ROK-U.S. Strategic Forum 2020 (Day 2)

Session II: Pandemics and the Global Responses

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Session III: Over-the-Horizon: The Future of U.S.-ROK Alliance

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Victor Cha: Good morning, everyone, or good evening if you’re in Asia. Welcome to day two of the ROK-U.S. Strategic Forum 2020 hosted by the Korea Foundation and the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

My name is Victor Cha, senior adviser and Korea Chair here at CSIS, and vice dean and professor at Georgetown University. And we have a great morning of panels lined up for you today. We had a great start yesterday with keynote speeches by the presidents of the two organizations, as well as the first vice foreign minister, to a standing room only crowd of over 16,000 viewers, and so we’re really looking forward to the discussion this morning.

To start us off we have introductory commemorative video celebrating 70 years – today is actually the 70th anniversary of the start of the Korean War – celebrating 70 years of the alliance that was put together by our senior fellow and colleague, Ambassador Mark Lippert, former U.S. ambassador to Korea.

And then following that video, we will have a short address by the current U.S. ambassador to Korea, Harry Harris; and then we will move directly into our panels being moderated by Anna Fifield of The Washington Post, who is now in China.

So with that, we’ll move to the start of the program, and thanks again for joining us.

(A video presentation is shown.)

Harry Harris: Hi, everyone. Good morning from Seoul, and thank you to Victor and everyone at CSIS for the invitation to speak to you all today. I’m sorry that I’m not able to join you interactively this morning, and I hope that we’ll all be able to attend the next conference in person.

This year, we have the privilege of commemorating the 70th anniversary of the start of the Korean War. I’ve thought long and hard about it and have spoken about it as a struggle that culminated in the victory of democracy over communism, and we see the fruits of that struggle in the present-day Republic of Korea.

As the Washington dwellers know, the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington is inscribed with a plaque that reads, “Our nation honors her sons and daughters who answered the call to defend a country they never knew and a people they never met.”

Seven decades later, I think that those men and women who served here during the Korean War would be amazed and proud of the alliance that we’ve forged and maintained together, and as we look to the future, I hope that what we do today to sustain and strengthen our alliance is worthy of the sacrifices that they made for us. This audience knows well the remarkable journey of South Korea
in these few short decades. It’s now known as a world-leading innovation nation and a key anchor in a volatile Asia.

As the ROK has changed and developed over the years, so too has the U.S.-ROK alliance. Like all relationships, we have our highs and lows. But the enduring strength of our alliance can be seen day to day, from our close cooperation in fighting coronavirus to the close coordination of our respective approaches to the DPRK.

The Korean government’s approach on COVID-19 has been lauded, and rightly so, as a global model. The ROK government’s comprehensive testing, detailed tracing and notification, and a robust health care system to treat patients have proven to be effective. There has been no need for a lockdown here because people here lived through and remember SARS, MERS, and other epidemics, and they follow guidelines. They wear masks and they limit social engagements.

In fact, Korean citizens were so confident in their government’s COVID precautions that there was a record voter turnout of over 66 percent in the April 15th National Assembly elections, which produced no COVID spikes afterward. These elections resulted in President Moon’s Democratic Party and its satellite, Citizens’ Party, winning a near super majority – 177 of the 300 seats in the legislature.

This means that President Moon now has a mandate to push his political agenda, for example, increasing social programs and fostering inter-Korea relations, though on the latter, events of this last week have, pointedly, reminded us that it takes two to tango.

Today, Korea is emerging from COVID-19 and is in transition to the new normal of what they call here everyday life quarantine. I spoke last week at a Korean War 70th anniversary art exhibition hosted by the MPVA and Ban Ki-moon in Gwanghwamun Plaza in front of the embassy, and it was all face masks and elbow bumps – you know, the new normal.

Now, can I see a show of hands if there – if this is a new normal where you currently work and live? OK. Now, a show of hands if I’m describing a scenario that couldn’t be further from your current reality. Wow. What am I saying? I can’t see a show of hands because this is a prerecorded message. But I am sure there was at least one person out there who raised his or her hand. So thank you. Just making sure you’re still with me because I’m just getting started.

Now, more than ever, many in the United States are benefitting firsthand from Korea’s successful response to COVID-19. The Korean government donated 2½ million masks to the United States, and Korean churches and companies stepped forward to donate PPE to the United States. You may have seen on Twitter and in the news sister city- and sister province-state relationships have also kicked
into high gear, with PPE donations flowing from Gwangju to San Antonio, and Jeollabuk-do to New Jersey and Washington.

On the commercial side, Hyundai developed drive-through testing at 22 hospitals across the United States and is providing vehicles for medical and emergency responders. Kia is producing protective face shields at its West Point, Georgia, facility for U.S. health care providers, and examples abound of ROK business proactively contributing to the health and well-being of the communities in which they live and operate.

As global economies plan their recovery in a post-COVID world, I believe the significant and continuous foreign direct investment by ROK companies in the United States deserves recognition. The Samsung Austin semi-conductor facility, for example, has been a part of the Austin, Texas community since 1997 and they have invested more than $20 billion there, the single largest sustained instance of FDI in American history.

The list goes on and on, with companies like CJ, Hyosung, LG, Hyundai, Kia, et cetera, and the United States needs to look no further than its closest allies and friends as it plans its economic rebound. And this goes both ways. The United States is the largest source of FDI in South Korea. Korean exports have long found an open market in the United States, and we remain the second biggest export destination for quality Korean goods.

Of course, the ROK, like most other economies impacted by COVID, including ours, has work to do for sure. ROK GDP growth in the first quarter of 2020 was minus-1.4, and the second quarter may be even worse. Even so, the ROK leads the OECD as the country with the best growth.

I know that some countries would try to leverage the impact the global pandemic is having on national economies and international supply chains for strategic purposes. But COVID has helped expose the U.S. and, frankly, the global economy’s overreliance on a single-source country supplier, and the administration is working to restructure and remedy unhealthy dependencies.

Undersecretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, the Environment – and everything – Keith Krach is leading this charge from the State Department. We are encouraging the ROK to join the Blue Dot Network, an initiative to bring together governments, the private sector, and civil society to work together to develop quality infrastructure projects. The network will certify infrastructure projects that demonstrate and uphold global infrastructure principles.

By proposing a common standard of project excellence, the Blue Dot Network will attract private capital to infrastructure projects in developing and emerging economies. We’re also increasing efforts to strengthen supply chains by creating the Economic Prosperity Network, a network of networks of trusted partners.
The network will include companies and civil society groups operating under the same set of standards on everything, from digital business, energy, and infrastructure to research, trade, education, and commerce.

As we develop details of the EPN, we’ll continue to work closely with the ROK on this initiative. I believe if we move quickly and persistently toward a trusted industrial base through a network of friends and allies, including the ROK, the U.S. economy and its strategic supply chain will be in a far better and more secure place than before COVID.

Now, while much of our focus has been diverted to COVID-19, we continue to pursue our key bilateral initiatives. We continue to work at the highest levels toward a fair and equitable defense burden-sharing special measures agreement.

On trade, we are focused on implementing our amended free trade agreement, or KORUS. In 2019, our trade deficit with Korea went up by $2.5 billion to just under 10 billion (dollars), which is suboptimal. Also, for the first quarter of 2020, the goods trade deficit with Korea was 3.9 billion (dollars). Not a good trend. Of course, one thing we must keep in mind is that COVID will continue to affect trade in the remaining quarters.

However, despite lower demand in the U.S., closed factories in Korea, and supply chain disruptions, the good news story here is that U.S. exports actually continue to rise, and, pre-COVID, our bilateral trade numbers were on a four-year increase, reaching a record $172 billion in two-way trade in goods and services in 2019.

Nontariff barriers and Korea-specific standards remain a challenge for U.S. companies operating in Korea. This is the case in big pharma, cloud computing, and data localization, insurance, and so on. As Korea telecom companies deploy their world-leading 5G infrastructure, we’ll need to work closely together to ensure the highest standards of communications reliability and security to advance our shared interests.

Now, just last week, citing reports that Beijing has threatened to break commitments with the U.K. unless London allows Huawei to build its 5G network, Secretary Pompeo affirmed that America stands with its allies and partners against the CCP’s coercive bullying tactics. The ROK knows better than most countries about such threatening behavior by China. We’ll have to work closely together to forge a path forward.

Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific remains a priority, particularly in terms of maritime and cybersecurity issues, transparent and fair financing of infrastructure projects, and women’s economic empowerment. We see many opportunities to collaborate with the ROKG in Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific.
Where the ROK-Japan relationship is concerned, I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again. No important security or economic issue in the region can be addressed without active ROK and Japan involvement, and the COVID-19 pandemic is one more example of that.

And, finally, the DPRK. I’m told the panel preceding this one was all about the DPRK so I’ll be brief. The U.S. remains open to making progress through diplomacy on the goals President Trump and Chairman Kim set at the historic Singapore Summit.

Now, like all of you on today’s call, the embassy team and I are tracking the recent activity at Kaesong, the choice words from Pyongyang, and we remain in close coordination with our ally, the Republic of Korea, on our efforts to engage the DPRK. The United States fully supports the ROK’s efforts on inter-Korean relations and urges the DPRK to refrain from further counterproductive actions.

So, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for listening to me today. Thank you to CSIS for hosting this virtual conference. Good luck and God bless.

(A video presentation begins.)

Victor Cha:

So the South Korean experience is dramatically different from many of the other countries afflicted by COVID-19. South Korea has just over 10,000 total infections, and even if you scale that up to the population of the United States, they still have vastly less — much less than Italy, much less than Spain, much less than France.

So I think there are a couple of things that South Korea did to reduce the spread of the disease. The first is that they moved very early. They discovered their first case of a traveler from Wuhan, China, on January 20th, and it took the South Korean officials less than a week after that first case to organize a meeting with 20 pharmaceutical and medical companies to start talking about a public-private sector partnership to increase production of PPE, of medical equipment, of face masks, as well as start a crash production on test kits.

The other thing that South Korea did very early on was declaring a national emergency. They went to code red on the infectious disease alert about one month after they discovered their first case. In the United States, it would take us at least three more weeks before we would declare a national emergency at a time when every day counts.

South Korea also put a lot of emphasis on contact tracing, and they essentially leveraged technology to do this. They used the one piece of technology that every South Korean has, and that’s a cell phone.

