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Whose Olympics: Pyeongchang or Pyongyang? A Roundtable Discussion on North Korea's Gesture Politics

Edited by Niki Alsford and Sojin Lim

International Institute of Korean Studies (IKSU) working paper series is a platform for research on Korean Studies. It provides an opportunity to share ideas, and to debate and develop subsequent publications. It includes first drafts of papers or reports intended for submission in journals or other forms of publication from ongoing or completed research projects, manuscript development, and from roundtable discussions.

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Whose Olympics: Pyeongchang or Pyongyang?
A Roundtable Discussion on North Korea's Gesture Politics

Edited by Dr Niki Alsford[2] and Dr Sojin Lim[3]

Forward Messages from Editors

This working paper is prepared based on the roundtable discussion held at the University of Central Lancashire, UK, on 1 March 2018 in relation to North Korea's diplomacy over the Peyongchang Olympic which was held between 9 and 25 February 2018. Four political commentators across UK were invited to take questions from the audience, by following their in-depth discussion on the issue, along with the moderator. Moderator and speakers participated in this roundtable are as below:

Moderator: Dr Niki Alsford (Director of the International Institute of Korean Studies, Reader in Asia Pacific Studies, University of Central Lancashire)

Speakers: Mr Rod Wye (Associate Fellow, Asia Programme, Chatham House / Head of Research for East Asia at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office); Dr Maria Ryan (Assistant Professor in American History, University of Nottingham); Dr Virginie Grzelczyk (Senior Lecturer in Politics & International Relations, Aston University); and Dr Ed Griffith (Senior Lecturer & Course Leader in Asia Pacific Studies, University of Central Lancashire)

Editors are delighted to publish the roundtable discussion which was held in timely manner, and believe that the discussion can facilitate further debates about current gesture politics over North Korea issue at the forefront of current political discussion in Asia Pacific region. At the same time, we hope that this working paper can be used as a meaningful primary source for researchers who are dealing with North Korea subject.

This working paper consists of three main parts: introduction or speakers, main panel discussion, and Q&A session conversation. In the following script, we used acronyms for each participant as: Niki Alsford (NA), Virginie Grzelczyk (VG), Rod Wye (RW), Ed Griffith (EG), Maria Ryan (MR). Those who provided questions during the Q&A session of the roundtable have provided signed consent forms as their names are revealed in this working paper.

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Introduction of Speakers

NA: Welcome all to this is a roundtable about recent Pyeongchang Olympic. Before we begin our discussion, let's start with each speaker's introduction. Rod?

RW: I am Head of Research for East Asia at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

NA: And Virginie?

VG: I'm Virginie Grzelczyk. I'm a Senior Lecturer in International Relations and Politics at Aston University. I work mostly on Korea actually, on North Korea, especially about the external relationships that North Korea has developed and is developing.

NA: So, Maria?

MR: I'm Maria Ryan, I work at Nottingham University, and my work is really on US foreign policy but with a specialism on post-Cold War foreign policy and I've written a little bit about US-North Korea relations from the US perspective.

EG: You probably all know me, but my name is Ed Griffith and I am the course leader here for Asia and Pacific Studies. My research mainly focuses on Sino-Japanese relations, but I'm obviously interested in East Asian international relations more generally. Nik has asked me to focus on Japan today because we have someone who is far more experienced than I am to talk about the Chinese perspective.

NA: Thank you. Now, we have an apology. We had also invited Dr Winnie King, who is in international relations at Bristol University. Unfortunately she was unable to join us this evening.

Roundtable Discussion

NA: So what I'm going to do now is I'm going to now hand over to each of our panelists, who will have five minutes to talk about the topic, on 'Whose Olympics, Pyeongchang or Pyongyang?' and a roundtable discussion on North Korea's gesture politics.
Now, as you know a lot has happened since the Olympics, so much of that is going to be brought into today's discussion. So I want to start our table here, really, with Rod from Chatham House. Rod, your five minutes please.

RW: Right, well, I'm not going to really talk about the Olympics. I'm just going to make a few remarks on the Chinese perspective on the Korean problem as I see it. First of all, the Chinese are hugely irritated by this whole Korean problem. They hate the, sort of, idea that the US has, or professes to have, that it's somehow all China's fault, and that if only China would put a bit of pressure on the North Koreans, then the whole thing would go away. The Chinese see it completely differently; they see it as all the Americans' fault - at its most simple, that if only the Americans would talk sensibly to the North Koreans, then this would all go away. But more widely, China has real interests, real long-term interests, on the Korean peninsula. China wants to be the dominant influence in the Korean peninsula. It wants also, in a much wider strategic perspective, to see the influence of the United States reduced in its own periphery, and the North Korean issue, obviously, is a particular

hot point in all this, where what has been happening in North Korea has provoked, or led to, much more US attention on the peninsula, and US actions with regard to the peninsula - the stationing of the THAAD and this kind of thing - that China sees as very much against its interests.

China does probably, well, does certainly, support the North Korean government. Economic support from China is still very important for North Korea, and the Chinese have no intention of putting so much pressure on North Korea that might lead to the instability or collapse of the North Korean regime. China does not wish to see the North Korean government collapse. One reason for this is that it fears that there would be a huge influx of refugees across the border. I think that probably is a minor inconvenience from the Chinese perspective. More widely, if North Korean collapse were followed by extended influence by either the South or particularly the United States in that region, that would be very much against China's wider strategic interests. And thirdly, and perhaps equally importantly, China does not wish to see one of the few remaining Communist regimes in this world fall. It's just a matter of prestige and symbolism for China.

So the Chinese are unwilling to participate in any actions that might lead to so much pressure on North Korea that the regime would be put under pressure. That's not to say that the Chinese have any particular love for the present leadership in North Korea. They did, after the death of Kim Il-Sung, entertain hopes that his son might be attracted by the Chinese model of development - reform and opening up - and they took him to various places in China to see what a wonderful job the Chinese were doing, but the North Koreans showed no interest in following the Chinese models. They seemingly wished to stand well apart from the Chinese while maintaining that dependency on them, and I think from the Chinese perspective this is another element in their annoyance with the problems of the Korean regime - that they cannot actually, as far as they can see it, find a way of influencing the North Koreans to do the kind of thing that the Chinese would want them to do.

Lastly, and related to the sort of, kinds of actions that are being taken to respond to the North Korean testing of missiles and nuclear weapons. The Chinese obviously, well, not obviously, but do not wish to see the denuclearising nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula. It is a potential threat to China - not that the North Korean missiles might aim in the Chinese direction, but that if there were an outbreak of some kind of hot war in the region, China would inevitably be involved, and they do not wish to see that. They widely are unwilling to see further proliferation of nuclear weapons capacity, particularly in the region because that would be to states or entities that are, of which the Chinese are suspicious.

