re writing a lot about the Middle East. You’re writing a lot about Afghanistan, Iraq, at least according to your Council on Foreign Relations website, you are. You then – later on you do write about Asia. You talk about – you have an article called Donald Trump’s pivot through Asia, Korea and the power of politics, the wrong lessons from North Korea, why the Iran deal is bad, thank North Korea.

So talk to the audience here a little bit about U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East at that time, and what was going on in Korea, and how the U.S. came to bridge those two really competing power centers that compete for time, attention and resources here in Washington? And a little bit about the decision making as you see it. Smart – the good, the bad, and the ugly.

MR. BOOT: Well, first, let me join everybody else in saying happy birthday to the Korea program. To John, to Victor, to Sue, the Entire CSIS team. I work at a rival think tank, but I got to tell you there are no rivals for what CSIS does in the field of Korea studies. So it’s an honor to be here with all of you. And that is a very broad question, Mark. Let me – let me try to address it in terms of lessons learned. And let me address it this way.

In terms of kind of what I personally have learned over the course of whatever it is, the last 20 years, very tumultuous years in U.S. foreign policy, which really – we kind of went through that kind of end of history interregnum after the end of the Cold War. There was a sense, I think, that I certainly shared, of American hubris, of American power. You know, I graduated from college in 1991, the year that the Cold War was ending, the year that the United States was standing alone atop the world as the sole superpower. And then, of course, the events of 9/11 in 2001 shocked us and drew our attention back to the world.

And I think, you know, we responded in part doing things that we had to – for example, in Afghanistan. And then we did things that we probably shouldn’t have done. And I was certainly part of that, I think, what I now see as a wrongheaded decision, as somebody who supported the Iraq War at the time, like a lot of people in this town, and a lot of people across this country, which I think showed some hubris about the possibilities, I would say, of American power and lack of attention to the limits of American power.

And I think that’s a lesson that Iraq taught. And, you know, really teaching us that it’s not enough to have good intentions or grandiose goals. You actually have to have a plan to get from here to there. And you also need to pay attention to what your allies say. And if they’re saying, you’re doing something wrong, you probably shouldn’t tell them to take a hike. You might try to listen to them. I think this are all things where I failed. And I think a lot of people in this town failed. And I think as a result of that, America failed. As a result of that a lot of lives were lost.

I recall, I think, the first time that General Brooks, when you were a deputy division commander in Baghdad in 2007, dealing with some of the fallout from those wrongheaded decisions. And I think – but I think, you know, call it a catastrophic fallout of the war in Iraq was reinforced by another major event that occurred in 2008-2009 that you didn’t mention, which I think was actually the
most significant event of the time, which was the global financial meltdown, the Great Recession. All those things shook the faith of the American people in their government, in their ruling elite. It undermined support for an internationalist foreign policy and a policy of American leadership in the world.

But I think, you know, to some extent, the initial beneficiary of that was President Obama because, of course, a lot of the reason why he got elected and became President Obama was because he opposed the war in Iraq and Hillary Clinton had supported it. But in hindsight, I would say President Obama – and I had my disagreements with him – but, you know, in hindsight I would say it was kind of a lost golden age of American policy, because he was actually somebody who did believe in an American leadership role in the world. And he wanted to rebalance things and pivot away from the Middle East to East Asia. And I think he made some mistakes along that route.

I think, you know, the pullout from Iraq in 2011 was a mistake. Not as big a mistake as our entry into Iraq, but a mistake nevertheless. But on the whole, I think, you know, President Obama was somebody who really – who did believe in America as a force for good in the world, including on issues like global warming, where we had not previously shown leadership. And now, of course, I think what you’re seeing is really the populist reverberations and the shock waves that have – that have swept through Washington. I think partially as a delayed result of the Iraq War, partially as a delayed result of the great financial collapse of 2008-2009.

And, of course, the result of that is you now have a president who doesn’t – fundamentally does not believe in the great tradition of American foreign policy going back to 1945. Somebody who does not believe in American international leadership, who does not believe in allies, who does not believe in free trade. And this is really, I think, the greatest challenge to American foreign policy and American standing in the world, certainly in my lifetime. I’m, you know, turning 50 this year, but probably really some of the greatest challenge since the Greatest Generation created the Pax American out of the ruins of World War II.

And now we have to really have an argument of a kind we did not have in 2009, and we really did not have at any point, even after the end of the Cold War, about what should America be doing? And I think the real challenge right now is for those of us who believe in American global leadership – and I still believe that American can be and should be a force for good. And I fear that we often are not in the world today. But, you know, for those of us who believe in that role, I think, you know, President Trump and the foreign policy that he’s instituting is really forcing us to argue and to think about those first principles in a way that we have not done before.