South Korea is the most penetrated country in terms of cell phone usage per household, and so the government thought it would be useful to put an app on a cell phone such that you could do contact tracing in terms of individuals who...
were tested positive for COVID-19 and you would also be able to warn other people using the app of the routes or the places visited by a positive case of COVID-19.

When we look at the South Korea case as well as the cases of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore, all of whom dealt pretty well with this COVID-19 pandemic, these societies are better prepared for COVID-19 today because of past coronavirus pandemics that they have suffered from.

In Asia, this was SARS in 2003 and it was the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome in 2015. These coronaviruses created this sort of panic that we see in the United States today. So the South Korean response to MERS in 2015 was not good. The government was strongly criticized for being unprepared. The emergency rooms were not ready for a highly contagious pandemic of this nature.

People were scared. They were very scared. But they learned from that. They learned to develop production capacity in terms of PPE as well as other forms of medical equipment to produce test kits very quickly and, most important, they learned about the importance of transparency with the public, providing as much information as possible to the public.

And so I think perhaps the best lesson and perhaps the brightest news, going forward, is as a result of this experience the United States, I think, is going to be better prepared for the next pandemic. Although the lessons this time are quite severe, we’re going to be better prepared for the next pandemic.

(Video presentation ends.)

Announcer: Session II, “Pandemics and the Global Responses,” examines the current global health crisis and the impact of pandemics on the world. This session will be moderated by Ms. Anna Fifield, Beijing bureau chief at The Washington Post.

Featured panelists include Dr. Chul Chung, Dr. Youngmee Jee, Dr. Victor Cha, and Dr. J. Stephen Morrison.

Audience, please welcome Ms. Anna Fifield.

(Music.)

Anna Fifield: Hello, everybody, and welcome to Panel II of our Pandemics and the Global Responses. I’m Anna Fifield from The Washington Post. I’ve just spent the last three months in my home country of New Zealand, which has almost entirely eliminated coronavirus, and but I’m now back in China where I’m in a quarantine hotel and having predictable internet problems, which is why you can’t see me. I’ve had to dial in for this event. So please bear with me as I try to conquer these technological problems. But I think we’ll have a great session nonetheless with four excellent experts on the subject.
Joining us from South Korea, we have Dr. Youngmee Jee from the Korea Foundation and one of South Korea’s top infectious diseases expert. We also have Dr. Chul Chung from the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy, or KIEP. And joining us from CSIS in Washington, D.C., is Victor Cha, the Korea Chair, and Stephen Morrison, the director of Global Health Policy Center.

So the subject before us today is a very broad one. We’ll try to focus it on South Korea’s response to the coronavirus outbreak and compare South Korea’s response and actions with that in the United States. So we’ll drive the conversation from here for maybe the first half of the session but I will leave plenty of time for questions. So please submit them through the system and I will see them and ask them of the audience.

But to start things off, I will turn to Dr. Jee in South Korea, where, you know, South Korea was lauded for its very successful response to the coronavirus at the beginning, the way that it rapidly ramped up to widespread testing and instituted extreme contact tracing, and what for many countries would seem to be radical transparency.

But even for all those initial gains, South Korea has had a few bumps. It’s undergoing another second wave at the moment. But, still, nothing like what the United States has been seeing, and this week, obviously, the U.S. has chalked up a very grim new record, recording a new daily high number of cases.

So I’d like to start, turning to you, Dr. Jee, to ask you about the South Korean – kind of the way South Korea was prepared for this outbreak. Obviously, it went through SARS, but, most recently in 2015, going through the MERS outbreak, Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome outbreak there. And there was a lot of criticism at that time that South Korea hadn’t been prepared enough for the outbreak and it didn’t have the right systems in place.

So I was hoping you could talk to us a little bit. You were involved in the MERS response at that time. But talk to us about what South Korea learned from that 2015 epidemic and how it applied those lessons to respond rapidly to coronavirus this year.

Youngmee Jee: Thank you for the question, Anna. As we have seen from the video clip, it is very true that Korea learned a lot from the MERS experience in 2015. So based on those lessons learned from the outbreak of MERS, the government took various actions. Firstly, in terms of governance, Korea CDC was upgraded with new establishment of emergency operations center and also a laboratory analysis center. Those two centers played a significant role in the COVID-19 response.

And, secondly, the emergency use licensing, those allowing the – all the licensing or for production of the kits was the key, and that really made us possible to extend our nationwide laboratory testing from a very early stage.
And next thing I can mention is infrastructure, of course. So we have strengthened infrastructure based on our experience from MERS, so such as negative-pressure room and ventilators – add more – and respiratory triage. Those were prepared. But I still think those are not enough.

So we still have to better prepare for the next peak. And then as you have seen from the videos, we have also enhanced our risk communication based on our experience from MERS. From those period of MERS outbreak, government was criticized for not sharing the information of affected hospital list with the public.

So with that, Korea CDC established a new risk communication team and those risk communication was really dedicated for the communication with the public, and this time there was daily briefing actually twice a day, in the morning and in the afternoon. The government actually provide full trust to the public and that really was – that led to the full trust – public’s full trust in the government actions.

And also I have to mention the amendment of the relevant law. So we have revised the national infectious disease prevention and control law to allow Korea CDC to collect and share data with development – the institutions and also with the public.

And in addition to those four factors, I also want to emphasize the importance of public-private partnerships. In many way(s) there were very close partnership(s) among public and private sectors.

So, for example, a community treatment center and a drive-through and walk-through sampling and testing method was proposed – were proposed by private sectors and adopted by the government, and also there was very close collaboration between different ministries. So those different ministries worked together to create a smart tracking system for the epidemiological investigation and also a safety protection app was applied to monitor the quarantined people.

And above all, I want to also emphasize all the actions. The government took actions right after the report from China to WHO at the end of last year. So, in January, the government took many, many actions. So on the 27th of January, as Victor also explained, there was a very important meeting with pharmaceutical companies to discuss the production of a diagnostic kit for the COVID-19 based on the emergency use license. And at that time, we only had four cases. But those actions were very, very critical for the early testing.

So I think, in summary, government handled this crisis without lockdown and with minimum travel restrictions in a very transparent and democratic way, based on extensive testing from a very early stage.
I think that will be my summary. Thank you.

Anna Fifield: Yeah. Thank you very much, Dr. Jee.

I think – I mean, some of these things you’ve described could be done by any country if they had the political will to do so. But some of them seem specific to Korea with the MERS experience but also just the level of technology in Korea and the way they’re able to push the alerts and the information out to people.

But I think one thing that has been very surprising, I mean, to me and to, I’m sure, many people around the world is the way, as you mentioned, the South Korean government has been able to access so much personal data during the course of this, to be able to access cell phone data, credit card usage, security camera footage, all of the – and even GPS records from people’s cars, and all of this kind of stuff would cause a firestorm in many other countries and set off a lot of alarms about privacy.

But in South Korea, there doesn’t seem to have been much concern about that. I mean, how can you explain that? Is there just a higher degree of social trust in South Korea? I’ll ask Dr. Jee again, if you could just, briefly, respond to that. And then I’ll ask Dr. Chung if he has thoughts on that, too.

Youngmee Jee: OK. Thank you for the question again.

It is very true that privacy issues should be handled with extreme care and we need to see both sides of public health and privacy. In Korea, MERS outbreak actually triggered government action towards public health side. And, as I mentioned, government was blamed for the – for not sharing the information with the public very quickly and also path of infective cases, that those were really criticized by the public.

So based on that criticism, as I mentioned, the relevant law was amended. So I think there is some misunderstanding that – on Korea’s policy. So this is not really, like, authoritarian or all centralized government action. The truth is that our policy is based on – is coming from the public demand.

So I think there was some consensus from the society to really amend the law to allow Korea CDC to collect data and share with the public. But, still, I think we can – we can refine our law after outbreak is over. We have to really see what we can really do better to protect the privacy of infected individuals.

Anna Fifield: OK.

Dr. Chung, would you agree with that? Is this widely accepted by South Korean people?

Chul Chung: Yeah, I agree. But the – I guess I’d like to add a little bit more, maybe. You know, the government and the authority actually sort of revised the degree of
showing this, you know, information in order to preserve a certain level of the privacy, I guess. And I think the – I don’t know how to say this, but personally I think the trust is the most important, you know, things these days, especially in Korea. And you know, I also suggest the, you know, policymakers to consider the social capital and social cohesion based on that trust building in order to, you know, get – push for some policies, especially in economic policies and trade policies.

Anna Fifield: OK. Great. Thank you.

And, Dr. Cha, do you have anything to add on this privacy subject?

Victor Cha: Yeah, Anna. Thanks. I do.

So the first thing is – just a couple things. The first thing is that in terms of the coronavirus experience in Asia, more broadly, I mean, this is one instance or one example in world politics where Asia was just so far ahead of the West. I mean, Asia, as you know, was so much better prepared for what came with COVID-19 because of the experiences with coronaviruses in the past and, particularly, in Korea, the MERS virus. And, I mean, Dr. Jee is the real expert on this. I’m the novice.

But when I went back and read some of the after action reports of doctors in Hong Kong and in Singapore and in Korea dealing with SARS in 2002, 2003, and MERS in 2015, it was just amazing to read because all of the things that they were talking about that were happening in emergency rooms – you know, absence of PPE, frontline health care workers getting sick, pitching tents in parking lots to create improvised isolation wards – were all the things that we were seeing happening in the United States, you know, earlier in the spring. And so they were just better prepared because of the experiences they went through.

I think there was, like, two cases of MERS nationally in the United States in 2015 and maybe a dozen cases – well, you know, Ebola was the other one. There was, like, a dozen cases of Ebola in the entire country, maybe two dozen cases of SARS. So it just didn’t even move the needle in the United States and, yet, it had a deep searing effect in Asia, hence, all of the changes that Dr. Jee was talking about.

Second, I think, you know, Anna, you talked about comparing to the United States. I think it’s very clear when we look at the Korean response and the U.S. response that the national government or, in our case, the federal government – the national government in Korea led from the front and not from behind in terms of bringing together, as Dr. Jee said, public and private sector, and really played sort of a leading role in this and that has, you know, been – I’m sure Steve has something say – really been absent in the U.S. case.
And in terms of privacy, you know, I think the interesting thing here, and the verdict is not out yet, is that you’re right. I mean, the government has taken control of a lot of information to ensure access to a lot of information about private citizens. And I think, you know, when people look back on this the real question will be, you know, do open democracies like Korea, when they have access to this information for public health and public safety reasons, are they able to – are they able to provide enough safeguards or self-restrain in a way so that that information is not abused and used in bad ways?

