

Center for Strategic and International Studies

2019 U.S.-Japan Security Seminar: Challenges and Opportunities for the Alliance

Panel Discussion

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MICHAEL J. GREEN: So, hello. We're back. We are going to dive a little deeper into some of the topics Senators Hayashi and Gardner addressed, and also reflect a bit on an all-day closed-door session we had between CSIS, JIA and some other colleagues around town on the security environment in Asia, our respective politics, and defense and economic relationships.

I'm joined by a well-known superstar in Washington, former ambassador here and now head of JIAA, Ken Sasae; Sue Mi Terry with CSIS, a Korea expert; and Yukio Okamoto, a veteran architect of the U.S.-Japan alliance, has served – I first met Yukio when I was working for Shiina-sensei many decades ago, when he was the director of North American affairs, and everyone once in a while I would be asked to carry him a piece of paper and I would tremble with fear. (Laughter.) Because he was such a big name in the Foreign Ministry and U.S.-Japan alliance. And he's been called on by almost every prime minister, I think, in the last two decades for advice on everything from economic policy to China to U.S.-Japan alliance relations.

So I'm going to start with Sue because the previous panel failed to solve the North Korea problem. (Laughter.) And we'll start with North Korea.

And, Sue, why don't you give us your views to get us started, and I'll ask the others for reactions. Is there going to be another Trump-Kim summit? If so, or if not, what does that mean? And once we get out of the blow by blow of the politics and diplomacy, as allies, where do the U.S. and Japan need to be vis-à-vis North Korea, diplomatically, militarily, over the coming years?

SUE MI TERRY: So I do think there's going to be a second summit – press is already talking about Hanoi and potentially Bangkok as a potential location – because both President Trump and Kim have the incentive to continue this. President Trump wants to still have North Korea seen as a foreign policy success, and Kim wants to make sure that this dialogue, this engagement with the United States doesn't go off track. Kim Jong-un just celebrated his 35th birthday in China with Xi Jinping, so I think that's sort of a prelude to this second summit. That's the fourth meeting with Xi Jinping probably discussing the potential second summit with President Trump. So there is going to be a second summit.

The question is what's going to come out of this meeting even if there is a second summit, and there I'm not overly optimistic that we're going to have a really substantive progress towards denuclearization. When you look at New Year's address, this year's New Year's address, the tone was tempered; that wasn't as aggressive as in the past. But Kim came out with long list of demands, same kind of problems that we have seen before. Basically, North Korea's position is that the ball is in United States' court. U.S. has to make next steps. And the long concessions are U.S. has to ease sanctions, U.S. has to give peace declaration, U.S. need to end the U.S.-ROK military exercises, no more strategic weapons – I mean, the whole long list before North Korea will take another step towards denuclearization. So we have that problem, the sequencing problem that we always had.

Then we also have definitional problem. Very interestingly, Kim Jong-un on this New Year's address actually spelled out what he meant by denuclearization. Of course, Korea watchers have always said this is a problem, because when North Korea says denuclearization, they mean something entirely different from what United States is saying, right? When we say denuclearization, we're talking about North Korea's nuclear weapons programs. But he spelled it out. He said: When we say denuclearization, we're talking about the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. That includes South Korean territory. That means obviously the troop presence, the U.S. extended nuclear umbrella

that we have over South Korea. So, basically, the demands are so high, now North Korea's raising the bar. So this is why I don't think – I'm not optimistic that we're going to make big progress. I think at most we'll agree to continue to agree to negotiate. Perhaps there will be a deal to be had.

The one thing that does concern me, to be honest, Secretary Pompeo this week had an interview with Sean Hannity and he didn't really use the word "denuclearization." And he talked about threat to America and intercontinental ballistic missiles, so I'm kind of concerned that if we are sort of going in this direction where the priority right now is perhaps having a deal on ICBM or something because it's so difficult to get to denuclearization. So we have a long road ahead of us.

I mean, Mike knows this, like, my whole – I'm concerned that Kim has a strategy, Kim Jong-un has a strategy and it's sort of they're moving towards achieving that goal, the goal of eventually getting acceptance, international acceptance of North Korea's nuclear weapons power, a responsible one, but they are moving towards that goal. And I don't see us achieving our goal of denuclearization.

Now, on the U.S.-Japan front, I do think Japan has been such a great ally to the United States on the North Korea issue, we've been on the same page at least. 2017, you know, during the whole maximum pressure phase, Japan was right there with the United States. I am a little bit concerned that potentially as President Trump moves forward and we don't know what he will agree to in the second summit, there will be some divergence, like, particularly if there's an ICBM deal I don't think this is something that Japan will necessarily like because it doesn't really take care of the short-range and the medium-range missiles and so on.

But obviously we need to continue to closely coordinate and work together. I mean, it's – one way – I mean, North Korea is such a difficult problem. But the only way we can move forward is if everybody is on the same page. And that's also South Korea, too. Like, that's a whole different issue, we can talk about that a little bit later, because there's a little bit – I saw a little bit of divergence there, too, between Washington and Seoul.

MR. GREEN: So, Yukio and Ken, if I can stay on North Korea for a few minutes and then we'll turn to China on trade and other things. The meeting we had yesterday between CSIS and JIAA with some of their colleagues was Chatham House rules, so it was one of these things where people could speak freely, but nobody could be quoted, but we can talk about some of the broad discussion themes. And on North Korea, two issues in particular – well, three issues emerged of some anxiety. One was the one Sue mentioned, the possibility the U.S. might be tempted to do a deal on intercontinental ballistic missiles that leaves short-range missiles aimed at Japan untouched. And there was a debate about whether that matters symbolically or operationally.

And then the second one was the danger of a perfect storm with U.S. Forces Korea. We're negotiating a special measures agreement now with Korea. It's kind of not going well. There are other issues, OPCON transfer, you've heard of that, things that – and then the president himself said in front of Kim Jong-un, I'd like to get troops off the peninsula someday. So the other source of real anxiety was whether there might be some, as Sue puts it, catastrophic success where we just pull out of Korea because we think we've succeeded.

The third one, mostly on the U.S. side, was, can anything be done to improve Japan-Korea relations right now or at least keep them from getting worse? Because that's such a critical piece of the geometry for us to be successful with North Korea is for the U.S., Japan and Korea to be trilaterally aligned.

So I'm going to put Ken in the hotseat. Ken Sasae led Japan's delegation to the six-party talks. And I worked on the six-party talks. And working on the six-party talks may not make you wiser, but it lowers your expectations. (Laughter.)

In any case, Ken, what do you think about these areas of divergence, convergence between the U.S. and Japan, Japan and Korea, and your view on the possible second summit between Kim and Trump?

KENICHIRO SASAE: Well, thank you. On the whole, how you think of this situation developing now, I mostly agree with what Sue said in terms of the challenges ahead.

But I try to be a bit more optimistic. You know, I used to be a diplomat – (laughter) – you know, a diplomat that tried to be optimistic when things are not really optimistic and you tried to be pessimistic when things are pretty optimistic, right?

