

Center for Strategic and International Studies

## Online Event

### **“Korea Chair ‘The Capital Cable’ #11 with Rep. Ami Bera”**

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FEATURING:

**Representative Ami Bera,**  
*Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee;  
Co-chair, Congressional Study Group on Korea*

CSIS EXPERTS:

**Victor Cha,**  
*Senior Advisor and Korea Chair, CSIS*

**Mark Lippert,**  
*Senior Advisor (Non-resident), Korea Chair, CSIS*

**Victor Cha,**  
*Senior Fellow, Korea Chair, CSIS*

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Mark Lippert:

All right. Good morning everyone in D.C., good evening to everyone in Korea, good day to everyone around the world. I'm Mark Lippert, host of The Capital Cable. And welcome to the 11th edition of the CSIS Capital Cable, brought to you by the good folks at Kia Motors. Special shout-out this week to Chris Wenk of the D.C. office.

This week on the broadcast, the U.S. elections and its impact on South Korea and the Korean Peninsula, writ large. The COVID-19 response in Korea. The United States and efforts – unilateral, bilateral, multilateral – to develop and distribute a vaccine and move forward on economic recovery efforts, both on the peninsula and here in the U.S. And the latest on North-South developments in the wake of the reported shooting death of the South Korean Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries official at sea, apparently at the hands of the North Koreans, as well as Moon Jae-in's speech at the United Nations.

Our very special guest this week is perfectly positioned to give us critical insights into these topics, and more. He is the chairman of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia-Pacific and Nonproliferation. He is one of the co-chairs of the bipartisan, bicameral study groups on Korea. He is the vice chair of the House Committee on Science, Space, Technology. He is a medical doctor with a 20-year medical career under his belt.

And a proud graduate of UC Irvine – go Anteaters! I also think he's a Dodger's fan. Some split loyalties, though, maybe the Giants – a rooting interest, maybe, as they say. Victor, don't get mad, plenty of love for the Yankees out there. We are very lucky, very honored, very privileged to have Congressman Ami Bera, a Democrat, representing the 7th District of California, just east of California's capital city Sacramento and within Sacramento County. Welcome to the program, Congressman.

All right. Quickly turning to our regular channels, Victor Cha, vice dean at Georgetown, head of the CSIS Korea Chair program, former NSC director, and obviously a Yankee's fan. And last but not least, Dr. Sue Mi Terry, senior advisor at CSIS Korea Chair, former CIA, former NSC, and also taught at Columbia University. Welcome, Sue. You there? All right, Sue.

With that said, with the intros, let's get into it. Before we get into our slated topics, we want to take a moment and just mark the passing of one of the most consequential jurists of our time, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. And can we bring up the pics, please? And the reason we bring it up here is that I think very few people know that Justice Ginsburg actually visited Korea in 2015. The first visit of its kind since Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, I believe in 1987.

She engaged on a range of topics – LGBT rights, discussed the issue of a pan-Asian human rights court, even did a great event at the ambassador's residence with young Koreans. Fantastic back and forth. She got a question, by the way, similarities between her and the Notorious B.I.G. I think her answer was that they're both from Brooklyn. She even stayed at the residence, was a houseguest. You know, I'm proud to say that. Remarkable pathbreaker, remarkable jurist, remarkable person.

Congressman, can we take advantage of you being here today to offer some insights on Justice Ginsburg? And again, welcome to the show.

Rep. Ami Bera:

Absolutely. And Mark, thanks for having me on. And it's great to be on with Dr. Terry and Dr. Cha.

You know, she was iconic, right, for a whole generation of women – you know, her rulings, you know, prior to being placed on the Supreme Court, you know, just, you know, her advocacy for women's rights, civil rights. And then, you know, in the later years – you know, my daughter's 22 years old – she became an iconic figure for that next generation of women. And you know, she's – you know, lying in state at the Supreme Court and just watching the folks pay their respects, and you know, this is a dramatic loss for the United States, but also she was an iconic figure for women around the world.

Mark Lippert:

All right. Well, thanks, Congressman. And I'll just add that she really did make an impact on her short but significant stay in Korea and among young people and young women. It was fantastic. And thanks for those insights.

All right, Congressman, let me – let me cover the next topic. Let's turn to the next topic here, and it – the death of – tragic as it was, of Justice Ginsburg is an obvious nexus for our next topic because of the political implications of it, but let's go to the U.S. elections. You know, and full disclosure, as I said at the outset you're a Democratic member of the House. I served in the Obama administration as a political appointee. But with that out of the way, I know that there's great interest, especially from our audience in Korea, on your insights on the U.S. election – presidential, third of the Senate, the entire House is up. And so just with that said, two broad questions for you: just your insights on the U.S. elections; and then implications for issues in Northeast Asia, particularly on South Korea, which I think was surprised in 2016 to find itself in, you know, I wouldn't say the middle, but at least a component of the domestic political machinations here in the United States. So, Congressman, please, the floor is yours on this topic.