And, you know, this may – we may see this question answered directly later after we go through this when the government decides what it’ll do with all this information that it has available. But as per your initial question, I don’t think you can get the levels of social trust that we’ve been talking about without the provision of the information.

I mean, the reason there’s no trust here in the United States is because nobody believes the information that they’re getting from their political leaders, and the data – it’s not being suppressed but the leaders are not drawing attention to it. Whereas, you know, in Korea, after MERS and SARS, there was a public demand, as Dr. Jee said, for the government to provide transparent and clear information.

And so the government was mandated with doing that, and when they created the laws to allow for this accumulation of all this information and to provide it to the public, then it became the public’s responsibility to comply, you know, with social distancing and mitigation efforts.

So I don’t think – I guess what I’m trying to say I don’t think you can get the levels of social trust that you were talking about, Anna, in the question without the government providing the information. So I think trust and the whole question of privacy of information are interconnected in that way.

Anna Fifield: Mmm hmm. Yeah, that’s a great point.

I’ll turn it over now to Stephen Morrison. And, Stephen, do you think that – I mean, like Victor said, Asia was really ahead of this and reacting very quickly. But there’s nothing particularly Asian about this response, right? Like, why is it that other countries didn’t take it seriously or didn’t move swiftly enough at the beginning to respond, didn’t see these alarm bells coming?

J. Stephen Morrison: Thank you, Anna. May I just, first, add a remark to what – the discussion on the technology?

Anna Fifield: Please.

J. Stephen Morrison: You know, I think it’s important. When you’re talking about trust in technology in the case of Asia, I think it’s important to emphasize that the bargain that the public has with their government is that there will not be egregious abuse and
the bargain is that the payoff for compliance is minimizing the disruption of economies and schooling.

So the public understands what the bargain is, what the compact is, and I think that has been validated and put into legislation and socialized as an idea over the last decade and a half, and I think that historical experience and that cultural and political compact is really fundamental.

And when you have that technology, you are able to put it to great use at the very front end and also when you have outbreaks – cluster outbreaks. What’s problematic for the United States and others that did not intervene early and aggressively but intervened sloppily and late is that technology doesn’t really provide a whole lot of benefit for us in that context. Contact tracing in the United States is going to be done by people walking around and getting on the phone and talking to people.

Your question around how did we get such a catastrophe in Europe, Europe is now coming out of this but Europe was very late and fragmented in its responses. In the United States, now Brazil, other Latin American states, we’re seeing – and in India as well now we’re seeing a rush of cases – as you pointed out, a historic high. I mean, the fact that in America 2.3 million people infected and 122,000 dead is just an astonishing fact.

So trying to explain why we had such an abdication of responsibility at the highest levels has to do with the nature of this presidency, I believe. But it’s not the only factor. Our public health system decayed after the 2008 and 2009 recession, and we disinvested in public health in the 2,800 public health jurisdictions around this country. They lost 56,000 jobs and 25 (percent) to 30 percent of their budgets.

We have a highly fragmented public health system and that has – and we’re paying a huge price for that. So this virus has been able to take full advantage of all of our – the weaknesses that have been exposed in our very inadequate health system. It’s also targeted those who are poor, those who are of color, and those who are otherwise marginalized and, obviously, it’s taken a huge toll on the elderly.

So the protections that you might see in other societies were not in place here either, and so it’s – we’ve had just enormous toll taken by those who are poor, of color, Black and brown, and those who are poor and those who are elderly or have underlying conditions.

What we’re seeing right now, this surge of cases, 36,000, 37,000 yesterday, the highest ever. The other peak we had was April 24th. So we’re back into a regressive very furious cycle. It does have to do with increased testing but only around the margins, really. What it has to do with was premature opening.
It has to do with behavioral reversion to complacency and disregard of the guidance, particularly by young people, of the lack of capacity locally. We’re seeing this over and over again in the South and the West – the lack of testing capacity, the lack of ability to isolate, quarantine, and contact trace.

Those capacities that exist in Asia do not exist at a local level, and we’re seeing a continued abdication of leadership. Vice President Pence briefed the Senate Republicans in a private session yesterday and told – and misrepresented reality and encouraged them to focus on the positives that are happening in the midst of this wildfire that is raging through over 20 states.

The last thing I’d say is that we cannot deny the speed and perniciousness of this virus. This virus is an extraordinary virus. It moves with speed. It’s easily concealed. It has delayed impacts, and we have just not been able to build the capacities to manage it.

Anna Fifield: Yeah. Yeah. Great. I mean, terrifying just to watch from a distance what’s happening there and, obviously, you know, China has really tried to capitalize on the American more bungling – bungled response to the coronavirus outbreak there. I mean, we’ve also seen the Trump administration try to use this as part of its broader hostilities with China. There’s a real political component there.

But separate from that, turning back to Victor Cha, do you think that COVID will reshape the dynamics and the relationships within Asia itself? Is this going to prompt countries like South Korea and Japan to rethink their relationship or their dependence on China, at least? Or, you know, how much is the United States trying to put pressure on its allies in the region to do that?

Victor Cha: Yeah, it’s a great question, Anna.

You know, I think, you know, on the – I would say that the short answer to your question is I think it will put pressure on allies and partners of the United States but not directly as a result of COVID.

And what I mean by that is that while China also has dealt relatively better with the virus, at least later on, than the United States did, there’s still lots of questions about a lack of transparency, about their acquiring of information and using an almost dystopian form of contact tracing, and, I mean, you know better than I – the bar codes. I mean, you’re sitting in a quarantine hotel right now and probably being – every one of – every movement is being watched in one way or another.

But I think the way it does put pressure on allies is that, you know, as you said, COVID-19 has led to a worsening of the relationship between the United States and China, not an improvement to the relationship between the United States and China, and almost every piece of writing in this field as well as in the international relations field prior to COVID-19 the arguments were that when we have transnational pandemics like this, this is where countries should come
together because this virus doesn’t know borders, that we should be coming
together whether it’s with regard to contact tracing, travel guidelines, a vaccine,
that we should be working together. And, if anything, it’s just pulled us apart.

And the way that puts pressure on other countries is that we increasingly see
more situations where the lead power in the international system and the rising
power are putting countries like Korea and others in what I call binary choice
situations where they must make choices because both powers are asking them
to take one side or another. And we haven’t seen that so much on COVID but
we, certainly, have seen it on other issues like 5G, Blue Dot Network, EPN, Hong
Kong.

I mean, you know, there are a whole variety of issues. So, and so the reason I
think this is new and different is that in the past there were isolated cases in
which countries like Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, might have –
there were isolated cases where they might have been asked by the United
States to take one position and by China to take another.

But we’re seeing that more and more now in a lot of the choices that are being
put to these countries, which puts them in a really difficult position because for
many of them their top security partner is the United States and their top
trading partner is China.

And so I would say, you know, what COVID has done and what the mutual
recriminations between Washington and Beijing over COVID has done has only
widened that gap and fueled, I think, the inclination on both sides in
Washington and Beijing to put pressure on countries to take, basically, zero-sum
choices. It’s either us or them, and that’s, I think, both perplexing and
dangerous for all of these other countries.

Anna Fifield: Yeah. Absolutely. And so this – I mean, the political side is as you
describe and then the diplomatic side of it is still playing out. But I guess the
fears are building, and I’ll turn to Dr. Chung now about the economic impacts
that this is going to have on the global economy. But, you know, we’re already
seeing it in China, where all of this started.

And so, Dr. Chung, can you talk a little bit about how severe you think this
economic impact is going to be, starting in Asia? And you know, already we’ve
seen it’s not just the supply chain disruptions, which have been enormous, but
there in South Korea, you know, that’s so reliant on Chinese tourism more and
more and Chinese business and general trade, right, how South Korea is dealing
with this. And how do you think China’s biggest trading partners in general
might respond? Is this going to encourage more diversification away from China
in trading relationships?

Chul Chung: Yeah. Thank you, Anna. That’s a great question.
As you may know, there was an incident of the automobile industry, the wiring harness that’s a, you know, part for the, you know, automobile manufacturing, that through this – the pandemic there was the supply disruption coming from China. So some of those – the automobile industry plants had to shut down for some time.

But I guess the more problem to the – this automobile industry, for example, is the weak demand and the big drop in the production and the – especially for Korean manufacturers. The exports dropped a lot. Like, in May, for example, 57 percent decrease compared to last year, and the overseas production dropped by 36 percent until May this year compared to the last year.

So because of the protectionism and deglobalization and the pandemic, I think that there are some structural changes in the global value chains in the supply chain. Even before the pandemic, though, there was the supply chain, you know, shortening actually was a trend, and also the global value chains becoming more of the regional value chains – for example, the USMCA, you know, highlighting the – and tightening the rules of origin, so leading to more concentration of production activity in the United States or in North America, for example. So they will actually, you know, bring some demand for the restructuring of the, you know, value chains for the companies and the, you know, firms across the – I mean, the world.

I think some of those, you know, answers for the Korean, you know, manufacturing firms is to diversify the – you know, the supply chains and also going for the safer supply chain, you know, so that they can reduce and minimize the disruption coming from some other crisis.

I think there was some, you know, trouble in terms of the, you know, demand and the – you know, the activities in tourism and especially the services industry. I think, you know, the situation is more serious because the services are different from the manufacturing because manufacturing can be temporarily distributed, meaning that the – maybe there was a decrease in demand and production but, you know, we can come back later and then make up for that.

But the services are very much time dependent and, you know, foregone services are usually very difficult to recover. That’s why the – you know, tourism and the services industry actually suffer more. So, you know, for example, the – but still, you know, these days we call it the revenge consumption, meaning that we have to be social distanced and also, you know, some countries had the – some lockdowns. So after that, you know, severe period some of those consumers come out and consume more.

But, yet, there’s a limitation to that, you know, revenge consumption, especially for the services. I think right now, I guess, the, you know, Chinese tourists do not come as much – as many as before and it is more serious than the case of the THAAD you know, a few years ago, like, in 2017.
But since the Koreans cannot go abroad, I guess the Korean, you know, tourists actually replaced some of those Chinese and the foreign tourists domestically. But I guess the – you know, the cross-country – across the border the tourism actually is suffering a lot and I think there should be some more, you know, collaboration. And that actually will have to do with some solutions to this – you know, the health crisis related to these, you know, solutions.

