Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT
Online Event

"Exploring the Black Box of North Korea in a Globalized Context"

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FEATURING

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Victor Cha: Well, good morning, everybody. Good morning to our audience in the United States. Good evening to our audience in Korea. Welcome to our program today. At the CSIS Korea chair we hope that everyone, at least in the U.S., had a good long weekend, giving thanks as we enter the holiday season. My name is Victor Cha. I'm the senior vice president and Korea chair at CSIS and professor at Georgetown University. I'm also director of the Washington Research Consortium on Korea at CSIS, which you will learn a lot about in the next couple hours.

Today we will discuss issue related to North Korea in the context of our Washington Research Consortium on Korea. For those of you who are not familiar with this, this consortium is a five-year project conducted by CSIS with the support of the grant from the Academy of Korean Studies. The consortium's research involved nine scholars in the U.S. and Korea, who I will introduce in a moment. The consortium's research is focused on deciphering the so-called black box that is North Korea.

Our scholars used multidisciplinary research methods to gain new and unique insights about the country, the regime, and its people. The fields of study included social history, diplomatic history, strategy and national security, data collection and analysis, post-modern concepts of statehood and methods of state control, evolving concepts of citizenship and identity, domestic politics, and the impacts of markets, transnational networks, and new sources of information on society.

These areas of study constitute new approaches to addressing the issue of North Korea. And the work that has been and will continue to be produced in this consortium, which is an astounding five books and 15 journal articles, constitute a corpus of scholarly literature that looks at North Korea not as a static whole but as a highly complicated and interrelated set of challenges that pose problems from regional stakeholders and a globalized world. This multiyear research project started in 2016 and concludes at the end of this year. The consortium was made possible by CSIS and the support of the Korean Studies Promotion Service of the Academy of Korean Studies. And the scholars want to thank AKS for its support that allowed us to work on this project.

As I mentioned a minute ago, nine scholars composed – were composed of the project. I personally have been very happy to work with such a wonderful group of scholars and friends. We definitely had our challenges, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic limited our ability to convene as a group to review each other's work. We were unable to gather as a group, at a panel that we had featured at the ISA in Hawaii. But we made do with several sessions by Zoom instead. So now allow me to introduce the members of the consortium, who are really the stars of today's show.

Joining us for panel one is Bridget Coggins. She is an associate professor of political science at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Bridget is also a senior advisor to our CSIS NextGen Scholars Program with USC. John Delury is professor of Chinese Studies at Yonsei – at the Yonsei University Graduate School of International Studies, where he serves as chair of the program on international cooperation. He is also chair of the undergraduate program in international studies at Yonsei's international – I'm sorry – Yonsei's Underwood International College and founding director of the Yonsei Center of Oceania Studies. I did not know that last fact.

And then joining us as the third panelist is Seong-Ho Sheen. He is professor of international security at East Asia and former dean of the Office of International Affairs at Seoul National University. In addition to his role as professor he has advised various government organizations, including the South Korean Ministry of National Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Unification, and Committee on Foreign Affairs and Unification in the South Korean National Assembly.

I will introduce our guests for panel two later, but let me also say that members of the consortium who were unable to join us today due to various scheduling dilemmas include Michael Green, who is senior vice president for Asia and Japan Chair at CSIS and director of Asian studies at Georgetown; Van Jackson, who is a senior lecturer in international relations at the Victoria University of Wellington; and Katharine Moon, who is a professor of political science as the Wasserman chair of Asian studies at Wellesley. Normally we would have brought all of these scholars to Seoul for a wrap-up conference featuring the research that has been done but, alas, we are resigned to doing this by Zoom.

So that's just a short introduction. And you can see, we brought together scholars from Korea, from the United States, from as far as New Zealand, to work on various aspects related to the black box of North Korea. And so in our first session, for the first hour we're going to speak with Bridge Seong-Ho and John. And I would like to start by first asking you each to give a very brief summary of one piece of work. A number of you have written multiple works for this consortium, but if you could just give a brief summary of one piece of work that you're doing related to the project. It could be something that you've already finished or something that you're continuing to work on. Just a short summary so that our audience can get some sense of substantively of some of the work that you all have been doing.

So why don't we start with Bridget.

Bridget Coggins: OK. Hi. Thank you, Victor. And thank you for having us all to discuss this work. One of my favorite parts of being an academic is convening to talk

about work and share ideas. And so this has been incredibly frustrating, not to – not to be with everyone. And I very much hoped to be in Seoul right now. So I'm jealous of my co-panelists.

So in just a quick five minutes, my way of opening the black box that is North Korea, or kind of peering into that black box, is to look at innovative methods of finding out about North Korea for fundamentally important security questions. And especially regarding instability and stability in North Korea. So I have two different pieces of that. The first is how is North Korean weapons proliferation affected by its stability or instability – or, regime stability or insecurity?

And the second, which I'm going to talk about a bit more today in depth, is how will North Korean civilians respond to dramatic instability or regime insecurity in North Korea, if that is to occur? And so specifically, what would the scale – I'm interested in what the scale or pace and nature of human flight might be for civilians that are facing dire effects as a result of instability within North Korea. So who will cross borders into China and South Korea, and under what kind of instability scenarios?

So as you might all know, and you probably certainly all know, answering this question is critical to, number one, understanding how conflict dynamics might unfold on the Korean Peninsula, anticipating them. And it's also, I think, something that is less paid attention to is it's essential for governmental and nongovernmental humanitarian security questions, right? If it is going to be necessary to get a lot of aid to border zones. One of the things that we're finding with migration right now in and across Europe and near the post-Soviet space is how do you – how do you get that kind of critical infrastructure and planning in place so that you can anticipate humanitarian needs? So those are the two things that are critical for answering this question.

And in North Korea, we don't expect to have access to one of the most critical drivers of these kinds of human flight. And that is in its internal politics, right? And so the research results and estimates of flight to date have been very superficial or vague or based on very scant or limited evidence. And so in my research, my team and I have taken on the wealth of information that we do know about North Korea, population, demographics, geography, topography, its roads and rail systems, wealth, health and wellbeing, mobility, family size, borders natural or otherwise.

And with that information, we've built a dynamic computer model, what's called an agent-based model, that can simulate, using a number of different measures of stability and instability scenarios, what human flight might result – might be likely to result in those situations. And we built that model using special North Korean characteristics but using what we do know from

other cases of instability and civil war, and the kinds of things that motivate human flight in those situations – where they create refugees, where they create internally-displaced people. And we also leveraged past instances of instability, and notably the Arduous March period in the mid-1990s in North Korea, to help us to get a better grasp on population dynamics as well.

So what do we find? What are the – what are the top-line findings? Well, we find two different important things. And the first is that the scale and pace of a potential refugee problem on the North Korean border with China is much smaller than many of the point estimates to date that have been made. So we expect that China could very successfully and capably deal with any refugee problem that might result on its side of the border. The scale and pace of North Korean refugees should not be so dramatic and fast that it would be incapable.

The second thing that we find is that internal displacement would be a far larger problem than existing estimates, and especially prominent research by American think tanks, might have anticipated. That's because we have incorporated the internal dynamics and we know a bit more about how countries and populations, like the North Korean population, that has been inured to very difficult and precarious socioeconomic circumstances for a very long time, might react to regime instability. So that's larger than is typically estimated, if it is discussed at all when it comes to these kinds of refugee scenario planning. Thanks.

Dr. Cha: Great. Thanks, Bridget, for that very interesting, very interesting work. And I'm sure that we'll have some questions about that.

Why don't we go now to Professor Sheen Seong-Ho, who is joining us from South Korea? Both Sheen Seong-Ho and John are joining us from South Korea. So thank you for joining us so late. So, Seong-Ho.

Sheen Seong-Ho: So, yes. Good morning, in D.C. or in Washington, and good evening here in Seoul at the moment. First of all, it's good to be with you again and, yeah, I'm very sorry that you couldn't make it to Seoul, as we were planning, you know, just a couple months ago. But at the moment, given the situation with the new kind of virus over the world, maybe it's safe to be on this, you know, virtual event yet, I guess.

I've been working on this project, focusing on how to deal with, obviously, North Korea's nuclear, you know, weapons, and how to negotiate with North Korea, as a kind of security specialist. So I have two project, one that I have finished, already published in Korean journal with the finished analysis, and my second project I'm at the moment currently working on. Speaking of my already – the first one, that was trying to compare the U.S. coercive

diplomacy dealing with North Korea's Kim Jong-un between the Obama administration and the Trump administration.

And as you can see, these two presidents or administrations maybe give us a kind of best example of two very different approach in dealing with this same problem, under the very two different presidents. And in doing so, I tried to apply kind of very, you know, traditional theory of coercive diplomacy by Alexander George, and also more recent work done by Bruce Jentleson about the Libyan case, and tried to combine those two analytical framework of these two scholars into comparing how this Obama strategy versus Mr. Trump's strategy did or didn't work in dealing with Kim Jong-un and their negotiation, you know, strategy.

And to sum it up, in case of Obama we all know that his approach was based upon strategic patience versus Mr. Trump's kind of big deal approach in dealing with North Korea. And obviously we had very different kind of dynamics and outcome between these two American presidents and their counterpart, Kim Jong-un. And what was the difference? When it comes to strategic patience, we all know that basically for eight years of Obama president basically nothing happened between U.S. and North Korea. And North Korea continued with its nuclear weapon.