Rep. Ami Bera:

Well, so let's think about, you know, the main election, which is this presidential race that's coming up. And you know, this is a time where the country is deeply divided. When you look at poll numbers for Vice President Biden or President Trump, you know, probably 90 percent of the population has already decided who they're going to vote for. And when they are surveyed, they indicate that they're not changing. They've already made up their minds. So you're really fighting for a very small group of persuadable voters.

Tack on top of that, you know, the way we elect a president in the United States isn't the popular vote. If it was a popular vote, you'd say for certain Vice President Biden was going to win this election. But we have the Electoral College, so it's done on a state-by-state basis. So you really have to pay attention to state polls – Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania. You know, my home state of California, we know Vice President Biden's going to win that and get the 55 electoral votes coming out of my state. So it's going to come down to a handful of battleground states.

Right now I would say the polling looks pretty favorable for the vice president. And full disclosure, I was a(n) early endorser of the vice president and was out there campaigning for him. So it looks like he has many more paths to get to the 270 votes that you need to win the Electoral College and become president. Again, you know, there's still, you know, five weeks, six weeks – 40 days – left to Election Day, so anything can happen.

You know, and then we'll have to see how the Supreme Court nomination plays out. You know, President Trump has indicated, you know, he's going to try to nominate and seat the next Supreme Court justice before the election. You know, that's a pretty tight timeframe to have hearings and everything else. So you know, how does that play out?

In the House of Representatives, I'd say the Democrats very likely will hold onto the majority. That will return Speaker Nancy Pelosi back to the speakership.

And then the Senate is very much in play. So you know, will the Democrats get a narrow majority there or will the Republicans hold on?

With regards to implications for foreign policy and the Korean Peninsula, you know, I think if President Biden comes in we've seen that he's a much more traditional – would be a much more traditional president vis-à-vis foreign policy. You know, we can tell from his 36 years in the Senate and eight years of vice president. But I think he would, you know, engage a little bit more than President Trump has on these issues. You know, I could certainly see a Biden administration, you know, looking at our allies in the region – particularly Japan and Korea – and some of the challenges that we've seen in recent years, and taking a more active role in, you know, trying to find a middle-ground nexus, particularly with a new prime minister coming in Japan.

And then vis-à-vis North Korea, it'll be interesting to see if President Trump – you know, you hear about maybe an October surprise. I doubt there's any room for negotiations or conversation with the North pre-election. Would something happen post-election? Perhaps.

And then what would the Biden administration position be vis-à-vis engaging in conversations with the North? I can see a scenario where the vice president would engage in that, particularly because President Moon certainly, but the Moon administration has an interest in, you know, continuing these talks. So we'll see. There's a lot of variables out there.

Mark Lippert:

And so if you were in Korea – in South Korea among our allies at this point, what issues would you be looking at in terms of possible early – I guess early significant topics that would either come after a Trump reelection or a Biden election? Would it be trade? Would it be burden sharing? Would it be North Korea? Where do you think you have to go first, Congressman?

Rep. Ami Bera:

Yeah, so I think fairly quickly in a Biden administration you would resolve the burden-sharing issue, and I think there's broad bipartisan support to get this resolved in Congress.

Second, you know, I think, you know, one of the things we took a little bit of concern with in terms of the Trump administration was this discussion about reduction in forces as well as, you know, a delay and at times putting off the joint training exercises that we've historically done. I can see a resumption of that in some force. And I don't think the Biden administration would talk about reducing forces, not at this particular time when, you know, there are real tensions in the region and certainly maritime tensions with China and elsewhere. I think maintaining a strong troop presence on the peninsula is not just in our – in the Koreans' interest, but it certainly is in the U.S. interest as well.

I do think a Trump administration – you know, again, it's taken a long time to resolve the Special Measures Agreement. We've been pushing for that to get resolved. Maybe that does get resolved as he goes into a second term. And I think Trump would try to restart talks. I mean, that would be my best guess. But you know, I never want to predict what President Trump is going to do.

Mark Lippert: (Laughs.) Fair point. Fair point.

Rep. Ami Bera: (Inaudible) – seems like it was years ago – it was just a couple years ago that there was a whole different approach taking place.

Mark Lippert: Fair point. Very fair point.