Anna Fifield: Yeah. Great. I love that idea of revenge consumption. I did a fair bit of revenge consuming in New Zealand once we came out of lockdown there. So, yeah. We’ll see.

But just to go back to a point that Dr. Cha made before about binary choices, I think – I mean, one of the places, I think, where this is playing out is in the WHO. So, as Stephen Morrison (detailed ?), China, obviously, is trying to assert more and more influence over the WHO and fill the vacuum left by the United States during – this was the result of this coronavirus outbreak. How concerned should we be about this? How concerned are you about this? And what can be done about it, if anything?

J. Stephen Morrison: Well, I’m deeply disturbed by the actions taken by the Trump administration to withdraw membership and end funding. That’s a dangerous and reckless decision, coming in the middle of this pandemic. This opens the door for expanded Chinese influence.

We saw this at the World Health Assembly where President Xi appeared remotely and spoke and pledged $2 billion – it’s still to be determined what that means – but also pledged cooperation on the dissemination of a safe and effective vaccine, but, obviously, didn’t want to really discuss the realities of what happened late last year and earlier this year in terms of the stumbles or the concealment and other measures which accounted for the spread in this period.

So we shall see if they follow through with – if China follows through with those commitments. I don’t think that having China play a bigger role in the World Health Organization is, by definition, a bad thing. I mean, people have been pressing China for many years to make a much stronger commitment than it currently does in terms of its financial pledges and the like.

I think that, certainly, if Vice President Biden is elected president in November there will be a reversal of the WHO decision early next year and the United States will resume a strong leadership position there.

Anna Fifield: OK. Yeah. Just picking up on what you said about the vaccine there, obviously, there are many countries around the world racing to try to develop a vaccine for the coronavirus and this has turned into yet another kind of geopolitical competition between the United States and China there.
Is it a bad thing, Dr. Morrison, to have a race like this? Like, could it be a good thing if, you know, various countries are making vaccines at the same time?

J. Stephen Morrison: Well, I don’t think there should be any surprise that there is a race underway, given the gravity of what’s happened to this entire planet and the need for safe and effective vaccines in order to get out from underneath the consequences, the economic and health consequences, of these dual crises.

You’re right. There is a race. The fact that the U.S. and China are in a very conspicuous escalating confrontation that’s become so conspiratorial and so prone to recriminations, and now we have, you know, slurs like Kung flu being used on the campaign trail with great regularity and the like, this is feeding this notion that the United States and China want to be the first to come forward with a safe and effective vaccine.

Both countries are putting very substantial sums into the candidates that they favor. There’s 183 vaccines under development. There’s about 14 that the U.S. is looking at very closely and we’ve made huge bets with five major firms – well, one modest biotech and four global firms. The Chinese are operating with their candidates, but there are many others out there under development.

The question here is will the decision – will institutions be bent to political prerogatives in order to make judgments prematurely around the safety and efficacy of the vaccine and will the best vaccine be chosen without nationalist calculations entering that, because we’ve got so many candidates out there and there is no mechanism at the moment that is out there, no method of coordination, coherent and reliable coordination yet, that would help put a dialogue together. This U.S.-China strategic confrontation has, basically, pushed things in the direction opposed to coordination and that confrontation has paralyzed the Security Council.

So we need to ask ourselves how are we going to move beyond that towards some level of coordination. I think you’re seeing many of the big global firms beginning to cut deals with the high-income countries. They’re beginning to make some commitments on low-income countries through the Gavi Alliance. But it’s totally unclear what happens with middle-income and lower-middle-income countries what sort of access will they have.

Youngmee Jee: So, Anna, can I add some comments?

Victor Cha: Please go ahead.

Youngmee Jee: So it is true that there is a real race for the vaccine development. But I think there should be because – (laughter) – even though there are – you mentioned 186 under development, you don’t really know at the end how many will succeed. So there should be the – a lot of efforts to really develop vaccines.
And you mentioned about no coordination of the vaccine development. But, in fact, there are some efforts to coordinate the vaccine development among different countries and developers by WHO, and I’m a member of those team for the R&D blueprint for the vaccine development. So if you see the website of WHO, there is real update of the clinical trials for the vaccine development by different countries and developers.

And as you mentioned, there was a global vaccine summit, I think, three weeks ago, participated also by U.S. and Korea and many other countries, also WHO and Gavi and some other global health partners, pledging for the vaccine access to low- and middle-income countries, I think. And I do hope that pledge will be really practiced so that not only rich countries then but also low- and middle-income countries have access to those vaccine(s).

But I want to emphasize that there is some efforts also by U.S. NIH. U.S. NIH is really the partner of WHO. They’re working very closely for the international solidarity clinical trial for vaccines.

Anna Fifield: Thank you very much, Dr. Jee. I’m sorry I dropped out of the call. Thank you for taking over there.

So we’ve got some good questions coming through from the audience now. If you do have questions, please do submit them and I’ll ask them to the panelists. We have two very similar ones that are – and great questions – that have come from Wanggi Jung (ph) at CSIS and Justin Rhee at The Heritage Foundation, both concerning what happens with all of the data and surveillance after the coronavirus crisis has passed, and how – like, what guidelines are in place in South Korea for returning to normal in terms of privacy when the world overcomes COVID. That’s a question from Justin Rhee. And then from Wanggi Jung (ph) at CSIS, he has asked: Will this kind of tech use become the new normal for public health in Asia after coronavirus?

So, Dr. Jee, I’ll turn that over to you.

Youngmee Jee: I actually didn’t catch your question very clearly. Can you repeat your question to me?

Anna Fifield: Yeah. I’m sorry about that. So basically what provisions are in place to deal with all of this data and information that the South Korean government has collected from people during the coronavirus outbreak? Like, how will it be disposed of or, like, is there – has it been discussed there how this will be – how it will be treated, and how these systems will be unrolled?

Youngmee Jee: So I think all those data are only used by the limited people in Korea CDC only. So all the other parties involved in collecting data will only send those data to Korea CDC, and only limited number of people will have access. And after certain period, I think that all those data will be destroyed. So I think with also the tracking system introduced in March, those data is more safer because
automatically those data are diminished by the database, which is only accessible by limited number of Korea CDC staff.

Victor Cha: Ann, can I just add to this?

Anna Fifield: Please do.

Victor Cha: I mean, I think it’s an important question. And I agree with what Dr. Jee said. The only thing I would add is that it’s actually very important that the government and the health authorities are also transparent about what they’re going to do with all of this data, you know, once – you know, once we move out of this virus or move out of sort of the crisis situation with this virus because, again, it goes back to this whole question of trust. I mean, I think right now what you’re seeing in places like Korea that you don’t see in the United States is a virtual cycle between, you know, civic trust and obligation to – you know, civic responsibility and civic trust, that’s tied with transparency of information. And if there is – there is growing distrust of what the authorities are doing with all of that data, that will then break that virtuous cycle again. So it’s actually a very important question. And, you know, it’s on the backend of this crisis, but it’s what will enable Korea to be able to respond to the next coronavirus pandemic more effectively, as long as that virtual cycle is not broken.

Anna Fifield: Yeah, the very important question, and one, I mean, that’s certainly on my mind because here in China, I mean, there’s been a lot of surveillance that has been rolled out, even more than usual, as a result of this virus. And I think it is definitely not going away once the virus is under control. It’s here to stay and very worrying from a Chinese perspective.

We’ll turn to another question here that’s been submitted by Millie Kim from Georgetown University. I’ll address this to Dr. Morrison. How do you believe the election has affected the U.S. response to COVID-19, if in any way? And how many – and how may the U.S. pandemic response play out as we get closer to the election? Has public health become a bipartisan issue in the United States?

J. Stephen Morrison: That’s a huge question, a very important one. I think it’s pretty clear that the president is very worried about the state of the pandemic and the economic consequences as being very disruptive to his prospects for reelection. And to that degree, it’s skewed the sentiment of putting a very positive spin on what’s happening. We’ve seen the dismantling of the taskforce. The taskforce is no longer a daily event, the White House taskforce.

So we’ve moved beyond – in a way, moved beyond the kind of in-depth, detailed daily discussion around the pandemic. And the preference has been to not talk about it, and to have things like the president’s interview in The Wall Street Journal, and the – and the Vice President Pence’s statement – or, his op-ed in The Wall Street Journal. These are becoming campaign devices in trying to put a very positive spin on what’s happening in the pandemic.
On the other side of the equation, Vice President Biden has been very tough in his ads, his campaign ads, focusing upon the failures of the Trump administration, in his – in his view. And has come up with a plan in terms of all of the sorts of things. The expectation is that whoever wins will still face a great crisis in January that will be front and center before the next government.

Anna Fifield: Thank you. I’m very pleased to see someone else has asked this question because obviously it’s one that I want to ask as well, and it relates to North Korea. And so North Korea has famously said that it has no cases of coronavirus. I think nobody believes that. We’ve had China come out saying that they’ve passed assistance to North Korea. We’ve seen pictures coming out of North Korea of people in face masks. So the question here is, is COVID-19 different from previous disasters that North Korea has had to face? How has this virus affected North Korea, its leadership, and the elite? Does Pyongyang face significant regime instability as a result of COVID-19? And it maybe for the first part, how has the virus affected North Korea?

Dr. Jee, do you have any information about that? I mean, how wide has the outbreak been inside North Korea? That was for Dr. Jee.

Youngmee Jee: (Off mic) – anyone here has any information on North Korea situation for COVID-19. But I do hope one thing, actually. I mentioned this during some meeting with vice minister of foreign affairs here in Korea. So North Korea belongs to another WHO region, which is Southeast Asia region, because of political reason. And South Korea belongs to Western Pacific region, together with China and Japan. So if North Korea can be part of WHO Western Pacific region, it will be much easier for us to have some data. And also, China is part of this Western Pacific region, so it will be also much easier for China to collaborate. Anyway, they will collaborate with North Korea, but officially also it would be good to collaborate between China and North Korea, if North Korea and South Korea belong to the same WHO regions. So that was one of my hope.

Anna Fifield: OK. Thank you. Sorry to put you on the spot with that one.