And very lastly, the use of sanctions; the one sort of weapon that the United Nations has consistently deployed to try and force changes in North Korean behaviour. The Chinese are very equivocal about the use of sanctions, especially when they are initiated by the United States because they still have a fear that US sanctions may well be applied to China. And that very briefly is where I see China coming from in all this.

NA: OK, thank you Rod. If I may perhaps move the discussion to Maria?

MR: Sure, OK. Well, I'm going to talk to you for a few minutes about the US perspective on North Korea. I think at the moment what we're seeing is a kind of multifaceted US approach that has three different dimensions. I think there is a diplomatic component, there is an economic component, and there's a military component. So in terms of diplomacy we know obviously that Trump agreed to meet Kim and before that there was some kind of lower level track II diplomacy that was ongoing, it was overseen by the US Special Representative to North Korea, called Joseph Yun, although he did resign a couple of

weeks ago. The economic component, there are obviously sanctions; it was just announced in February that there is a new round of specifically American sanctions on North Korea, these are an attempt to coerce North Korea, I think. And the military component of US policy I think is also coercive. Last year, the Trump administration began to talk about waging a preventive war against North Korea, it really began to sort of normalise the discussion of preventive war. Interestingly, the US Secretary of Defence, James Mattis, he is not a supporter of the idea of preventive war. He has called it 'catastrophic', the idea of fighting a war with North Korea, but there have been various US military exercises to prepare for this scenario of possible war with North Korea. I just read yesterday in the New York Times that the US and South Korea are going to resume their annual military training exercises on the Korean peninsula on the first of April.

I do think these plans for the summit meeting between Kim and Trump do signal a change in the US position, actually a softening of the US position. For the first year that Trump was in power, he basically refused to even think about meeting the North Korean leader, he refused to sanction any high-level negotiations unless North Korea began to disarm before they even met. This was a position that the Bush administration used to take as well, they saw negotiations as a kind of a reward for North Korea, and you shouldn't reward a state that has developed this nuclear programme. But I think that the softening of the US approach came about as the result of a meeting between Vice-President Mike Pence and the South Korean President Moon Jae-In - I hope I'm not butchering the pronunciation there - at the Winter Olympics in February, and Pence talked to the media afterwards about how the South Korean President had convinced him to 'do something different'. And Mike Pence said, 'the maximum pressure campaign is going to continue and intensify, but if you want to talk, we'll talk', and he said that North Korea needed to agree to put denuclearisation on the table. So I think what Mike Pence was suggesting there was that the US will talk without preconditions, and in fact that is what Trump has basically agreed to do. They're not demanding that North Korea denuclearise before they actually sit down and talk.

So there has been I think a kind of, a softening of the US approach, which I think is a good thing, but more broadly I am not convinced that US policymakers have a particularly good grasp of the causes of the nuclear crisis, or the reasons why the relationship between the US and North Korea is so bad. If you go back to the 1990s, US policymakers have typically viewed North Korea as a rogue state, and I certainly don't want to defend the regime there, but I think the US analysis of it is somewhat superficial, that this idea of North Korea as a rogue state is a kind of inherited assumption. It's rarely, if ever, questioned by US policymakers. Successive North Korean leaders have generally been viewed as these kind of completely irrational madmen, or these calculating blackmailers that hate Western values and just want to blackmail the West. So there's rarely any discussion of the fact that the US and North Korea are still technically at war - obviously there was a ceasefire signed in 1953 that has frozen the conflict between them since then, but they are still technically at war - there is no consideration of the impact of-- the fact that there are, I think, still 27,000 US troops stationed in South Korea, no consideration of the impact that US military exercises on the Korean peninsula might be having on North Korea's worldview, its outlook. So very little self-reflection, I think, in US policymaking. I'm not convinced that they even know what the North Korean leader actually wants.

More broadly, I think if you look at the main national security documents, in like for example the 2017 National Security Strategy that the Trump administration put out, I think what you see in there is a worldview that I would describe as aggressive realism. By 'realism' I mean political science realism, the idea that states are potential aggressors, states are potential rivals, they are clear competitors, they are the cause of all of the security

dilemmas that the US faces in the world in the twenty-first century, so this is, we're not talking about a liberal, internationalist administration here that's thinking, 'well, how can we work through multilateral institutions to constrain our rivals and work with our allies?', I think they're quite aggressive realists in the Trump administration. So I think from my perspective, the summit meeting that is scheduled to take place, I think it's a really kind of rare opportunity, a kind of precious opportunity to have some constructive eye-level dialogue between the two leaders, but I think Trump is not the man you would want in the driver's seat on the American side. I think really the chances for a success at this summit from a US perspective I think are slim. Trump does not have the temperament, or the skill, or the historical knowledge, or the experience to handle this kind of, you know, very complex diplomatic negotiation that's required.

More broadly, as I said, I don't think the US government has a particularly good understanding, I think it has quite a superficial understanding of what the problem is with North Korea. I think the ultimate US goal in East Asia is the maintenance of US hegemony, or US dominance, if you like, in East Asia, which is something that Rod referred to. He's quite right, this is something that is not acceptable for the Chinese either, and that objective may well undermine dialogue with North Korea as well.

I think, even though Trump has agreed to this dialogue, there are other elements of the US approach to North Korea, like the military approach and the economic approach that are still coercive, and I think those coercive elements may well undermine the dialogue that's going to take place. But I'm happy to be proven wrong on this one!

NA: Thank you. I'm going to move the discussion to Ed.

EG: Sure. So as I said before, Niki asked me to talk from the Japanese perspective, or at least to consider Japan's role in all of this, and I threatened to do a 'mic drop' on him and just say, 'Japan has no role in this', drop mic, and leave. But I'm not doing that.

NA: Thank you.

EG: But I will emphasise that when we think about 'how did we get to where we are now, with a Kim and Trump summit proposed and a Kim and Moon summit proposed?' and if you ask the question, 'what role did Japan play in that?' the honest answer is 'absolutely none whatsoever'. So I thought maybe it was more helpful to think about this in terms of what matters to Japan out of this, what does Japan hope to achieve or what does Japan hope can be achieved out of all of this? And I think that there are probably three areas in which North Korea really matters, certainly to the current Japanese government.

The first is in nuclear weapons and other missiles. And I emphasise the 'other missiles' there, because there is a lot of focus, understandably I think, on nuclear weapons because they're very big, they're very scary, and Japan, as we all know, has this really deep history as the only nation that's ever actually been attacked by nuclear weapons. That's had a significant impact on the Japanese psyche on this. But actually, the conventional missiles are just as threatening to Japan because there are so many of them that can reach Japan and that North Korea has demonstrated quite a disregard in terms of Japanese security in firing the missiles as close to Japan as it has done.

The next area in which North Korea, I think, matters to, again I say, this Japanese government, in particular to Shinzo Abe, is with regard to his ambition, long-term ambition, I think, to revise Article 9 or at the very least to move Japan closer towards being able to do that, and closer towards having something of a more normalised military in the country. And here's where I may be slightly controversial, if I may, and say that I think that Abe

has used North Korea as something of a bogeyman over the last couple of years to convince the Japanese people that they are in more danger and more of a threat than potentially they actually are, and so this is something that Abe has been able to exploit. So the fear that you see in the Japanese population I think is very real, the threat that they face I think is significantly lower than Abe has made out.