A final question on this topic – and then I'll go to Sue and Victor for comment – for you, Congressman. Do you see – you alluded to it earlier, lots of bipartisan support for Korea, the alliance. It seems like there's lots of very constructive policymaking going on, both in the House and the Senate, on a range of topics. Do you see that changing after the election?

Rep. Ami Bera: You know, I really don't. I think we recognize Korea is one of our strongest allies, a major trading partner. And I should say that Vice President Biden probably would take a slightly different approach to trade and commerce in a Biden administration. I think you'd resolve some of these issues with our friends. So you know, I think you'll continue to have a strong bipartisan, bicameral recognition and, you know, relationship and alliance with Korea.

Mark Lippert: All right. Excellent, Congressman.

All right. Let me go to Dr. Cha here for comment. Dr. Cha, Victor, can you just talk a little bit about what you might see after the U.S. presidential election and anything that might happen in the runup to it, either alliance equities and/or North Korea?

Victor Cha: Well, thanks, Mark. And I just want to say it really is a pleasure to have Congressman Bera on the show. I mean, he's a real friend of the alliance and has done a fantastic job as subcommittee chair.

You know, I feel, Mark, like that we really are at a very important moment in U.S. relations in Asia because things that we've sort of taken for granted as being standard pieces of U.S. foreign policy and grand strategy have all changed in the last four years – most importantly, the way we treat our allies. You know, we are now in a moment where we treat them very transactionally. It's about money,

and it's about money in the context of the broader view that these alliances just drain U.S. power and strength, and they don't augment them. And I agree with Congressman Bera that, you know, in a Biden administration there's going to be a real effort to rejuvenate – normalize U.S. relations with our allies, again, in the context of a belief that these alliances augment U.S. power and influence. They don't sap U.S. power and influence. So, in that sense, you know, I agree. SMA would try to be resolved right away, efforts to improve relations between Japan and Korea, our two key allies. I think that would happen right away. I think there would probably be more caution on North Korea – you know, open to negotiations, a substantive, detailed negotiation, with the possibility of higher-level meetings later, but really focusing on substance as opposed to just made-for-TV meetings.

If we had a second Trump term, my personal view is I think Trump would almost – would almost go right away into a meeting with the North Korean leader and try to – try to make some sort of deal. Experts may not like the deal but, you know, he would spin it into being a very good deal. Because as one of the people that I spoke to last week who knows him very well says, you know, he went all-in on North Korea. And he wants – you know, he likes to finish what he started. So, I think there'd be something pretty dramatic if he won. But whether that would be good in terms of denuclearization and the alliance is not clear.

Mark Lippert: Gotcha. All right, thanks, Victor. Great stuff. Great insights. And what I would just – you know, what I wanted to ask is, have you ever appeared the Congressman in subcommittee, and was he tough on you? I'm just kidding. All right, let's – I'm going to –

Victor Cha: Always tough. Always tough.

Mark Lippert: All right. (Laughs.) All right. I'm going to lift and shift to the next topic because I want to get to it, and there is a more, I think, detailed treatment warranted here, on COVID-19. And Sue, if you could just set us up on this important topic. And obviously if you want to make any comments about post-election, pre-election, any of that. I think you're welcome to it. And I think we're going to get some of that a little bit later in the show. But important topic, COVID-19.

You've been doing some research on this in term of the South Korean response, which has been lauded globally. And I should point out that Jeong Eun-kyeong, South Korea's anti-virus czar, has just been included in the Time 100 list of most influential people because of the South Korean response. So, Sue, broad strokes here, what's worked in South Korea? Current state of affairs? And the outlook in terms of their work regionally and globally as well?

Sue Mi Terry: Yeah, Mark, the Moon administration is understandably very proud of how they handled COVID. South Korea was able to avoid large outbreak without a full lockdown. They're even calling it K-quarantine, like K-pop, right? And they were able to achieve this, you know, for a number of factors involved, including collaboration with private sector, stringent contact tracing, adaptive health care system, and so on. But the South Koreans did have a second wave of infections, and South Korea's daily caseload of new infections, once fewer than 10 – which is really remarkable when you consider that they had, like, as many as 900 a day in February – they got it to fewer than 10.

But then, because of the second wave, they have seen infections in the triple digits every day since mid-August, although now just recently they have got it under 100, and just yesterday they got it back 110. Mainly the virus spread through churches and large gatherings and anti-government rallies. But the Moon administration really acted very quickly, very aggressively, tightening restrictions, again, aggressively using surveillance, camera footage, smartphones, location data, credit purchases to help trace and establish transmission chains. There was sort of a zero-tolerance or maximum penalties policy for people who were violating laws, to control the virus.