Whereas in case of Mr. Trump, quite interestingly he had two summits, if you will, maybe including the last meeting the Panmunjom, three meeting with Kim Jong-un. And they had a certain kind of agreement – basic agreement, at least in rhetoric, kind of denuclearizing relation plans by Kim Jong-un. So why is there such a different outcome or response from the North Korean regime?

And in that sense, I say, you know, first of all, there's obvious difference in their approach in dealing with him. And I use, like, for example, using the framework of Bruce Jentleson's proportionality, of acknowledging North Korean regime as a legitimate party for negotiation. And in that – both Obama and Trump in that had a kind of similar, you know, position when they said they didn't try to at least send a signal that they're out for the regime change, which was kind of under the George Bush administration.

The second frame – the criteria of – you know, when it comes to coercive credibility, that when United States, you know, said that there would be a price to pay if you don't do any – accept my demand. And Obama's strategic patience, which was a kind of a gradual turning the screws strategy, according to Alexander George, it didn't create enough kind of sense of urgency to the North Korean regime. Whereas Trump's early rhetoric of, you know, completely destroying North Korea, even using nuclear weapon and all kind of thing, created enough urgency to the Kim Jong-un regime, which raised America's credibility when it comes to its own threat of punishment.

The third criteria of reciprocity, which was talked about. It's not only the pressure. You also have to provide certain kind of reward, in other words the carrot and stick approach. In that criteria, again President Obama didn't, it seems like, provide enough incentive for Kim Jong-un to come to the negotiation table with a serious kind of incentive and intention. Whereas Mr. Trump, simply by suggesting and providing – actually meeting with Kim Jong-un himself was such a huge reward for Kim Jong-un regime, who was dying almost to – you know, seeking for U.S. kind of recognition of Kim Jong-un as a kind of worthy party of this – one of the most – I mean, the powerful nation, the leader of the United States meeting with him in person. That in and itself provided huge kind of incentive, maybe, for Kim Jong-un.

So that's how in combination of all this it created enough, you know, urgency at the same time incentive for Kim Jong-un to come out, at least to meet with Mr. Trump, which was not the case of President Obama. So these are kind of my conclusions. But at the end of the day, of course, all those two different approaches didn't work out. It didn't eventually accomplish denuclearization, you know, objective from the U.S. perspective. But anyway, those are the kind of some lesson and comparison that I tried to, you know, apply in analyzing. Maybe good to have some future implication for the Biden administration's approach to North Korea, as they try to begin another round of nuclear negotiation diplomacy with Pyongyang.

Let me stop here.

Dr. Cha: Great. Thank you, Seong-Ho. Thank you very much for telling us about some of the projects that you've been working on. The next one we'll go to for a research summary is John Delury. John.

John Delury: Yeah, well, thanks, Victor. And just to echo everyone else, this has been a great project. I've really treasured being part of this group. And we shift now from political science and international relations to history, which I guess was part of your purpose in gathering us together. As you said, a sort of multidisciplinary approach.

So I did a few pieces for the project, but the one maybe I'd start with, Victor, was – it's actually not out yet. So this is – this is a teaser here. Everyone can race off to the website of the Journal of Cold War Studies and keep updating until the article drops. But I was really intrigued. Obviously, my background is in China, and I've sort of come to North Korea via China. So I use this as an opportunity to dig deeper into that relationship. In a way, it's kind of putting the black box next to the gray box and see what happens.

And so it's a sort of classic diplomatic history piece, where the anchor of it is a moment really in 1980 where there's this interesting contradiction that I

saw between what was happening in China, which is going through the post-Mao transition into the Deng area. And that summer of 1980, Deng Xiaoping unleashes this sort of small campaign against feudalism. And so that becomes one of the buzzwords of the year – of combatting feudalism. This came up recently because as part of that campaign there was the constitutional revision that set the term limits on the Chinese presidency, which of course Xi Jinping got rid of 2018.

So that was a very interesting point to look more deeply into, particularly because of the contradiction formed with later in that year, October, at the 6th Korean Workers Party Congress where essentially Kim Il-sung coronates his son, Kim Jong-il, as sort of the ultimate act of feudalism. So it was that ideological contradiction that I wanted to look at and sort of probe the tensions between China and North Korea.

And I think, you know, what I was trying to do – although it's a straight history approach – I think part of my motivation was, having observed, as we all did, the pretty extraordinary open tensions of 2017 between Kim Jong-un and Xi Jinping, I wanted to sort of take a historical baseline measure and look at an earlier moment of fairly intense tensions, and to just sort of, in my own mind, get a better understanding of – you know, of how to contextualize what we see more recently.

And in terms of methodology, what I ended up doing – again, this is sort of the black box or two black box approach. I relied primarily on the state media reports coming out of – simultaneously out of Pyongyang and Beijing, and would – and obviously, these are tightly controlled, especially on a topic like this, state media outlets. And that actually gave me the opportunity to look for discrepancies in terms of the reporting on the Chinese side versus the North Korean side. And so, you know, any delays or differences, things mentioned in Rodong Sinmun and not mentioned in Renmin Ribao and the People's Daily and vice versa, I sort of jumped on those and tried to develop an interpretation basically out of the gaps in the reporting.

And lastly, I would say, you know, as a historian you don't really have to prove anything. There's no end. Things just happen and you try to figure out what happened. So that really was at the end of the day what it was about, that research. But I guess I would say, if I tried to draw a broader conclusion, what I saw, which I do think is a pattern in that very peculiar relationship, is that, you know, you could see these tensions. If you know, especially, how to read the state media. I don't think I was inventing it. They're there. They were not as out in the open as 2017, so I do think it shows how bad the relationship was in 2017.

But the other thing is what I couldn't find – and it's possible it's hidden in the archives – I couldn't find evidence of kind of resolving the tension. Instead, it

was more like Deng Xiaoping and the leadership in China, and he was grooming his successors. And then Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and the North Korean leadership, they just sort of absorbed these tensions and grit their teeth and moved on to sort of the next set of tensions. So what I couldn't see was resolution or kind of learning, growing.

And to me, you know, that speaks to the way in which that alliance – I do think it's an alliance relationship – is a very tension one, and one without a lot of growth. But that also, in a way, has this strange resilience. It can absorb a tension that maybe we would expect would break apart other alliance relationships. So to me, that was – that was the takeaway, if there's any.

Dr. Cha: Great. Thanks, John. So terrific summary. I know that all of you are doing different and a number of reports for the project, but thanks for summarizing some of them. All of you in some respects with your projects are dealing with questions of North Korean resilience – whether it's domestic resilience, whether it's resilience with regard to the relationship with China, historically or currently. So I wanted to shift the conversation to looking at questions of North Korean stability in 2021, and how you assess that these days.

I know that, John, in some of your – in addition to the Journal of Cold War History project, you've also written some for Asian Survey, the year ender or the beginning of the year Asian Survey pieces on North Korea in 2020, North Korea in 2021. I don't know if you're doing North Korea in 2022. But if you were to write something now, or maybe you've already thought about this, what do you think would be the main story if we talked about North Korea in 2021?

Dr. Delury: Thanks, Victor. That's a great question. And, you know, very briefly, on those, I did do two. The two was enough. I retired. But it was a great exercise. Those are wonderful. Very – I've used those before, they're very useful, those year enders that Asian Survey does for many countries in the region. And so I really enjoyed doing those as kind of practice. You know, what was important in 2019 and in 2020? And those were relatively quiet years.

I'm glad I didn't have to do 2017 and 2018. It was – it was in a way easier, although by 2020 – and this gets to your question – it was getting hard to figure out what to say because it was getting so quiet. And our sources of information, which are – again, to the black box title of or project – you know, our sources are always, of course, highly constrained and limited. But even that limited pool was really drying up.

You know, things like a diplomatic community, NGO community, humanitarian groups who certainly I think we all take opportunities we can to chat with folks off the record, or whatever, or read things that are written up. And you do get some sense of how things are going on the ground. Obviously, there's been so much interest from the outside to understand where is North Korea with COVID? You know, which basically I'm waiting for the expert who really knows. I haven't found anyone who actually knows. We have a lot of educated guesswork and that kind of thing.

So by the end of 2020, and I think is probably what I'd be writing about and grappling with now, is almost a meta article about this issue of the black box, you know, and how under these conditions you actually learn to appreciate the sources you do have in quote/unquote "normal times," before COVID, when there were more defectors coming out and going back in, or you had more of an information flow with groups here, you had the diplomatic community, NGO community. And that's essentially all gone. So that's probably the – I have a feeling, you know, the title of the piece would be something epistemological.

Whereas the other one – in previous years I did feel I could draw some straight, you know, descriptions of – obviously in 2020 the focus – I called the piece in search of health and power, because of the all-consuming focus on combatting COVID. You know, there was no pretense that it doesn't exist. North Korea was one of the – maybe the first country, even arguably before China, to seal its border and treat it with extreme seriousness. So that was the – you know, the central issue, really, in 2020. And I think it would be much harder to try and do justice to this year.

Dr. Cha: Great. Thanks. Thanks, John.