So yes, of course, there is a concern that North Korea would continue to play all these sequential, you know, tactics of before. And that is not news. This has been repeated many times. You put your demand first and then try to deal – (inaudible). And even some of the things that you want to see in a – you know, will be proposed by the others, rather than you request. So these are not necessarily new to all of us. But I think the important thing is that you just stay on the general set of the goals. That is, you know, denuclearization is first and foremost goal of this exercise. While missile issues are most important, that is weapon delivery system.

But I think – you know, in terms of priority, we need to get rid of nuclear weapon, because all this missile, whether it is with nuclear weapons or not makes difference, right? and this short and medium-range missile, we don't appreciate it. But if there is a nuclear weapon on it, that's more scary of course. So first I think we need to address all this nuclear issues. Then I think of course we can – we can negotiate on the missile issues. But when it comes to missiles, we have already missile there – medium- and short-range missile. Well, we're supposed to be, you know, countering against all these threat by the deterrence we have with United States.

So, so far he is deterred, right, one way or another. But when it comes to nuclear weapons with missile, I think the power for us to impress North Korea that they can't think something funny might be reduced if they are quite sure that they could threaten us. That's why I think we have to be together with the United States in terms of both increasing the deterrence effort and also trying to get rid of nuclear weapon. That's one thing.

On that stage, I think we're still in the initial stage. We have started. So this is a long shot. The second time of the president talks. This might not be the end of the story. So whatever progress in terms of denuclearization, that would be great. And even though there is no complete agreement including verification and declarations of the facilities and so forth, I hope that there will be some progress on the denuclearization. We shouldn't spend too much time on the definitional issues. What is important is what we would get from North Korea.

Now, on our relationship with ROK, it's puny, to be honest. And it's regrettable that, you know, we thought that all this debate on the history was more or less politically, you know, settled with the previous government of ROK. But it came back once again. And there is additional trouble. Of course, now, we don't want to go overreacting to what the Korean Supreme Court had decided. But

when it goes into actual actions by the – by the parties involved and affecting our companies, I think the government has to, of course, defend the interests of Japanese citizens.

And so but before we see the Korean government take the positions, we had to be careful not to arouse too much emotions – public emotion – so that this could be spilling over the capacity to control.

MR. GREEN: You sound a little pessimistic, which means your optimistic.

MR. SASAE: Oh, I try to be, but –

MR. GREEN: Yukio?

YUKIO OKAMOTO: I think Sue has given necessarily answers before, but I never thought that North Korea would ever give up their nuclear weapons. Number one, it's been only the strongest pillar for their national security for 30 years. And they were this close to really acquiring nuclear weapons. And suddenly he's touched with divine calling of international peace and cooperation. And he says, yes, we are going to give up nuclear weapons. That's unthinkable.

Second reason is Kim Jong-un must be enjoying all the world's attention riveted on him. He is in power with the president of the United States, negotiating like a big world statesman. That's all because he has nuclear weapons. Without which, the size of North Korea will be reduced to that of countries like West – sorry, Equatorial Africa (sic; Guinea) or Gabon. They have, roughly, the same GDP. One thousand and one hundredth of U.S. GDP is the size of North Korea. I mean, who gives such sensational attention on ego-inflated Kim Jong-un? No. So he cannot stand to give up nuclear weapons and he will take advantage – full advantage of, as it were, the gift given by Mr. Trump in Singapore, which is to be able to develop their nuclear weapons development program without any fear of being attacked by the United States militarily.

They are coming this close to becoming a full-fledged nuclear weapon country, and when they become the real nuclear-armed country, if I were Kim Jong-un I would say this. Hey, big bully United States, why are you just picking on us? What about India? What about Pakistan? We are at the equal status as they are. Now, if you want to reduce, much less take away, all our weapons it will have to be in the multilateral fora with India, Pakistan, or Israel, and it's going to be a big procrastination of arms reduction talks. And it is hard to imagine that North Korea will at the end comes a completely nuclear-free country.

So, I mean, as much as we really hope that Mr. Trump's strategy works and North Korea gives up all the nuclear weapons, but at the same time we – especially Japan has to think about adding deterrence capability to what the United States has and that is – we have to acquire a capability to hit the North Korean bases directly from Japan.

Now, constitutional arguments were made in 1950s to this regard and that's all been solved. There was a government declaration that it is not unconstitutional to acquire a military capability to attack a foreign base if that is essential for the subsistence of Japan, and for 60 years opposition parties have not changed – have not challenged this government interpretation. So the matter is political if we are going to acquire such capability or not. Technically, I have spoken with many people and we believe it is possible.

Now, if we acquire that capability, what happens? We will not take a first strike. After North Korea hits Japan, we will try to shoot down their second missile aimed at Japan. If it is a chemical weapon, mounted, the chemical weapon will explode above the sky over North Korea, not Japan. If it is a nuclear warhead, I don't think it will explode. But still, it is going to be a tremendous fear for North Korea that there may be a nuclear explosion inflicted by Japanese missiles.

Now, so what I am saying is that it is not an offensive capability that we should acquire. It is for deterring North Korea for the second attack, thereby really deterring their first attack as well. I mean, there's no national consensus. There has to be a fierce political argument. But it is an argument worth trying in Japan and there may be other ways of deterring a North Korean attempt. But whatever we do, we have to be in very close coordination with the United States to make the aggregated deterrence capability of the two countries to a maximum degree.

MR. GREEN: So the great thing about having you on the panel, Yukio, is you definitely add some good spice. (Laughter.) So let's have that debate now a little bit because, as you said, this is not just a debate. I think there should be a debate in Japan. There's already a debate in Korea about this, too, but it needs to be a debate with the U.S.

The danger for Japan, one of the dangers, is that a unilateral Japanese capability to strike North Korea will very likely not be sufficient to eliminate any North Korean threat. Hundreds of hardened bunkers with No Dongs and other missiles that can hit Japan and now road-mobile missiles, even the U.S. is becoming unsure. That's why there's so much urgency to the diplomacy in the last year. Even the U.S. side is becoming unsure whether it could be confident of eliminating all of North Korea's missiles and weapons once they have road-mobile capabilities, which the newest generation of missiles would have. So Japan wouldn't be able to take all this out. There would be a hit and then the massive retaliation would be up to the U.S. to fight.

So in the Cold War, the Japanese side worried often, you'll recall, about – (inaudible) – about entrapped by a U.S. attack and being forced to fight alongside or support the U.S. The risk for Japan of this strategy is that U.S. side, which is indispensable for Japan's deterrence, might start getting nervous about Japan and hedging and being hesitant and weaken deterrence.

So how would you deal with that? Would you have a joint capability? What would you answer? Because this would be the debate in the U.S. I think it's a debate worth having, but what would your answer be?

MR. OKAMOTO: Oh, of course, we have article five of our security treaty. And, you know, we already have a capability to strike Korean bases. Look at Japanese F-15s mounted with air-to-surface missiles capable of reaching 180 miles.