Victor Cha: I think that – you know, so it’s – first, let me just reinforce the point about data – Dr. Jee’s point about data. It would be very helpful if countries – members of the WHO who are more friendly to North Korea were able to gather some data about what’s going on inside of North Korea. You know, whether countries in Southeast Asia that would be – I mean, that would be, I think, very important right now.

So this is different, and it’s not different. It’s certainly different in the sense that – I mean, the virus itself, as Steve said, is pernicious. It’s incredibly different. As

Anna Fifield:
I think many listeners are aware, North Korea doesn’t have a public health infrastructure capable of dealing with this. And you know, because of the virus’ origins, if there was one country that could have a virus that would be most dangerous to North Korea, it would be, you know, what emerged in China, because of the unique relationship between China and North Korea. So in that sense, it makes it different.

It’s not different in the way North Korea has responded, in the sense that they publicly have stated that they have no confirmed cases. They say that it’s not a problem for them. But at the same time, they have pivoted from that very public statement of strength to reach out quietly to the NGO community, to others, for help. And I say that’s not different because when you look at North Korea’s response to MERS, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, SARS, and Ebola, they had exactly the same response, which was to declare publicly everything’s fine but, you know, privately their asking for help indicated that the virus had entered their country.

I mean, we know that some suppliers are getting into North Korea overland at the Dandong-Sinuiju border and the water route from Dalian to Nampo, but it’s very limited due to the quarantines on both sides. There is a carve out in the U.N. sanctions regime for humanitarian assistance that is being used for COVID to – COVID, PPE, and other things to send to North Korea. But, you know, there’s still lots of unknowns. Kim Jong-un, Anna, as you know well, has not been visible very much in 2020, from the spring of 2020 and summer. His sister has played a much more prominent role in the recent interactions with South Korea and with the United States.

And, you know, I’ve seen some analysts that have speculated that this could be a function of COVID concerns. That’s why he’s been seen on the western part of the country and not in the capital city. So, you know, as always is the case with North Korea, there’s a lot – there’s more that we don’t know than we know. But looking at sort of the nature of this pandemic and the public health system in North Korea, it’s a big source of concern.

J. Stephen Morrison: Can I just add a remark here, Anna?

Anna Fifield: Sure.

J. Stephen Morrison: Just a couple things. One is that U.N. personnel who were outside of the county because of the holiday earlier in the year have had great difficulty getting back. So I think that in terms of UNICEF and WHO, WFP presence is pretty thin. And that’s been problematic. WFP’s lately been making noises that the malnutrition, which is already acute in the rural – within the rural populations – has worsened. And that is probably a reflection of the border – the closure of the trade with China in this period. We have – as everyone’s said – we have no data on case counts or mortality around COVID-19. But we do have evidence of deteriorating malnutrition status. The other interesting thing is that schools have reopened, and quarantining has been relaxed somewhat on the
foreigners. Which I take that to be some indication of a sense of lessening of the threat of COVID-19. Thank you.

Anna Fifield: OK. Thank you very much.

We do need to wrap up. I have one more question, though, that has been on my mind. And I’d like to give this to Dr. Chung to finish this session. I just wanted to ask Dr. Chung, you know, South Koreans are famous for – or infamous for working extremely long hours and having a workaholic culture. But now out of necessity many people have been forced to work from home for at least some of the time during the outbreak. So do you think that this could finally force some kind of change in South Korean working culture? Or am I being too optimistic?

Chul Chung: Yeah, that’s a great question. I think the workaholic Koreans, maybe my father’s generation it worked maybe, and then to a certain degree my generation. But the younger generation actually values the balance between the work and life and leisure. I know that my father’s generation usually – you know, we had this, you know, one week – like, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Friday, Friday. There was no, you know, weekend. But in Korea there is the 52-hour week already before the COVID-19.

But with the pandemic, together with the new technology, will accelerate transformation into this type of economy, meaning that there’s going to be a huge change indeed in the work environment and the labor market situation. And I think the – as you mentioned, that the working at home or some other ways of, you know, working environment will bring some more flexibility to the labor market. I think that’s something that’s going to – that we are going to see after this, you know, post-corona, you know, situation.

One thing I’d like to add from economic side was on the, you know, coordination of vaccine. Even if a vaccine is developed, you know, one concern is that because of this pandemic there is a, you know, huge increase in the export restrictions. Before the pandemic the protectionism was usually against the imports – restricting imports from other countries. But this time it’s the export restrictions on medical supplies and food. I think that the (moral ?) and – that that’s going to actually harm those in – especially in the developing countries or, you know, some countries like North Korea. That’s going to have a big impact on the inequality as well. And it’s not going to have – it’s not going to help to tackle this health crisis. So I guess the trade can actually help – not the – (inaudible) – this – you know, recovering from this health crisis and economic crisis, I guess.

Anna Fifield: OK. Thank you very much, Dr. Chung. And we’ve gone overtime. But thank you everybody. Dr. Chung, Dr. Cha, Dr. Jee, and Dr. Morrison. Four doctors and me. And sorry about my technical problems at my end in trying to hear. But thank you everybody for bearing with us.
There is a short break now, but please do not go off the line. Stay online because there is another panel discussion coming up very soon on the U.S.-South Korea alliance. So thank you, everybody, for joining. And we’ll say goodbye.

J. Stephen Morrison: Thank you, Anna.

Victor Cha: Thank you.

(END SESSION II)

Announcer: Session III, “Over-the-Horizon: The Future of U.S.-ROK Alliance,” features a discussion on what opportunities the U.S.-ROK alliance may collaborate on in the 21st century that promote both the strength of the alliance, regional stability, and global welfare. This session will be moderated by Dr. Young-Kwan Yoon, professor emeritus at the Seoul National University, and former minister of foreign affairs of the Republic of Korea. This session will feature Dr. Nohyoung Park, Mr. Yunju Ko, Dr. Michael Green, and Mr. Randall Schriver.

Audience, please welcome Dr. Young-kwan Yoon.

Young-Kwan Yoon: It is my great pleasure to moderate Session III of ROK-U.S. Strategic Forum 2020. Hello, I am Young-Kwan Yoon, professor emeritus at Seoul National University. Thank you very much for watching or participating in this very timely and important conference.

It is my great pleasure to moderate Session III of the ROK-U.S. Strategic Forum 2020, which was organized by the Korea Foundation and the CSIS. For our discussion today on security matters and the future of the ROK-U.S. alliance, we have very distinguished four panelists. Each of them needs no further introduction, and all of them have very extensive working experience in the field for a long time, as a – as a practitioner or a researcher, contributing much to the development of the U.S.-ROK alliance. We had a wonderful discussion on security matters yesterday in Session I. It covered various issues, like the history and the current state of ROK-U.S. alliance and the matters related to the security and peace on the Korean Peninsula, including the North Korean nuclear issues.

Since it covered much of the current state of the U.S.-ROK alliance I hope in this session, Session III, we focus on the future of the ROK-U.S. alliance, thinking about how we can upgrade and modernize our alliance so that it can fit better to the changing international situation. As many would agree, I think the ROK-U.S. alliance has been successful in the last seven decades. It provided security which was the most important necessary condition for economic development and democracy in South Korea. Of course, there are sometimes ups and downs in the government-to-government relations between to states, but we have overcome all those difficulties and the alliance successfully promoted shared values and mutual interest.
It started from – it originally started from the security-focused alliance in the early 1950s in order to deter the North Korean military threat. But it gradually developed into a comprehensive globally oriented partnership which covers political, economic, diplomatic, and cultural cooperation. So now I would like to invite your views on how to upgrade and modernize our alliance. I know it’s a rather broad subject, but what comes first in your mind when you think about this issue? First, I’d like to turn the mic to Professor Park Nohyoung.

Nohyoung Park: Thank you, Professor Yoon.

My idea is rather simple. There is a need for the ordinary people to have a good understanding of the alliance between the ROK and the U.S. For this purpose, the people of both countries need to be educated on the historical context of the creation of the alliance to secure peace on the Korean Peninsula. In addition, the role of the alliance for the two countries should be refined to cope with newly changed domestic and regional and international geopolitical situations. For example, one of the touchstones for operating and modernizing the alliance should be in how to cooperate in and through cyberspace, which was not found when the mutual defense treaty between the ROK and the U.S. was concluded in 1953. The alliance of the two countries should be fully extended to cyberspace, which is now becoming a paramount platform for the global society. I’d like to speak more on cybersecurity cooperation later in this session. Thank you.

Young-Kwan Yoon: Professor Park, I think that you have made a very important point, especially your point that we need to try to refine or redefine the role of the alliance for both allies from a long-term perspective. But I sometime get the impression that both governments are always so busy – too busy to think of a long term – from a long-term perspective and defining or redefining, I mean, the alliance, from a long-term perspective. So I think we need to consider and try to – how to refine our alliance from a long-term perspective rather than, I mean, spending most of the time focusing on immediate concerns or immediate challenges. Thank you very much.

Next, Professor Michael Green, senior vice president of the CSIS for Asia and Japan chair.

Michael Green: Thank you, Professor Yoon. It’s a real privilege to be on this panel led by you. And I also want to take this moment to thank you for all the scholarship you’ve brought to our alliance and leadership you’ve brought as foreign minister at a really critical turning point, when I was in the White House with Victor and you were in Seoul, providing real guidance for us all, as you are on this panel.

So I think that Professor Park makes a very good point about informing the public, engaging the public. We have vibrant democracies, and it’s critical that we maintain bipartisan support for our alliance and also inclusion and discussion with a younger generation, which is why the very large audience for this forum
is so encouraging. There is some good news in U.S. public opinion polls. Support for the U.S.-ROK alliance is at historic highs. When Americans are asked, “Should we defend Korea?” two thirds generally say yes, which is quite high – higher than NATO. And among Millennials and Generation X and Z, younger Americans in their 20s, support for the alliance is even higher.

So that’s a good base upon which to build, but I think Professor Park’s point is well taken. I also think we have to continue obviously modernizing deterrence vis-à-vis North Korea. And we have some real challenges bilaterally. The SME negotiations are extremely contentious and threatening in some ways to our political consensus in both countries. But I have confidence we will do well because we’ve faced these challenges before. We’ve been able to adjust. In the 1990s when I first worked in the Pentagon with Randy Schriver at the time, we had to deal with the new scenario of instability in North Korea. And we developed joint planning and worked it together. And then 10 years ago we had to work with the new provocations after the Cheonan incident and Yeonpyeong. And we came up with a counter-provocation plan.