Let me go now to Dr. Coggins and ask you, Bridget, very interesting research, this project that you've done trying to map and predict what movement would look like in North Korea in the event of some sort of instability. If I would – if we take that question more – and scope it out even more broadly, what would be the indicators based on your research with regard to whether there was actual instability in the regime. You said that we wouldn't see the sorts of flows outside of the country into China, but where there would be a lot of movement would be inside the country. And so would that be, like, the primary indicator? Or how would you look at this whole question of instability, based on the research you've done?

Dr. Coggins: Thanks, Victor. I think that one of the – one of the things that has come to me – maybe too gradually – but one of the things that has come to me in doing work on North Korea is something that you and your team at CSIS, using satellite imagery and Dr. Chestnut Greitens and some of the work that she's doing on kind of what kind of signals are there that the North Korean regime

does not control? What can we look at that is data that is not produced by North Korea itself? Because there are so many ways in which things are controlled within the North Korean state.

And when it comes to international relations data, external data, we're almost always relying on the state. And in cases where we're not relying on the state to give us data, we're relying on nongovernmental organizations and third-party institutions that in the North Korean case are not active or, in this most recent couple of years, have been specifically pushed out of the country or barred from reentering the country, right? And so I think that one of the things that we would want to look at to know whether or not there is a significant amount of regime stability is really is there – are we starting to see uncontrolled population movement within the country in a way that we hadn't before?

As you know, movement within the country is also very closely restricted and regulated. And so if we did start to see population movement that was unanticipated and in a more – or, less systematic way than what we might expect, or some policy of regime itself, then I would say that that would be a good external indicator that's not controlled by the Kim regime itself that we could look to.

Dr. Cha: Interesting. In terms of internal movement, what did your model show in terms of how – was the movement moving – was it moving to the big cities? Or what sort of movement did you see – did you guys find?

Dr. Coggins: So one of the nice things about a computer simulation model is you can run a hundred or a thousand different scenarios. And so what we have started doing – and we will retain the model and we can use it to make it as complex as we like or change it as time goes on – but one of the things that we thought was very important is if there was conflict that was centered in Pyongyang, what would – what would happen to – as you know, much of the population is concentrated there. And the wealthy and powerful are also concentrated there.

And so what we looked at was a small conflict there, and compared that to something that was longer-term and larger. And what we saw in the small conflict, in the concentrated conflict, is people disperse, but then they return pretty much as soon as it's done, because it's the violence that drives people away. And that's what we see in other conflict scenarios in other places too, where there's, for example, a coup or a coup d'état or some other kind of palace intrigue.

In longer-term conflicts, what we saw was much longer-term displacement and movement at least from Pyongyang towards places like Dandong and movement toward the border with South Korea, the DMZ.

Dr. Cha: Interesting. Very interesting. OK, Seong-Ho, let's go to you. I mean, in your work on coercive diplomacy I wondered the extent to which you looked at this question that it's increasingly looking like we're going to be living with a nuclear North Korea for the foreseeable future, despite, you know, the stated policy of compete and irreversible denuclearization. First, one, what do you think about that? And, two, you know, what are the implications of this for diplomacy?

Dr. Sheen: Yes. In fact, that's kind of one of my – second part of the project that I'm working on. Because I ended with my first project as a conclusion, despite all these two different approach what they have is, yes, still North Korean nuclear program is going on, Kim Jong-un is getting his own nuclear weapon. And there should be no kind of, you know, wishful thinking about this. Like you said, there's, I think, kind of wide agreement, consensus among – both in Washington and Seoul and the other part of the world, that no matter what Kim Jong-un's – for Kim Jong-un to give up his nuclear weapon, that is one of the most important guarantee of his regime survival. It's not going to be easy, right? So we all know. So that's why you just raise that question, then how we deal with or live with this kind of, you know, semi-nuclear power of North Korea.

And then we need to, again, deep dive into what is their nuclear intention? At the same time, both capabilities. And obviously over the past years and decades – if not decades, there has been some – lots of research about North Korea's nuclear intention, or their capability as they test so many nuclear weapons, at the same time missile, and all those things. And I found that there was kind of too much of a wide variety of assessment from very much kind of North Korea has all kinds of this nuclear weapon capability and they can threaten the United States, hitting Washington, D.C. and all those, you know, major cities in the United – with its ICBM capability.

But those – I mean, you have to always think about the worst-case scenario, but still there's a kind of little bit of too much of overinterpretation of North Korea's nuclear capability. Yet, at the same time we should not underestimate their, you know, weapon capability or provocative intentions. So we need to find a kind of balance in between. So that's why I'm trying to work with the kind of connection between their real intention and their weapon capability, including all those missile capability, and try to have a more realistic assessment first. And then we can come up with how to deter or deal with those – North Korea's weapon capability.

And, I mean, there is, I know, lots of debate going on about this is really for the mainly – for the deterrence purpose or this for also very aggressive coercive purpose. And based on those different assessment, you need – there is also a different kind of response or suggestion about how to deal

with those, what is the best deterrence strategy against North Korea's nuclear weapon capability. But in recently – especially given South Korea's ongoing presidential campaign, there is an interesting debate coming out within South Korea, saying that: Can we really trust U.S. extended deterrence against this increasing North Korea's nuclear capability?

And one of the extreme, you know, kind of wild case scenario among some of those Korean politicians, for example, is that maybe South Korea need to develop our own nuclear capability. I think that's a kind of very dangerous kind of area that, you know, we could fall into if we emphasize too much about a kind of capability or we overestimate North Korea's nuclear capability or intention. So this is a kind of – my second one, trying to assess how to strike a balance between North Korea's, you know, rhetoric and their nuclear intention and their real capability. That's kind of what I've been working on.

But I guess, going back to your first question, I guess the Biden administration, you know, came up with kind of the pragmatically calibrated approach to North Korea. What that is, how to deal with North Korea. And I think eventually they have to find some way in between Obama and Trump's approach. But bottom line is, they need to talk to Kim Jong-un again.

Dr. Cha: Thanks. Thanks, Seong-Ho. You mentioned the South Korean elections and politicians being among the people where we've heard this talk about questions of U.S. extended deterrence, given the unlikely scenario that North Korea will denuclearize anytime soon. Is there any data on the extent to which that view is – where that sits on the political spectrum? And has that changed over time? Because, you know, I know there are certain people that that view had been associated with, but I guess my question is has that – has it moved – is it still isolated to that particular pocket of the South Korean political spectrum, or has that changed?

Dr. Sheen: Yes, one thing is that, you know, among these two presidents or candidates or camp, quite ironically, the opposition party, which traditionally is for more – for U.S.-ROK alliance and conservative faction. These are the camp that there is voices for kind of – such a kind of South Korea's nuclear, you know, armament. But the governing party candidate, or current government, the liberal progressive group of Korean, you know, part of the political spectrum, they tend to say, no, no, no, we shouldn't go to that dangerous path. We should still try to, you know, nuclear negotiation and all kind of thing.

But at the same time, I guess, even among those conservatives, I think those who are, you know, telling about South Korea's nuclear weapon development still remains to be very minor voices. But at the same time, with this nuclear negotiation between the U.S. and North is not going

anywhere, a complete impasse, and while at the same time there's a kind of public awareness about growing North Korea's nuclear capability, there's a – you know, one of the poll in recent poll done by the ASEAN Institute, a think tank in Korea, they said that 70 percent of South Korean public say that maybe we should develop our own nuclear weapon capability.

Of course, it fluctuates. When there's a better inter-Korean relation or better, you know, dialogue, conversation between U.S. and North, those support for kind of nuclear armament goes down, like, 50 percent or 40 percent. But at the same time, if really nothing happens in this nuclear negotiation front, obviously the pressure for kind of – both for Korean public and politician to do something about this North Korean nuclear program will build up. And who knows, in some day you may have a very really serious debate about, you know, South Korea.

But at the same time, those people are also talking about, you know, redeployment of U.S. tactical nuclear weapon into South Korea, or nuclear core sharing. So there is a different debate going on at the moment, but that debate is happening in Korea right now.

Dr. Cha: Great. Thanks, Seong-Ho.

Let me go to John and step back from the question of extended deterrence and discussions of nuclearization in South Korea to more broadly the Moon government's record. I mean, you live in Seoul. You know, you're one of the leading public commentators on this. I mean, how would you assess the Moon government is – now we're entering December. They've got a few months left in office. You know, five years of really intense efforts with North Korea, arguably their most important priority. Some might say even more important than domestic issues, or at least the view of some in South Korea. I mean, how would you assess the overall record, given the effort that's been put in? What accomplishments were made and, you know, how would you – as a professor, how would you grade the policy?

Dr. Delury: Well, now that everything is online, you know, my whole theory of grading has changed. So I might not give a grade. It's a great question. It's very hard when you're still in the middle of it. I do think about that. I think about how will historians in 10, 20, 30 years look back on the Moon years. I mean, living through it now, my guess is it's going to be about COVID, and pretty skillfully – not necessarily Moon himself, but making the right decisions in terms of empowering the right people and having an administrative state that can handle it and a society that makes good decisions. So I sort of think that's probably actually going to be what it's mostly about, even though that's not really what we talk about. it's sort of assumed, yeah, they've done a good job with that.