The final area is with regards to the abduction issue, which is the constant thorn in any attempt between Japan to be involved in a resolution of the North Korean issue. So, for those of you who don't know, there has been an omission from North Korea that there was a fairly systematic operation in which North Korea abducted Japanese citizens and they've been kept in North Korea for a very long period of time. And whenever Japan has become involved in any sort of talks or negotiations, this abduction issue, although I don't want to downplay the significance of this for those people, we are talking about a relatively small number of people. Japan raises this issue right up the agenda whenever these talks are able to take place, and so we know already that as soon as there was an announcement that Trump would be having a summit with Kim, Abe was on the phone to Donald Trump the very same day, and raised the abduction issue with him, and has requested that Trump makes sure that he raises the abduction issue when he meets with Kim. And I think that's a problem, it's certainly a problem for any potential advance that might be made in the Trump-Kim summit, which I think has been pointed out was already quite a difficult thing to do, but if you bring this abduction issue into it I feel it will cloud things even further. So I think what all of this does actually is it serves to emphasise Japan's junior role in all of this, and I think potentially the most embarrassing to come out of this - maybe 'embarrassing' is the wrong word, but what it does is it highlights Japan's inability or its impotence in East Asian international relations. So some of the key issues, which are possibly key to Japan's national security and are certainly key to its own identity, Japan actually has very little role and very little say in it. Japan wasn't consulted about any of the proposed summits, Japanese policymakers were just as surprised as we were when suddenly it was announced that Trump would be meeting with Kim. And yet this is something which is absolutely key to the way that Japan sees its role in the region. So what Japan really, I guess, wants out of it is-- there must be a fear, I think, within Japan that this could lead to some kind of détente between North Korea and the United States, and this might marginalise the US-Japan alliance, which fundamentally is the most important thing to Japan's national security.

So, I did want to mention something else, which is that Japan has significantly increased investment in missile defence systems over recent years. I mentioned previously that North Korea has been kind of used as a bit of a bogeyman, and in some ways this missile defence system is aimed at North Korea, but what I would say is that actually for Japan, when it comes down to it, it's really all about China. And Japan's military modernisation and Japan's attempts to become more of a normal military nation is really focused on China and the threat that Japan sees coming from China. But North Korea is a fairly convenient and fairly convincing bogeyman in all of this. So I think that's really where Japan's key interests lie.

NA: OK, thank you, and I'll take the discussion to Virginie.

VG: Where to start? This is supposed to be the North Korean perspective, I guess, so I'll try to slide into North Korean shoes a little bit. We'll see the extent of my twisted mind in doing this. But I guess I want to go back to what was talked about by Maria and Rod. We talk about the North Korean success - are those talks going to be successful? But I think we need to define what successful means. Success means a variety of things for the actors

involved. For United States, success in those talks means the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. It's not the Korean peninsula; the denuclearisation of North Korea. And that is a thing, a contentious point. We've seen over the past years and years and years, we've seen it with the six party talks, Moscow [...] to talk about the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula because they also want the United States [...] nuclear weapons [...]. So I think we have a very very big problem here when it comes to talking about what success means. So that's one point. To go back to the original topic for today, you know, Pyongyang or Pyeongchang, who kind of won the Olympics? I think North Korea did, in that sense. I think we have to really acknowledge the type of diplomacy that South Korea and the South Korean president have carried out prior to the Olympics, because it was not a mean feat to actually invite the enemy, to actually invite-- make sure from a security point of view, you could have a North Korean delegation coming in, this was done very very quickly, in a matter of weeks before the Olympics. To actually have the Olympics in a very-- you know, just a few hours from North Korea, not have any problems with security or anything of the sort. And out of this, to actually get to have some meaningful engagement that then let to a promise of a visit to North Korea. So that was basically what the Olympics, you know, I think, gave us, in that sense. It was, you know, Olympic diplomacy.

I think for me the picture that I liked the most was when you had the delegation and you had Mike Pence and his wife trying very very hard to show that they were ignoring the North Korean delegation. You know, prior to the Olympics, Mike Pence had made it very very clear that to disrupt, actually, to shame the North Koreans, to basically tell the world that they were, you know, a horrible nation and all of that, and actually they did not say anything. So that was a little bit of a missed opportunity when it comes to [...] at the Olympics. So then we moved on to the week, you know, after the Olympics and South Korea going to North Korea, which for me is the big deal, that real promise of talks and that reconnection between the two Koreas, which was completely overshadowed by Donald Trump's announcement that he would meet Kim Jong-Un. I'm very sceptical that the meeting will take place, because just like a lot of things that come from the Trump administration, you move onto another topic yet. Another week, you know, another scandal, another something, another Secretary of State. And I think that is also the problem that we see nowadays, is we see - to go back to what Maria was talking about - the disruption when it comes to diplomacy. What is very important is since, you know, over the past year or so, we do not have an American ambassador in South Korea. Nobody's in the post. We were about to have Victor Cha - some of you have probably, you know, read Victor Cha who coined the term 'hawk and/or engagement', and who was judged 'not hawk enough' for the Trump administration. So if somebody like Victor Cha is not, you know, deemed good enough to become South Korea ambassador, somebody who has extensive knowledge and, you know, contacts in the region, then I think we are in trouble. So I think that is for me the problem, that we do not have a diplomatic link, and North Korea actually has felt it. North Korea has reached, through a number of contacts, unofficial contacts, to try to understand what is going on with American diplomacy, because they are unable to read it. It has become a little bit murky for them to understand what it coming from Washington. So hence, you know, the kind of meeting and the kind of contact that we see now with South Korea.

I think we also should not underestimate what has happened over the past year when it comes to the sanctions. Those have had an effect, actually, on North Korea. And if there's one thing that the Trump administration has moved, that is actually that particular economic element. What we start to see now is we start to see a number of players. I'm not going to call them 'allies', but I'm going to call them 'trading partners', that North

Korea had around the world. Those are not numerous, but they exist, containing especially a number of partners in Africa. Those countries have dropped their relationship with North Korea; military training, education, economic partnership, and all of that. And that has happened, you know, basically quite late, because those relationships have been going on for many many many decades, but it's only with the sanctions that we've seen last year, where suddenly everything is just sanctioned at that point. Where, for example, North Korea doesn't have the right to build statues in Africa anymore. Who cared about statues 20 years ago, when we thought that North Korea was going to collapse? When this idea was very very strong that we don't need to actually look into how North Korea made money, because they're going to collapse anyway. So I think that is actually the reality; the reality is it's been very very difficult for North Korea to operate, when it comes to its economy. Support from China is not the support necessarily from China, it's investment from China's businessmen as well, it's joint ventures, things that North Korea needs, but it's also things when it comes to sustainable development, this is something that I want to-- this is the last point of this little introduction.

