

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT
Online Event

**“ROK-U.S. Strategic Forum 2021: The Road Ahead after
the Biden-Moon Summit”**

***Session II - Denuclearization and Peace on the Korean
Peninsula: Is There a Way Forward?***

DATE

Monday, November 15, 2021, at 10:55 a.m. ET

FEATURING

Sue Mi Terry

*Director, Hyundai Motor-Korea Foundation Center for Korean History and Public Policy,
Wilson Center*

Richard C. Johnson

*Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Countering Weapons of Mass
Destruction and Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Missile Defense,
U.S. Department of Defense*

Yoon Young-kwan

*Kim Koo Visiting Professor, Harvard University; Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic
of Korea*

Sheen Seong-ho

*Professor & Director, International Security Center, Graduate School of International Studies,
Seoul National University*

MODERATOR

Kim Joon-hyung

*Professor, Handong Global University; Former Chancellor, Korea National Diplomatic
Academy*

Transcript By

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Kim Joon-Hyung: OK, hello, everybody. My name is Kim Joon-hyung again. I'm sorry to show you my face twice in a row. (Laughs.) But I am more honored to be a moderator for the second session, which is titled "Denuclearization and Peace on the Korean Peninsula: Is there a way forward?" And I thought about this when I looked at these questions. We are asking same – we have been asking the same question over and over again. Still didn't get, you know, answered. And then, you know, this morning First Vice Minister Choi talked about never give up. (Laughs.) So, I don't want to give up asking this question. So maybe we can have – we can have some clue or insight to think creatively. And we have a great line of panelists. And actually, you know, during the first session I was expecting to come back to me one more time. (Laughter.) But suddenly, it ended. So why don't we, changing a little bit of format, so at least two rounds or three rounds, if possible. So maybe we'll come in short, a little bit, and then we can talk more about issues. I will introduce each whenever they come to present, so not, you know, everybody at once. OK. Actually, I set out several questions beforehand, and then I have three – I categorized into three. And first question is this, like, where are we now, and diagnosing the current situation and forecasting the next six months. Because six months are – the Moon government has six months left. And I don't want to – we don't want to focus the long-period of time. So, for the next six months. And who and what will be the key to move on from the current deadlock? So, this is the first category of questions, and you can present yourself. First presenter, let's see, next to me. Dr. Yoon Young-kwan is Kim Koo visiting professor in the Department of Government at Harvard University. Previously, he was senior visiting scholar with the Korea Project at the Harvard Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs from December 2020 to June 2021. He's also professor emeritus in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at Seoul National University. From 2003 to 2004, he served as the minister of foreign affairs and trade of Republic of Korea. Before joining the faculty of Soul National University in 1990, he taught at the University of California-Davis for three years. I have a long list of his resume, so I'll stop here and give him the stage. The floor is yours.

Yoon Young-Kwan: Thank you very much, Professor Kim Joon-hyung, for your very kind introduction. And it's my great pleasure and thank you for having me in this very important conference. As we all know, I mean, we are – we have been in kind of stalemate for at least two years, since the end of Hanoi summit. And there was no progress in terms of denuclearization. And there was no improvement of bilateral relationship between the United States and North Korea. And inter-Korean relationship maybe there was some, but still we are in a difficult situation. And the U.S. government, the Biden administration, has been saying – for example, Ambassador Sung Kim has been saying that the U.S. is open to dialogue without any condition at any time with North Korea. But frankly speaking, I feel that, I mean, their plate is already full. I mean, there are so many things to cover, so much more urgent issues. I mean, there are. And North Koreans, they say that basically what is important is the end of hostile policy of the United States. And I wonder whether they are really interested in the end of – I mean, declaration of end of Korean War. And so far, they have been restraining their behavior, and

they have not yet made any significant provocation, such as nuclear test or ICBM. But nobody knows how long they will restrain their behavior. South Korean government, they seem to be quite interested in facilitating resumption of the U.S.-North Korea dialogue – for example, so taking some measures like declaration of the end of Korean War. But they have only six months left. So, I don't know whether their efforts will be successful or not. In other words, we are in a kind of stalemate, which seems somewhat stable from a short-term tactical perspective. But from a long-term strategic perspective, which may be working disadvantageously in terms of U.S. strategy interest in their region. If we – if we continue to be in this kind of stalemate for a long time, probably I'm afraid the relative influence of the United States will be weakening while the relative influence of China will be increasing. So, I'm concerned. I'm concerned about that, yeah.

Mr. Kim:

Thank you very much. It's very short. (Laughter.) OK, good. OK, our next speaker will be Sue Mi Terry – Dr. Sue Mi Terry. She is director of Hyundai Motor-Korea Foundation Center for Korean History and Public Policy at the Wilson Center. She was a former senior fellow with the Korea Chair at the Center for – CSIS, here. Dr. Terry was a senior analyst on Korean issues at the CIA from 2001 to 2008. She was director for Korea, Japan, and Oceania affairs at the National Security Council under George W. Bush and President Barack Obama, between 2008 and 2009. Actually, she is a – she is almost like a star in Korea. I saw her face every other day in Korean news. (Laughs.) So congratulations on your new job, and the floor is yours.