But on North Korea, Victor, you know, I think that we all lived through 2017. Moon played his part. And I think he'll get credit for helping. I think it was Kim Jong-un more. But Moon Jae-in clearly played, in my view, a catalyst role in turning things – you know, using Pyeongchang Olympics, giving Trump the space to do what he wanted to do, which was to directly engage. Which, in my view, was the right move. So Moon was instrumental in kind of that whole shift. And things were getting pretty scary, as we all know, late 2017. And so I think history will be charitable there.

2018, obviously hopes got really high, and the process then fell apart after basically a year – not even a full calendar year. And since then, Moon has clearly tried to, you know, claw some way back to it. I think at this point he's hoping – the moonshot is one last summit. And actually, I would not at all count that off. You know, the possibility – discount the possibility of that. But that, of course, won't achieve anything in its substance. So, you know, I think the answer – this is how history often works – a lot of the answer to how Moon is judged is going to depend on who wins the election in March, and where things go from there. And that's a whole black box. You can barely – I can't follow what the two main candidates are saying. And so that's very hard to predict.

You know, so I think if either of the candidates kind of build on the legacy of 2018, of the good work they did with the CMA, you know, the confidence building, the sort of in the weeds pragmatic stuff, then I think it will go down to Moon's credit. But if things go in a different way, you know, it gets harder to assess. So, yeah, I think the past may depend on the future.

Dr. Cha: Spoken like a true historian. (Laughter.)

Dr. Delury: Not answering the question. (Laughter.)

Dr. Cha: No, that's actually insightful. We've got some questions from the audience that I'd like to see if we can get to. And the first one I'd like to go to is one that's for Dr. Coggins. And it's from Bangladesh. This is what's so great about Zoom.

And the question for Bridget is: Thank you for your insightful presentation. Do you think that in the event of an exodus of North Korean refugees into China the Xi Jinping government is likely to treat these displaced people harshly?

Dr. Coggins: I think yes. I mean, and the reason why I think so is their demonstrated treatment of so-called North Korean defectors harshly. I think that unless they are – unless their regime is convinced that treating them in some other way is a more successful way of managing both the kind of real problem – real humanitarian and security problems that would come along the border,

but also the alliance relationship with its most problematic ally – unless it's convinced that there are other ways of more successfully dealing with those two issues I think that the result is likely to be more of the same.

And I think that that's tragic and horrible for the North Korean population, who is, you know, number one, already very much struggling in terms of, you know, health and society and politics as a result of a regime that many, if not the vast majority of them, did not choose. And also given a conflict environment, those needs and requirements would be all the more acute for that population. And so I think that for all of us in the international community that talk about human rights in North Korea, and talk about the wellbeing of North Koreans when we're talking about why more sanctions are important, for example, or holding fast on sanctions is important, we should also at least – at the very least – simultaneously be making real and concrete humanitarian capacity plans for these populations, and trying very ardently to reach these people, who are at the – at the moment beyond our help.

Dr. Cha: Thanks. Bridget, just a quick follow up. You mentioned that – so you can – in this model that you've developed you can run different scenarios. And you addressed one of them earlier, which was some sort of conflict inside of Pyongyang. Is there another that you can give us an example of that you had interesting findings from? Another type of scenario that you ran in the model?

Dr. Coggins: So the biggest change – I think the biggest and most interesting shift that we saw in refugee and displacement movement came with whether or not the DMZ was open or closed. So it has been the case that China has been hardening somewhat its border with North Korea over the – over the past decade and a half. And that will remain kind of closed, but only relatively closed, depending upon whether or not it's at a – at a river crossing or that sort of thing. There are more porous and less porous situations.

But the DMZ is a very, very hard border. And it's a very militarized border. And it's not just on land. It's even out into sea, as we well know. But there are three crossing points that are at least potential crossing points where people could cross and pass into South Korea, were there the capacity and the political will to accept people crossing the borders in large numbers. The population of South Korea – or, of South Korea is concentrated in the North. And the population of North Korea is concentrated towards the South. And so that makes it a very interesting political question, but also humanitarian capacity planning for Seoul.

Do you attempt to open the borders in order to allow refugees or really Koreans, right, to pass into the – into the cities in the North or not? And what we see is that the population pretty quickly figures out over time in this

– in these scenarios that there are border crossings that are open and that the especially long journey from the east coast, maybe, to the – to the west coast, where in Jilin and Dandong becomes much more possible to move to South Korea, just across the DMZ for those people. And so we do see larger numbers siphon in that direction.

Dr. Cha: Thanks. Very interesting stuff.

Next question – we have time maybe for one more question. And this one isn't directed to anybody in particular, but I think it should go to Seong-Ho. And that is – the question is: How would you discuss the high degree of attention the Trump administration assigned to summit meetings with North Korea and the lack of public attention to North Korean relations by the Biden administration? What conclusions do you draw regarding the appropriate U.S. policy towards the North?

Dr. Sheen: Yeah. I think that was a very important point that, you know, in dealing with North Korea, Kim Jong-un holds the key. Whether the situation is good or bad, he's the one in the strong position. He's the one who makes all the decisions. So I think U.S. need to recognize, which Mr. Trump did. At the same time, I know the American dilemma that we tried this but how can we trust his word and all kind of stuff. So we need to have a kind of, you know, concrete discussion about all the terms and condition about, you know, meeting, also certain nuclear negotiations, all that.

But that kind of approach alone will not work. Somehow the U.S. needs to find a way to connect with Kim Jong-un again, starting with maybe, you know, sending a more positive signal, try to recover some of the trust that Kim Jong-un, you know, had between Donald Trump. And I think in that sense still, Mr. Biden, you know, acknowledging the Singapore Summit agreement between Kim Jong-un and Trump about not only denuclearization but also normalizing U.S.-DPRK relation, along with, you know, peace regime in the Korean Peninsula was the right thing to do.

And I guess, going back to Dr. John Delury's point of, you know, maybe President Moon Jae-in at the moment, they are discussing end of war declaration and kinds of last-minute kind of effort to connect with North Korea again. Maybe U.S. needs to talk to South Korea about how to connect with Kim Jong-un in kind of close coordination between U.S. and South Korea.

Dr. Cha: Great. Thanks.

So I'm going to sneak in just one more question for Profession Coggins, which came in from Ewha University. And that is that: Bridget, you mentioned that it's important to look at information that – or, data that

North Korea does not control, such as NGO reports for research. However, as we currently don't have many eyes and ears on the ground due to the pandemic, what sources would you consider to be the most reliable for current research on North Korea?

Dr. Coggins: OK. This is a tough one. And I think that there are a number of different limitations to kind of how much – or, the kind of – maybe the depth and texture of the information that we're able to gather given the current conditions. But what I do think is important is – are a couple of things. The first is paying attention to things that we can see at a distance, right? Patterns and movements and external policies, or the results of external policies. The sort of ripple effects of things that we can see. And there are also creative strategies for data access that different researchers are using.

So for example, something like rice prices within gray markets, right, to see how the actual market is affected rather than the posted prices, right, which we all know are of very limited utility in telling us what the economic situation is within the country. I think that – I personally think too that it's important to look for what's not there, what's missing. So, for example, if it is the case that, given North Korea's political situation, that there is data that is really regularly produced for a particular reason with a particular bent in mind, to show that maybe people are healthy and doing very well.

We can see in the patterns over time the specific manipulation, if we can think about a known bias that might be cooked into those numbers, what is attempting to be communicated, or what needs to be downplayed versus up-played politically. And so I think that the best that we might be able to do with health and wellbeing in particular is to look at these kind of data forensic tools to try and kind of reason backward about what it is – what's trying to be communicated and what that might be hiding. Kind of what's not there, what's hidden underneath the numbers that we do have.

Dr. Cha: Thanks, Bridget. John, did you want to get in on this?

Dr. Delury: Yeah. Just really quickly, it's so interesting. I was really struck my Bridget's comment about looking for data that they don't control. And one thing that strikes me, I mean, I tend to stick more to traditional sources, the texts of the state. Like, in my research I guess you could say North Korea doesn't control Chinese state media and so finding discrepancies was one way to try and get at something that's going on. But another example that came to my mind listening to Bridget is even in Kim Jong-un's speeches – which I found I think was particularly in 2019, when I did the Asian Survey piece, were really quite interesting.

To sit there and sort of systematically read through his speeches over basically the full year. You actually hear him talking about things he can't

control and is quite frustrated by. Like, there was a lot of anger and frustration in the – these are, you know, by the publication of the state at the Politburo meetings and at his site visits. And so, you know, this issue of what hints of what can't be controlled can, I think, be found, fragments of it, in authoritative documents of the state, that are basically under the complete control of Kim Jong-un. But I'm very grateful to Bridget. It's a wonderful way for us to think about, you know, how, again, we crack open the black box a little bit.

Dr. Cha: Well, thanks. Well, one thing we can't control is time. (Laughter.) And unfortunately, we're out of it. This was a really fantastic hour's discussion on all the very interesting research that you guys have been doing. So I want to thank you all for joining us this morning – Dr. Bridget Coggins, Dr. John Delury, Dr. Sheen Seong-Ho. Thank you for joining us this morning. Thank you for participating in the consortium. And we wish you the best of luck with the rest of your research. So, again, thank you from Boston and from Seoul.