And I hope – my fervent hope – I don’t know if this will be realized. But my fervent hope is that after this near-death experience with American foreign policy, perhaps under a more sober future president, we will rediscover the importance of some of the basic tenets of American foreign policy and stand up for our values. Stand up for free trade. Stand up for the things that American has fought for since 1945 around the world. And certainly stand up for the value of alliances, of which, of course, the U.S.-ROK alliance is one of our bedrock alliances, along with the U.S.-Japan alliance, along with the U.S.-NATO relationship, U.S. and Canada, U.S. and Australia. So many alliances out there. And there’s going to be a lot of repair work that needs to be done after the damage which we are seeing today.
But we have certainly come a long way, I would say, since 2009. And I wish I had more positive things to say about the direction which we have come, but it has not overall, I think, been a good news story.

MR. LIPPERT: All right. Well, thanks, Max. That was tour de force around the world. And we went Kathy on the Peninsula, General Brooks, a tour de force through Asia, global perspective Max. Victor, it’s your night. It’s ten years. You get to try to bring this all together. I want to read to you, though, one quote from the The Chosun Ilbo about what – the article which your picture is associated. It says – the headline reads: Victor Cha Appointed Korea Chair at U.S. Think Tank. It says, “The CSIS launched the Korea Chair following Japan and China chairs in the belief that issues regarding the Korean Peninsula are becoming more and more important. This is the first time a Korea chair has been launched in a major think tank. From now on Cha will take charge of research and policymaking concerning inter-Korean issues.”

So given where we are, given that it’s your night, given that we’ve gotten the peninsula, Asia, the globe, bring us all together. Where are we in this 10 years and set us up here in terms of where we might look out into the future.

VICTOR CHA: Well, thanks, Mark. First, I feel obligated to say a couple of things about tonight and the Korean Chair, an then I’ll offer some very quick remarks. The first is, I really want to – I think we should all thank John Hamre. The Korea Chair, at CSIS would not have been possible without his personal commitment to developing a permanent, named-out program on Korea in Washington, D.C. And he did it largely because he believes that Korea is critical to U.S. interests in Asia, and as a global power. And it was that commitment when I first met him that just genuinely he exuded, and in the end was the main reason that I came to CSIS. I didn’t need another job. I had a job at Georgetown. (Laughter.) But he was so committed to this that I said: I have to work with and for this man.

I also want to thank – there’s a lot of people – I just look around. There’s a lot of people who have been involved in making the chair successful, including, you know, Kathy, who was the ambassador and hosted us when we did our first big event in Korea. General Brooks was always willing to provide us with – to give his time and host a group when we came to town. Sue Terry, who’s been a terrific addition to the program, and Bob King, Tom Hubbard, I mean, the list goes on and on, Mike Green. And then all the staff who have been associated with the Chair – Marie DuMond; Ellen Kim; Lisa Collins, who is now working at the Pentagon; Andy Lim; Sang Jun Lee; and Dana Kim, our newest addition; and Joe Bermudez, who’s been helping us with all of our satellite imagery work, which has gotten a lot of – a lot of attention lately. So it’s really not been possible without all of these people.

You know, when I think about – when you ask us to think about 2009 to now there are two things that come to mind for me with regard to the – to Korea. The first of these, on North Korea, is that we’re actually no place better off in 2019 than we were in 2009. In 2009, I remember essentially the efforts through the six-party talks, which Cathy and I and others worked on, essentially ground to a halt after the stroke – what we later found out to be a stroke by Kim Jong-il in August of 2008. And essentially the talks broke down after that. And so we – and then – and then North Korea did – eventually did some more tests. So fast-forward to today, and while the atmospherics and the optics may be a little bit better, substantively speaking we are no better off and, if anything, we are worse off because North Korea’s programs have grown in many different ways since 2009.
And then on South Korea and the alliance, I too remember that statement that President Obama made about the alliance is the best it’s ever been. And I agreed with that at the time. I felt like the alliance had a broad base to it in terms of focusing not just on North Korea, but on strengthening the alliance with people like General Brooks, and General Sharp, and others. But also a global agenda based on two advanced industrial democracies and sharing similar concerns. And there was no more obvious reflection of that than when Mark was President Obama’s ambassador, because he really pushed forward with an agenda that focused on the global scope of the alliance. Yes, the peninsula is important, but there’s a world out there that Korea and the United States can help to shape. And I thought that was a – that was a fantastic message about the alliance.

I’m concerned, as we’ve talked about throughout the day, that the alliance has lost some of that. It’s become more – before it was a broad-based pyramid. It’s kind of like an upside-down pyramid now, where all of the alliance rests on the most difficult and contentious issues, which are North Korea, burden sharing, OPCON transition, Section 232 trade issues. So I agree with what Tom Christensen said in the previous panel. The strongest asset that the United States has today are its allies and partners. I think, looking over the past 10 years, that we all need to do more to enhance, and prove, and grow those alliance relationships.