Sue Mi Terry:

Thank you so much. And thanks to Victor, CSIS, and Korea Foundation for having me here, even though I defected. (Laughter.) And it's great to be here and be part of this panel, distinguished panelists. And I know everyone here has been looking at the Korean issue for a very long time. So I really appreciate this. After having followed North Korea for how many decades, I feel there's more humility. Like, I don't know. I don't have answers. I don't know where we are headed. And I read everybody's – I just read Minister Yoon's wonderful piece on national interests on how we need a bold strategy. I'm not sure if we're going to necessarily agree on what we should do next, but I think we can agree on where we are today. (Laughs.) And I do agree with Minister Yoon's comments right now that, obviously, we are at an impasse, again, after three decades of dealing with North Korea and after five U.S. presidents – very different U.S. presidents, and very different policies we have pursued, from bilateral negotiations to multilateral, Axis of Evil, to, you know Banco Delta Asia, to strategic patience, to maximum pressure, and even meeting with Kim Jong-un three times. And here we are again having this conversation on where we are. So we are at an impasse. And I would argue that – I agree with Minister Yoon that in the sense that while there might be, you know, OK, there's no nuclear test and ICBM test – and I'm going to leave this part to Richard, because he's the professional on this – but we are at a worse point, I would argue, because North Korea has been making advancement on both its nuclear and missile program. That's what they've been doing the last few years. And last recent spate of tests show that they are trying to diversify their missile programs and frustrate U.S. missile defenses, and so on. So I do think we are worse off. And after

having gone through the summitry and having sat down with Kim and having the Hanoi summit fail, our options – U.S. options are getting even more limited, realistically speaking. So I don't think we are – so, again, here we are. We are at an impasse, but we are even worse off. I know that President Moon, with six months left in office, you know, he's making a valiant effort to really make progress with North Korea. And I do think it's important to have this conversation, even though we might not agree exactly on the pros and cons of having a peace declaration right now with North Korea. Although, I do buy Victor's earlier comment, what he was trying to get at is do I necessarily think that North Korea is going to be like, sure, that's all I need, we need a peace declaration and this is the one thing that we've been missing the last three decades, and now we can make progress? I'm highly doubtful, because one thing that we – you know, one good thing that came out of the Hanoi summit is that we understand what Kim wants. And Kim wants significant sanctions relief. So unless we are willing to give that, I'm not quite sure necessarily that peace declaration would – that's going to be it, and North Koreans are going to say, OK, now that's going to get us starting the right framework, and so on. So that's where we are. And in terms of your question, the second part of the question of you asked us to predict what's going to happen in the next six months, I mean, you know, one thing about also having followed North Korea for many years is I don't think they're all that unpredictable. So I can – you know, it's going to be an interesting six months, because there is South Korea – presidential election in South Korea. Clearly Kim would want, I would think, the progressive candidate to win, just because of their policy stance. One's more pro-engagement and the other conservative party is a little bit more, you know, less so. So, you know, it'll be interesting how Kim calculates that he should best influence South Korean election, although I do think South Korean public now is so sophisticated and they're so focused on domestic issues, I'm not sure if they're going to be all that much swayed by whatever North Koreans choose to do. But my prediction is that they are going to continue at this spot a very – Kim found this very sweet spot of provocations and returning to some sort of testing campaign, but it's not – it doesn't really merit an overreaction. This is a nice, sweet spot for Kim. And alternating between that and, you know, sort giving out peace feelers to South Korea to see where he can land. Beijing Olympics might be a good venue, just like PyeongChang Olympics served as a good venue for – if Kim is interested in having a sit-down, that might be a good venue. But I think this is sort of – that's what he's going to do. He's going to continually alternate. And North Korea's strategic goals have not changed. They remain consistent, which are getting international acceptance of North Korea as a nuclear weapons power, getting us comfortable living with North Korea's nuclear weapons. And then secondly, I do think Kim does want to split the alliance. So I think that's what he's going to do, is continually sort of alternate back and forth. And I would just end with this comment: There's some criticism of the Biden administration's policy in terms of what are they doing. You know, this is – they keep saying we're not this, we're not that, we're not doing strategic patience, we're not doing maximum pressure. Well, what is it exactly? There are no details. But I do think that one thing that the Biden administration is doing correctly is that they mean it when they say they are

going to work very closely with their allies. So, I do see the Biden administration working very closely with the Blue House, and with Japan, with South Korea, going back and forth. At least – maybe not much has been accomplished, but there’s a lot of coordination and transparency back and forth. And I think that’s a very good thing.

Mr. Kim:

Thank you very much. I think you’re right, when I heard, you know, from Blue House and MOFA, actually, they say all kinds of levels they talk to each other. So sometimes they don’t have anything to discuss anymore, jokingly they said. But somehow nothing came out of it. And actually, one point you made is, you know, North Korea can help progressive, you know, candidate in coming election. But in history, the opposite actually. They did something actually when – ironically, or maybe they intended to help conservative. Maybe they are symbiotic – you know, hostility symbiosis, I call it. (Laughs.) Anyways. OK, and then the question about the Beijing Olympic and the role of China, actually, I saved it for the last. So I’m going to come back to you if we have time for that. And third presenter, let me introduce Dr. Sheen Seong-ho. He is a professor of international security and a director of the International Security Center at the Graduate School of International Studies, Seoul National University. Previously he was a visiting fellow at East-West Center, Washington, D.C. CNAPS fellow at the Brookings Institution, an assistant research professor at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, Honolulu, Hawaii, and a research fellow at the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis in Cambridge, MA. Dr. Sheen has taught at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. The floor is yours.