So they're doing a lot of right things. In terms of vaccines they are – you know, obviously this second wave has really given a renewed sense of urgency for producing vaccines for South Korea. And they have this two-pronged approach working with local companies. And then second prong is working with international community. I think, like, three South Korean companies are currently developing vaccines which are already in clinical trials that are placed to start before the end of the year. And they, of course, are working with, like, SK Biosciences, working with U.S. government program Novavax, and also the South Koreans are involved with AstraZeneca in Oxford. So there are a lot of collaboration as well.

And I will just say, the last thing just looking ahead, that politics of vaccine could get interesting though, in the backdrop of U.S.-China relations, just because, you know, the leading candidates are also like some from the U.S. and some from China. And we know South Korea's increasingly uncomfortable just being stuck between Beijing and Washington. And China has already been reaching out to partners like the Philippines and Pakistan, trying to provide doses of finished vaccine – promising to provide. So South Korea may not ultimately need Chinese vaccines, but it could become a sticking point if the U.S. – if there's an agreement with Beijing is worked out. But all of this could be a moot point if the Biden administration comes in, I think.

Mark Lippert: Gotcha. So, Sue, what you're saying is effective response, unique and interesting and effective measures taken domestically, but watch the space of the international politics in that it could contribute to a longstanding Korean concern on a range of issues, in terms of being caught between China, the U.S., and in part of a larger game, for lack of a better term. Is that a fair statement?

Sue Mi Terry: Great Summary. Thank you, Mark.

Mark Lippert: All right, great. And to that end, what should the South Koreans be thinking about now in terms of positioning themselves to avoid this crosscurrent, or being caught into this larger game?

Sue Mi Terry: Well, I think South Koreans are doing the right things. They are, you know, working also collaboratively, working with the international community. And just – I think President Moon just also recently announced that they wanted to do some multilateral effort regionally that involves China, Japan, Mongolia, and actually North Korea. We can talk about that a little bit later in terms of timing for North Korea. But they are – they are making a lot of multilateral efforts too. And they are just trying to sort of hedge. I'm just saying, watch out for the

difficult spot that South Korea will be in if somehow China has a vaccine out first and they're promising to, you know, share this vaccine with other countries.

Mark Lippert: And last question before I go back to the Congressman. Your thoughts – you mentioned it – your thoughts on the proposal by President Moon at the United Nations for this multilateral Northeast Asia regime to deal with global health issues.

Sue Mi Terry: Well, you know, to be fair, you know, this is – I think this is right. I mean, you know, South Korea is trying to make multilateral efforts. The United States has not. President Trump might not be happy about it, but I don't think this is our place to say. I think South Korea, you know, is trying to do – I think part of the reason for involving North Korea is because they're trying to make an effort to improve relationship with North Korea. And in terms of China, it's a regional collaboration, and they also have Japan involved. So I think it's – you know, I don't think there's anything we need to be concerned about. I think this is the right thing, for President Moon to try multilateral efforts regionally.

Mark Lippert: OK. Got it, Sue. Great analysis, as always.

Let me come back to the congressman for his take. Congressman, you just heard the analysis from Sue, what the South Koreans are doing both domestically, internationally, and multilaterally. And as we said at the outset, you're a medical doctor, decades of experience. You also served in a public official capacity as the medical examiner of Sacramento County, if I'm not mistaken.

So two questions: Anything to add on what the South Koreans are doing in terms in response? And your comments on the pandemic and its impacts here in the United States, both in terms of public health and economic recovery?

Rep. Ami Bera: You know, the South Koreans should be very proud of their quick and rapid response. You know, it wasn't politicized. The majority of the population did the right thing and came together as a country to really bring the caseload down those incredibly low levels. And, yeah, this is a virus, so you are going to have peaks and valleys, but the fact that when you have clusters going up and cases going up, the South Koreans will come together again, you know, to tamp things down. And you know, again, I think they should be proud. You know, we're – early on when we had real testing issues where we had a lack of PPE. The South Koreans, you know, really did send a lot of equipment to the United States, and certainly to my home state of California. And that's what friends do. They work together.

And, you know, contrast that with – you know, Dr. Terry was talking about, you know, caseloads below 1,000. And yesterday we had 40,000 new cases here in the United States. So we're a far ways away from getting cases to where they need to be. You know, from the U.S. perspective I get asked often, it's, like, what happened in the wealthiest country in the world that has some of the best health care resources. And it really was an issue of politics, that, you know, President Trump made a decision to politicize the virus.