I’ve worked on alliances with Japan, with Australia. The Combined Force Command – this joint and combined relationship is a treasure and an asset that has allowed us to modernize our planning and our operational relationships. And I think we’ll be able to do it. So we’ve done well, and I think we’ll keep doing well, modernizing despite challenges deterrence towards North Korea. And in recent years, we’ve done very well on building a global alliance around G-20, the aid effectiveness summits, the nuclear summit, and so many areas. The gap, and it’s increasingly a geopolitical and political problem, the gap is regional security. This is the donut hole in our alliance, the area which we’re not talking about.

If this were a conference on NATO, if this were a conference on Australia-U.S. alliance, Japan, even the U.S.-India partnership, there would be a panel dedicated entire to China. And in the U.S.-Korea relationship right now, we just do not have the ability to talk about the China problem effectively, despite our strong deterrence cooperation on the peninsula and our global cooperation. And Victor and others pointed out that this is a growing problem for countries like Korea that have deep economic relationships with China. But the trend lines elsewhere are pretty clear. Australia is taking a harder line on China. The new poll that came out yesterday from the Lowy Institute shows a 30-point drop in Australian trust in China. The European Union has declared that they are in systemic competition with China. The Halifax Forum for the transatlantic relationship is focusing on China in its next annual meeting.

So I don’t agree with speakers yesterday who said this is all because Trump is hardline on China. There are aspects of the Trump administration’s rhetoric and approach to China that I think are too simplistic, too overdone. But if Biden becomes president, there will be a continuation of strategic competition with China and policies with alliances to deal with it. So I think that’s the area where we have to modernize. Now, this does not mean – you will remember,
Professor Yoon, when we were in the government Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld pressed Korea very hard to agree to strategic flexibility. You know, to the use of U.S. forces for contingencies off-Peninsula, which could involve China, obviously. And President Bush intervened and said: No, that’s asking too much.

I don’t think that strategic cooperation on Asia and on stability in Asia, and on the China question means that we immediately go to high-end warfighting scenarios. The really critical work is in the peacetime shaping missions. How do we convince China not to engage in coercive behavior? How do we network alliances? How do we work together? And that, I think, is a reasonable agenda we should talk about. And I can say more in our next round.

I’ll just conclude by saying it is ironic, because at the beginning of our alliance 70 years ago the U.S. was afraid of Syngman Rhee because Yi Sŭngman wanted to create a collective security arrangement in Asia. And the U.S. did not want to be entrapped in a war with China by the Korean government. Today we have switched places. The U.S. is moving towards more collective cooperation in Asia, and it’s the government in Seoul that’s worried about being entrapped in a conflict with China.

But I do think there are ways we can – we can manage this so that we’re not putting Korea in a difficult position. And I worry that if we don’t, the U.S. Korea alliance will be much weaker, even if we’re strong on deterring North Korea. Even if we’re strong in global. If we can’t handle regional issues we’re going to have a problem down the road. Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mike, for your excellent review of the history of bilateral alliance in the last several decades. And you also rightly pointed out the importance of the U.S.-ROK incorporation on the global issues, especially building a norm-based international order. Many, I guess, policymakers and professionals and thinkers of foreign policy in this country agree with the necessity to cooperation on how to build a norm-based international order in the future. The problem seems to be that we have a unique – very unique geopolitical dilemma, which is North Korea. And all those countries who are more cooperative in discussing this matter with the United States, they don’t have some problems like North Korea. I mean, they are not divided at all, like Korea. So my question to you is, will there be any other things, I mean, that the United States can help South Korea to overcome that kind of unique geopolitical dilemma?

Michael J. Green: So I’ll go into detail later if you like on some specific policy areas where we can cooperate, but I do think that the United States has to be – and the administration now – has to be much more sensitive to the unique situation of each ally. India is not an ally, but it’s a partner we want to work with. India has a nonalignment tradition that we have to understand. The Korean government has to do with North Korea, as you said. And I think we should not have a one-size fits all approach to shaping the regional environment, dealing with China. I
think we should have a menu that countries can pick from and show some flexibility and agility. And I can go into some of those areas, but they’re not necessarily military.

But I’d make another point, if I could, Young-Kwan. Yes, Korea has a problem because of North Korea, and Korea needs Chinese pressure on North Korea, Chinese help with the North Korea problem. But I would argue, and I think many Americans see it this way, that if China thinks that Korea is afraid to align more closely with other U.S. allies across Asia, and if South Korea is afraid to stand up to China, is afraid to take a strong stance for the alliance with the U.S., then China is going to be much less likely to be helpful on the North Korea problem.

If China thinks that it can drive a wedge between Seoul and Washington, then China is going to wait and try to weaken the U.S.-Korea alliance, and isolate South Korea, and not take action against North Korea. But if China thinks that its actions, its behavior is causing the U.S., Korea, and Japan to cooperate more, Korea to do more in regional security than it has, then I think China is going to be under much greater pressure for geopolitical reasons to do something about North Korea.

But if they feel like this tide of history is going to allow them to watch the U.S.-Korea alliance get weaker as China’s power rises, they will be less likely. Beijing will be less likely to be helpful on North Korea. They have to be faced with a circumstance that forces choices. And that’s not what we have right now. What we have right now is a situation where China views the U.S.-Korea alliance – and, I think, views it as favorable in terms of the trajectory. And that makes China less willing to help us on North Korea.

So I would take the conundrum you’re describing and turn it around and say precisely because we need China’s help on North Korea we should be aligned more than we have been on the China issue. Not for warfighting, not for anything like that, but in diplomatic and in values terms, as you put it.

Young-Kwan Yoon: Thank you very much for your insights. And next our speaker is Director-General Ko Yunju. He is director-general of the American affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Director-General Ko.

Yunju Ko: Yes, thank you, Dr. Yoon. And then I’m very pleased and honored to have this discussion with the very distinguished scholars over the video. So and then I share with what Dr. Yoon said about our alliance, how the alliance evolved, and then so far. And I’m not going to, you know, talk about – in details about the current challenging issues in the regional context that Dr. Michael Green raised. I think the result of that kind of session for tomorrow’s session. I think that this more, like, a proper session, that I can see.
So today at this time I would like to more focusing on the kind of general description of how well we – or what the future of the alliance should go. And in that context, I think my question lies, how to – you know, how to see the future direction of the alliance? I think this kind of question is the everyday – you know, the question that have to deal with, with my colleagues and when I’m working on American issues.

So I think when it comes to my, you know, core assumption or core essence of the future direction of the alliance is to enhance – further enhance our alliance partnership. That is my assumption and my essence of that efforts that Korean government is, of course, moving forward the alliance for future. So in that context, when it comes to the partnership for peace and security of the Korean Peninsula, if we look at the alliance direction for future, I think everybody – I believe everybody – I believe everybody agree that Korea should play a leading role in those issues, in the Korean Peninsula issues, especially for the peace and security of the Korean Peninsula.

This is a kind of one direction that we have to pursue as alliance for the better partnership on that issue. So in that context, in that sense I think I would like to mention briefly about the OPCON transition that currently we are undergoing. As you know, the conditions-based OPCON transition was agreed between two governments in 2015 November, you know, SCM meeting between two defense ministers. And then follow on, when the President Moon administration is sworn in in 2017, both governments agreed to facilitate those process for the OPCON – conditions based OPCON transition.

So, so far we have – we finished the initial operation capability assessment last year. And then this year we are trying to help second stage of the combined forces assessment for full operation capabilities. I think that is not scheduled yet, but I believe both depends, you know, the ministries were in agree – you know, that kind of, you know, assessment process later this year. And then, you know, based on the OPCON transition, you can see the – our defense budget increase every year. You know, 7.5 percent on every, since 2017, and accounting for 2.6 percent of GDP for our defense. This is, I think, much more than the average of Japan and the other – the European countries.

And also, you know, based on the OPCON conditions based – I mean, the conditions change a lot. I mean, there is a core, you know, capabilities of the Korean military, you know, which can play a leading role in defense of a combined posture and also, you know, alliance, you know, combine defense posture that can, you know, fend off North Korean nuclear missile threats. And those kind of conditions requires our – you know, much more, you know, spending on the military budget, also, you know, purchasing the weaponry systems. But mainly, our, you know, government is purchasing a huge amount of the United States weapons systems, which can, you know, contribute to our defense – you know, the combined defense posture by increasing interoperability of the weaponry systems.
So those are the kind of things that the enhanced partnership for the leading role of the Korean on the Korean Peninsula issue. That is one area that the how we enhance our partnership. The other area that I can, you know, see is more related to the cooperation beyond the Korean Peninsula. I think in that case the United States had an Indo-Pacific Strategy. Korea have a New Southern Policy. So two presidents, when they met last June – June last year, they – our president mentioned that the Korean government is pursuing harmonious cooperation between two initiatives. I mean our New Southern Policy and the United States Indo-Pacific Strategy. I mean, based on that statement, we, as government officials – I mean, the two government officials that follow up those statements, and we adopted a joint fact sheet on the cooperation between New Southern Policy and Indo-Pacific Strategy last November. And also, we adopted a joint statement for that cooperation.

This year our working-level officials continue to consult, to devise the mechanism and coordinate the joint project that – which can, you know, contribute to the capacity building in the ASEAN countries. This is, I think, the one area that we can, you know, enhance partnership for the future alliance. That partnership goes beyond the Korean Peninsula. This is one area that I can – I can, you know, tell you. And the more specifically – I mean, I’d like to mention two areas – two specific areas that we can – our alliance can, you know, cooperate for future.

One is that global health security. I mean, global health security requires, you know, the openness and transparency because, as we have seen, the COVID-19 response – I mean, the Korean government – everybody speaks highly of the Korean government’s response to COVID-19. Why they praised the Korean government response is that Korean government’s policy or response is highly based on the transparency and openness and the democracy. I mean, those kind of principles and values the United States and Korea are sharing together.

So an alliance which can, you know, handle, tackle the pandemic very effectively, because the alliance is based on trust and partnership. And those pandemic issues requires the international world, you know, very faithful trust. So in that sense, I think the global health security is one specific area of future cooperation between Korea and the United States. And also the two government show the – a lot of good practices. When we addressed the COVID-19 cases, we shared a lot of information – detailed information. And also we helped each other for personal protective equipment. And also we helped each other testing kits, and many things.