Sheen Seong-Ho:

Thank you very much, Professor Kim, for a very nice introduction. First of all, it’s so nice to back in Washington, D.C. My last travel to D.C. was more than one and a half years ago. So I guess this is a pretty much the same for most of Korean delegation. It’s been a long time, I guess. And I guess my American colleagues also maybe are longing to come back to Seoul some time. I hope we will have that kind of, you know, back and forth active exchange between Seoul and Washington. Maybe this is the beginning of going back to normalcy both in D.C. – and when I watched last night, Sunday night football on TV, everybody was – you know, I mean, no masks, tens of thousands packed stadium. So unreal still in Korea at the moment. But I think this is good sign. After listening to all of my, you know, previous presenters, I also happen to be on the same page with most of what they say about denuclearization, dealing with North Korean regime. But because they are still, you know, kind of to cheer up the mood in this room, I would like to maybe suggest some new – a different perspective. Not that I’m just naïve enough to believe all kinds of miracle on the Korean Peninsula. But let me talk about the three, I think, I believe, important political calendar regarding this event in the coming months and year. The first is, obviously, the Beijing Olympics next year in February – starts February 4th. So, speaking of this end of Korean War declaration, I guess there is some speculation in Seoul at this moment that, obviously, we know that the current outgoing president, Moon Jae-in, maybe his last wish would be to have this great ceremony at least with maybe him and President Biden, and maybe Chairman Kim, and even Xi Jinping. Who knows what will happen in

the next year? About five months left in his office. But definitely he would like to – you know, want to have his lasting legacy as a president who really pushed forward this kind of engaging North Korea, building – at least, starting a kind of peace process on the Korean Peninsula. Which Vice Minister Choi Jong Kun talked about this morning. Obviously, the second is – so who knows what will happen in the opening ceremony of Beijing Olympics, who will show up. Obviously, the Chinese government maybe want to have President Moon but, most of all, maybe they want to have President Biden. But we will see. The second, but how the North Koreans will react, of course, respond. The one complicating thing, as we all heard before, we have, you know, an upcoming presidential election in South Korea, which is set for the 9th of March, so a month after Beijing opening ceremony. And of course, North Korea, obviously, watching carefully who is going to be the next president. So if I were Kim Jong-un, even if Kim Jong-un has a very good, you know, personal relation with President Moon, he may want to see who will become, you know, owner of next Blue House. And obviously, we have this about four months of horseracing between the two candidate from governing party and opposition party. And the race is very tight at the moment. So, no one knows. There's both possibility. And each of these candidate has their own view on North Korean policy, which maybe – but is quite, you know, general that, obviously, governing party candidate tend to be more for the engagement, whereas the opposition party candidate Yoon Seok-youl is more aligned with the general conservative line of – you know, on North Korea policy. So, we will see. But still that's another important, I think, calendar to watch. Finally, the third calendar I think it is important is – in both U.S. and China – the November next year. U.S. has a midterm election. In China they have 20th Party Congress. And every sign indicate that President Xi Jinping wants to have his position sealed for the next term, which is – which will break away from the, you know, tradition of the Chinese party leadership change, and all that. And that means that at the same time I guess both Washington and Beijing will be very much preoccupied with their own domestic calendar, obviously with this good reason. And in this regard, I see that – I suspect they may want to have any kind of, you know, trouble coming out of Korean Peninsula or East Asia. I mean, speaking of in the U.S.-China strategic competition, there is an intensifying, there is a rivalry, and all that. But at the same time, all politics are local, you know? And to me, in that regard, it reminds me of, OK, back in 2017 under the previous U.S. administration, Korea was the hot spot. Back in 2017 everybody was talking. If there is any war, it will be the Korean Peninsula. Thank God now Korea is not on the top of that list. People talk about Taiwan or South China Sea, in case of you and China. So, I suspect maybe – that may be a continuing kind of trend, that's even both Washington and Beijing, that they don't want to see any kind of new crisis on the Korean Peninsula next year. So maybe that may give us some kind of break for the South Korean government. Whoever comes into the next presidential office, Blue House, they will still try to stabilize the situation, especially given all this pandemic going on. Everybody is worried about economy. So maybe still, in essence, obviously that says the good part of this or what will happen, how it will go, it depends on Kim Jong-un. And no one knows what is he up to. (Laughs.) But at least we have a relatively kind of, to me, stable

kind of foundation for the concerned parties in the region to engage, rather than confront, North Korea. Of course, we all know that they will not easily give up, you know, their nuclear program. There will be lots of, you know, North Korean tactics and to drive a wedge between U.S. and ROK, and all that. But I'm quite sure, whoever becomes the next, you know, occupant of the Blue House, they will try to work with American government, their counterpart. That's one thing that I'm quite sure. So, on that, I try to leave on a little bit of positive note for the prospects on the Korean Peninsula in the coming months. Thank you.