MR. LIPPERT: Thanks, Victor. Maybe just one follow-up to General Brooks, and then I’ll come back to Ambassador Stephens.

General Brooks, you sounded relatively optimistic in your assessment. You talked about, you know, things – that the alliance is still strong, got some barnacles. I’m glad you worked in the Navy there. But, you know, you’ve got three or four things on the security side that really get at the heart of the relationship in terms of, Victor mentioned, the burden sharing agreement. You’ve got OPCON coming up. And then you’ve got the CMA, also, that’s new. And how does that impact the U.N. command, USFK, all of that? Could you talk us through where you see the security leg of this relationship going?

GEN. BROOKS: I’ll take a run – take a run at it. You know, the – if you think about the outcomes of the Singapore summit, one of them, as was mentioned earlier today, was repatriation of remains. And that required a military channel of communication to be activated. When we go back to 2009, that’s about the time where we changed the senior member of the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission from being an American to being a South Korean. And the North Koreans walked away from the table. And we went that long without general officer-level dialogue. Generals from the two sides – from U.N. command and from the Korean People’s Army talking to each other.

But in the period of time following the Olympics in early 2018 – and there was a military component to the condition of the Olympics and the environment around the Olympics, which was very important, but I won’t go into detail here – the conditions began to change. And we found that we could get the door open for dialogue again with the Korean People’s Army, the North Korean military, on this subject of repatriation. And we had to through the usual dance of insulting one another, and not coming to a meeting that we said we would be at, walking out of a meeting. Generally it was – the U.N. command was sitting at the meeting at the appointed place and time, and North Korea would take advantage of its 30-minute time zone difference – which existed at that time, but has since been eliminated, where they’re now literally on the same time zone as everyone else in the region, but especially as South Korea.
And so this change of environment led to military-to-military dialogue beginning between South Korea and the North Korean People’s Army to try to lower the tension – the military tension that was quite evident in 2017 but was in some ways a potential disruptor to diplomatic discourse that was beginning to unfold. We had this season of summitry was beginning to open in the spring of 2018. And it was only a few months earlier that we had a defector run across the demilitarized zone in the joint security area of Panmunjom, in November of 2017. A few weeks later, we had the final intercontinental ballistic missile launch. In between those two periods, we had the visit of President Trump to South Korea. A lot of things had happened in that period of time.

And suddenly, the door opened to dialogue. So this Comprehensive Military Agreement is the fruit of dialogue between the United Nations Command and the South Korean military to ensure that there was conversation about things it needed to continue to enhance the armistice, increase the potential for peace, and decrease the potential for war, and then that discussion was carried by the South Koreans into meetings with the North Koreans, enabled by U.N. Command at the locations, principally being done in Panmunjom. So it was a triangular relationship that unfolded.

Eventually, we got to a direct dialogue with the Korean People’s Army on the transfer of remains. We got to the point of agreement on a date, a time, a place. They insisted that it not been Panmunjom, where we had historically done transfers of remains. They wouldn’t tell us exactly how many sets of remains they had. But we wanted to get whatever we could, and to bring those home. And that ultimately happened.

Our discussions quietly, without fanfare, led to the point where we had a U.S. C-17 cargo aircraft, U.S. Air Force jet aircraft, fly into North Korea, into Wonsan, land at Wonsan airfield there – which is a major airbase, and had been the scene of numerous missile launches by the way – and there we met with the North Koreans. This is U.S. sovereignty flying into North Korea at the behest of United Nations Command with U.N. Command representatives aboard, to have a conversation, have a meeting, to show that the relationship can change and was changing. And the KPA released 55 boxes of remains. We think that that’s somewhere between 100 and 190 different people in those 55 boxes. But they fell under the U.N. flag, and we brought them back under the U.N. flag.

The moral of the story in all this is that when North Korea feels that there is some foundation of mutual respect and conversation, and that they see a change of relationship, they will move in the direction that they say they are going to move. They’re not going to move in the direction you want them to move necessarily, but the direction they say they’re going to move. And I happen to hold out the view because of that, because of that experience, that North Korea will move toward denuclearization, because they said they would. Kim Jong-un said he would. And he’s committed to this, or he’s going to lose face. And he doesn’t like to lose face. The road to get there, though, is where the work is to be done. Whether that’s through a series of summits or background work, or both, or just things that build confidence, as that transfer of remains did, that we both can be trusted at our word, and we can move forward in ways that can show that there’s a chance of progress.

There’s a fundamental challenge that’s out there – and I will stop on this point – and I don’t think we’ve completely addressed it. The first is the Eastern view versus the Western view of how to approach the problem. So how do you get to denuclearization? In simple terms, there are really three things involved: relationship, trust, and denuclearization. I’m simplifying significantly here. But what is the sequence among those? The Western approach is, show me something that I can believe in in denuclearization, and then I can trust you, and then we can have a new relationship. The Eastern view
of that is exactly the opposite. Show me a new relationship, then I can trust you, and then I’ll take steps regarding denuclearization.