MR. GREEN: And just to be clear, you're talking about North Korean bases.

MR. OKAMOTO: North Korean. (Laughter.) I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

So, I mean, they fly Japan Sea and come close to North Korean shore. And they are, as of today, have that capability. It is all a deterrence game. I mean, this thing that you described should never ever happen. If that happens, it will be to the loss and defeat of everybody.

One thing interesting we must think of is the attitude of China. Every time North Korea does something adventurous, it irritates China, like sending a spy ship close to the Japanese shore or shooting a Taepodong close to Tohoku area of Japan to the Pacific side. And every time we respond by shooting up an information satellite or changing our law, this is what China hates. And we – and Ken should know better – but they must be telling North Koreans don't do stupid things, you are just militarizing Japan. So as we take more resolute stands, we can expect China to intervene even.

MR. GREEN: Sue or Ken, do you want to weigh in on this one.

MR. SASAE: Yeah. I think the danger of letting North Korea keeping all this development of missiles and also nuclear weapons would justify some of the debates that we could increase our defense capability beyond what we have today. And also, this might invite in the future if the argument goes that we cannot even completely eliminate a North Korean nuclear weapon, then the argument we need to have more sufficient deterrence on top of U.S. deterrence capability, because we don't want to see all this decoupling that we saw back in, what, early – back in '80s and '90s between Europe and Russia and the United States. And so, you know, before getting to that debate, I think still we shouldn't really give in to the argument that it is difficult for us to expect North Korea to go for complete denuclearization. That's already in the hands of North Korea propaganda.

MS. TERRY: So just moving forward since we're debating, years now North Korea is a nuclear weapons power. It is already one, but let say it goes, achieves its goal of internationally being recognized as a nuclear weapons power. So that debate goes even further because one of the key concerns of why we cannot allow that to happen is regional proliferation, right? So why not just end it with what you're talking about? But this question that comes up, even in some conservative circles in South Korea too, is that South Korea could go nuclear and then Japan could follow. That's a question that lingers out there – right? – this potential risk for regional proliferation. So, I mean, I worry about that. And this is sort of the answer that we give when a lot of people did question during the whole "fire and fury" phase, there were a lot of folks who asked why can't we just live with nuclear North Korea? You know, we live with nuclear Pakistan. Why can't we not do that? And one of the answers is because of this – right? – the potential for it.

MR. GREEN: Well, we may have no option. If they're not going to negotiate with the weapons and we're not willing to start a war, we may have no option but to quote-unquote "live," but it will be a more dangerous world and it will require significantly more robust deterrence, which may mean surface-to-surface missile capabilities for both – Korea has them, South Korea – for Japan and Korea. But it will mean enhanced deterrence, too, which to me means more jointness, interoperability, and not just U.S.-Japan, U.S.-Korea, but trilaterally. That's going to be a challenge.

You know, missiles and surface-to-surface missiles and intermediate-range missiles is actually an interesting segue to China. And we talked actually quite a bit yesterday in our session about the INF. Some people in the room, Japanese-Americans thought it was a bad idea to get out of the INF Treaty. Others thought it was either necessary or useful because the growth of PLA tactical air-surface combatants in the first island chain and beyond means that increasingly the U.S., Japan, U.S. allies are going to need to do, in effect, what China did when we talked about so-called A2/AD. I mean, the initial China complication for U.S. forward presence was missiles. And the complication we may end up throwing back at China as it expands its conventional air force, naval power, power projection, may end up being missiles. And so part of the argument was, look, this INF thing, whether you agree or not getting out of it, it was mostly air and naval people pointed out, but now the army and ground forces will be involved in the archipelago and elsewhere having the ability to complicate the other side with

missiles. So missiles are going to be part of the debate whether it's North Korea or China, I suspect. And the Chinese kind of started it, remember? It was the Chinese buildup in the '90s that got us here, in a way.

So the other thing we discussed yesterday about China and had an interesting – the best discussions never reach a satisfactory conclusion – so let's replay it a little bit today, which was the question – we talked about the free and open Indo-Pacific strategy a lot. We had people from both governments brief. There's a lot of alignment. I think the consensus was there's a lot more substance to the FOIP than people often recognize. But there's a fundamental strategic question it doesn't really answer, and that was a question we kept asking, which is, is China shapeable? Can the U.S., Japan and other powers shape Chinese choices, change the trajectory? And so I wanted to kind of put that back to all of you now. We may be aligned and have a general sense of what we need to do to shape China, but can China be shaped? Is this a trajectory we see that can change?

And I'm trying to remember who should go first. Maybe I'll start with you, Yukio, because you caught part of this conversation as well. Do you think we can, with our foreign policy strategies – the U.S., Japan, other countries, Europe, India – do you think we can get China to behave in a way that's more reassuring for us?

MR. OKAMOTO: Definitely. I mean, when China started to build runways on the coral reefs and islands in the South China Sea, if the United States has taken a very severe and strong attitude of protest when they did that to the first island, could they have – and sending naval ships – could they have so easily completed six consecutive islands equipped to airfields? I don't think so. The resolute attitude of the United States counts very much. And U.S. has this long traditional policy, so you say, to take a neutral stance on territorial issue, on the issue of sovereignty. But there are so many cases in the world where legal stance is so clear, overwhelmingly favoring one party. And South China Sea islands are one of them. So why should – but the United States has a big nice understanding about, oh, we are taking neutral stance. Only we need freedom of navigation. But that's a bit lukewarm, I think.

Whatever China does, I think the most risky attempt they're going to make is to take Taiwan. And I am increasingly under the impression that Mr. Xi Jinping extended his term to a lifetime duration – changing the constitution. Now he can sit there as the president of China forever. Why did he do that? I think his greatest ambition is to do something about Taiwan. Of course, first, politically – aiming for one state, two system status. But if that does not go well, will he really not use military force? So I mean, if that happens, we will be all losers again. I don't know with what probability you will go to rescue Taiwan. But if you do, Japan will – cannot fight with the United States because of the constitutional ban. But we will have to give you logistical support from rear, according to Article 6 of security treaty.

And for China, whether the military assistance from Japan is made from rear or from front, it is the same thing. We are in a warring situation with each other. So that would involve all the major countries in that region. So we must really deter Mr. Xi Jinping to take such adventurous course. And I think there are really needs for very, very close coordination, which I don't think exists now between Japan and the United States. A very minute adjustment of policy towards China.

MR. GREEN: So we use the word – and I was the one who introduced it yesterday and today – we use the word shape. It's kind of a Pentagon phrase. It sounds like force them to. It really means convince them – (laughs) – convince them through a combination of principle of deterrence, but cooperation. So can we convince China?

MR. SASAE: Yeah, I think it is difficult, obviously, but it depends on the time frame and also what we are talking about. When it comes to political philosophy or values and ideas, some of that remains pretty difficult, possibly as far as Chinese government is basically not really following Western democratic, you know, pluralistic values of authority. That's a revolution. So with those, some debate about the 1990s in China. There was a whole debate – you know, familiar – all the – (inaudible) – warnings and all this stuff. But it seems like Chinese now moving into other directions. And we all do recognize.