Mr. Kim:

Thank you very much, Dr. Sheen. Our final panelist is Mr. Richard Johnson. He is the deputy assistant secretary of defense for countering weapons of mass destruction and acting deputy assistant secretary of defense for nuclear and missile defense at the U.S. Department of Defense. Prior to his appointment at the Department of Defense, he served as the senior director for fuel cycle and verification at the Nuclear Threat Initiative, and the system coordinator and deputy lead coordinator for Iran nuclear implementation at the U.S. Department of State. And I kind of saved him for the last, because he is an expert on nuclear issues, he's an expert on North Korea, an expert on Iran. So and he is the only one who really is tacking with this North Korean issue right now, as a government official. So maybe he can give a better picture with more accuracy. Go ahead. (Laughs.)

Richard Johnson:

Thank you very much, Joon-hyung. And thank you so much to CSIS, especially to my good friend Dr. Cha, and also to the Korea Foundation, Dr. Lee Geun, for inviting me today. It's very nice, as others have said, to be back in person and to see a lot of smiling faces, even if the topic that we're discussing is a very serious one. So thank you very much. You asked, you know, kind of where do we stand? And I think it is important, though Dr. Terry mentioned it a little bit, to come back to where we stand from a U.S. policy perspective, and then talk a little bit about where that has taken us to today. So just to recall, the Biden-Harris administration as one of its first acts undertook to underdo – to do a new North Korea policy review. And I was a part of that review when I came into government. I came in a little bit later, but I was part of it starting in March of this year. And it's important to recall that after doing a very intensive look at our policy that we've landed in an important place. And that is that first of all, we have reaffirmed our commitment to the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. But we also have an understanding that past efforts, as has been mentioned before, have not achieved this objective. So, we understand that we have to focus on something that's not a grand bargain, not strategic patience, as you've said, but something that is practical, and something that takes a calibrated approach that includes being open to and exploring diplomacy with the DPRK. Minister Yoon mentioned the comments from my former boss, Ambassador Sung Kim. But also, working to make sure that whatever we do is increasing the security of not only the United States but of our allies, particularly our regional allies in South Korea and Japan, and our deployed forces there and around the world. And I should just note here that my key role here at the Department of Defense is focused primarily on the countering WMD side and the nuclear side of things, which includes not only

supporting the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, but also enforcing U.N. Security Council sanctions resolutions and also overseeing missile threat reduction, WMD threat reduction and, very importantly, our strong, incredible extended deterrence commitments to our partners and allies. And I think that is something that is very important to this equation and needs to not be forgotten when we're talking about this issue. And so there's a balance that we have to achieve. Dr. Terry mentioned where we are in terms of the last six months or the last year in terms of North Korea's development of its nuclear and missile programs. And I would agree that we see a worsening in regards to increasing technical sophistication on behalf of the DPRK. We've seen what the North Koreans claim to be a hypersonic glide vehicle test. In recent months we've seen advancements in the submarine-launched ballistic missile realm. All of this is a concern not only to the United States but, frankly, to South Korea and Japan and that regional stability. And I think we have to recall that the security and stability of the Korean Peninsula is intimately and inextricably tied to regional security and stability. And it connects very much back to the previous panel that talked about U.S. and China relations. One of the things that is part of my duties, and I think needs to be considered – and this was also a part of the DPRK policy review – was the idea that while we are seeking a practical calibrated approach that is including of and inclusive of diplomacy as our first tool of resort, that we cannot give up on, at the same time, fully implementing and making sure that we are upholding the U.N. sanctions regime and U.S. bilateral sanctions, because these tools are very important not only as a signaling device – and sanctions are not a punishment. Sanctions are a tool to prevent and reduce threats and to counter proliferation. And so I think it's important to recall that we will continue to do that. We are doing that now. And at the Department of Defense, one of the things that we do in support of that is to actually spearhead an effort where we're joined by seven other nations, including Australia, Canada, France, Japan, New Zealand, and of course South Korea, along with the U.K., to enforce the resolutions, particularly preventing North Korea from receiving illicit refined petroleum and helping to deny the revenue from illicit sources that come from their WMD and missile programs. And so that effort will continue, and it needs to be underway. In terms of where we're going from here, I would just say I think the United States has shown truly its commitment to reaching out to the DPRK, to speaking with them diplomatically. But we've also shown, as has been pointed out by others in the panel, that we will do so in line with what President Biden has said very clearly and repeatedly, which is our effort to reinvigorate and modernize our alliances, particularly our alliances with South Korea and Japan. So, while we will see diplomacy as a first – tool of first resort, we will not this diplomacy take a backseat to our efforts to make sure that we are upholding our commitments to those allies and partners. So in short, we've made very clear our interest in reaching out, but in the meantime if we're not getting feedback from the DPRK – and understanding that COVID is an important component of this – then we have to do other things to make sure that we uphold and maintain strategic stability in the region and protect our allies and partners. And so we will look forward to proceeding on whichever track is the right one. And I know that Ambassador Kim and my colleagues at the

State Department are doing all that they can to engage with our partners and allies. And, as you said, meeting very, very regularly. But in the meantime, as they say in English, it takes two to tango. So, we look forward to seeing if we have a dance partner who wants to come to the floor. But we will not stand idly by in making – in ignoring the threats that we see from North Korea's actions, both in its nuclear and its missile program. And I will close by also saying something that is often overlooked but is an important part of my portfolio, which is that the DPRK, we assess, is also undertaking offensive chemical and biological weapons programs, which are a serious threat to – not only to the Korean Peninsula but to the region, including to U.S. forces. And we're all living today – I'm looking out into an audience that I'm very happy to see everybody is wearing their masks, but if you think that COVID was a difficult challenge, there are many other concerns that you could have in that regard. And we should not forget that as a component of our strategy. Thank you.