And, you know, things like face coverings, face masks, that, you know, I think many of the Asian countries where, you know, there's no cultural stigma to



wearing a face covering – you know, that often is part of routine life. We know how from a medical perspective that that's one of the best tools we have in, you know, reducing transmission of the virus. And, you know, the fact that that's still politicized right now, that you still see, you know, President Trump holding these big rallies where people are close together, not wearing facemasks, you know, that's how, you know, this virus is going to continue to spread.

And Dr. Terry also touched on, yeah, I think there will be a real different approach in a Biden administration. I think one of the first things that a President Biden will do is rejoin the World Health Organization, join the global vaccine effort, and, you know, start to work with organizations like Gavi, and CEPI. And, you know, understanding that this isn't just about vaccinating one country, the United States. This is about figuring out how we vaccinate 6-7 billion people around the world. Which is a huge logistical task. You know, all the vials, all the syringes, the global health workforce that would have to do it.

And there's no guarantee that a safe and effective vaccine will first be discovered in the United States. You know, it could be China. You know, there's multiple vaccines being tested around the world right, multiple trials going on. What we have to do, though, is – you know, when we get those safe and effective vaccines, we've got to share that data freely. We've got to marshal the world's manufacturing capacity to quickly ramp up that manufacturing. This is where you really do need a multilateral approach.

You know, I think what President Moon is doing is right for the region. And again, it's my hope that – you know, I don't sense that President Trump at this juncture changes how he thinks about the virus or a future vaccine. But I certainly do think that a President Biden would rejoin these multilateral and international efforts to stamp out this virus.

Mark Lippert:

Excellent analysis, Congressman. You know, you can see the decades of experience coming through with your medical background. I think I'm the only non-doctor on this show. Now, you're a medical doctor; those guys are Ph.Ds. But to take it one level and combine it with your subcommittee chairmanship on East Asia – and I would – you know, broader – more broadly, the Pacific, you see this pocket or bubble of fairly effective responses across a range of cultures, right? Taiwan, Vietnam, Korea, Japan, New Zealand. You know, what – why do you think East Asia has – and the Pacific – has been effective in their response? Any insights there?

And then at the same time – I know this is beyond your writ on the subcommittee but you're a full committee member as well – Europe. Backsliding in Europe, or at least their levels seem to be going up. The backsliding's probably not the appropriate term, but their levels seem to be on the – on the rise. What accounts for some of these differences in the region? And what lessons should we learn here in the U.S. from this?

Rep. Ami Bera:

Yeah, so we touched on one, the innate face coverings, face masks. There is not a cultural stigma in Asia to it. And many people already were wearing face coverings. Also the prior experience with SARS and MERS I think, you know, really did lead South Korea to make public health investments, understanding that they saw those. But there's – we're still learning quite a bit about COVID-19.

And you know, it is very possible that, given the proximity to where SARS and MERS really emerged, that there might be some innate level of immunity as well that already exists within some of the Asian populations and the Asian countries.

You know, it's quite remarkable, you know, watching what the case rates in China are, if we take that at face value and take that as accuracy. So you know, there is still a lot of science that suggests that prior exposure to other coronaviruses may give you some level of immunity so that even if you're exposed to COVID-19, your body's able to mount an immune response and keep it from, you know, becoming a critical infection, and allow you to get over it fairly quickly in an asymptomatic way.

But I also think the Asian countries didn't politicize this. And it became a political issue in the United States. And, you know, this is where – often we're proud of our individualism in the United States. This is a place where it really hurt us, where we didn't come together and say this is a virus that doesn't know if you're a Democrat or Republican, you know, what religion you worship, what your country of origin. It's a virus. So let's come together, let's let the scientists do the work, let's listen to the doctors. Instead, it became a political issue.

Mark Lippert: All right. Well, thanks, Congressman, for those insights. I'm going to come back to you in one second. Let me just bring Victor in. Victor, just your comments on this, and how should we be thinking about President Moon's initiative? How should we be thinking of this in terms of the geopolitics of Asia, Korea, and the world writ large, your specialty?

Victor Cha: So first let me say that, you know, I think Congressman Bera really sort of hit the four main reasons why Asia's – you know, it's the masking, it's the previous possible immunity. I had not thought of that. That's actually quite interesting. But it fits very well with this – you know, the experience that they had in Asia. You know, SARS and MERS for the most part did not come to the United States. I mean – I mean, the numbers were very small nationally compared to what we were seeing in Asia, and that's a very interesting point. And then the politics of it, absolutely.