Things have been blocked when it comes to the future. Often [...] this point. I'm especially thinking about education [...] for example. Pyongyang University of Science and technology, where you see there are a number of young North Korean people being educated by foreigners, by foreign lecturers, and because of the sanctions, that has collapsed, both because people cannot return to teach, and also because a number of materials cannot be sent to North Korea. So if you want to have engineering, you actually do not have equipment that can be sent because that can be diverted to actually build those missiles that are being sent over Japan. That is a reality; diversion of the resources. So I think this is, you know, what I'm concerned about is actually the future, because for North Korea their success is actually survival. They are not in a suicidal game. They want the survival of the elite really, we're not talking here of a regime that cares for people, it's a certain number of [...] that tries to maintain their position and their survival. For them, that is their end game, survival, and it's not going to happen if they get rid of their nuclear weapons.

NA: OK, well, many thanks to our panelists there. So there's quite a lot that you should hopefully have taken from that, a number of really, kind of, big key words, and some of those words, like engagement, there's: engagement, fracture, rogue, aggressive, sanctions, survival of regimes - these are really quite important. It's creating an image, and there's an image of which the media has tended to tap on when we start to explore ideas of what is North Korea and what is not North Korea. We've had recently with the press looking at links between North Korea and Syria, leaked UN documents, they haven't really taken us any further, apart from initial assessments. So, these kind of conversations are really really important.

Q&A Session

NA: I want to kind of now maybe move this discussion to you, and I'm really, really pleased with the enthusiasm with which you have come forward and asking the questions. I have a few selected ones and I'm going to invite you now to give your question, and then we will turn to the panelist to address this, and hopefully to engage in debate as well as dialogue and debate - proper debate, not with your fists, alright? So no fisticuffs today. So I'm going to start, really, by looking at this and trying to think about how we can kind of

frame what's already been discussed to your questions, to help us to look at some time of continuity.

So I'm going to start our first question with James McCormack (JM). James, if you would like to stand up. I have a microphone so if you could just bear with me for a moment, thank you. So James, if you would like to introduce yourself to the panel.

Audience: OK. Good afternoon, my name's James McCormack, I'm a fourth year student of Asia Pacific Studies here. My question for the panel is: Do you believe that the return to the 'Sunshine Policy' in South Korea is indicative of a shift away from a desire for reunification with North Korea, and if so, how would you expect this shift to affect the relations between the nation you are specialised in and North and South Korea?

NA: I want to kind of perhaps start, if you don't mind, with you, Virginie, to come forward with that question?

VG: I don't know if it's a return to the Sunshine Policy, it's a turn towards engagement policy. I mean, I think those have been tumultuous times in South Korea. When it comes to the previous presidency, and how do you move forward in a society that's quite fractured. When I was reading what the President was talking about, I think it was this morning or yesterday afternoon, he was not really talking about reunification, he was talking about two countries at peace, essentially. So I think, going back to the bottom of the issue, we are talking here of trying to solve the armistice, which is still the sticking point, and I'm not sure this really comes into play for the United States - going back to this legal problem that we have, which as you know is not the United States being party to this, this is UN, this is China, and this is North Korea. So South Korea is out of the equation! If you read the armistice this way. If you read it differently, you know, South Korea participated in the UN troops, they are a de facto signatory to the armistice. I think that's a point that has to be ignored. And I'm thinking about what you were saying about Japan, that Japan had no role in this, and for me Japan has all the roles, because it goes back to the end of World War Two. What we see is that you have a colonised state that's been [...] and cut in half, and it all starts from there.

NA: Thank you. Perhaps we can have another one.

EG: Sure. Yeah. I think maybe I should clarify that I wasn't suggesting that Japan had no role whatsoever in what's taken place in Korea! But in terms of Japan's role in the recent events, it's certainly no longer as influential as it was, in the 1930s and 1940s.

James, in answer to your question, I'm not sure we would necessarily term it a Sunshine Policy as such, but I can see why you would use that phrase. It's pretty clear that Moon has tried to change South Korean policy with regards to North Korea, and I can see that he's doing things differently, which I think was the phrase that we used earlier on. Does that mean that he's giving up on unification? I would say no. I don't imagine any president of South Korea could ever formally give up on unification, likewise with North Korea. And I guess if you're going to think about unification of North and South Korea you will think there are only two conceivable ways in which that can happen. One is peacefully - i.e. through negotiation or economic integration - and the other is through war. And if we have someone there who is pursuing a peaceful policy aimed at that, I think that that would be preferable to the alternative. So I certainly don't think it's a bad thing for South Korea or North Korea or the region as a whole, that we have a president in South Korea who's interested in talking to North Korea rather than increasing tensions in the area.

With regards to how it impacts Japan, I guess I would just refer back to what I said previously that the biggest thing for Japan here is that they certainly have an interest in there being some sort of resolution, because a nuclear-armed North Korea is a threat to Japan, and is an explicit threat to Japan. So they certainly have an interest in this being resolved. But the process that seems to be taking place has become almost trilateral now. It seems China has now been marginalised in all of this, which I think is a fairly surprising development. So we only have North and South Korea and the United States involved in the process, which just serves to isolate Japan and make it even more dependent on the United States, which is probably an uncomfortable place for a country that ought to be a bit more powerful than it is, like Japan. Similarly, its relationship with South Korea, really, is that it sort of marginalises it even more and it just leaves it more and more dependent. Is that [...]?

NA: Rod, would you like to…?

RW: Thank you. In answer to the first part of your question, or at least as it has been interpreted, the Chinese are very much in favour of engagement and want the various parties to be talking to each other. They are also very happy to see a reduction in the immediate tensions on the Korean peninsula, but I think they are very unhappy - to pick up on Ed's point - with this idea that they are being marginalised. Because they want to be a central part of any solution, but even more, process towards a solution of managing the […].
While they may see it as basically the United States having behaved badly over this, they don't want the United States to be the principal actor in reaching a modus vivendi on the Korean peninsula. So they want to be very much involved, so while they are welcoming in the short term the reduction in tension, they really do see themselves as central. And certainly if you are looking towards a Chinese view of reunification, again I think in principle they would say that reunification is a good idea because they have their own problem in that regard with Taiwan, so they're not against reunification, but the question is on whose terms and how is it managed? And they would want that process to be very much under Chinese auspices, and the most likely scenario that one can see at the moment is that is reunification occurred tomorrow it would probably be on South Korean/US terms, and that's not what the Chinese want.

NA: Maria.