Mr. Kim: Thank you very much, Mr. Johnson. And thank you for your, your know, excellent service at – you know, at the front. And, yeah, we have – we spent half of our session wisely, so we can have a second round. And second round, the question seems a little stupid, but let's ask that. Does Washington truly want to denuclearize North Korea? It seems odd, but sometimes in Korea, cynically, people say: If you emphasize denuclearization at once, or CVID, which is so hard to achieve, that means you don't really want it denuclearized in your mind. So maybe it's a cynical statement, because – I raise this question because I have some kind of feeling that in Washington, either moderate who try to have a dialogue – solve the problem with dialogue, through dialogue – and hardliners want to pressure North Korea until they surrender. But somehow, they approach consensus that North Korea is not going to denuclearize. Of course, solution is different, but somehow, they – so is this cynicism? Or is it really – that means ironically it can, you know, help North Korea to keep their nuclear weapon. You know, sanction is not going to make North Korea collapse in the near future. And the dialogue is going to take a long time. So maybe this – and another question – a follow up question is, can the Korean government persuade these doubtful and busy Washington politicians to seriously solve the problem through dialogue with Pyongyang? Because some people say this North Korean issue is a very important issue, and even critical issue. But it doesn't seem like it's an urgent issue. So, for example, you know, U.S. approach is just come to the negotiating table. We can talk anything unconditionally. It's not going to work to call North Korea to the table, because they had a traumatic experience in Hanoi, so they want to have some kind of solid promise before they come to the table. But U.S. look at it as a sacrifice, even though North Korea is doing anything. So, for example, you know, end of war declaration and things like that. So still posture it continues, that means North Korea is not going to come to the table. So, this is my second question. Start with Minister Yoon.

Mr. Yoon: Yes. That's really interesting, and at the same time a little bit, I mean, provocative – (laughs) – question. Let me answer this way: I have never been suspicious of the true intention of the American side for their purpose

of denuclearizing North Korea. What I'm thinking is that it's time for us to take some steps from the current – away from the current situation and review what our policy – I mean, how – I mean, why our traditional and conventional policy didn't work in the last 30 years. I think the traditional approach has been based on three categories, characteristics. One is on the assumption that China would continue to share the common interest in denuclearizing North Korea. I'm not sure. I'm also not sure whether China will cooperate in coming years. I'm somewhat skeptical. And nowadays, they seem to be trying to link the North Korean issue to other issues – international issues not related to the Korean Peninsula. So a little bit skeptical on that issue. And the second characteristic of the conventional approach has been some kind of moralistic and coercive approach. What I'm saying is basically traditional approach tended to view North Korea as a bad guy, and interaction between North Korea and the United States and North Korea and South Korea is a kind of bad guy/good guy relationship rather than action/reaction interaction. So somewhat morally charged. It's understandable, because definitely North Korea violated international rules of nonproliferation and defected from so many previous agreements with the international society and South Korea. However, to solve the problem, I think we need a kind of – a little – I mean, a less moralistic approach, and kind of a more detached approach from a third-person's eye perspective. What I'm saying is pushing North Korea, you do – or do take some positive measures in terms of denuclearization. Then we will, I mean, reward your, I mean, cooperation. And that kind of approach cannot work because there is a kind of so-called security dilemma problem embedded in this North Korean issue. So, kind of a simultaneous action, I mean, principle may be necessary. Of course, Ambassador Biegun mentioned about that new approach in his Stanford address, but I think there was not much opportunity for him to really apply that principle in the negotiation in Hanoi. A third characteristic is narrow focus on – only on security dimension, nuclear aspect, probably not taking much attention to the other related important issues, like economic dimension or diplomatic dimension of North Korea issue. So, it was not a comprehensive approach. And I think we need to depart from our traditional approach based on these three, kind of, I mean, characteristics or assumptions. And otherwise, I think, I mean, Chinese influence on the Korean Peninsula will be gradually increasing, because U.S. traditional approach pushed North Korea in the orbit of China for the last two decades or three decades, or something like that. And when – I mean, even when North Koreans really don't trust much China, I think that kind of important point was not taken seriously by the U.S. policymakers. And there was no strategic effort to, I mean, utilize that kind of, I mean, delicate relationship between China and North Korea. North Korean leaders may be very much concerned about their too-heavy dependence on China, politically and economically. So, they really want to improve relationship with the United States, but that aspect has been disregarded and denied the opportunities, I mean. So, my position is that we need to take a new approach, a kind of bold approach, which focuses on changing the nature of U.S.-DPRK political relationship. Otherwise, there will be no trust between two countries at all, and even, I mean, if that kind of very low-level, I mean, trust continues, another successful nuclear