I think what's – what like about Moon's initiative, which is sort of a version of Northeast Asia – a Northeast Asia regional response to the pandemic, is that somebody is trying to take the lead on a multilateral response. For all intents and purposes, there's only one country, I think, in the world that can do that effectively, and that's the United States, and we have abdicated that position very openly, you know, over the past – over the past year. But if the United States is not going to do it, someone has to do it. And if it's a middle power like Korea trying to bring others along, then why not, you know? That's a great thing.

All the literature told us before this pandemic hit that these sorts of transnational threats can only be dealt with multilaterally, right? They can only be dealt with multilaterally. And we've had the completely opposite response by all countries. But I think all countries take their lead from the big powers, and in this case they take their lead from the United States. There's always talk about how the United States has declined in the world, China's rising. But the reality is – and you know, others can agree or disagree – the reality is, is when we have a crisis like this that hits the world, countries instinctively look to the United

States to see what the U.S. is going to do and they're going to follow what the U.S. is going to do. So if we had taken a much more global, multilateral response, sharing information, talking about rejecting vaccine nationalism, right, and truly looking for a global response and sharing resources and a global vaccine effort, I think a lot of countries would have – would have joined along.

So more power to Korea if they're trying to play this role. I think it's a great initiative. And hopefully, other countries – and I certainly think in a Biden administration there would be that sort of stance when it came to try to – fashioning a multination response.

Mark Lippert:

All right. Great stuff, Victor.

Let me come back to the congressman for the last question on this topic. And Victor, you hit a series of notes that I think set up this question well. First, the transnational nature of this threat. Second, multilateral and you could argue regional responses are needed. And third, there are health and security dimensions to this. And so to the congressman, I know you've been thinking and the committee has been thinking a bit about biosecurity, both in terms of the U.S. but also its implications globally. And of course, this is a broadcast focused on the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. So could you talk a little bit about your thoughts on that bucket of issues that seems to stem from where we are today? What should we be thinking about in terms of biosecurity going forward, both in the United States and regionally in Northeast Asia, as well as the world?

Rep. Ami Bera:

No, absolutely. And that's the last bucket on my subcommittee, nonproliferation, and we're thinking about it in that context because, in truth, the bad actors are looking at what a virus has done to the global economy and to countries around the world. It's brought us to our knees in some ways. And it is much easier to get your hands on, you know, ways to manufacture a virus or genetically alter a virus, and that's something we have to take very seriously. You know, as opposed to it's hard to get nuclear technology and nuclear weaponry, but you know, creating biothreats is not relatively complicated.

You know, how we're thinking about it and I think how a Biden administration will be thinking about it, as we start to put the apparatus in place to defeat COVID-19 we should also be thinking about how we put the pieces in place to deter and detect the next pandemic because we know we'll see another pandemic at some point in the future, but also put pieces in place – programs like the PREDICT program, et cetera – where we're also putting an apparatus in place to do vital surveillance and to very quickly detect these potential threats.

So you know, there's a lot of convergence on, you know, pandemic preparedness and looking for naturally occurring pandemics, but then also doing the same biosurveillance. And as we build an apparatus to stamp out COVID-19, it does create a real, unique opportunity for the world to work together to – you know, to build and place the foundations to address biothreats.

Mark Lippert:

Yeah. And to your point, Congressman, I remember these articles in about 2017, if my memory serves me right, about Canadian researchers, \$100,000, and basically mail-order DNA and reconstituting a then-defunct pox virus. I mean, it underscores your point about the ease or, you know, the relative ease of getting

your hands on this and then I think what we've seen today in terms of a pandemic, the destructive nature of it.

Rep. Ami Bera: No, absolutely. And this – it's a global threat, so you know, one country or one bad actor may play with that virus but we've just seen in this interconnected world of ours how quickly a virus spreads across the entire planet.

Mark Lippert: No, absolutely, and you know, well put.

And you know, this is – I guess the final point is something that, you know, we talk a lot about or talk about in D.C., or at least from time to time as you've seen come up, but I think your point is there are resources, there are operational structures now in place to really put in place some measures going forward, and we should take advantage of this to erect these institutions and organizations that we need.

Rep. Ami Bera: Absolutely. We're going to spend billions of dollars to build the institutions and to defeat COVID-19. We should be thinking more broadly than just the current pandemic and our current situation as we build these organizations, alliances, and infrastructure.

Mark Lippert: All right. Thanks, Congressman. Excellent insights.

All right. We are down to about 10 minutes left. We are going to get to our more traditional topics here today that we previewed at the outset, and I'm going to come to Victor first. Victor, we have had these reports all over the news in South Korea, in Northeast Asia about this reporting, shooting death of a South Korean Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries official at sea apparently at the hands of the North Koreans. His body seems to be burned, doused in some sort of flammable material and burned. Can you just talk us through that issue, implications on North-South relations? And how do you think this unfolded in terms of North Korean decision-making? Take it anywhere you want, please.