So based on those practices, we can develop the international governance system of global health security. I think that is one specific area that we can – you know, we can work together. And the other one is that I believe the space industry. I mean, that space area is very much a promising area of cooperation for two countries because, as I said before, alliance requires – or, is based on the strong trust for each other. So usually so far the space issue is very much
related to the sensitive technology. So the United States have very strong bilateral and global, you know, nonproliferation policies regarding the space development of technologies.

So those kind of nonproliferation policies are – is kind of becoming an obstacle for Korea to engage with the cooperation with the United States. So since we have seen – and since we have over more than 70 years – or, more than 67 years of alliance, we have, you know, evolved our alliance into the future oriented, you know, cooperation. In the case of space, it’s the one area that – every time we have a presidential meeting, there is a joint statement. Every time in the joint statement we mentioned about the space, the cooperation as a new frontier of our alliance operations. So I think this is a time for us to move forward with the space industry cooperation for the future new frontier of the alliance. I think let me stop here, and then I look forward to our following discussions. Thank you.

Young-Kwan Yoon: Thank you very much, Director-General Ko, for succinctly explaining Korean government’s vision for the ROK-U.S. alliance for the future. After listening to your presentation, let me focus one specific issue, which I think is probably more important issues than any other. That is transition of wartime OPCON, I mean, wartime operational control issue.

Please correct me if I’m wrong. I’ve got a general impression that there are two, I mean, conflicting things here. One is Korean government’s desire to be an equal partner and take a more active role in providing security to the Korean Peninsula. On the other hand, I mean, it takes time to prepare conditions for transition of the OPCON – I mean, wartime OPCON. And these two things seem to conflict in some sense. And I’m wondering whether we can find an optimal balance between these two – I mean, between two governments, the United States and South Korea.

And our next speaker is a former assistant secretary of defense for Indo-Pacific security affairs, Mr. Randall Schriver. Please.

Randall Schriver: Yes. Good morning to my colleagues in the United States. Good evening to friends in Korea. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this forum again. So thank you to CSIS and the Korean Foundation.

Good news and bad news. The good news is I agree with just about everything Dr. Green said, which makes me feel confident that I’m on the right track, as he’s probably the greatest strategic thinker of my generation. The bad news is, we didn’t coordinate beforehand and he said just about everything I was going to say. So I’ll be very brief here. And rather than repeat what Mike said I just want to amplify a couple points.

I’ve often said that the alliance went global before it went regional, and that donut hole, as Mike described it, is very noticeable. But it is going to become a bigger omission over time and will not impact the warmth of the relationship or
the capabilities, per se. But it will threaten the relevance of the alliance going forward, if not addressed. And I say that because the China challenge – and I can say from the Department of Defense point of view where I just came from – the China challenge is the primary focus and has become the organizing principle for the entire defense enterprise. It affects everything that the Pentagon does, whether that’s future investments, acquisition strategies, force structure of the joint force, future force posture, how we think about alliances and partnerships and capacity building, how we operate, whether that be freedom of navigation operations or other displays of presence in the region.

So it’s hard for me to see this not impacting the relevance of the alliance, or at least in the thinking of the alliance partners in Washington, if this omission isn’t addressed over time. I think another important point Mike made relates to what may happen in the future, a new administration. And my view is, although a dramatic change in rhetoric, and style, and tone, and a very unconventional approach from this president, and aspects of the China policy being a radical departure from the past – I think use of tariffs and the like – but in fact in the security area and in the defense area I believe our policies are more evolutionary than revolutionary.

And if you look at the pivot or rebalance, I’m not sure they ever decided what it was, but if you look at the core aspects of the Obama administration’s move into the Indo-Pacific, the importance of the region, a place of priority, the interest in strengthening partners and alliances with a particular purpose in mind of support of free and open international order – I mean, those are all principles and aspects that were carried over into the Trump administration, the difference in style notwithstanding, the rebranding notwithstanding. And I think the same would be true going forward in a Biden administration, if there is one, or a future administration at some point because the center of gravity has really changed in the public in the United States.

The recent Pew poll, 66 percent of Americans now have a very negative view of China and are concerned about China’s behavior. But really at the core, it’s a structural shift in the power hierarchy. It’s China’s departure from the traditional Deng Xiaoping hide and bide strategy, and more assertive behavior, more willingness to accept friction, et cetera. So I don’t see this as a Trump policy only. And again, I think for our alliance to maintain relevance, which I think we all want, we’ve got to start thinking about regional challenges. But I’m very mindful of the earlier comments about forcing binary choices and the risks associated with that. And so I do think there are ways to frame cooperation in the region, and there’s ways to – I think Mike used the terms a menu of options so that we can grow more comfortable cooperation on these issues.

We always said at the Department of Defense, we don’t go to countries and say: We want you to choose between Washington and Beijing, the United States and China. But can you choose support for your own sovereignty? Can you choose support for supporting international law and norms? Can you choose to support peaceful dispute resolution? If you can choose those things,
then we’re confident you’ll be on sides because our purpose in the United States is not to seek territory, not to seek the diminishment of even our strategic competitor. It’s to uphold a particular regional and global order, particularly where the regional and global commons are concerned.

So I think there are ways to frame it, and ways that may be more comfortable for our alliance partners and other emerging partners. And we can focus our activities as such as well. The last thing I would say is – and this sort of circles back to modernizing the alliance – that will, over time, start to impact capabilities. And I think the things that have already been raised – cyber, space – these are all areas that the China challenge will need to invest in. So again, if we’re identifying this as modernization priorities for other reasons, you know, that’s fine. I think that complements what ultimately we need to do in terms of our regional cooperation.

So like I said, a lot of what I might have said Mike covered. And so I just wanted to amplify a few of those points. And look forward to any questions or discussion.

Young-Kwan Yoon: Thank you for the comments. And I don’t know whether this is a response to you or Mike again, but my impression is that South Korean government’s position on this issue cannot be separated from the North Korean nuclear issue, in the sense that we, most Koreans, yearn for living in a peaceful condition with North Korea, if not a peaceful unification in the later period. And if we cannot satisfy that kind of, I mean, desire, or cherished desire for Korean people, I mean, South Koreans cannot but be considering China factor. And I mean, in order to, I mean, help South Korea to be free from that concern, I think the U.S. can do something in terms of, I mean, North Korea nuclear policy.

What I’m saying is, instead of taking very orthodox approach on denuclearization – for example, you denuclearize first and then we will provide everything. Instead of that kind of approach, I think the U.S. can be more flexible, and pragmatic, and engage North Korea into continued negotiation and dialogue. In that way, I think probably the U.S. may be able to find a way to embrace North Korea on the condition that North Korea will definitely denuclearize itself. But the current situation is not developing that way. So that makes South Korea position very difficult. I mean, so – I mean, again, I think this issue cannot be separated from the North Korean nuclear issue. I mean, why don’t we discuss later?

Now I’d like to turn my mic to Professor Park Nohyoung. And my question to you is: What new frontier issue would you pick up if you – I mean, if we want to strengthen or upgrade our alliance for the future? And how we can promote, I mean, mutual cooperation in that specific issue area?

Nohyoung Park: Thank you, Professor Yoon. Yes, I’d like to choose cybersecurity issues for the alliance between the ROK and the U.S. But before moving to that discussion, if
allowed, I’d like to discuss – I mean, say something briefly on the issue of forcing binary choices between China and the U.S.

I think if you look at a general or bigger picture of international society and the rules making in the international society, especially relating to cybersecurity and just trade, trade in data, cross-border flows of data, I think China finds the importance of the international rules. China has been making kind of – (inaudible). So I think in the end, ultimately the two superpowers agree to international agreement, and a real agreement on those new issues. I mean, cyber sovereignty, data sovereignty. Then I think there will be less pressure on choosing a binary center in the international order.

Now, I’d like to go to discussion of cybersecurity cooperation between the ROK and the U.S. And as we note, the ROK and the U.S. are one of the most advanced state in ICTs, information and communications technologies. And as a result, the two countries are most vulnerable to malicious cyber operations. And thus, there are a lot of cooperation issues on economic, political, military, and legal issues. And I’d like to suggest two points. First, cyberspace, a newly found recognized domain, is now agreed to be applied by the existing international law, including the U.N. Charter.

Nevertheless, there’s still disagreements on the application of the particular rules of international law, such as the international humanitarian law or law of armed conflict, and the right to self-defense as provided in Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, and also countermeasures to be imposed on international wrongful acts. In this respect, I’d like to suggest that the ROK and the U.S. may cooperate on the application of international law to cyberspace, then one of the practical issues may be the application of the right to self-defense in general and the collective defense in particular.

For example, NATO allies agreed that a serious cyberthreat could trigger the invocation of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which provides that an armed attack against one ally is to be regarded an attack against all. Thus, cyber defense is now a part of NATO’s core task of collective defense. In addition, in April last year Japan and the U.S. agreed that the mutual security treaty could cover serious cyberattacks against both countries. Likewise, the ROK and the U.S. need to confirm their understanding that their mutual defense treaty could cover cyberattacks, invoking collective defense.

So the provision on collective defense against traditional armed attacks should be reinterpreted in the context of cyber. The three countries, the U.S., the ROK, and Japan, in cooperation with NATO, could cooperate in developing the thresholds of cyberattacks which may be equivalent to traditional armed attacks.

Second, I’d like to suggest that the ROK and the U.S. should practically cooperate by conducting public attributes of serious malicious cyber operations together. A group of those likeminded countries, such as the U.S., the U.K.,
Australia recently made public attributions by blaming a particular country as responsible for serious malicious cyber incident, like WannaCry ransomware and NotPetya ransomware. Attribution is identifying responsible perpetrators for malicious cyber operations. Public attribution, as a course of action to malicious cyber operations, may be a good tool of deterrence against malicious cyber operations.

On 21st September 2019, last year, 27 U.N. member states, including the U.S., the ROK, and Japan, made the joint statement on advancing responsible state behavior in cyberspace, where they stressed, quote, “when necessary we will work together on a voluntary basis to hold states accountable when they act contrary to this framework of responsible state behavior in cyberspace, as been developed in the U.N., including by taking measures that are transparency and consistent with international law. There must be consequences for bad behavior in cyberspace,” unquote.

Thus, the ROK, as one of the states making this joint statement, should join such public attributions to hold those states committing malicious cyber operations accountable under international law, in cooperation with the U.S., which has unparalleled attribution capabilities. The capability for plausible public attribution is a precondition for international cooperation in cyberspace. Thank you.