When it come to trade and economy, yes, I think China did a great opening compared to, say, back in 1970 or '80, when they joined WTO and so forth, to pursue this market economic path. But still, there is a long way to go. And the question is that other result of these U.S. talks with China. China is becoming more open in terms of domestic economic policy, macroeconomic policy, all this government intervention in the market, and high-tech policy, and all the things.

It is difficult, it I think this is not possibly a matter of political philosophy. At the end it could be, because it might relate to the fundamental of Chinese government. But I think if Chinese recognize that most of the demands coming from United States is not simply a bullying against China, some of them are pretty good to be compared to Chinese economic fundamentals and helps. If they will come to that point, I think there is room for Chinese changing, that Chinese shape move, if they would come to that point.

But when they come to militarily or a strategic dimensions, well, it's pretty difficult, possibly. You know, Yukio told that, you know, Chinese continue to build up their arsenal, not to mention the – you know, the intermediate missiles and so forth. How do you talk about INF things? China is outside the arbiter of international, you know, conventions, and so forth. So there is some merit of looking into Russian proposal. Why China is not a part of all these restrictions of the sort? But it doesn't really justify the violations of the INF Treaty on the part of Russia. But I think we really don't know where China is heading for. For – (inaudible) – what is the final goal and objective? So these things are difficult. But I think what is important is that, as Yukio said, that we need to prepare, and we need to go ahead in terms of our deterrence capability.

MR. GREEN: Just to follow up, the Pew poll that came out a few months ago asked around the world what leaders do you trust to do the right thing. And President Trump did great. (Laughter.) No, he didn't do so well. But – and Prime Minister Abe, by the way, was not in the question, who do you trust to do the right thing? It was interesting because just before that the Lowy Institute poll in Australia asked that question to Australians, who do you – what world leader do you trust to do the right thing, including many world leaders. And Abe won, except for Malcolm Turnbull, who barely beat him. But Abe wasn't in this Pew poll. I think Angela Merkel won the most support.

But Xi Jinping, the number of people who said Xi Jinping could be trusted to do the right thing, dropped in every country in the world, except Japan where it went up. From a very low base. (Laughter.) It still was one of the low – you know, it went from, I think, 10 or 11 to 18-19, something like that, percent. But it went up. And so I asked Hayashi-sensei a little bit about this. He gave a good answer. But, maybe, Ken, you can give us more context. This Japan-China rapprochement, stabilization, some peoples say hedging against the U.S. What's going on, in your view, in the Japan-China relationship right now?

MR. SASAE: I think there is this element of a kind of gap. What I mean by that is that as, you know, Hayashi-sensei was talking about, all this process of trying to normalize, I would say, the relationship with China was underway before all this, you know, really confrontation between China and the United States intensified. And when I came to Washington as ambassador five or six years ago, there was a still kind of optimism on the part of United States that China could change the course. And you know, in spite of all this Chinese ambition to expand at the time, but there was still hope that China might be going along with the United States.

And around the time I think there was a sense in Japan that United States might be giving in to this Chinese ambition to split entire Pacific into two camps, you know, two big countries could gobble of the whole (thought ?). That wasn't quite, you know, answer, (dream ?) thing for us to hear. And so that was the kind of effort to normalize relations, especially on the part of a leaders exchange.

The United States, in spite of all the problem, is carrying all this, you know, leaders conversations, mutual visits. It was always Chinese who say, no, we don't do that with you. So we didn't appreciate at all, to be honest. So there was some process to normalize the relationship. The fact that the prime minister is visiting China and Chinese leaders is coming to Japan is a part of a process catching up the United States, I would say. The United States is tough and strong and big guy, so China is not in a position to reject the United States, say that we're not going to have our leaders visit. (Inaudible.) And also, we have to do it.

So we just came from minus, negative, to zero position. And we might move forward. But it doesn't mean that we have resolved all the questions.

So my point is that as we move forward, we might be in the positions to tell China more candidly and in a friendly way that the way they should govern on the trade structure and the economic structure, it's time for China to change. But in telling that one, you should have a proper relationship. You know, if you don't have any good talking relationship, whatever you say is barking from far away. So I think it's a good thing for us, for Japan, to regain these normalized exchanges between the leaders. So that would also give signal to the business and others that they could continue to do the business. But that doesn't mean that we will resolve all the questions. We're just, you know, talking about.

MR. GREEN: Sue, one of the issues, as you'll recall, that came up on both Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy, whether we can shape China, was how the Korean Peninsula fits. And I think there was – there was debate about whether the Republic of Korea is capable of shifting Chinese expectations. I happen to think so. But Korea's decisions in all this, South Korea's decisions, are going to be critical. We have a lot of political – not turmoil, change – (laughs) – bureaucratically in Seoul right now. But what's your sense of that piece of the puzzle?

MS. TERRY: Well, so I was going to also ask you: In this poll, how did – how did Xi Jinping do in South Korea? Did he –

MR. GREEN: Well, I don't remember exactly. But it was not a big change is what I recall, yeah. Although public opinion has been more negative about China, yeah.

MS. TERRY: Right. So, obviously, South Korea's relationship with China is quite complicated, and South Korea has to always do this kind of hedging balance –

MR. GREEN: It went down. Sorry, just came to me. It went down in Korea, Xi Jinping's, yeah.

MS. TERRY: Right. That's what I would expect.

Because South Korea has to – you know, they do this hedging, balancing between China and the United States. It's just their fate; they have to do it. But I think China – the perception of China took a real hit in South Korea over this whole debacle over that deployment – China sanctioning the wrong country, basically, South Korea, a whole year. I think that was really a shock for South Koreans to just really realize, OK, this is – I mean, that was always there, but I think that really had a significant impact psychologically for the public, too. And then President Moon Jae-in also went to China, did not have a terribly good reception. So that relationship has always been complicated, but I think it's been further complicated by, I think, honestly, China's misstep of how they handled this whole thing about that.

But that said, I mean, it's – South Korea right now over North Korea policy I think is more aligned with China on North Korea, right. President Moon is – you could argue there is almost like a pressure on the United States with U.S. – with South Korea, China, Russia, and North Korea. Because of that, North Korea policy is more now aligned with China. And President Moon needs China to help in that. You know, they still have to continually balance this. But I do think that whole relationship had a – took a different turn after that.

MR. GREEN: So thank you.

One of the things that Ken just mentioned was part of the shaping strategy has to be trade and TPP, which Senator Gardner spoke about, which many of his colleagues, especially from agriculture-exporting states, but elsewhere, wish we had done, strategic things wish we had done, but we haven't. Japan is moving ahead with CPTPP and EU and other trade arrangements.