agreement will not be kept by North Korea. Probably in one year or two years there will be another defection by that country. So, I think we need to take a new approach, which focuses on changing the bilateral relationship between the United States and North Korea. And we have several measures which we can consider. For example, declaration of the end of Korean War is one measure. But I think just one stand-alone action regarding declaration of peace cannot work. I mean, it should be implemented from a broader strategic perspective in relation to other measures, like establishing liaison office in Pyongyang and Washington, D.C., and trying to build military confidence between two countries, or inviting North Koreans to this country to educate about how, I mean, market capitalism works. Some other measures. So, I think we need a new or systematic bold approach, focusing on changing the bilateral relationship. And there is not much time left. Probably if the current situation continues, sometime next year, I guess, probably North Korea may provoke – I mean, testing nuclear weapons or launching ICBM. I think we need to – we can take that kind of bold approach before that time comes. And once North Korea makes that kind of provocation, the U.S. will have no, I mean, choice, actually, other than taking a kind of very strong response against that provocation. Then probably the situation will become worsened.

Mr. Kim: Thank you very much. Mr. Yoon talks about we have to give up the moralistic approach. And actually, I wrote a book review of Donald Gregg, who was ambassador to Korea – U.S. ambassador to Korea. The last sentence is: One of the reasons for the failure dealing with enemies is to demonize the enemies. Actually, reminds me of that phrase. And you talked about the new kind of approach. And why don't, Dr. Terry, you can answer that. Is it possible to go along with this new approach to North Korea, with the question that I originally gave you?

Ms. Terry: So, I will be very candid. So, I mean, I don't disagree with many things that Minister Yoon said. He said we need a bold approach. But the devil is in the details, right? So, I think even in that piece on the national interest you said that we need to maintain sanctions, which I agree with. So, if we do maintain sanctions, and I've made comments previously, Kim wants sanctions lifted. So how do we get to this bold approach? Right now, we saw recent spate of tests that Richard talked about. And so – and we do have our own domestic politics. We have elections coming up. So, President Biden, even though this deal that Trump – Kim offered to President Trump in Hanoi was not good enough even for President Trump, just realistic, domestically, President Biden is supposed to in the – North Korea conducts tests, and we say we are ready to meet with North Koreans anytime, without precondition, and do what? Like, we're just going to declare peace and we are going to open liaison office? By the way, Alex – I see Alex Wong here – I believe that we were willing to give end of war peace declaration and open liaison offices. That was all sort of in the package that we were going to offer. It's just that it fell apart because Kim demanded a significant amount of sanctions to be lifted in Hanoi. So, I understand that we need a new bold approach, and I don't disagree with that. I guess my dilemma is how do we get – realistically get there at this point, where we are? And I don't think –

you know, I'm not trying to necessarily defend the Biden administration. You can do that. (Laughter.) But it's not like they're coming in with some ultra-hardline approach. They said, we're willing to meet with Kim. So I just don't – I can't square this – how domestically we can also just – you know, we'll just – we just need a new bold approach, so here is a peace declaration, and we're going to open liaison offices, even though you are continually conducting tests and improving, advancing your nuclear weapons and missile program. So I guess we need to figure out how to get there. So I don't disagree with sort of the philosophy or the main thrust of what you're saying, Mr. Yoon. Also, China angle. I agree with you. I think, you know, we have a tendency to try to rely on China. And China has not been helpful, although we did see China actually implementing sanctions after years of dragging its feet in the fall of 2017. And we can talk about why that is, but that – if China was helpful then, it's no longer helpful. And I think that trying to keep on relying on China to solve the problem has not been – I don't see that also in the future. On the security dilemma piece, I understand that there is a security dilemma, and of course they are pursuing nuclear weapons as an ultimate deterrent card against the United States, because even a powerful country like the United States would not attack North Korea if they are a nuclear weapons power. But I'm not entirely certain and sold that their security dilemma will be resolved with just a peace declaration. South Koreans also say that peace declaration does not really mean much. It's just a symbolic thing. And it's not a peace treaty. It doesn't have legal binding. It's not this and that. But if it's not – if it's so not that important, what makes North Koreans feel like now their security dilemma is solved, necessarily, with the peace declaration? And I would argue that fundamentally for the Kim regime, as long as rival South Korea state – that is freer, richer – exists, their security dilemma continues. So I understand that there's a security dilemma. I understand that it's part of the reason why they pursue nuclear weapons. But it's not all of it, right? Nuclear weapons also is a rallying point ideologically. It gives them prestige. It gives them influence. There's a whole host of reasons why they have nuclear weapons. So now, going back to your first, original question on is the U.S. serious about denuclearization, I do think that we are – we shouldn't be that cynical. I do think the U.S. government is serious about wanting denuclearization. And I don't believe the U.S. government is going to abandon denuclearization. Seeking denuclearization as a goal, because even though North Korea has nuclear weapons, and even though it is sort of a de facto nuclear weapons power but adopting that as a policy it has serious implications – including, potentially, regional proliferation in the future that could – you know, some South Korean conservatives are already talking about bringing tactical nuclear weapons back or pursuing nuclear weapons. And then then there's – that's just one reason. There's a whole host of reasons why the U.S. will never adopt it. But saying that and wanting denuclearization as a goal, that's still different from accurate assessment and the reality of the situation, which is that North Korea is highly unlikely to give it up. (Laughs.) I mean, I don't think that's being overly cynical, to come to that assessment. It's not because you want North Korea to keep nuclear weapons. It's because that's the reality of the situation of their having deal with North Korea for three decades. So I don't want to end it with that cynicism. I do think that the goal