We will now transition to the next panel. And joining us is our other – two other members of our – of our Washington consortium. Let me introduce them properly, if that's OK. So I will start with Dr. Sheena Chestnut Greitens, who is associate professor at the LBJ School of International Public Affairs at the University of Texas, Austin, as well as a faculty fellow with the Clements Center for National Security, and a distinguished scholar with the Strauss Center for International Security and Law. Dr. Greitens was an assistant professor of political science at the University of Missouri. And I have here that co-director of the University's Institute for Korean Studies, but I think you also founded the Institute for Korean Studies at Missouri. Yeah. Which is arguably more important than co-directing, so. (Laughs.)

And then also joining us actually from Manilla, if I'm correct – Andrew's still in Manilla, in the Philippines – is Andrew Yeo, who is professor of politics and director of the Asian Studies Center at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. Currently he's on a leave in Manilla in the Philippines. And as some of you – or maybe of you may know, he will also take up the reins as the new SK-Korea Foundation chair in Korea studies at the Brookings Institution's Center for East Asia Policy Studies.

So it's great to have both Dr. Chestnut Greitens and Dr. Yeo joining us for the second hour of the panel. So what we did before, the previous panel, was explain to the audience broadly what we did with this AKS grant and the different projects that people were working on. And I asked the previous group if they could just give us, you know, five to seven minutes about one of the projects that you've been working on under the grant, if that's OK, just so that people have some idea. I know that in both of your cases you wrote more than one piece for the – for the lab. So if I could go to Dr. Chestnut

Greitens first. If you could give us a little summary of some of the work that you've been doing, that would be great.

Sheena Chestnut Greitens: Yeah, absolutely. Well, first of all, thank you, Dr. Cha, for your leadership on this, to CSIS, and to the Academy of Korean Studies. This was just a terrific lab experience. And I really enjoyed the first panel, which I was able to listen to most of. And I think there are some interesting tie-ins to the things that Andrew and I might say today.

I did a couple of projects for the lab. One was looking at changes to the North Korea political economy and the rise of basically what we call market Leninism under North Korea. Which is – maybe we can get to a discussion of that when we talk a bit about Andrew's work on markets and state-society relations. But I piece that I wanted to really highlight and introduce if a forthcoming book with Cambridge in the Element series on East Asian society and politics. We're in the process of finalizing the manuscript now.

But the book really tries to look at – the title of it is "The Politics of the North Korean Diaspora." And it really looks at what has happened to North Koreans who have left the DPRK and who have now actually become globally distributed, which is a phenomenon that I encountered when I started doing some research on North Korea and on the North Korean economy, but as part of that research ended up encountering and having really interesting conversations with people who'd left North Korea who were not just in South Korea, but scattered around the world. The largest population of North Korean refugees and defectors is obviously in the ROK. But there are now small communities of North Korean refugees and defectors in the United States, in Canada, in the U.K., in Germany and France, and in Japan as well.

And so the book tries, first of all, just to describe what's happening, which is this global dispersion. This emergence of a North Korean diaspora, as opposed to the broader Korean global diaspora, has really been formed in the last 20 or so years. And what's interesting about this is we're used to thinking of diasporas in largely ethnic terms. But we find – but one of the interesting things that we found was that this group of North Koreans has pretty distinctive migration patterns, has a very distinct sense of political identity, and some unique ways of incorporating in the Western democracies, where a lot of these numbers of the diaspora have ended up.

And a lot of that is shaped by two things. First of all is the divided – the division of the Korean Peninsula, which has affected where North Koreans who want to leave North Korea can go, right? The availability of South Korean citizenship means many of them are not only allowed, but encouraged or, in some cases required, to go to South Korea. So the U.K. has a position now that because South Korea is an available durable solution for

North Koreans, that they must go there rather than claiming asylum or refugee status in the U.K.

It's not true everywhere. The United States has special legislation, which I know, Dr. Cha, you know very well, the North Korean Human Rights Act, that permits North Koreans who have not gone to South Korea first to resettle in the United States. And actually, just about a month ago Canada passed – made a decision that it would allow a trial program that is somewhat similar to allow North Koreans who've not gone to South Korea first to be sponsored for private resettlement in Canada. So very small-scale trial program but could potentially be expanded in the future.

And so the first fact that really shapes where this North Korean diaspora has gone is the division and the contested nature of citizenship on the Korean Peninsula. But the second factor that really affects members of the diaspora and how they think about North Korea is the fact that North Korea is one of the world's most closed, authoritarian regimes. And so the book manuscript goes through not only where people do go and how they incorporate in the Western democracies, where they're largely concentrated – again, outside of South Korea and Japan – but it also then looks at the North Korean regime and how it's attempted to manage the emergence of essentially a defector diaspora.

During the Cold War, North Korea was able to basically project a diaspora that was organized and sponsored and largely controlled by the state. It was a state-affiliated overseas presence. And what's happened since the 1990s is that an increasing number of North Koreans abroad are not sent there by the regime, and sort of don't remain there in order to achieve the goals or the purposes of the North Korean regime. They are either dissidents or people who've escaped for economic and political reasons.

And so that change in the nature of the diaspora, from about the mid-1990s to present, also means that the North Korean regime has changed how it relates to North Koreans abroad and engages in a lot more surveillance and attempts to discredit defectors who leave, particularly those who are outspoken on human rights advocacy, whether that's at the U.N. or before the United States Congress, or through civil society activism in South Korea with things like balloon launches or attempts to provide information to the people, family and friends, who are remaining in North Korea.

And in some cases, that's actually extended to state-sponsored or state-directed assassination and actual attempts to decapitate potential opposition and deter people who remain abroad from engaging in advocacy for human rights or trying to change the situation on the ground inside North Korea. And so the chapter outlines three different approaches that the North Korean regime has taken. One is simply to deter people from leaving at all.

The second is to discredit North Koreans who have left who are critical of the regime and its policies. And then third is to decapitate opposition or try to prevent the diaspora that exists from turning into an overseas opposition movement.

And there's a lot of discussion right now in diaspora studies and the study of migration about when and how diasporas can be an effective voice abroad for internal political change and authoritarian regimes. They actually – diaspora members did play a really important role in the Arab spring, but in many cases their roles in advocating for political change in their homeland depended on social media and internet connectivity that doesn't exist in the North Korean case. Right, the North Korean regime has so tightly controlled access to information and the ability of external actors to get information into North Korea. My guess would be that that was in part motivated by watching what happened in the Arab Spring and the catalyst that some of these overseas actors played in anti-regime mobilization.

We know that North Korea is actually thinking about – and I believe there was a report this summer that they were getting training from the Chinese Ministry of Public Security on how to handle unrest. So this looks like something that they're actively thinking and monitoring. And certainly their behavior toward the diaspora has become increasingly sort of activist in its patterns of surveillance and in trying to control what the members of the North Korean diaspora do as political advocates and activists.

So the book is really, first of all, trying just to document this phenomenon and document the experiences of these thousands of people who have chosen to leave North Korea and resettle both in the Korean Peninsula, where there's been a lot of great research already, but also now this more far-flung global community, about which there's been relatively little scholarship. And so the first goal is simply to lay out that this is happening, and then to think – you know, the project also wants to think a little bit about how this could affect the future of North Korea, the future of any plans for reunification, and what then global and international policies toward the DPRK should be.

And so I'll stop there. I'm happy to answer follow-up questions. But the book should be coming out sometime early next year, depending on how the COVID production process goes. There's been a little bit of uncertainty on that. And I had hoped the book would be out by now, but it's been a little bit of slow going, as we all adapt to the pandemic. So I really look forward to sharing it with everybody in its actual hard or electronic copy early next year. Thanks.

Dr. Cha: That's great. Thanks so much, Sheena. That sounds like a really fascinating – oops – lost my headset. That sounds like a really fascinating book. And like

you said, there isn't much literature on this at all, right? There's quite a bit of defector testimony inside of South Korea, and a number of books have been written based on that. But this is something that's very interesting.

Can I ask you just one quick follow-up question? You mentioned that Canada is experimenting a little bit with a resettlement effort. Is that – is that something that is being – how is that being done? Is that being done by NGO groups? Is there actual legislation, like in the United States?

Dr. Greitens: Yeah, it's a great question. So previously actually one of the largest communities of North Korean expatriates was in the greater Toronto area, and in Canada. And it turned out that most of those were onward migrants from South Korea. So a large number of that community had gone to South Korea first and then decided to move to Canada. And that was – the Canadian government initially said it was going to permit people who hadn't been to North Korea first to come, but not people who'd been to – I'm sorry – been to South Korea first, but not any others.

And then it actually tightened the decision. Ironically, that around the time that it was increasing its refugee cap for, you know, migrants or refugees from Syria and elsewhere, it actually – the Canadian immigration authorities determined that because there was this option of going to South Korea, North Koreans couldn't come to Canada at all. They just – they weren't going to be considered refugees because they had this alternate citizenship available to them. There's some tension, which the book goes into in more depth and tries to explain, between that and what the ROK government's position has been over time, but the result was that at the time, ironically, that it had the most sort of pro-immigrant, pro refugee rhetoric the Trudeau administration was issuing deportation notices to North Koreans in Canada.

And that was actually one of the things that sparked my interest in, you know, what on Earth is going on here, and what are the politics of this? Because that seemed like such an incongruous decision to me. And so it took about six years for civil society advocates and NGOs in Canada to work with the ministers of immigration, the immigration authorities, to get – there's a special measure under Canadian law where the minister of immigration can say: OK, these people don't meet the standard for refugees under standard Canadian law, but we're going to make an exception. And that exception has been used twice before in Canada's history to allow pilot, small-scale resettlement programs.