Young-Kwan Yoon: Thank you very much. I think you raised important, I mean, issues. It was very interesting for me to hear your recommendation that both the U.S. and South Korea should come to the understanding that defense alliance between two countries covers cyberattacks. Are there, I mean, much enthusiasms among policymakers in both countries on that issue – on that specific issue these days?

Nohyoung Park: Well, as I said, there are at least two precedents in the NATO and also between Japan and the U.S. So I think between the ROK and the U.S. there should be a kind of – the understanding on cyberattacks in the context of the mutual defense treaty between the two countries.

Young-Kwan Yoon: OK, thank you. Thank you very much.

Dr. Ko – I mean, Director-General Ko, you mentioned the issue of cooperation in space. And we concluded a framework agreement in that issue area three years ago. Was there much progress in that issue area?

Yunju Ko: I think we have the framework agreement between Korea and the United States some years ago. And then that is a kind of – the legislative framework that we can work together. But based on that, there is some communications took place between the governments – (inaudible) – space issue. And there is some – you know, the cooperation is ongoing, but that kind of cooperation is very much rudimentary. For example, Korea Aerospace Research Institute and NASA, they have some, you know, project working together, but mainly at the planning level.
And then Korean – you know, the industry – the government industry, they have planned for, you know, the launch 104 satellites, various satellites, by 2040 by using our – you know, our developed civilian space-launch vehicles. But for that, the satellite, we need some parts from the United States that’s very much sensitive parts that is prohibited for the international trade on arms controls, ITAR regulations. So those kind of, you know, nonproliferation-related regulations are becoming, you know, kind of obstacle for Korean industry to engage politically with the United States industries.

So in that sense, I think the alliance is, as I’ve said before, is based on the trust and, you know, confidence. So based on that, I think the certain, you know, areas of, you know, sensitive industry, we need – based on the alliance, we need to work together to, you know, allocate scarce resources more efficiently to the mutual benefits of the country. That’s the point.

Young-Kwan Yoon: OK, thank you.

We have only a few minutes left. Briefly, I mean, Michael, would you make final comments on the issues that we talked so far?

Michael J. Green: Sure. Thank you. I thought all the comments were very helpful and very concrete. And I want to applaud Director-General Ko for his efforts, and – (inaudible) – efforts to align the New Southern Policy with the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy. I think that’s absolutely critical. I hope we’ll see more than just symbolic joint projects. We need concrete cooperation. So for example, I’ve spent a lot of time in Southeast Asia the past few years in countries like Cambodia, Mongolia, Myanmar, where I’ve been. KOICA is doing wonderful work and very active on things like women’s empowerment, civil society building.

But when the U.S. ambassador meets with likeminded ambassadors to deal with democracy and human rights challenges, the Korean ambassador often stays out. Is invited but stays out. The Canadians go. The British go. The Australians, the Japanese. Korea as a powerful democracy, in many ways is a model of democratic transition to countries like Myanmar, should be more actively involved. In Vietnam, the U.S., Australia, Japan have divided nonlethal Coast Guard-type capabilities, patrol boats. So did Korea. But Korea did it completely through direct commercial sales, with no coordination with the U.S., Australia, or Japan. So if we aligned, then those things should be done strategically and not surprising each other. And that would be a success for what Director-General Ko is trying to do.

I think the area where we’re going to have to really cooperate better is controlling sensitive technology, and especially 5G. I think the U.S. Commerce Department export control rules are too much. The extraterritoriality against Samsung or others, in my view, is too much. It’s too much. On the other hand, TSMC is Taiwan is now going to shift a significant amount of their seven-
nanometer fabrication production to the United States. Japan has already moved in that direction. So Samsung and Korea are increasingly the outliers among U.S. allies and partners. And we have to move beyond the current dynamic, which is the U.S. kind of says: Do what we say. And then the Korean side says: Leave us alone, we need China for North Korea.

It's too simplistic. What we really need is for Korea, as an advanced technology country, to be a central part of shaping a new technology control regime in the world. It should not just be Japan, or France, or Britain. Korea has to be central in that. So we have to really start a new kind of strategic dialogue on technologies that we don’t have right now.

Young-Kwan Yoon: Thank you very much. Lastly, Secretary Schriver, one of the audience asked a question to you. Would you mind if I laid this question to you directly? For Mr. Randy Schriver. You were part of the core negotiating team for the Singapore summit. What was that like? Bolton’s book says that he was unhappy with the teams falling into North Korea’s trap. Do you agree?

Randall Schriver: Can I just make one comment before answering that question, in terms of a last thought about modernizing the alliance? The author Lewis Carroll has a scene in “Alice in Wonderland” where she’s asked for directions, and the Cheshire Cat says: Well, where are you going? And she says, well, I don’t know. And he says, well, then any road will get you there. So I think before we start talking about particular capabilities, cyber, space, and all these things – which I think we need to do – we need to know where we’re headed, and we need to have frank conversations about the future of the alliance. You can’t really do strategy unless you have shared vision for desired outcomes. And you can’t really train, equip, and do all the other things unless you know where you’re going. You can do it, but it’ll be detached from – it threatens to be detached from your core security interests out into the future.

So, Ambassador Bolton has written a very lengthy book and can speak for himself, if that’s his view. I think what I try to remind people from that period, we weren’t, before Singapore, engaged in denuclearization talks. We had about 10 days to produce a summit statement. A summit statement is very different than what Ambassador Hill was involved in, and Victor and Mike, supporting all those efforts where you had a group of technical experts, supported by diplomats and other subject matter experts trying to develop a roadmap to denuclearization, trying to come up with an agreement that would put the elements of that roadmap in place and have both sides sign a document.

We were working on a summit statement. We had about 10 days to do it. And so we thought it was important that Kim Jong-un put his name down to something. After all, this was an unprecedented meeting, an unprecedented opportunity. And for the first time, we had the opportunity to get the North Korean leader himself on paper committing to something. All the previous agreements before the Trump administration were government-to-government
agreements, but not necessarily with the signature or anything from the leader himself.

So what we came up with may not have been as concrete and as binding as people might have liked. But in fact, it achieved what we sought out to do in terms of getting the leader on record committed to doing some things. Obviously what happened subsequent to that, and the failure for even a modest amount – a most attempt at implementation – (laughs) – show that, you know, even if the agreement had been more specific, stronger, different, I think we end up in the same place. And I think the efforts of the Trump administration certainly open to criticism and critique.

But I think there was – I think the president was absolutely genuine in his commitment in trying to reach a deal, more flexible, Professor Yoon, than I think you described in terms of asking for everything upfront before we do anything. That wasn’t my experience as a part of the negotiating team. But it was sincere, genuine interest in trying to solve a problem. And it just – it takes two to tango. And that’s where we are.

Young-Kwan Yoon: OK. Thank you very much. I think we had very productive and stimulating discussion. Especially I think this session was successful in highlighting one of the most important issues in trying to strengthen and upgrade our bilateral alliance. Thank you very much, all. Thank you. (Applause.)

Victor Cha: OK. Thank you, Foreign Minister Yoon, for a great panel.

I want to start by thanking everybody in the audience for watching over the past two days. We really hope that you enjoyed our discussions over two days with three panels on regional peace, transnational challenges, and the alliance. I think it’s fitting that we close our two-day session focusing on the alliance with terrific contributions from our four panelists and from the foreign minister. This, today, being the 70th anniversary of the state of the Korean War, and a reaffirmation of the strength of the relationship.

The interest among all of you in the audience is greater than ever here today, on the 70th anniversary. We are well over 20,000 views of the event over the past two days. And for those of you who missed some of it, it will be archived, both available on YouTube and on the CSIS and Korea Foundation websites.

You know, this is, at least for the CSIS Korea Chair, our first large-scale online event. There are certain benefits, in the sense that we truly had a global audience that joined us for the past few days. My only regret is that we cannot take our guests all for a nice dinner after the evening’s events, and a glass of wine, to carry the conversation further. But some of us will be doing this online privately tomorrow morning.

I want to thank our technical team and our support team for putting this event together. It is like trying to put on a television show. And our tech team just did
a fantastic job. We’re truly indebted to them. They’ve been working absolutely overtime given all the events that CSIS is doing. I want to thank our distinguished guests who joined us over the past couple of days, the first vice foreign minister, Ambassador Harris, Ambassador Stephens, Ambassador Lippert, Foreign Minister Yoon, Assistant Secretary Schriver, Assistant Secretary Helvey, Director-General Ko, and all of the — all of the experts and scholars and opinion leaders who’ve joined us.

And then finally, I want to thank Korea Foundation, our partner, and my good friend and respected colleague, President Lee Geun of Korea Foundation. We have been working with Korea Foundation since the origins of this chair over 10 years ago. And this annual event, our signature event, the ROK-U.S. Strategic Forum with the Korea Foundation is certainly one of the highlights of our year of programming and events. And so on behalf of Dr. Hamre, I want to, again, thank the Korea Foundation and turn the floor over to Professor Lee Geun for any closing remarks.

Geun Lee:

Thank you, Dr, Cha.

I think the Korean participants — all of the Korean participants will have a nice dinner together tomorrow at this Shilla Hotel in Jeju Island. I think that is one of the benefits of the success of Korean, you know, COVID-19 fighting model. And I hope we can bring all the participants, both in Korea and in the USA, together to a beautiful island of Jeju and have a great dinner next year.

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Korea Foundation I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all of you once again. Thank you for taking time out of your day to offer your passionate participation in these insightful discussions. I believe this forum was a stepping-stone towards changing the challenges of COVID-19 into opportunities. I’m delighted to have joined this forum alongside such distinguished company. And I’m proud to contribute to greater understanding, the exchange of ideas and ways to bring peace on the Korean Peninsula, and the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War.

The ROK and the U.S. have enjoyed a long period of friendship and have depended on each other, especially in times of trouble. Although the nature of our alliance may evolve, and the environment may change, we’ll always move forward together to build a brighter future. I hope that we can continue to enhance our mutual support and deepen our friendship. I trust in the strength of the alliance. And I’m certain that through our collaboration, we’ll resolve all the challenges that we face.

Last but not least, let me take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to CSIS. This forum would not have been possible without the cooperation of Dr. Victor Cha and the CSIS staff. Until we meet again, stay healthy and safe from COVID-19. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

(END)