And then we have the U.S.-Japan piece, which we don't know what to call. Kono Taro called it TAG and got in trouble with USTR, so it's a problem in a trade negotiation if you don't even know what to call it, but the agenda is important because the U.S.-Japan piece of TPP was by far the most important piece.

So I'll start with Ken. But where do you see this going? Do you think we can address some of the China problem, rulemaking and things, even if we can't get to some of the old tariff issues? How should we think about this U.S.-Japan bilateral fill-in-the-blank negotiation in the context of China and larger rulemaking and economic integration in Asia?

MR. SASAE: As you know, my good friend, there was this TPP negotiated under the previous Obama administration. There are a lot of rulemaking issues addressed and that is still relevant today. And that has been also relevant in the context of NAFTA renegotiation. Of course, there are some reviews and strengths and some changes taking place. But when it comes to fundamentals, I think all the elements are in there.

So although we start from negotiation on good trade, because that is critical anyway, be it fisheries and often it comes to agriculture and auto trade, you know, unless we will see some of the amicable agreement on these two issues, as it was in the case of TPP negotiations, I think it is difficult for us to move beyond that one.

I don't mean that we can't discuss all the other rule issues. But as the two leaders agreed, we are supposed to be discussing on this trade goods issues and empower with some of the service issues and investment issues, say. And then and after that, we move into a whole bunch of, you know, service and investment issues, so this is a two-track, you know, sequential negotiation.

At the end, how you will call, that's up to you. But still, I think it's supposed to be including most of the elements we addressed under TPP or others. And we are still hopeful that after all these negotiations shaping up that people would recognize that there is still merit of regional free trade like TPP. And because I think all these bilateral deals are overlapping with the rules, it's basically related to China. And that would strengthen the strategic position of the United States and also our positions vis-à-vis China to deal with Chinese problem. So whether it is a regional FTA or bilateral agreement, it involves all these rule issues, whether it is subsidy issues or intellectual property issues or e-commerce issues, whatever, that would help to address the Chinese question in conjunction with what we addressed even in the WTO.

Here in this country, the WTO is not that popular. But I think that there is merit of getting all these rules substantiated, also validated by the global institutions.

MR. GREEN: Yukio, do you want to –

MR. OKAMOTO: I don't really think it is going to be very, very difficult negotiations because we have gone through most of the major issues in TPP and all we have to do is to apply that result to the United States. And how to call the name of the treaty is unimportant. But we really hope that the United States will not deal with Japan the same way you are dealing with China.

I want to share an interesting episode and that was in 1989 when Bush 41st came to the president. As vice president of Reagan administration, he knew the importance of a U.S.-Japan relationship. So only after two weeks of his inauguration there was Japan-United States talks at the White House. Japan was Prime Minister Takeshita and, you know, there was a working lunch and the agenda was strategic security issues. But we were surprised to see so many economic secretaries – Commerce, Treasury, USTR – sitting at the lunch table, and there was no economic discussion during the working lunch. It was all about the Soviet Union and China.

So after the lunch I asked the advisor – the president's advisor – what was it all about – why did we have so many economic ministers, and the answer was it was the direct instruction of the president. He wanted to demonstrate the depth and the scope of Japan-U.S. relationship to economic ministers. No, the individual negotiations must take account of that overall picture, and I was moved. So, I mean, to treat advisories like a(n) ally and to treat the ally like advisories that can be seen sometime. (Laughs.) You should really depart from and when we are in really ally-to-ally negotiations nothing is insolvable, especially this trade negotiation.

MR. GREEN: We all miss George Herbert Walker Bush because he brought that kind of frame.

I'm going to ask one last question to Yukio because you are always ready to talk about Okinawa. There's a really bad joke about the genie of Kasumi Yasaki (ph). And a Foreign Ministry official finds a bottle and brushes it and out comes the genie of Kasumi Yasaki (ph), who says, I am the genie of Kasumi Yasaki (ph); you can have one wish. And the director general of North American (first ?) says, I have one wish, and he pulls out a big chart and he says, this is the North Korea problem.

There are 1.2 million men under arms. They have hundreds of missiles aimed at us. They have nuclear weapons. They have the largest chemical, biological – and the genie says, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop; I'm only the genie of Kasumi Yasaki (ph).

And then the Foreign Ministry official says, oh, OK. He pulls out another map. He says, this is Okinawa. I need to build a runway right there, and the genie says, let me see that North Korea chart again. (Laughter.) So decades later, actually this week, I think, we're actually – we, the U.S. and Japan – Japan are beginning land filling on the runway. So there's concrete, literally and figuratively – a progress. On the other hand, it's taken a long time. The election in Okinawa for governor went in ways that complicate it for Tokyo. You know this relationship between Tokyo and Okinawa and the U.S. better than just about anybody. What's your sense of where we are?

MR. OKAMOTO: Before that, Mike, can I just say a few words about the state of Japan-U.S. relationship?

MR. GREEN: Please. Yeah.

MR. OKAMOTO: You know, when you demonstrated your extraordinary good will by sending 20,000 servicemen and women to Tohoku area – tsunami-devastated area – it really served as the almost shocking reminder to Japanese people how close we are, and Japanese will never forget that. And we, of course, appreciate the assistance China gave to us. But we can never equate China, who sent 15 people for one week, with 20,000 Americans really staying there to see to the end of the reconstruction process. And now Japanese people have 80 percent support of U.S.-Japan alliance, and in a democratic state this is almost unanimity. So we are always there. And so, speaking about Okinawa, there is no really scientific co-relationship. But very few people – surprisingly few people are saying we have to get American bases out of Okinawa, we don't need American troops there. Twenty thousand servicemen and women, most of them are from Okinawa.

So what do we do? A few years ago, I had thought that there must be other way. What we called a Plan B. So I made my testimony at the Diet in both houses that we really should consider again the way we are progressing. But no change. And when we come to this stage, this is very difficult to think about a Plan B. So the choice is whether to transfer Futenma Airfield to Henoko. The advantage is that the size of the base will be one half of what we have at Futenma. And the possibility of causing damage to residents in case of accident will be reduced to almost zero. That's one option. Or, two, retain Futenma as it is, with obvious disadvantages.

Of course, the – for Okinawans, the ideal solution is to take Futenma all together without any replacement facilities in Okinawa. But Mr. Hatoyama committed that when he was the prime minister to Okinawans, only to make the confusion larger. Then he had to come up with that there is no such magic solution. So I don't think we have only two options now.

MR. GREEN: Interesting. Ken, can I ask you to give us a last word before we turn to the audience in particular about the state of U.S.-Japan relations? Eighty-five percent in polls in Japan support the alliance. In the U.S., the numbers are very high. In Chicago Council on Global Affairs and others, the highest they've ever been. Americans in polls rank Japan one of the top three or four most trustworthy countries. But one of our participants yesterday pointed to a new Yomiuri poll where the number of Japanese who are anxious about where the U.S. is going has really gone up. Or, actually, I think that confidence in the U.S. went down. It was one or the other. So not everything's perfect. What's your sense of where we are?