Victor Cha: So it's, obviously, very – it's terrible news if it's true. This official was on a boat, I guess, that was patrolling waters, fishing waters. You know, as you know, there are contested fishing waters between the North and the South, and apparently a guy jumped off the boat and tried to defect to North Korea. He had been complaining about some personal issues and debt and things like that. And the North Koreans found him, and it sounds like they shot him and then they burned him in oil because they were worried that he might transmit the COVID virus.

So I think it speaks to a number of things. One is it's another manifestation of how absolutely paranoid the country is about COVID-19 virus spreading within the country because they have no public-health infrastructure whatsoever to contain it.

Second, very, very inconvenient – (laughs) – I would say, for the Moon government, given that President Moon had just given this big speech at the U.N. General Assembly where he talked about inter-Korean reconciliation and a peace initiative as sort of the door opener to making progress on denuclearization.

And then, you know, third, I think from the popular perspective of the Korean people, you know, I think they're probably – if you took the broad sweep of the Korean general public, they may be a step behind the Moon administration in terms of the forward-leaningness towards North Korea. And when you have stories like this, it certainly can't help in terms of public support for a full-on engagement strategy in the last – in the remaining year and a half or so of the Moon administration.

And of course, one has to empathize with Moon because, you know, he's seeing the United States and China at each other's – at each other's throat, literally, in the U.N. General Assembly speeches over COVID-19, and he's trying to push inter-Korean reconciliation, which is very difficult to do if the United States and China are not cooperating with each other. And so he's looking for different avenues to try to make progress, and then you get a story like this that pops up in the news which kind of – you know, kind of dampens out any efforts.

So you know, it's unfortunate, certainly for the individual. It's a bad situation for North – reflecting the bad situation in North Korea overall. Kim Jong-un probably had no role in this decision. It was probably standard operating procedure that's been handed down. But the news repercussions of it I'm sure have gotten to him and I would imagine he's not very happy with it.

Mark Lippert:

And just to follow up there, you recall that General Abrams on our last broadcast talked about the shoot-to-kill orders that had been issued by the North Korean high command, if you – to its border forces. Do you think that impacted the decision-making here? And I guess your answer probably would be yes because of the paranoia towards COVID that led to these orders in the first place. I guess my question is, what in terms of any fallout or repercussions on politics inside of Pyongyang, given that there's a lot of internal discussion – we've talked about this before – a lot of internal machinations? Any political fallout domestically in North Korea from this tragic episode?

Victor Cha:

Yeah, it's a good question. I don't know. I mean, in terms of domestic fallout within North Korea, I don't know. I mean, you know, maybe – you know, if the government is oriented towards trying to get something going with South Korea, then maybe they'll hang someone out to try for this. You know, they do that kind of thing, as we all know, in the past.

I mean, the political repercussions in South Korea I think are also interesting, because as General Abrams said – he had a pretty – he had a pretty sort of even, sort of steady view on inter-Korean relations going into our election season. He saw things as pretty calm. But when you have incidents like this that happen, you know, I'm sure it'll create anger among South Koreans. That'll put more pressure on the government. The Moon government has already said they're upset and angry with what North Korea did. So you know, you just never know what the political repercussions of this are going to be and the pressures it puts on the Moon government to say certain things, which the North may then feel compelled to respond to, right, and then all of a sudden a calm situation is no longer calm anymore.

Mark Lippert:

Got you. Excellent insights.

And let me just throw the same question to Sue, and then I'll go to the congressman for last words probably on a broader topic. But Sue, your insights on this.

Sue Mi Terry:

No, I agree with Victor and everything he said. I just think it's really unfortunate timing as President Moon just called for a permanent peace regime and peace declaration at the UNGA meeting and this multilateral cooperation on COVID, including North Korea. So you have to feel for the Moon administration. They are trying to make something happen with North Korea, not getting anywhere.

And I think this is something that we should be concerned where it comes to October surprise because a Trump-Kim summit is very unlikely to happen at this point. There's no movement towards that. In terms of North Korean provocation that we're waiting for, I don't think anything big is going to happen necessarily before the November election just because this is an unusual election year where Kim wants to see Trump reelected. So I think that provocation will come probably during the transition period. That's the time that we need to watch out for, between November 3<sup>rd</sup> and January 10<sup>th</sup>. And then particularly if Biden gets elected, provocation will come afterwards.