MR: [...] I don't think I can really speak to the first part of your question about what South Korea wants, but what I will say is that I do think South Korea has taken the initiative very successfully here, because I can't really account for the shift in US government policy any other way than that it's down to the talk that Moon had with Mike Pence. And I think that the reason that South Korea was able to exercise influence in that way over US policy was because until that point there was no coherent US government policy on North Korea. Over the past year you've had Trump talking about fire and fury, and then you've had these defence secretaries saying "Oh no, no, we're committed to diplomacy, we have this ongoing track II diplomacy". So when you have the president and members of his cabinet saying different things, who speaks for the US government? What is official US policy? So I think there was kind of a gap, a lack of coherent policy in Washington, and the South Koreans have done a really good job of kind of stepping in and shaping US policy on this point.

NA: OK, well thank you. I just want to kind of perhaps draw out some of the things that were said in the panel in answer to that question. We talk quite a bit about this idea of solving armistice, which is the point that you were making there Virginie, and this idea of, kind of, unification, and we're always looking at unification as being an end game here or the end goal, but in terms of kind of signing a peace treaty in a sense confirms a two state situation, essentially. What I would like to think, perhaps for one of you to kind of talk about, whether or not that should be an option as they negotiate, as opposed to unification. So should they be moving more towards an idea of a two state, rather than a one state under either the North or the South. So, who wants it?

VG: I think a lot of you have been to South Korea. How many of you have been to North Korea?

EG: We did send some students to North Korea...

VG: They did not come back?!

NA: They did come back!

EG: Just mysteriously disappeared [...] year abroad, but we did have some.

VG: When I was in South Korea the last time, I was at the [...] department store in [...], and I was struck by the amount of stuff that's on sale. And everything is about things. Things and things. And I was comparing this to when I was in North Korea where there is not much. There is some. There are some things, but to me this illustrates the gap. There's a tremendous gap in economic terms, there's a tremendous gap in terms of people as well. And I think when you hear about this more and more because there are a number of North Korean people who leave, North Korea and who resettle in South Korea. You have probably heard and read some of those accounts that actually some of them are having a very difficult time from an identity point of view. So I think we have a question of identity, and the question of reunification is a question of people.

Can we actually go and move to a unified Korean population? A few years ago I was doing some research on that, this question of national identity, and I was trying to see if North Koreans— where basically they met. Where North Korean population and South Korean population met on the question of national identity. And sadly, what I found was they meet on the beef they have with the past, especially with China, stealing artifacts and all of that, they meet on their dislike and distrust of Japan, and they meet on the concept of purity of blood. Those are not very good elements to create a one unified nation - hatred of others, contention with the past, and understanding of the bloodline. If you think about the history that you have in Europe, those are not very good things when it comes to moving forwards. I think those are, you know, things that we need to think about. There's the cost, obviously. There are reasons there's the changes, and there's the future, there's the reality. A lot of people in South Korea are very concerned about this potential reunification because it will cost a lot of money. When I see young Korean students, you know, I go to South Korea and I teach on different programmes and stuff, I see students who are either extremely disconnected from history, or students who are very socially active, actually engaging with the North Korean population. But those are very very few, and that's what worries me, actually, about the South Koreans, that knows what the North Koreans are being told at school about South Korea. We know a bit, but I think it's very improbable that we get to have a successful unification like we've seen in Germany, for example.

RW: Just to add a little bit, I entirely agree with what you say. I think reunification is in a sense a lovely ideal goal, but if you think about the practicalities of it, of the way that the two populations have lived such different lives over the last sixty years, they really have very little in common and so how are they going to reintegrate? And especially from the perspective of the North Koreans I think it would be very difficult to come to terms with the society that has developed in South Korea. So although it's an admirable ideal, I think the practicalities of it would be very, very difficult, and for the moment, to go back to realist internationalist politics which the Chinese love to do, I think they would be much happier with two states in Korea rather than a reunified Korea, which would have more of a Korean perspective on its future than the two states where China is much more able to influence the politics of both of them.

NA: Anyone else?

EG: I can throw some random thoughts in. I don't think I can really add anything more to the question of identity than what has already been said, and very nicely articulated, but what I would say is maybe there is another solution to this, which could lie in bringing it back to our theme of the Winter Olympics, in thinking that there was, of course, the unified ice hockey team. I'm not suggesting they could just unify the ice hockey team. There are several different ways that countries can reunify, the obvious one to think about it Germany, but we do have other examples around the world. There's the Northern Ireland model, we could also think maybe closer to Korea in terms of what China did with the one country two systems. Now, I sort of think that's maybe the only feasible way that you could ever have a kind of a unification, where you really actually did have two separate systems with two separate governments functioning completely differently, but ostensibly agreeing that they are one country, whilst just not necessarily interfering in each other's affairs. Not that that's what China has actually done with Hong Kong, but it's what it said it would do. I wonder if that's maybe the only feasible way that we could bring about anything that looks like a unification, but, I mean, the German model, it's difficult to imagine that in our lifetime.

NA: I'm just going to move on to our second prepared question. I'm going to move this discussion because I think this idea of what's going on in the Olympics, and this idea of some kind of unification, whether or not it was superficial on an ice hockey team, but I mean we do have those in sports. In the Six Nations, the Irish one, right? We do have this in sports, this is not something new, but obviously it's recent in this instance. So I'm going to move to our next questioner: Shelton Smith.

Audience: Hello, I'm Shelton, I'm a first-year studying APS Korean. My question for the panel is: In your opinion, was the halt in tests purely to gain access to the Olympics, or do you think that Trump's hard pressure had forced the DPRK to step down from its adamant standpoint that they would eat grass before halting their nuclear programme?

NA: OK, so perhaps start with you, Maria.

MR: So you're referring there to the North Koreans halting their nuclear tests?

Audience: Yeah.

MR: Yeah. It's a good question. The North Koreans have done these tests periodically for a long time really now, and they do them for a short period of time and then stop. So it's very hard to know whether this is because of Trump. In the past whenever the US has exerted pressure on North Korea, the North Koreans have tended to respond in quite an aggressive way, so I don't think it would be in keeping with past behaviour to suddenly stop these tests. But how long does it take to do a missile test? It's not going to go on forever. It's something that's time-limited anyway. But just thinking about the way that the North has responded in the past to aggression from the US, I think it's really unlikely that it was a response to Trump.

RW: What we don't know, of course, is the sort of internal engineering dynamics of the North Korean processes. What they feel that they need to do next, how successful they feel they have been in what they have already done, what sort of capabilities they are building. But nonetheless we have seen a halt in testing for the last few months, and that has certainly helped reduce the feeling of political pressure on the peninsula. Whether or not that is a response to the US pressure and the sanctions regime, I sort of vacillate. I listened with interest to what you were saying about other countries, third countries that North Korea is finding it more and more difficult to have dealings with, that it is feeling more isolated, and I think the sanctions have been stronger, and they have been biting harder. There is a whole sort of theology around sanctions, whether in principle they are effective or not effective, endless arguments over this, and I guess North Korea will be another sort of case in this endless argument process. But something clearly happened to make the North Koreans be prepared either to make a gesture themselves, or respond to the work of the South Koreans. I suspect it probably wasn't, as it were, a last resort by the North Koreans, saying 'Oh my god, we're so cut off, we've got to do something'.