MR. SASAE: Well, I think even though this impact of American political debate – divided debates is also felt by Japanese audience – and there are lots of, you know, reporters even here. I mean, people – (inaudible) – America is divided and talking and right or left and, you know, up and down and so forth. (Laughter.) And so it is obvious that America seems to be a bit in turmoil of authority. And that gives an impact on the general public. I mean, you don't have to listen to CNN every day. I mean, so it doesn't mean that Japanese public at large are losing their confidence about the United States capacity to come back. I think that is pretty sure.

You know, all the confusion. There is Congress. There is, you know, Supreme Court working, in spite of some of the debate there. And mass media, divided. But they have free press. Different from what we see in other parts of the world. So I hope and I trust the Americans' possibility to come back to the United States of America.

MR. GREEN: Let's open it up for some questions before we wrap up. We have folks with microphones, if you could raise your hand. I'll try to turn my head this way and take some questions. And I have to start with a journalist. (Laughter.) Just to show they're not the enemy of the people. Or, at least not the enemy of CSIS and JIIA. Please, yeah, front row. Is this question up and down or left or right or?

Q: (Off mic.)

MS. TERRY: It's not on.

MR. GREEN: Push up. Yeah, good. OK.

Q: No? OK. (Inaudible) – Newspaper.

I have a question for Ms. Sue Mi Terry. The announcement by President Trump to withdraw troops from Syria and Afghanistan was a big surprise. Do you think the current U.S. teams on North Korea at State, White House, CIA, are functioning well enough to deter President Trump from making any abrupt or thoughtless decision? Is there any possibility that he announces that withdrawal of U.S. forces in Korea after the second summit?

MR. GREEN: The critical question of deterrence on the Korean Peninsula.

MS. TERRY: (Laughs.) So that is – that is a concern. And first, I think President Trump's sudden decision, pulling the troops out of Syria, I think that did have an impact, even though now that's been reversed and it's complicated, and then also Defense Secretary Mattis' resignation. That says volumes, right? That's very, very concerning, just the way – because Secretary Mattis was so pro-alliance and against the troop withdrawal, and so on. And so obviously that is the danger of – could potentially President Trump announce something like this in the second summit with Kim? I think there is that danger there.

When it comes to just general North Korea policy, we do say there's President Trump and then there's the bureaucracy. And everybody else is against – there's no one, I think, that's supportive of U.S. decision to reduce troops on the Korean Peninsula. But, again, I think that's separate. When you say U.S. foreign policy towards North Korea, I would just – policy, there's two layers. There President Trump. And you say how the – do they work well? Well, this is a consistent problem. I used as

example of, you know, continual mixed signals that's coming out – not only on North Korea policy, but on everything else. But in North Korea policy too.

You know, what – is Secretary Pompeo, for example, on September 19th, 2018, last year, said there's going to be a timeline. Just seven days later, President Trump says: No. there is no timeline. I don't want to play this timeline game. So everybody else following this, it's really hard to know what it is. So we know at least what Secretary Pompeo, Biegun, and all the folks are doing. You talk to – you know, now Andy Kim has retired. But you talk to these guys and you think you have a plan. But that's not necessarily President Trump's thing. And so that's the wild card.

I would like to believe that folks like Bolton, and Pompeo, and everybody can sort of convince President Trump not to make that kind of decision or make that kind of deal. But of course, that's the ultimate wildcard. And I don't have a good answer for that.

MR. GREEN: If I can – if I can agree with that, and just add, from my perspective, the – first of all, it's interesting how much the Syria decision has impacted views on the other side of the world, in Japan, Korea, and Australia. In the same way that President Obama's reversal on Syria redline had a devastating effect on allies' views of U.S. commitment in Asia. And, you know, American presidents keep having to learn, the world's not divided into windowless compartments. And that's the first point.

The second point, though, adding into to what Sue said, there's been quite a backlash against the President's Syria statement, in the Congress, and the media, and among U.S. allies. And a lot of backtracking. A lot of effort to explain, well, he didn't really mean it. He meant this, he meant that. And, you know, John Bolton's statement – National Security Advisor John Bolton has not disagreed with the president ever. But on this, he started to walk it in a way that the president then said: That's what I meant. (Laughter.)

And that was Syria, where there is probably a much more compelling case. I don't think it's the right decision, but you can make somewhat of a more compelling case than you can on the Korean Peninsula.

And so I think if you ever had – and I think it's possible – but if you ever had the president, you know, announce I'm getting out of Korea – you know, if he talked to Kim Jong-un and said you can have it – you can have it, the way he did to Erdogan on Syria, I think that you'd see quite a significant backlash. And it wouldn't just be Congress or the media; it would be allies, especially Japan.

So when Jimmy Carter said he was pulling U.S. troops out of Korea, he would not drop that. He ran on it in 1976. I wrote a book on this. No one can figure out who told him. I have my suspicions. And his entire Cabinet opposed it, and they could not talk him out of it. And finally, if you've read Koji Murata's book about this – he did his Ph.D. here on this – finally, one of the tipping points was when the Japanese side said Korea's critical to Japan. And I think it was – well, I won't go into the details, but the delegation from Tokyo scared Harold Brown, scared Brzezinski into what it would mean for the U.S.'s whole position in Asia, especially Japan.

So I think Japan will have a big impact on this. Abe-san's been fairly quiet about it. Why sweat? Why make the situation worse? But if it actually came to that, I think Japan, personally, would have a huge influence in this town with Congress, with the media, with the Pentagon, as would Australia and other U.S. allies.

MS. TERRY: A hundred percent agree with this. Also, there is bipartisan support – I mean, there's no bipartisan support. That's why you have McCain National Defense Authorization Act that passed last year just thinking about this scenario, trying to curb that, so.

MR. GREEN: But as you know, Fumoto-san (ph), all of us worry about it a little bit.

MS. TERRY: Yeah, of course.

MR. GREEN: Thank you.

I saw Akimoto-san next, and then I'll – yeah, in the center here. Other side. There you go.

Q: Satohiro Akimoto with the Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

I have a question to Ambassador Sasae and Mike. I worry about, you know, Japan-Korea relationship. Ambassador Sasae said that the relationship is a pity. It is a pity also to see the relationship continue to deteriorate to the point of no return. Now that Japan and Korea have successfully – I shouldn't say successfully, but Japan and Korea demonstrated lack of ability to improve their relationship, do you have any role that you may ask the United States to play in order to facilitate a better relationship between the two countries? And to Mike, whether you have a suggestion as to what the United States can do to better the relationship between the two countries, that is pretty important to the United States as well. Thank you.

MR. SASAE: Well, the – may I break Chatham House rule? (Laughter.) I mean, there was –

MR. GREEN: If you quote yourself. (Laughter.)

MR. SASAE: There was exactly the same question asked, I mean, in yesterday's, you know – the debate. So I asked the, you know, participant: Can you give me idea? (Laughs.)