is still denuclearization. And I don't disagree with Minister Yoon. It's just that how do we figure out the details. And again, I'll end with on peace declaration I'm so glad to see that Blue House and the Biden administration is working very hard to coordinate, at least have a very frank conversation about the pros and cons of a peace declaration. So, I'm – you know, it's as good as we can do, is closely coordinating with each other.

Mr. Kim: Thank you very much. Yeah, if I take the position of devil's advocate, it's kind of – it sounds to me it's like Aesop Fable's the king's new clothes. So, you know, they have nuclear weapons, and that no solution to denuclearize – it somehow is just going on, like strategic patience. And question for you – additional question is, actually, if I was not mistaken, on several occasions you were pretty critical about the current Biden's, you know, practical, calibrated approach. You said it's good, everything's right, but it doesn't have any starter to, you know, resume the process. Still do you have – is it my wrong evaluation? Or still you have the –

Ms. Terry: No, I do think – criticism is a strong word, in front of colleagues. (Laughter.)

Mr. Kim: I'm not actually making you define it, but –

Ms. Terry: No, no, but what I do think is ironic is the instance that this is not strategic patience, because it sounds very much like strategic patience to me. Just because if you're not going to give sanctions relief, if you don't want to – so it's not – the reality is that, is what I'm trying to say. So it's fine to rhetorically say this is very different from Trump administration, this is very different from the Obama administration. And so that's what I'm sort of just pointing out, is that in trying to figure out what it is, it doesn't seem all that different. And I'm not necessarily criticizing it, because I don't have any other brilliant solution. It's not like I have a lot of solutions in my bag, and saying, oh, they're not pursuing that. I understand the limits of this problem, having worked on this issue. So that's what I was saying, yeah.

Mr. Kim: Mr. Sheen.

Mr. Sheen: Never give up. (Laughter.)

Mr. Kim: OK.

Mr. Sheen: The thing is, we all know that it's not going to be easy. And we all know that North Korea is not going to easily give up nuclear weapons. But at the same time, what's the alternative? I mean, acknowledging North Korea as a de facto or real nuclear power, what's the consequences? We all know that, as Dr. Terry just said, we are going to see a nuclear arms race in the region, starting maybe from South Korea. And recently, there was an Asan survey saying that – and we have, yes indeed, presidential race going on. There is a back and forth. Speaking of extended deterrence, South Korea is how much we are sure about the American commitment, and all that. This debate – there's quite a live debate going on. But the point was that the takeaway –

and it's ironic that traditional, the opposition party, the conservative – the other one who is not very much sure about the U.S. extended deterrence. So there has been some call for maybe, yes, bringing back the U.S. tactical nuclear weapons, which is a non-starter – (laughs) – for American government position. Or nuclear co-sharing, that's another kind of Korean way of thinking, but American doesn't seem to be on the page. What's the alternative? Indigenous Korean nuclear program. And they quote that Asan poll, in fact, that has been conducted last September, just two months ago, and 70 percent of South Koreans saying that we have to have if, indeed, North Korea becomes or already is a de facto nuclear power. That is because – but at the same time, that Asan same poll that conducted in 2018, just three years ago, the support for the indigenous program was, like, about 50 percent. Still maybe strong, but way lower than 70 percent. Why? Because that 2018 things were going quite – rather well, in terms of nuclear negotiation and all the summitry between American government and Kim Jong-un, and all that. So that just shows you that the moment American government give up, you know, denuclearization, obviously this is a wake-up call for the South Korean government, the public, and they will push for those kinds of movements. And that's not obviously in the U.S. interest. So I don't think that it's in the U.S. interest to give up, whatever it takes – bold approach, a small approach, a practical approach, or pragmatic approach. No, we should not give up denuclearizing North Korea. And I think that has been the South Korean government position all along. And last point is that next year will be the 30th anniversary of the '92 joint declaration between the two Koreas about concrete denuclearization – or, nuclear-free Korean Peninsula. By the way, that joint declaration was not done under the liberal government. It was Roh Tae-woo, president who by the way passed away just a couple of weeks ago. So it's going to be 30 years. Maybe it takes another 30 years before we can go back to all that. But should not give up. And the second point is that, of course, how can we trust North Korean regime and all kinds of rhetoric? But the fact of the matter is, as much as they're in for this nuclear development and all this missile testing and all that, and provocation, but Kim Jong-un himself said officially twice in the Panmunjom declaration – by the way, that was the first time the North Korean leader was discussing the nuclear issue with a South Korean counterpart. And in written, you know, document they committed for the denuclearization. And of course, the following Singapore summit. Everybody talks about Hanoi, but before Hanoi there was Singapore. And there also, Kim Jong-un at least in principle – if, of course, there are conditions – the Americans hostile and intentions are completely gone – then they are still committed they are willing to denuclearize. I think that maybe still give us a certain sliver of hope. And on that, maybe I think in close coordination between Seoul and Washington we should keep trying and find a way to denuclearize Korean peninsula. Not nuclear arms race.