But clearly they did feel that the road that they were travelling down was one that was just sort of getting further and further out of control, not least because of the uncertain responses coming out of the White House to what was being done, all the fire and fury stuff. It must have given them cause to think, at least a little. So I think that, I mean I do agree that the South Koreans deserve a lot of respect for the diplomacy that they have conducted. That has enabled us to get to this very surprising condition where suddenly President Trump has said that he is willing to have a meeting with the North Korean leader. The problem is where do we go next on the diplomatic front? On the military front any halt in the testing is not a move towards denuclearisation, or reducing the North Koreans' reliance on their missiles and on their nuclear technology, because that's about North Korean survival for them. They are not going to give that up. They're not going to move backwards. They may be for the moment prepared not to move any further forwards, but they are not going to move backwards without something very real and tangible, and that - we don't really know what it is, but it involves some form of reliable security guarantee from the US. And it's difficult to see quite what that may involve.

NA: Right. I was also just thinking if I could just add, and I'll move to Virginie. Knowledge is something that's very difficult to remove, so the knowledge of how to produce nuclear weapons is there. So, there is obviously a case of full denuclearisation isn't really an option because knowledge of the thing will always be there. I don't know if there's anything that you could add, Virgine, to this.

VG: I'll try to say it loud so you can hear me. It doesn't cost anything to North Korea to say that they are going to stop testing right now. We've seen it in the past, we've heard it in the past, a lot of this testing, more the missile testing, those are communication devices.

So North Korea is pissed off because the US and South Korea are conducting 'war games', they do this every year, and we know that this is a time that, you know, always attention, and then North Korea is going to send a message, preferably over Japan just to piss them off a little bit as well. And so, that goes on like this, and when you have a look at this, over a long period of time, and what I mean by this is ten years, fifteen, twenty years, and when you have a look at this escalation and tension, you realise that this goes up and up and up, and at some point you should be hitting what in the literature we call a critical threshold. And then you move on to war. We don't have that. Why? Because there are de-escalation devices at some point, and actually the parties don't want to go to war. That's the reality.
I think, to go back to what Rod was talking about, having those weapons and not getting rid of them, we know now how North Korea got those weapons, they got the stuff from Pakistan, it's very very clear. We also know that North Korea has been selling missiles to a lot of different countries. So the missiles that we see in Syria right now, the missiles that we have seen in Libya, all of the Middle East, are North Korean missiles. They sold them legally to those countries before sanctions. They actually show on trade registers. If you go to the UN register book on trade and all of that, those things are there. Very very clear. So we actually look for that, you know, they got second hand missiles from China during the 1960s. They then copied them and sold some of them also to [...] and that, so we know that. That's kind of, not really new. There's nothing, I would say, that North Korea would not actually sell the nuclear technology for money. Because, you know, they actually bought it from Pakistan, so hey ,why not? They are not, you know, in terms of, you know, absolute nuclear power, they only to just have nuclear weapons. If other countries have them, that's fine. As long as they have them to balance, well, the United States. So right now they are not losing anything by opening themselves to dialogue. To give one example, during 1998 there was this thing that was called [...] example, perhaps some of you have come across this. Basically, a US spy plane had a look and they saw that there was actually activity in a big hole in North Korea. And back then we were in the agreed framework, so North Korea should not develop anything. So US went to IAEA and said 'we want to have inspectors, because we think that something bad is happening', then initially for six months so that inspectors would have access to this big, you know, area, and North Korea was like 'we're a sovereign nation, we're not doing anything bad, blablabla'. Six months later, they open their door and what did they find? What did the inspectors find? Nothing! So the inspectors were saying 'actually this is great, because we asked for verification, we were allowed to see nothing bad is going on, it works very well. And then you have people who were a bit more sceptical and say 'yeah well in six months, they had time to move whatever was there. What happened a few months later North Korea received a 'potato deal' actually coming from the US and other countries, basically from millions, you know, and basically that falls on North Korea's land, just like that! You know, accusations, let's try to actually milk it, which is part of their survival as well. We have to recognise that as well, they are not irrational. They actually have very very clear red lines and green lines, things that they will not do, and they will not get rid of their nuclear weapons, that's clear. And then, you know, whatever falls in their laps and can be exploited they will, because hey, why not? This is a state, a rational state, trying to survive. Any other state would do the same.

NA: Yes, please.

Audience: As a South Korean I personally disagree with your claim that North Korea has nothing to lose by giving away their nuclear power.

VG: That's not what I meant. I said that they have nothing to lose in saying that they are not going to test for the moment. That's what I mean.

Audience: But they are the country that vitally needed [...] support, and I believe the North Koreans are currently using those weapons and their upper handedness on other countries to convince their public, because they are suffering right now, and if there's something that could convince them to give supporting on them instead of going off to somewhere else.

VG: You mean their own population?

Audience: Yes.

VG: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think they do that, and you know, they talk to their own population differently than, you know, what they are talking about in the international arena. The way they frame this is like, just imagine, if Donald Trump goes to North Korea, what do you think North Korea is going to tell to his people? We are here, sitting in Pyongyang, and Donald Trump, the United States, comes to us. Victory for North Korea! They are going to sell this image to the population, and they are going to be using this for propaganda. You're absolutely right. I think you only come to nuclear weapons, saying right now, 'oh you know, we are going to actually pause and not test for the moment while we are having this—'. It's not a sign of weakness when it comes to their own population. They are saying 'we are actually having a dialogue to talk, we are stakeholders in this'. I think maybe you misunderstood what I meant by saying 'they have something to lose or nothing to lose'. I do think that they use it for population control and [...] definitely.

NA: Is there any other kind of, maybe a response to this from the audience?

EG: Could I? Is that alright?

NA: Yeah, please.

EG: Marginalised on the end here, isolated like Japan.

VG: Push you a bit further. Across the water, across the Sea of Japan.

EG; So you can fire missiles over me, I know. Yeah I would like to simultaneously agree with something that Virginie has said, and also something Rod said before. In particular, I think Virginie is absolutely correct when she says that North Korea hasn't given up anything, yet, to answer your question Shelton. So the pause is simply a pause, and actually if you look back over the history of North Korea's missile testing operations, then the period of time in which it's paused isn't that much time at all. And in fact it's just because they've been so frequent over the last couple of years that it feels like there's a significant pause right now but in the great history of it it's not that significant at all. So at the moment, they've given absolutely nothing. And that actually feeds into what Niki was saying, which is that the main aim that the United States has, in this potential summit, is to get complete, verifiable irreversible denuclearisation of North Korea. It's not possible. It's not possible. Firstly, it's one of those red lines that North Korea just won't cross. They will not get rid of those nuclear weapons, they're categoric about that. But even if you could get rid of the nuclear weapons, you can't get rid of the knowledge of how to build those nuclear weapons,

so this irreversible denuclearisation - it's a pipe dream, it could never possibly happen. So it almost raises the question - not to be too pessimistic - but what's the point? Because the main aim that the United States wants out of this is unachievable. The main aim that North Korea wants out of this is this security guarantee from the United States. Probably also not possible. So neither side can actually achieve either of the main aims, so I'm not ever so optimistic about what comes out of it.