But seriously, you know, this is a quite dilemma to be honest, a very serious dilemma. And not in terms of legal positions or agreement, international agreement we have, you know, maintained throughout all this postwar period with every government in South Korea. They are now departing from that one. I hope that the Korean government and people would understand this is a complete departure from the things we had to base our relationship with ROK. That gravity need to be understood.

But having said it, you know, we want to see Korean government to work out some of the things that they might do on their own because they haven't really come to the decision what they would do. This is a high – you know, Supreme Court decision, and the party was lodging against all this, you know, reconciliation and (outside ?) settlements. And of course the companies have rejected Japanese government support of this one, and reportedly prime minister has asked his Cabinet and government to consider what kind of measure could be taken against the possible damage that could be done to Japanese companies. So I think at this moment we are a pretty, you know, precarious point where we might go to further deteriorations or we could stop here and try to be sober, try to work out some solution.

What is the solution? I think the initiative should be coming from South Korean side. Up until that moment, the best thing Japanese government and people can do is to make too much emotional

outburst, and then that would make the Korean government in a difficult position to work out their own solution.

MR. GREEN: So –

Q: (Off mic) – the United States?

MR. SASAE: Yeah, I – well, the – I hope that the United States would – you know, if I'm a diplomat, ambassador here, I would say of course the United States would support Japanese position – (inaudible). (Laughter.) But since I'm a private person, I mean, I can say that so far I don't expect the United States government could come into this hot, hot, hot states of the – (inaudible). We need to come to more so a point where United States could play a more meaning role to – you know, the previous government, I mean, Obama administration gave some benign and informal support and advice to – both to Tokyo and Seoul on this issue, and including, you know, Vice President Biden and others giving a very informal conversation. So my hope is that there should be some informal conversation before going to the exchanges through mass media and public domain.

MR. GREEN: I was asked to talk with Rich Armitage to the LDP committee about this two years ago, three years ago, and we basically – it was off the record, but we said we won't tell you what you should do, we won't Korea what you should do; we can tell you how it affects U.S. interests when Japan-Korea relations deteriorate. It puts us in a worse position. And then the tabloid Shukan Bunshun picked us up and said Green and Armitage are Korean spies. (Laughter.) So even a – you know, if the U.S. enters into this area – and we weren't in the government, so with great peril.

But what we said stands. The deteriorating Japan-Korea relationship hurts our national security, and hurts our position in Asia, and hurts our ability to deter North Korea, to deter and dissuade China. And so the U.S. has a – you can set aside – scholars can debate whether there's a moral position to be taken and everyone will have their own positions. But as a matter of national interest, the U.S. has a very clear interest in both countries making this – making progress.

And we had an interesting discussion yesterday. I don't know if – I'm sure he'd be happy to be quoted, but I can't. But a quite respected scholar in this town said, look, there's basically a difference between resolution and reconciliation. Just because politically it's hard to resolve this doesn't mean you can't continually make efforts to improve reconciliation. So what occurred to me at the time was, Hayashi-san, you used to have a soccer league with the Korean parliament, right, with the National Assembly. Are you still playing soccer with them?

Q: Yeah.

MR. GREEN: So start playing soccer. (Laughter.) In every front – Japan and Korea, people of good faith and strategic vision in every front should make efforts to show what's possible in this relationship. Korean businesses who are not particularly anti-Japanese – (inaudible) – right now are afraid because of this court decision to continue economic discussions with Japanese counterparts. Don't be afraid. You know, people of goodwill – so one of my answers is start playing soccer. And it's one small thing. But in every area, start showing that reconciliation and common values between two democracies and U.S. allies are more important than what, frankly, Beijing and Pyongyang would like everyone talking about, which is the past. And keep that demonstration of goodwill. So bouncing it to Hayashi-san.

MS. TERRY: Can I just say also I think it's important to just keep a historic, like, perspective, big-picture perspective? It's not always going to be this way, right? I mean, there were times when there was good – like, I'm thinking of how, like, it was in 1990s. Even Kim Dae-jung era, when Kim Dae-jung to teach – (inaudible) – the whole time, until 2002, the co-host the World Cup. So under the right situation things can improve. So while it looks bad now, I think just – I think your advice was just excellent in terms of not being emotional about it and just sort of have a little bit of a long-term –

MR. GREEN: Can I say one more thing? There was a – there was a view expressed quite a bit yesterday that this administration doesn't care about this issue. And I'm not sure whether the president does. However, I don't think that that is right and a few months ago H.R. McMaster, the former national security advisor, gave a major public speech in Korea arguing pretty close to what I just argued but even more passionately or more persuasively, and not a single Korean newspaper covered it. So and I'm not sure it got much coverage in Japan either.

So I think it's a mistake to assume that this administration, which with its free and open Indo-Pacific strategy with some pretty – set aside at the top, it's pretty qualified people like Matt Pottinger and Randy Schriver – I think it's a mistake to assume they don't worry about this and care about it and you see – H.R. McMaster would not have given that speech, in my view, without an awful lot of checking in the administration.

MR. SASAE: Mike, do you want another spies for me on –

MR. GREEN: Are you a spy, too?

MR. SASAE: (We have a ?) relationship. Diplomatic normalization of Japan with North Korea will bring Japan-South Korea relationship to a new dimension and it will be good for the two countries.

MR. GREEN: You're anticipating Japan will improve relations with North Korea?

MR. SASAE: Think about it.

MR. GREEN: I am. (Laughter.) Yes, sir. Right up here with –

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

With so much political capital on this issue, what does Trump have to deliver to have any prayer of reelection in 2020? Is it enough to have the fifth summit or do we have to see 10 nuclear weapons being disassembled in Oak Ridge? And at what point do the Japanese lose patience and sort of bail out on the whole process?

MR. GREEN: So North Korea – if there's a – assuming there's a second summit with Kim Jong-un what politically does Donald Trump need to do here? Is that what you mean by the first part of the question?

Q: Third summit, fourth summit, fifth summit?

MR. GREEN: Yeah. Well, Sue, you want to –

MS. TERRY: So I'm not sure if I got the question right, but what does he need to get for him to –

Q: Deliver to the American people.

MS. TERRY: Honestly, I don't think he needs much. Look what he did with the Singapore Summit. I mean, nothing was accomplished with the Singapore Summit. We just had this aspirational statement. But then he declared that, you know, the threat is over – I mean, to the base. That said, there was a lot of backlash. Every – I think everybody here in the town knows that that was kind of a – he didn't accomplish much.

So it depends on if – who does he have to sell it to. If it's his base, I don't – I think he can just – all North Korea has to do is give a little to make him look like they're making, you know, a positive step towards denuclearization. Disable a facility. You know, they just have to give enough for President Trump to be able to spin it, and if the base – if the question is to the base. But, now, if it's to the policy community, I mean, he would – we know that President Trump has to deliver more, that this is all very superficial.

So did I answer that question right? I'm not sure if I answered the question. Yeah.

MR. GREEN: Yeah, I think that's good.

MR. SASAE: Yeah.

Q: Japan will live with all this?