But in terms of October surprise, something like this is something that we didn't expect, right? So something can always happen unexpectedly that could escalate tensions, like we've seen. South Korean public is already outraged. You know, you couldn't just kill this guy and shoot him, you had to then douse him in oil and burn him and cremate? I mean, this – so I think this is a factor that we should consider when we're talking about October surprises.

Mark Lippert:

Yeah, great, great insights, Sue.

And just one follow up on that. You know, not – take this incident. Obviously, it's inflamed – rightly so – inflamed South Korean domestic public opinion, really put President Moon in a difficult position as you underscored at the outset. Do you – putting that aside for a moment, as hard as it is, do you think that there's any interest in the North Koreans in cooperating with a multilateral regime on COVID or public-health issues?

Sue Mi Terry:

I'm not sure if North Koreans are really in a position to do that. I understand President Moon's desire to do that and why he's doing that. The South Koreans are trying to do whatever, like just throwing everything to see what sticks with North Korea they are so eager to improve relationship.

I'm not sure. On one hand, you know, you see North Koreans being so paranoid about COVID, preventing COVID, and this is what happened. I'm not sure if necessarily that they would be able to – you know, or they were necessarily engaged, you know, in South Korea's efforts. You know, to really make progress with North Korea, as much as the Moon administration wants that to happen, really the things that – what the North Koreans are looking for is a movement from the United States, from Washington. And that's what's going to truly move the needle.

Mark Lippert:

Gotcha. Thank you, Sue. Great insights.

All right, just to close us out, Congressman, you know, in just a minute or so, any thoughts about where we might go from here in terms of the next couple of months, the U.S.-North Korea, we've got a new Japanese prime minister. You know, your thoughts on the region over the next couple of months, and what should we be looking out for, and what should we be prepared for in terms of policy responses here in the United States.

Rep. Ami Bera:

Yeah. So, obviously, the outcome of the presidential election 40 days from now will have a big impact on how we move. Taking – separating that aside, I really do think there's an opportunity to create new multilateral organizations that reflect the 21st century world. You know, we created organizations and alliances post-World War II that reflected that world, that will have served the world fairly well for the last 75 years. But we're in a different world today, where, you know, the Republic of Korea is a leading nation, you have Japan, you have Australia. And you have a rising China.

And for the region it's not the United States or China. You know, the countries in the region will have to coexist with both global powers. But I do think creating multilateral alliances is the best way for likeminded nations, democracies, you know, countries that value human rights and so forth, and want the rule of law. We're always going to compete with China, but let's do so under the rule of law. So I think you can create those alliances in the region that would hopefully nudge China in a better direction. We all want to avoid a kinetic confrontation with China. That's not in anyone's interest, particularly the countries in the region. So, you know, that's my hope going forward, that we can create these alliances.

Mark Lippert:

No, absolutely. Congressman, great stuff. Let me add my support to using the opportunity the crisis has brought to build stronger institutions that will help us promote peace and prosperity – not just in Korean, not just in Northeast Asia, but around the world going forward. Well said, well put.

And so with that, we are out of time, unfortunately. Congressman, just fantastic stuff. If the whole medical career or congressional career doesn't work out, you may be – you know, a permanent seat on The Capital Cable is yours. So we just thank you for your insights, your top-notch, top-shelf counsel, insights at the nexus of politics, foreign policy, and science, and medicine. And we are grateful for your insights here today. So thanks again for coming onto the show. Victor, Sue, as always, great stuff. We really appreciate it. Fantastic work. And we're looking forward to the next one.

Just, you know, on a somber note, I know we've had some unfortunate news to report today, but let me add to this – but not to add to this – but just to point out that the Kia Tigers ace, Aaron Brooks – this is news in Korea – his family was hurt in the United States in a traffic accident. Apparently a motorist ran through a red light. And Mr. Brooks had gone to the United States to take care of his family, departing the Kia Tigers. And obviously our thoughts and prayers are all with him.

But also, what's even notable here is that the entire Korea Tigers team, the entire KBO, and also Korean population writ large has rallied in support of this American. And, you know, it's just great to see the alliance at a people-to-people

level watching out for each other, taking care of each other. There are these moments where you just see that on a people-to-people level. And it is, on the one hand tragic and we want a speedy recovery, but also just important. And we really wish the family the best.

All right. With that let me just say our next guest, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Marc Knapper to come on the show in two weeks to talk about Secretary Pompeo's trip to Korea and Japan. Very timely. Mr. Knapper is, I think, our stalwart guest here, most appearances, he holds the record. And we'll be adding to that in two weeks.

So thanks to Kia, thanks to the congressman, thanks to Victor and Sue. It's been an insightful, face-paced, with a little bit of fun along the way, episode. And – (speaks in Korean) – see you in two weeks.

(END)