So HanVoice is the civil society organization, the NGO that is sponsoring the five North Korean families for private resettlement. So it requires private sponsorship. It requires an NGO to do much of the heavy lifting. And it's a pilot program. It's only five families in the next two years. But I know from talking to a lot of advocates and folks in that community that they're really

hoping the program will be successful and can then be made either permanent or institutionalized for a longer period of time. So it works under basically a special preexisting measure in Canadian law, but it requires a clear group-based determination by the minister of immigration. And that just happened recently. It was just announced last month.

And the other interesting part of it is that it is, in Canada's case, explicitly focused on women and children, which is – you know, both meets the priorities of the Trudeau government, which has this – a very feminist emphasis in its foreign policy and its human rights advocacy, but it's also a good match, frankly, for the North Korean refugee community, which is 70 to 80 percent female, depending on what year you look at it. But since it's a consistently female population these are often people who've been subject to some form of gender-based violence or trafficking, it actually is a policy that is sort of a good fit between the Canadian government's priorities and the needs of North Korean refugee populations.

So I think this was a case of pretty smart advocacy by the NGO community in Canada. It took six years. It was a long process. And having interviewed some of the folks who were involved in it, you know, I just commend them for their patience and determination in getting this through, because I know it wasn't easy. But I do think it's a potential model now that could be used in some other countries who have immigration systems a bit more like – more like Canada's, and less like the United States. So there are some similarities to the North Korean Human Rights Act, but the private sponsorship model in Canada is quite different, and potentially provides, you know, a different and a second model for other countries to copy, which I think is a good thing for the people of North Korea.

Dr. Cha: Thanks. Thanks. That's fascinating, fascinating stuff.

OK, now I'd like to go to Professor Andrew Yeo, SK-Brookings Korea Chair and professor at Catholic. Andrew, I know you've done a couple projects for the lab as well. Could you – would you like to sort of give our audience some insights into what you've been working on?

Andrew Yeo: Sure, Victor. Thanks. I just also wanted to say how delighted I am to be on this panel with you and Sheena, who's seen this project develop over the past few years. I know I've used Sheena as a sounding board multiple times. So that's one of the great things about this lab, that we all have this interest in North Korea and we can bounce off ideas off each other. I am also grateful to the Korea chair, yourself, Victor, and all those at CSIS, and also the Academy of Korean Studies for the logistical and financial support. So, again, my gratitude goes out there.

Now, in terms of the projects, you know, this project over the five years led to two academic articles, one which examined people to people engagement with North Korea, sadly almost none of which exists today because of the pandemic, and then the other article was a review essay which evaluated how we assess domestic change in North Korea. But like Sheena, I think I'll talk about the penultimate project, which was a short book published by Cambridge University Press earlier this year, and like Sheena it's through the Elements on East Asia society and politics series. So that's now available.

But in line with our project theme of understanding the black box of North Korea, the book was a way for me to organize my own thinking about the prospects for domestic change in North Korea, and more specifically the potential development of civil society. Now, in the early stages of the book, you know, I was much more focused on the civil society aspect, but it was clear that there isn't much in the way of an actual civil society and it was going to be a pretty short book. So I shifted direction a bit, so we're looking more now at how markets can shape state-society relations.

But back to this question about, you know, whether there's a change or not in North Korea, you know, on the one hand there seems to be little change. We see the Kim family dynasty has outlived almost ever current dictatorship in its 70-plus years of continuous rule. North Korea's still one of the poorest countries in the world. And it perennially ranks near the bottom of any index on political freedoms, on things like civil liberties, political liberties.

But on the other hand, we've heard fascinating accounts of rising markets, the emergence of new capitalists, and the existence of a post-famine generation who crave for more information about the outside world. So on one hand, it sounds like North Korea hasn't changed at all in the past two decades. But on the other hand, we do hear these stories, these anecdotes, about things that are changing on the ground.

Now, both narratives may actually be true. And the question of change may depend on what aspect of North Korea or which region of the country one is examining. So from a macro-level perspective, it may appear that little has changed about North Korea, but at a micro level, if we kind of go – if we go look at this from the bottom up there is some widespread consensus among North Korea experts about the significant role markets play in North Korea's economy and their importance to state and private actors. The formal and informal markets have become a permanent fixture in what is supposed to be a socialist state.

Now, what's up for debate is whether and to what degree markets and things like trade networks have altered state-society relations. Central here is whether expanding markets weaken authoritarian rule. And what's key to my argument is the question of authoritarian legitimacy and how well Kim

Jong-un manages to successfully co-opt markets into the regime's ideology. If the regime implements controlled economic measures, extracts rents, and subsumes the market economy into its ideology, the state will likely retain strong authoritarian control. Markets will be beholden to the state, providing the regime much-needed revenue, and thereby empowering rather than weakening the state.

But in a different hypothesis, or, you know, in contrast to that view where the state – you know, state is master over a society, if the regime fails to incorporate markets into its legitimating message as private actors build informal trust networks, share information, and collude with state bureaucrats, more fundamental changes in state-society relations are in order. As North Koreans become further dependent on markets for economic survival, the regime's authoritarian grip may weaken as gaps emerge between the regime's ideology and the actual experiences of North Koreans. If markets continue to shift power in favor of private market participants, while at the same time hollowing out the legitimacy of the state, we may begin to see signs of an emerging public sphere.

So those are my two connecting hypotheses. And, you know, I'll say more if you talk – if we talk more about the pandemic, but for the most part I think markets are very difficult to control. We see the state try to walk back markets regulate, rein in the markets. But, you know, they – most of the time – almost every time they've failed. And so markets have reemerged. But right now, we're in a period where just because of the pandemic there's just not a lot of flow of goods coming across the border. And so the situation looks pretty grim right now, but in the longer term I am optimistic that markets will return and we may see some of these dynamics playing out again. You know, we don't know how long it will be before North Korea can shake off the effects of this pandemic, but I am more hopeful, at least if we think in the longer term.

Dr. Cha: Great. Thanks, Andrew. Can I ask you – and we will talk about the pandemic and its impact. Can I ask you one follow-up question? Which is, so as you know, we've collected a bunch of data at CSIS with regard to formal markets – the, whatever it is, 436 markets, at least as of 2016, five years ago, that exist in North Korea. In this study that you've done and the research have you done, have you come across any good data about informal markets in North Korea? I know it's very hard to come by, but anything that you've learned about the informal markets of North Korea?

Dr. Yeo: Yeah. Most of the information on informal markets, of course, comes from defectors as well too. And it's hard to – now, you – the project that you're referring to that CSIS had done, I remember seeing the coordinates on maps of where these market locations are. And there are other studies that have looked at that. But unfortunately, because of, you know, informal markets,

they can be anything from just people selling things within their village neighborhood to just on the streets.

I haven't seen anything as systematic, but certainly there are anecdotes and there is evidence of markets – informal markets operating in certain cities, in certain regions. So along the border regions, this is where informal markets are more prevalent. So you've seen – we've seen more anecdotal information rather than systematic, but on the whole we definitely know that informal markets have grown and taken up a larger share of the North Korean economy.

Dr. Cha: And then the other question, quickly, is do we know if – so we know the government taxes the formal markets. Do we know if they are able to tax informal markets?

Dr. Yeo: So I was reading – you know, I was reviewing a paper. And someone mentioned that North Korea can't tax the markets because – the informal markets, because it would be a recognition that it's a market economy and that there are prices that are actually fixed. So, you know, we sometimes call with the formal markets when they, you know, make vendors pay – you know, they have to pay a fee, they have to pay a certain, maybe, a percentage of whatever they make in their profits to the state. And, you know, we refer to that to a tax, but that's technically not a tax. It's more of a fee.

On the informal markets, no, there isn't – there isn't a tax, per se. But if you think of bribery as a form of tax, you know, something of bribes as just – that's the cost of doing business in North Korea. So oftentimes if you're doing these informal markets, you have to pay off – maybe you have to pay off border guards, or maybe you have to pay off a security official to be able to sell your goods. And some will say that that is – that's the cost of doing business. So you might refer to that as a tax, but there isn't a tax per se that the state can actually impose with these informal markets, at least nothing systematic.

Dr. Cha: Great. Thanks. Sheena, you had a comment in the chat. Do you want to speak to that for the audience's benefit? Yeah.

Dr. Greitens: Sure. So this gets to the question – and Andrew and I have had lots of conversations about what's going on in state-society relations as the North Korean regime tries to regulate markets. And so one the things I think is really interesting, and I just wanted to pick up on this distinction between the informal and the formal market, is a lot of the stories that we've seen lately about repression of market activity are actually explicitly directed at these informal, or grasshopper, markets.

And part of – part of our thinking in this paper that I worked on on market Leninism picks up and very much builds on Andrew's work, to argue that part of what the regime strategy is, right? So Andrew very much looks at this from the perspective of the state society, of civil society, of the – you know, the civilians who are trying, and citizens who are trying to navigate these constraints imposed by the regime. If you look at the regime's policies, it looks a bit like what the North Korean regime is trying to do is to force all – shut down all of the informal market activity, which is more genuine, spontaneous free market activity, and force it into these regime-controlled markets where it can be regulated so that – and taxed, because that's an effective way of siphoning revenue upward for the North Korean regime.