MR. SASAE: Well, at the end, we are with the United States. We are friends and allies. When things are bad, we are with you. When things are good, we are with you. Of course, we are in a position to give advice to the American friends. When the American friends are trying to – (inaudible) – into North Korean tactics, we tell, be careful. When the – you know, we see all this lure of Americans loosening the sanctions, we might advise that it's not time for you to do it and when the South Korean government is trying to move forward without taking much into account the progress on the denuclearization talks we gently talk to even South Korean government that this have to be in the context of overall negotiations.

So I think Japan is in a position to give our support to both United States and Korean friend in terms of, you know, coordinations – trilateral coordination – because I think, at the end, all three would suffer if the North Korea will continue to be possessing nuclear weapons and long-range missiles and isolate it. So I think it's great for the president continue to be engaged rather than disengaged and take a hasty decision which are not really appreciated by all of us.

MR. GREEN: But I don't think – you're asking all the foreign policy experts to opine on domestic U.S. politics. But I don't think that the president's going to get a lot of benefit politically from this summit. I think Sue's right. He won't necessarily suffer a lot of damage. He can continue saying at rallies and to the base: I keep meeting this guy. He hasn't tested.

MS. TERRY: Right.

MR. GREEN: Kim Jong Un probably won't test because this is dissipating all the pressure on him. It's weakening sanctions. It's weakening U.S. exercises. I mean, I think it's a lot of benefit for Kim Jong Un. So he can say: I was tough, and now he's not testing, and then that will be good enough.

It doesn't expand his support, but it will keep the base happy. Public opinion polls before 2016 pretty consistently showed that Republicans, 90 percent or so of Republicans considered Russia and North Korea major threats. In most recent polls, Republicans, it's more like 50-some percent. You know, the president has convinced a significant part of the Republican base to change their views of national security because of our tribal politics. And so he doesn't have to do a lot to keep the base.

But I also would add, I think there is risk. If he goes too far, there are going to be Democrats controlling the hearings and subpoenas in the House and the budget. And you saw many, most everyone basically except Rand Paul on the Republican side defy him on Russia and Syria. And so if he goes too far in this with Kim Jong Un, I think he risks suffering not devastating political damage, but some erosion on the margins. But I don't think it gets – unless we're all wrong and Kim Jong Un actually does – Kim Jong Un turns over nuclear weapons to the president to take home, he will get a political boost, and frankly, would deserve it. But I wouldn't bet a lot on that.

Let's see. I've been going over here, so let me go in the back over here.

Q: Hi. My name is Takawa Harane (ph) from Okinawa prefecture, Washington, D.C. office.

Like, I heard the comment that thinking of plan B is too late. But I think that the Okinawan people hope there is still time left for us. So under that context, I was impressed by the Japanese emperor's birthday remark on December 23rd. I think he mentioned about the importance of staying closer to Okinawan people. I shouldn't be allowed to interpret his message any way. However, if I could, how could you interpret that remark when we think about the status quo or situation in Okinawa right now?

MR. GREEN: I think that's you, Yukio.

MR. OKAMOTO: Yes, the emperor's statement was very thoughtful and moving. He has in him a very deep emotion that he has to compensate for Okinawa. I feel the same way. We did a terrible thing to Okinawa, victimizing Okinawa to delay the American offensive to Japan's mainland during the Pacific War. After the defeat of the war, we simply delegated Okinawans' fate to American occupation. Very rough rule was conducted. And now after the reversion of Okinawa, we should have done much more with Okinawa having 70 percent of U.S. bases on a tiny space. Okinawa comprise only 0.6 percent of entire Japanese land, where we have 70 percent concentration. Now, the only way to reduce – (inaudible) – is to transfer the base of Okinawa to mainland.

As I said earlier, Mr. Hatoyama thought it was possible. But he did it in a very clumsy way. And so that did not come to fruition. But you know, there are many unpopulated or less populated areas in mainland Japan who want the basis of self-defense forces to be located, because it will bring economic dynamism to those desolate villages. So it's going to be, like, 10 years project. But we have to show to Okinawan people that mainlanders care about Okinawa by accepting even a few portion of Okinawan base. Unless mainlanders really demonstrate that intention to Okinawan people, this issue will never be solved. That's my personal conviction.

MR. GREEN: Very last brief question for Ken. One topic that came up from both American and Japanese callers yesterday that I didn't anticipate coming up in a seminar on U.S.-Japan alliance was the impact of the end of the Heisei era, that this calendar year the emperor will finish his reign and there will be a new era. And people pointed out things like every time there's been a change in era, the government in power fell. Or I was a student at Tokyo University in 1989.

And it was unbelievable what happened in the classrooms, with students who'd never thought about the emperor, suddenly throwing out emotions. Talking about – I remember well one of my friend's grandfathers who'd been a sergeant in China during the year, who'd never talked about it to his kids, just grabbed me at a dinner, pulled me aside, and told me everything. And there was a very famous book that came out, "Japan at War: An Oral History," where historians just captured all these stories from people who were completely unwilling to talk until the Showa era ended. So you know, it was interesting. It came up in the political and social and other contexts.

What does it mean, the end of the Heisei era? It's – these things seem to have more significant in the Japanese worldview and thinking about their own place in history than maybe we fully appreciate.

MR. SASAE: Well, thank you, Michael, for giving me the chance to think about that question. I haven't given deep thought to the meaning of ending this Showa – or, sorry – Heisei period and moving onto another age. I think this period of Heisei is basically the period we confirmed the importance of peace. Some people could decide that we depend too much on the United States, and we didn't send a force of we are safe and so forth. But to me, I think it was a time when we reconfirmed the fundamental, you know, thinking we developed after the war. I'm not talking about the constitution and all that stuff. I'm talking about the deep sense of Japanese.

I think their majesties symbolized this period. One, they visited all the places where the Japanese soldiers died during the war. And they continued to pray for these souls, and so forth. And whenever there is victims that, you know, Yukio mentioned all these tsunami and earthquake. Their majesty did go and visit it and link together. I think this sense of unity, by no means small. It's a big, big achievement for the Japanese people and as a nation. I think so – with that basis, I think what is necessarily ahead is to think what we can do more in terms of proactive role as a stabilizing force for the peace in the region that will require more defensive mood, and that would require more possibly opening of Japanese society.

I'm not talking about the immigration issues, but to be honest I think we could do more possibly. And also, there is a good time for us to think of the new innovations of society. So I think all this Heisei period was basically a good period for Japanese, in spite of all this economic slowdown and, you know, two decades of slump, and so forth. On the whole I think the people lived in peace. And that's what Heisei was all about.

MR. GREEN: Thank you.

We had a really interesting discussion, I think, today with our political friends and with our diplomat, scholar friends now. And we've concluded the 25th U.S.-Japan CSIS-JIIA forum. And we're going to celebrate with a bit of a reception, to which you are all invited. But let's first thank Okamoto-san and Sue Mi Terry and Ambassador Sasae. And we'll see you back there. (Applause.)

(END)