You asked a question about Trump's policy towards North Korea, and if this had had an impact, and this is where I think I have to agree with something that Rod said, which is that it must have been part of the calculation. Even if this is actually— what we seem to be saying is that this is a clever North Korean delaying tactic, then they must also be taking into consideration the way Trump has been behaving towards North Korea over the last year or so. Many of you will have seen this idea that Trump is employing the 'madman theory', which is the Nixon madman theory, which obviously Nixon was incredibly successful with[…].

VG: What do you mean? You never know.

EG: […] which is the idea that if he behaves in this way that makes him appear mad to the rest of the world, he'll be so unpredictable that North Korea actually will fear him and will be more willing to bow down to demands, because they just can't predict what he's going to [..]. I don't really buy this.

NA: No.

MR: He's not that smart.

EG: I don't think that that's what he's been doing. I mean, he has clearly been more aggressive and he has clearly been more assertive, certainly at the rhetorical level. We've never heard presidents using phrases like 'fire and fury' before. So it must have been part of the calculation, but having said that I think most likely out of this is that North Korea is just simply delaying whilst they see what they can get out of this. It's what they've always done in the past and it's most likely what they're doing now. And the other point about that is - so you were talking about how they would sell this to the North Korean population, so sure, if Trump goes to Pyongyang well that will be a fantastic public relations victory for Pyongyang, but what do they know about it right now? I mean, it's not […]. We're all talking about his now, and we're all excited about it and debating it and talking about it, but what about the North Korean population? It's not been mentioned in North Korean press, to the best of my knowledge. I don't know if anyone has seen anything since then. The South Korean delegation was reported, but this prospect of a meeting with Trump hasn't been raised yet. Phil, you want to say something.

Audience: You actually touched on something that I've been thinking of for a long time whilst we've all been talking from right to left, all the way through. The populations of each country, obviously it's going to be very hard to gauge what each of them think, and with leaders representing the population, so Trump represents the current interest of America, and then vice versa for every country. It's very easy to focus on the military aspect and the threat of weapons, and their devastation, or the threats of economic pressure on each country, what do each of you kind of think the current population are going to really think of this situation, from each of your representative countries, sort of thing? So what do you really think people are thinking, trying to disregard what the leaders are representing?

NA: Yes, I think a very very good question. I want to start perhaps with Rod.

RW: It is very very difficult in China to get a handle on what the people of China think about any particular issue. I suspect on the Korean side of things, by and large, they don't care. It's not a high priority for the people of China what happens in Korea. What they do care about, if you look at that, is the sort of strategic position of China, that China has now properly stood up in the world and deserves greater respect from all the powers concerned, including, in particular, the United States, and I think that, again, from a populist perspective in China this new, strong nationalism that seems to be coming out of the new leadership, with more assertive policies, is popular and plays well, but as far as the Korean peninsula is concerned, not really. There was a time when there was a lot of propaganda about how close China was to North Korea, but that has really died away and the whole sort of business about the Korean war is not really played up very much in the sort of narrative of the People's Republic of China. So I don't think they care hugely, it's the policy makers that care about it.

NA: If I could take that to Ed, [...] Japan.

EG: Sure, I was going to rephrase that for you, to cite Mark [...], but what does China think? 1.4 billion people, so I think we always have to be very very careful of saying 'Chinese people think this', because there's a diversity of views in China, no matter what some people may try and tell you. The same, of course, is also true of Japan. I think there is a diversity of views in Japan. It is easier to know what public opinion is in Japan, because of course we have much more reliable public opinion polls that come out of Japan, it's much easier to do those. I haven't seen any in recent days, so it's difficult to comment exactly on that, but I would say that the two things which are usually prioritised by Japanese people when it comes to North Korea are the nuclear weapons. As I mentioned before, there's — I think very understandably — there is this big scar on the Japanese psyche about nuclear weapons, and what is usually perceived as a very really threat of them coming under nuclear attack again. And so I think that is usually the biggest priority. Now ultimately if it appears that this could result in the denuclearisation of North Korea, which the panel here seems to think that it won't, but if it does appear that way then it would be seen I think in a positive light. Having said that, the other big issue, which is something else I mentioned earlier on, is the abduction issue in Japan, which — despite really concerning only a small number of people, and I'm not trying to diminish the importance of a small number of people — it is raised as this massive issue for Japan and for Japanese people, and it's usually sort of the first or second thing that Japan should be talking to North Korea about, and there shouldn't be a resolution with North Korea unless all of these abductees are returned to Japan. So I think that sort of tells you where some of the priorities will lie.

NA: Maria, may I have your thoughts?

MR: Well, the US is also a huge country, and there's a great diversity within it. At the same time, I think it's also fairly true to say that it is politically polarised. Trump lost the popular vote by about 3 million but because of the way that the electoral college works he did win the presidency, and I think this kind of orcish rhetoric that he uses actually is quite popular with his base. It has a kind of domestic political function - they like a president who talks tough. Equally, you've got the many democratic-leaning Americans who will dislike this

just as much as Trump's base likes it. But actually I think that if you ask most Americans to rank, in order of importance, what political issues are important to you at the moment, I think North Korea will be really low down, actually. I think it's an issue that is important amongst the elite, and certainly the foreign policy elite, but I think for most Americans, unless North Korea is actually threatening Hawaii — and there were rumours that they could do that, maybe they can, last year — I would say it's fairly low on the priority list of most Americans.

RW: Can I just add one idea to that? If the North Korean claims about the technology they have developed are true — that they can now realistically threaten the mainland of the United States or are planning to do so — I think that's a real problem for policymakers in Washington, because that is the first time in living memory, I think, that a state has developed a capacity to threaten the homeland of the United States, and do you want to be in the administration that allowed that to happen? And I suspect that there's some of that thinking at the back of the minds of policymakers in the United States. It was perhaps tolerable for North Korea to develop a nuclear capability that would be — if it were used at all — used within the region. But if that threat now extends to the continental United States, I think that that's a real headache for policymakers in Washington.

VG: Well, what could North Korean people think about all of this? I think — it's a very difficult question, obviously — but I think the elite and the people are concerned about the same thing, and that's survival. At the people's level, the daily existence is about survival, going about business and work, what you ought to do to be able to make your life OK, tolerable, and better. One thing that I remember from when I was in North Korea was just to listen to the noise in the street — close your eyes and you hear: kids getting out of school, they sound just like any other kids getting out of school in any city. Teenagers giggling, people going about their daily life. And I think this is what we also need to think about, that there is a daily life, when it comes to North Korea, that a lot of people, many many thousands, millions of people, just going about their day-to-day life, and trying to make it. I think for me that is the most important. The regime is what it is, but the future is about those people and that life.