But it also lets them keep closer control of their own agents, who are the people who have been engaged in bribery, coercion, and sometimes abuse of this fee system with the informal markets. So we see some of this as an effort to shift the locus of market activity from the informal markets that are outside regime control to this area where they can be regulated and taxed by the regime. And as Andrew's work, I think, really carefully points out, that has pretty different effects on state-society relations, if the markets are formal versus informal. And the potential for markets then to be a politically liberating force gets smaller if the regime is able to shift people into these more formal regime-controlled market settings. So it's just – it's a part of Andrew's work that I think is really interesting and important, and that we're seeing that distinction, especially under COVID, play out in real time.

Dr. Cha: Well, I mean, let's talk about that then. I mean, the first is just the theme that resonates from the last panel and then this panel as well is, you know, a lot of the work about understanding North Korea as a black box is, you know, identifying, you know, what are the – what are the things that the government can control, what they cannot control, and how they try to wrest control over things that they cannot control. So, you know, this is clearly one of the areas. The other, which we haven't talked about in the context of the work in this project but that all of you know well, is, you know, the contest that's taking place on the communications technology side, right, between North Korean citizens who are gaining more access to cellphones and SMS texting, and then the government's use of that technology to actually try to control more and monitor more what their citizens – what their citizens are doing.

But can we move to the – because both of you have sort of skirted around it, but let's talk about sort of the impact of the pandemic and what it's done. I guess the question is what it's done to markets, and how it's impacted the government's strategy on markets, how it's impacted society. So, I don't know, who would like to go – who would like to go first?

Dr. Yeo: I can take that first, Sheena, if you don't mind. So there was – you know, there was much greater optimism about markets empowering society in the mid-20 – you know, early-mid 2010s, when money was flowing, when the donjus, you know, the money masters and the new capitalists were thriving in a pre-pandemic, you know, pre-heavy sanctions era. But, you know, North Korean watchers, myself included have – you know, I was more optimistic in the longer term, you know, post-pandemic. But, you know, there's also less optimism now just about things like societal change or economic change. And, you know, it stems from almost two years of heavy border lockdowns. And, you know, we've also seen the regime crackdown on the spread of, you know, capitalists and outside cultural influence. There's been a tightening of ideological indoctrination as well too.

So what that means for the markets is that, you know, there's just a lot less goods, money that's flowing, that's circulating in North Korea. And even things like, you know, goods for food production – like fertilizer, seeds, you know, grain – you know, there's a shortage of this. And, you know, right now there's a humanitarian crisis that's ongoing in North Korea. And, yeah, so when you talk about markets, you know, the pandemic itself, it's – the people are suffering. But as, I think, John had mentioned – John Delury had mentioned in the first panel, you know, these are also things that Kim Jong-un has confessed that he doesn't have control over. And it must be frustrating for the leadership as well.

And, you know, they're doing the best that they can to try to control the situation. Sheena has written about this as well too, about the state trying to, you know, centralize economic authority once again, and really to clamp down, rein in the markets. This has been going on even before the pandemic but, you know, since the pandemic they've really tightened their grip on the markets, trying to take control of the economy again. And so even though, you know, the market has shrunk just naturally because of the pandemic, I think the state has become less open to it.

And that's what where I mentioned where we see periods of, you know, markets opening and then, the regime clamping down or cracking down again on markets. And we're in this period where I think the state is really trying to clamp down on this. And whether that's because of the pandemic or whether the state is using the pandemic as an excuse to really tighten its authority, I mean, that's up for debate. But, yeah, it is a grim situation right now in North Korea.

Dr. Cha: Sheena.

Dr. Greitens: Yeah. It's a great question. You know, I would say I think we see a couple of different effects on the pandemic. And certainly, it has made research on global politics in general pretty challenging in the last couple of years. But in

terms of the effect on North Korean migration, North Korean refugees, the North Korean diaspora, I think, you know, what we've seen is that North Korea is maybe an extreme case but fits a broader global pattern of what some of my colleagues in a forthcoming paper at International Security called opportunistic repression.

And their paper looks at semi-authoritarian or authoritarian regimes in Africa, who found in the pandemic a reason and a pretext to do some things that they might have already wanted to do – in terms of strengthening political control – but the pandemic provided, you know, a reason to assume emergency powers, to put a lot of power into executive hands – meaning sort of the core leadership, in many cases an autocrat or a dictator, and then to really crack down on society, including targeting political opponents under the guise of these public health emergency measures.

In North Korea's case, that's meant limits on internal mobility, which was one of the things that made market activity possible and allowed information to circulate more freely, and really tight border control. And so the effect has been really to decimate the number of – in the literal sense, right? To down to 10 percent of what – or less – of what it once was the number of North Koreans who are able to leave North Korea, particularly via China. North Korea was already one of the authoritarian regimes in the international system that limited emigration the most. There are some nondemocracies that actually do allow citizens to leave a fair amount and return to the country, and it is still politically controlled and calibrated but there's a lot more mobility.

North Korea has never been one of those. And the pandemic has really tanked the number of people who've been able to escape North Korea. I think in the last quarter, the number of North Koreans arriving in South Korea for resettlement was in single digits, which is really tragic when it's coupled with the humanitarian crisis that Andrew mentioned – the food shortages, the loss of cross-border trade with China, which was an economic lifeline for so many people, particularly in the northern parts of North Korea.

And so I think the effect of the pandemic has been not only to exacerbate the internal humanitarian crisis that Andrew spoke about, but also to limit the ability of North Koreans to leave in search of not only political freedom but in some cases literal physical survival. And to me, that's hugely concerning and the potential for just human tragedy there is really troubling and concerning.

We do see that in the case of the North Korean diaspora part of this book project involved a survey of North Koreans in the United States, which we tried to mirror some of the work that had been done in South Korea so we could compare responses. And we still saw that between 30 and 40 percent

of people were in touch with family or friends, some sort of contact inside North Korea, or had been able to send something. But the cost of using a broker to get across the border has gone way, way up. And it's gotten much, much harder to communicate or send food, medicine, money, information. And so it's also attenuated the relationship between the North Koreans who have escaped abroad and the family members that they – that they still have inside North Korea, which is, again, just a really tragic consequence of pandemic politics.

Dr. Cha: Great, both of you. I have a question for each of you – a follow up question. For Sheena, you mentioned that the number of North Koreans that are making their way into South Korea has dwindled quite a bit. And that certainly has to do with – may have to do with opportunistic repression. But if you could also comment on sort of the – whether, and if so how, the South Korean government's policies with regard to North Korean human rights has or has not affected that flow of people.

And then for Andrew, I'm curious to know your thoughts on the extent to which this border lockdown with China, which is now – you know, now going onto, like, 23 months now – has impacted – how that has impacted the markets. I've heard different stories anecdotally about how it's impacted the markets. But – and it looked like – you know, we had some imagery last week that was featured in The Financial Times that showed that they looked like they were going to try to start to open up the border with China by converting an airbase into a storage facility – storage quarantine facility. But that looks like it may all be on hold now because of this new variant of the virus. But if you could – sort of what's – you know, in your estimation, how has this border lockdown affected the markets? So maybe I'll go to Andrew first.

Dr. Yeo: Sure. Well, as – you know, as many in the North Korean watching community knows, 90 – up to, you know, 95 percent of trade – North Korean trade comes from China. So when you have a border lockdown and nothing's coming in and out, you know, you can imagine what sort of effect that would have for North Korea, for North Korean markets. You know, when the majority of goods that you get are coming from one country, and then that – and there's a hard lockdown, you know, that should say something about markets itself.

But, you know, we've seen these signals where – you know, reports that trade with North Korea has gone up, and so maybe we're seeing the North Koreans ease markets. I remember the CSIS report as well too It looked like they were getting ready to maybe open one segment of the border to allow more shipments, but then, you know, things – you know, the following month, you know, it doesn't materialize. And it's one of these questions – and going back to the theme of, you know, understanding the black box, you

know, what is Kim Jong-un thinking? And how much longer can the country persist without borders opening up, up to a certain extent?

So that's where you get questions, you know, things about is the regime going to be stable in another year or so? Is it going to have to make some kind of changes? And will that change the calculus of the Kim regime to maybe try to negotiate with the U.S. or engage South Korea again? And I mean – (laughs) – your guess is as good as mine, because you would think that they would be at a point where they would want – you know, certainly they want the sanctions relief. But, you know, they're still holding on. And so it leads to these questions of what is – you know, what is driving the Kim regime's calculus? You would think that at least having a vaccination strategy would then be an answer to trying to, you know, ease the border lockdowns. But that hasn't been – that hasn't been the case as well.

The flipside of this, of course, is, you know, some say that the regime is still able to survive because it can somehow evade sanctions, or in terms of the illicit economy or illicit good. That things are still getting into the country illegally, maybe through – Sheena may know more about this, but I don't know what the port situation looks like, if they've opened any ports. But there may be – there may be ways to smuggle things – smuggle things through. But again, those sort of stories are also anecdotal. So it's really hard to know. You know, the elites tend to thrive, you know, through illegal, you know, sanctions evasions and through the illicit economy. I don't know to what extent that holds true in a situation when there's a strict border lockdown. But it may be possible that – you know, that it's actually because of markets, or at least the illegal markets, illicit trade that North Koreans are still able to – the regime, at least, is still able to stay afloat.