Mr. Kim:

Thank you very much, Dr. Sheen. If I – I think it's going to be shame that if I ask you, do you really want to denuclearize North Korea. Let me change my – let me revise my question a little bit. There is criticism – you know, there was worry actually by the administration they would go for – they would go for dialogue and negotiation, but a revival of strategic patience, even though

the Obama people deny they never had that policy. But anyways, after one year, nothing much happening. And of course, we all know that, you know, North Korea is not responding. But there is – it's kind of this practical, calibrated approach, like, it sounds like or looks, like, passive. Why don't you try a more proactive tool to bring North Korea to the table, not just saying we can talk without condition? OK. That's my question. (Laughs.) OK.

Mr. Johnson:

Well, thank you. But I'll go back to your original question, which is to say of course the United States wants to achieve the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. And I will tell you that this is something – it wasn't just sort of a check-the-box exercise, that we said, well, obviously, that's the outcome in the policy review. We looked at all of these factors. We looked at how do you phrase these sorts of things. So the short answer to you is, yes, we want to do that. And to your additional question, I guess what I would say is, you know, I was also in the Obama administration. Actually, this is my fourth administration that I've served in. Three of those were as a civil servant and including during the time of so-called strategic patience. And I do think we're in a different place here. I think that, you know, it's important to recall where we were in the Obama administration, where very early on in the administration the North Koreans conducted some pretty terrible tests, missile and nuclear tests, after the president had said that he was open to dialogue. And so that – and we also had things like the Leap Day Deal, that did not go very well. And so recall how you got to strategic patience. It was after outreach; it was after diplomacy. And so, you know, I hope that we will not see provocations from our North Korean counterparts, if you will. But the reality is that strategic patience involved basically demonstration or signaling that, you know, essentially don't call us, we'll call you. And now I think we're in a place where I know the phraseology – you know, people wonder what it means, practical, calibrated. But I think it means what it says it means, which is that, you know, we're prepared to take practical steps in a calibrated manner, including diplomacy. And I think if you look at the work that Ambassador Kim is doing – and I will certainly defer to my State Department colleagues on that because that's not my area of responsibility anymore – but I think it demonstrates that we are prepared to take certain steps. But again, we have to have a negotiating partner. And I think the other difference we have from the Obama administration and, frankly, even from the Trump administration is COVID. And we have a real challenge, I think, on our hands to figure out even the – you know, the mechanism, the place, the time. You know, all those sorts of things would be an important component. Let me just add a couple more quick things, because I know we're at the end. I'm an L.A. Dodger fan, so I think I'm playing the Justin Turner role here, as the clean-up batter. But I'm not sure; we change our lineup too much. Two more quick things. One is, because extended deterrence was mentioned, and I think it's really important to reiterate how much an important factor in our relationship with not only South Korea, but also with Japan and Australia. And of course, we have things like the Deterrence Strategy Committee that meets very regularly. You know, and in fact we have some upcoming meetings at the ministerial level coming up, with the SCM, which I think really undergird the alliance.

And I think we have not lost – not only have we not lost attention to this, we’ve actually refocused attention on this. And so the work that we’re going to help develop a common operating picture, to increase our allies’ understandings of strategic capabilities, tabletop exercises – all those sorts of things are really important. And the last thing I will just say, because it was mentioned about China. And I would say, I think the other important difference between our policy and policies that have been put forward in the past is we’re putting this policy forward with a focus on what the United States can do, working with our allies and partners. Of course, China could play a positive and important role, and we would hope that it would – including, by the way, enforcing U.N. sanctions which it has done better in the past and we would hope it would return to that. But we recognize that we may not have as positive of a role from China in this strategy. And so, we will work with China. We will seek to do what we can with China on North Korea and denuclearization. And I won’t get ahead of anything that’s going to happen at a much higher level later today. But I think at the end of the day our focus is on what can we do with our allies and partners in strong solidarity in making the region a safer and more stable place. So, thank you.

Mr. Kim:

Thank you very much. We are – our time is up – almost time is up. And by taking advantage of moderator’s role, I want to end this session with making two points. Number one is, I had a webinar with Mr. Biegun one time. And what he said was very interesting, because Biden administration endorsed Singapore declaration. So, the point we can go back to return to, is Hanoi. And Hanoi is not really total failure, because we tested our exchange equating each other. So, we can make change, and then we can go back to Hanoi. And the second point I want to make is, this declaration of ending war is not really paranoia or Moon Jae-in government wants to have so eagerly. I don’t think so. And as far as I know, and as far as I talk to Blue House people, they say this, in between – they’re trying to manage this situation, not to disturb anything, and maintain this stability. That’s the minimum goal. If possible, if everything going well with the help of China, there can be a dramatic change. But not really going for it. So, it’s not – (laughs) – you know, end of war declaration is life and death of Moon Jae-in government. Thank you very much and thank for you’re the panelists. OK, thank you. (Applause.)