And so this dialogue and this exchange of letters that we’ve seen is really important, because it’s part of that foundation of conveying respect, even if it doesn’t seem to fit our Western way of looking at the problem. It’s important. It’s timely. And it has the potential to lead to a new relationship, which can then lead to a new set of actions. Now, I may stand alone in that view, but I’ve certainly seen proof of it in my experience there. And I think that it’s something that we have to pay attention to.

MR. LIPPERT: All right. Thanks, General. Good stuff. Let me – we’re about out of time, and so I want to go to the dean of this panel, Kathy. (Laughter.) You’ve heard a lot tonight. You’ve seen all these ups and downs. You’ve seen it from many different levels. Can you just – any closing comments in terms of where you think, one, the U.S.-ROK alliance is headed and, two, any predictions on the future in terms of the DPRK situation?

MS. STEPHENS: Yeah. Well –

MR. LIPPERT: That’s the burden of being the resident expert.

MS. STEPHENS: Yeah, it’s just a way of saying I’m the oldest, I know. It’s very Korean of you. (Laughter.)

Yeah, I guess I fall a little bit between kind of the optimism of General Brooks, I’d say, and a little bit of the pessimism I hear from Victor, in a sense. But I guess I’d put it in this way: I think when it comes to, you know, the mechanics of the way that the U.S. and South Korea work together, that’s quite well-established and developed. You know, we have a kind of a resilience – and, again, I’m looking further back, as I said, than 2009. But, you know –

MR. LIPPERT: You’re allowed to do that.

MS. STEPHENS: I’m allowed to do that. But I mean, I think just – I’d just stipulate that I think that’s given the alliance a resilience which we need to acknowledge. And I think it’s also just inevitable and natural, I guess you weren’t saying it wasn’t, that, you know, we’ve turned our attention back to the peninsula and back to Northeast Asia. And that does have to do with, you know, North Korea’s increasing capabilities and the ambitions of Kim Jong-un, I mean, whether they’re aggressive or not, but his own desires, and the changing role of China, and the changing role of the U.S. in the area.

So I think that’s where we’re going to be focused. It doesn’t mean that we can’t do things together globally. I think the kind of initiative that has been increasing over the years is something that is not so emphasized by the Trump administration, although there is some elements. But certainly climate change is an area that we used to work with the South Koreans a lot on. I hope we will again. But there are other areas where we do. But, you know, this is an alliance that is focused on – I call it the unfinished business of the Korean Peninsula. You know, the status quo has never been U.S. policy. And you know, sadly, coming now to the 69th anniversary of the beginning of the war, you know, I never thought – you know, and I think most – many Koreans in this room, we never thought we’d still be where we are with a divided peninsula and now with the North Korea with all this nuclear capability.
But that’s a long of, I guess, saying: Despite those challenges, I think we’re going to work together on them. I feel pretty optimistic about that. My concerns, as I mentioned earlier – and I think Mr. Boot put it in a much, you know, broader and more eloquent context – are in the kind of the big questions of our time, you know? (Laughs.) And they do relate to values, to, I think, the U.S. sense of what our role in the world is, and to what our Korean colleagues were calling some of the strategic dilemmas they face as, I think – I don’t want to put words in the mouths of my Korean friends – but who value an alliance, but recognize China is a neighbor. And the U.S. has become, at least in the short-term, less predictably, and some might say less reliable.

So those are the things that worry me. So you can never be a pessimist, did you know, if you’re in diplomacy or, I guess, in politics – or in life. But it’s that broad and strategic context that worries me. I do have some confidence, as I said, that we built some, you know, mechanisms over the years to work – try to work out our immediate issues on the peninsula, and hopefully some broader ones as well. And finally I would say, and good evidence of that is on the trade issue. You know, for all the ups and downs, I mean, South Korea’s in far better shape on the trade issues than other countries because we did get a KORUS FTA. And we’ve managed to kind of keep going along. So modest optimism.

MR. LIPPERT: Modest optimism. All right. Well, thanks, Kathy. Great comments to end here.

Victor, I’m just going to look to you for one programming note. Do we have any time – do we have time for a question or two from the audience? You know, we started this panel a little late. It’s getting late. I don’t want to keep people from their families and/or libations, or anything of that nature. So it’s your night and you’re going to make the final decision whether or not we should take a question or two?

MR. CHA: So Andy has a sign up in the back that says: zero minutes. (Laughter.) So I think that means we have to stop.

MR. LIPPERT: All right. Well, thanks, everybody. Thanks for a great panel. Thanks for a great talk. (Applause.)

(END)