Dr. Cha: Thanks, Andrew.

Sheena.

Dr. Greitens: Yeah. Just as a follow up on that point, I think the North Korean regime's shift toward cyber revenue-generating operations was well timed, because it actually was in place prior to the pandemic. And so I think the leadership, my sense is that the leadership has a potential source of revenue that we were, you know, a little bit slow to catch onto. I know there was some good work out of CSIS on this. But overall, you know, there was this shift toward the regime attempting to earn revenue through cyberoperations, which don't necessarily require a lot of physical border crossing and travel.

So in some sense the regime, you know, came into the pandemic with that potential advantage. Now, obviously, there's still been constraints imposed by sanctions and the pandemic. But I actually think in some ways the border control has hit ordinary people in North Korea harder, because they were

just more dependent on physical border crossing of goods and people. And so I think it's important to sort of just, you know, bracket that cyber point.

On the question of ROK policy and how it's shaped the North Korean diaspora, it's a great question. One of the papers that I did for the lab looked at North Korean migration experiences. And it looked at what happened – we disaggregated the migration process for North Koreans who have ended up in South Korea. And we actually did this using a collection of their almost 200 – or, over 200 North Korean – or, I'm sorry, almost 200 is more correct – North Korean numbers of the diaspora who have left and written a memoir in either English or Korean. And we went through and systematically coded all of those and looked at what happened to people during different stages of their migration journey.

And one of the things that we found is that often their first encounter with the South Korean government was not when they actually got to the physical territory of the ROK. It was abroad, going to a consulate, going to an embassy, asking a Korean citizen of the ROK who happened to be in Canada or a third country for help. And a lot of them reported actually that those initial requests for help were not successful. That there were cases where they, you know, legally and in terms of ethnic identity, right, thought of themselves as Korean, the expected that the South Korean government would treat them as citizens, which is the, you know, South Korean law claims it treats North Koreans as citizens. But when they approached embassies or consulates abroad, they often weren't given the same rights or status that someone already holding an ROK passport would have been.

And so from – you can talk about it at the level of policy, but at the level of individual migrant and refugee experience, they didn't feel fully equal members of the – of South Korea, of the South Korean polity. And that that actually extended all the way through the process of being debriefed by the National Intelligence Service and then the three-month period in which they were at Hanawon. So what was interesting about that, I think that process of not necessarily knowing whether you can count on the South Korean state to include you if you're not already in South Korea actually has a really important effect, in particular on some of the folks who chose to go to the United States.

Because we saw that there were two things that were sort of consistent themes. When we asked people, you know, why did you choose to come to the U.S.? And some of our respondents had actually been to South Korea first and then came to the United States to study or to work or for temporary purposes. And some of them were refugees who had gone through the process outlined by the North Korean Human Rights Act. And so we looked at both groups.

But consistently people said it was a sense that there was greater economic and social opportunity in the United States. But a secondary theme really was a desire to avoid what they saw as the potential for discrimination and the lack of socioeconomic mobility in the ROK itself. And I know that's something that ROK policy has tried to grapple with, but it seems to be an ongoing issue, at least judging from our survey results. And it's part of why you see people choosing to seek other countries as resettlement destinations.

And then I think the final – I guess a final point is that we also, in the survey, tried to disentangle: What is it that somebody who's come from an authoritarian system, like North Korea, thinks is important about democratic citizenship? I think this is a fascinating question with a lot to teach all of us right now, as we grapple with questions about what American democracy should look like, and global democracy. But one of the things that came up very strongly in the survey results is that people who've left North Korea really prioritize what we would call a civil libertarian notion of democratic citizenship.

So overwhelmingly – like off the charts – people will say that the purpose of a democratic government is to provide people with their individual rights and freedoms. So very strong emphasis on civil liberties. And that's kind of at odds with the approach taken, at least in some cases, by the Moon government where it's those kinds of activities – freedom of speech, freedom to send information, freedom to do balloon launches – that have been constricted by some of the policies that this administration has taken.

I know there was some discussion of that earlier, but I would just note that we now have some evidence that there's a real sort of structure of democratic citizenship that North Korean – people who've left North Korea prioritize, where civil liberties are really important. And so the extent that there is any hint of not having a very expansive tolerance and protection for civil liberties by any government, that's going to run into or be at odds with the way that North Koreans think about, you know, what's important about freedom and democracy. In the book, again, you know, we try to disaggregate that and explore it in a little more detail, in the book manuscript.

Dr. Cha: Great. Really interesting stuff. So we have a little bit of time and there's some questions from the audience. So the first question is – and I think both of you can comment on this – with women dominating market trade in North Korea, how does their participation interact with preexisting gender norms? And what is the impact on reshaping of social relations in civil society within the country?

Yeah, I know Sheena can take that one too but I just unmuted myself, so let me – let me take a stab at that. You know, that's absolutely correct that women are dominating the markets, and especially when it comes to the informal markets and the jangmadang, because men have to work in their – you know, their state jobs, you know, the jobs that they're required to work in. Whereas women, especially if they stay at home, you know, have extra time. So they're able to work in the markets.

And there is recognition within North Korean society of women becoming, you know, the breadwinners, or women making money. And, you know, there's actually a great podcast on NK News with Hanna Song, who directs NK – North Korea Database, NKDB. They just came out with a report on, you know, the household and, you know, the effects that markets are having on women. And so they – she talks about some of the dynamics of social relations between, you know, husbands and wives. And there's this tension, because there is a recognition that women are becoming breadwinners, but yet it's – North Korea's still a patriarchal society, so that leads to tensions.

In terms of civil society, you know, if you think about women working in markets – you know, I've thought about this a lot and I've talked about this with a couple colleagues, I wrote a report about markets and, you know, civil society building blocks. Justin Hastings at University of Sydney and Dan Wertz who was with NCNK, and, you know, we tried to explore whether women are – you know, these women are forming informal trust networks. You know, when you work in a market, you have – you have to have information. You have to know about prices of goods. You have to know, you know, who is selling what. And that means that you have to talk to one another. And we wondered if that would naturally lead to, you know, conversations among women. You know, the rise of a public sphere of sorts, as women interact.

And we actually even wondered whether women's – things like the women's union, if that – you know, you're required to meet two times a week in this association. But, you know, what purpose does it serve for women? Or on the sidelines, are they going to be talking – chatting about their market activities? So we – they actually do think that there's a lot of potential there. And so things like entrepreneurship, if women want to know how do I start a business, you're not going to ask the state how do I begin my own business. You're going to ask someone who has had that experience before. So, again, this is – this is women speaking and talking informally. And it's not being regulated by the state.

And so, again, we're seeing – this is what we mean by the building blocks of civil society. As these informal trust networks are working, as women are having conversations with one another, about markets but maybe about other stuff. Maybe about the weather, maybe about gossip, maybe about a

South Korean drama, who knows? Of course, that's getting more dangerous. But to us, that is, you know, the early trappings of a civil society, when you can get people to begin talking and have discourse that's not – that's not being – that's not intervened by the state. So just some thoughts about women and markets and civil society.

Dr. Cha: Great. Sheena, I'll give you the last word.

Dr. Greitens: I would – I would just second, you know, a lot of what Andrew has said about the changing dynamics in North Korea itself. As it relates to migration, obviously this – you know, this gives North Korean women more opportunity to cross the border as part of economic activity, but then also places them at increased risk for trafficking and gender-based violence.

And comparatively, one of the really interesting things that I don't think we have a great handle on is that I don't think there's been a diaspora where it's predominantly women and children and so many single mothers. And so I think that raises all sorts of really interesting questions about resettlement policy, but also about sort of patterns of political engagement. And part of why we've seen some of the defectors who have become advocates really focus on women's rights. So lots of interesting questions that I think we're just now starting to explore, and would be great areas for people to keep researching and looking into, because they're fascinating and we don't have full answers yet.

Dr. Cha: Thanks. Well, this is a terrific discussion. And I feel like we've only hit the tip of the iceberg. There's a lot more that we could talk about. But unfortunately, we're at the end of our time. So I want to thank Andrew and Sheena for a very interesting discussion about North Korean market society, the diaspora, things that we don't – you know, in sort of the national security-based discussion around Washington, D.C. we don't talk enough about, because that's probably where there's the most change that will come in North Korea inside the black box.

So, again, there's clearly much more that we could talk about, but that is why the audience can look up your research on our website, which we've put up all the work that you've done there. They can certainly learn more from that. I want to thank Andrew Yeo, Sheena Chestnut Greitens, Bridget Coggins, Seong-Ho Sheen, and John Delury for joining us today. I want to thank Seiyeon Ji, who's not on the screen, but she was the person who's been leading us all in this big lab effort. Thank her for all her work in keeping us – keeping us – herding us cats and keeping us all together.

Thanks again to CSIS and the Academy of Korean Studies for their support of the work of these scholars. And best wishes to our scholars for the rest of your research. I know that all of you are still very much deeply in different

stages of the work, and we wish you the best of luck there. And finally, to our audience, thank you for tuning in. Best wishes for the holiday season. And we'll see you all soon. Thank you.