NA: So, obviously, I think there's quite a lot that we can take from that. The key here really is that it matters to policy, and this is very much a diplomacy thing. I think one of the key things that we can perhaps draw out from that question is this thing that Virginie was talking about — this kind of critical threshold — and actually engagement starts to reduce this down so we can see also there's a strategic process, and that very much leads to our next question for the panel, from Lauren Roberts.

Audience: Hello, I'm Lauren, I'm a part graduate of the Korean Studies programme here and soon to be starting the MA of Korean Studies. My question for the panel is: do you think South Korea's willingness to engage in talks with North Korea during the Olympics will create a domino effect for other countries to engage in diplomatic relations with North Korea?

VG: Yeah, I'll take this one. I think it's very hard to say. When we have a look at how many official diplomatic relationships North Korea has with the rest of the world, there are many many many many, some are very very old, and there's a question of depth. Who are, really, the countries that are their friends, that are close to the DPRK, and not that many, really. If we are looking at this from a European perspective, we do have […].

Sweden has always had a particular relationship, because of the embassy and all of that. There were talks of that potential Trump and Kim Jong-Un meeting happening in Sweden, actually, or in Norway. On neutral ground perhaps, a halfway point, maybe, for this to actually legally happen, as well. At the European level you have countries coordinated by sanctions as well, so it's quite difficult to engage. There's engagement in the UK, with the DPRK. It's really quite limited. Who is left, really? There's Cuba, but that relationship has a number of variants, it's not like it was when Castro was alive. There are a few countries that would be open to this, but what we've seen is some engagement when it comes to middle power, or middle power diplomacy. So Australia, for example, has always talked quite a bit directly to North Korea, but then closed off, there's sort of that kind of back and forth. Canada has also kind of done the same. There has been staying with the line of non-proliferation and all of that. I see very little potential for other states to say 'let's actually do this', because of the UN sanctions. If everything is regulated with a UN security council resolution, there's not much you can do.

NA: Maria, did you have anything to add.

MR: Yeah, it's a really good question. It's hard to say for certain, but I guess I would just echo what Virginie said about the UN sanctions, and in addition US treaty allies — I'm thinking especially about NATO allies — they're going to continue to defer to the US for the most part when it comes to North Korea, because the US is actually a party to that conflict because it's still technically at war with North Korea. So I can't see — and this is a very Western perspective — I can't see of America's treaty allies, it's greatest allies actually trying to forge an independent path on this. I think they will just defer to the US and it's going to be a long long time before we see that action.

NA: Rod?

RW: I too think it's a very good question, and it is a question that I think exercises policymakers, certainly in the UK and probably in the European Union, of 'shouldn't we not be trying to play a constructive role in all this? How can we — seeing the potential downside of a potential escalation of tensions in North Korea, surely it is in our interest to try and find some way of reducing those tensions, and contributing towards a way of managing the processes on the Korean peninsula?' The trouble is there's very little leverage or opening for any third countries to get involved. The six party talks actually had the people round the table who were most closely involved: the Russians, the Chinese, the Koreans, the Japanese, the US, etc. For the others there really wasn't much opening into that. The European Union were involved in the last attempt, that failed to find some lasting solution in providing the North Koreans with some kind of nuclear power generation capacity in return for no further development in nuclear matters, and the European Union was involved in that. But that all came to nothing. So I think it's a real challenge for policymakers to find a constructive way in which they can be involved, and also to open up a new diplomatic front is a real challenge. You have to be quite confident of what you are doing and how you are doing it. The Scandinavians have done this in respect of North Korea and also, for example, in the Palestinian peace process. But to think that suddenly we're going to get a rush from countries across the world engaging more closely with North Korea, I don't think so, because there's no real interest for them in so doing.

EG: If I could firstly congratulate you on being what will be the first intake of people studying an MA in Korean Studies outside of the Korean peninsula — little plug for our university

there — but to answer your question, I'm afraid my answer is going to be depressingly similar to my colleagues on the panel here, which is simply 'no, not yet'. I can't see how there are going to be a great rush of countries who are likely to go ahead of what the United States is doing. I think even those countries that are not necessarily treaty allies of the United States would find it difficult to launch into something before the United States has reached an agreement. Of course in the very hypothetical scenario in which the United States does reach some kind of agreement with North Korea, well that's kind of a different kettle of fish.

So, with my Japan hat on, which I'm apparently wearing today, I try to think about this and what would Japan do. Well, Japan does have history with this, and actually Japan did try this a few years ago when Koizumi was the prime minister of Japan, and he was — I was going to say a bit like Trump, he wasn't anything like Trump, he was much more intelligent than that — but he was also very very flamboyant, he had similar hair, but also was very big on big gestures and so he was the very first Japanese prime minister to actually go to Pyongyang, and so it sort of appeared there that there could be a breakthrough, but yet that broke down, and there were a number of broken promises from North Korea regarding missile development and missile testing, and I think that experience in Japan would prevent Japan from doing anything at all. Even if they weren't already bound by just following what the United States do. So, like I said, I don't really disagree with anything my colleagues on the panel have said, which is depressing, but I think we have to wait and see what comes out of this, which we also seem to think isn't going to be very much. How depressing is that?

NA: So perhaps we can move to our fourth question here, Matthew Parker?

Audience: Good afternoon, I'm Matthew Parker, I'm a first-year Korean Studies with APS, and my question is: Does Moon Jae-in have the fortitude to be a forceful negotiator in talks with Kim Jong-un, or is Moon likely to make sacrifices?

VG: Well, I think it's not just Moon. I think it's everybody around. When we have a look at South Korea and we compare South Korea and the United States, when you have South Korea you have the mystery of unification, you have a number of people, a number of career diplomats who've been working on this and been engaging on a daily basis with North Korea to some extent because of the [...] complex and all of that. So I don't see one person going in, I think it's unlikely, actually, that the president will be the main negotiator. That is not, really, the goal. You have [...] the person to engage in this, and then you have a diplomatic team, specialists, who are going to do the daily work in getting this agreement together. And it's the same when it comes to why it's a bit problematic for Donald Trump to say he's going to go there and negotiate. What? No. You need to have that team behind, and that team right now isn't there, for the United States. That is really the big problem.

NA: Maria, can you pick up on that?

MR: Yeah, actually, I was just going to say with regards to diplomacy that one thing I forgot to mention is that the Trump administration is basically gutting the US state department. They've gotten rid of like 30% of their employees over the past year. That's partly because they've shut various departments, but it's also partly because so many people have resigned because there's been this colossal drop in morale, because the state department has been so sidelined in US policymaking. And as someone mentioned earlier, I can't remember who it was, the US does not have an ambassador in South Korea at the moment,

so that's another reason why I think there's not much chance an awful lot comes out of the summit meeting because who is going to do the negotiating for the US? I don't really know.

NA: Ed, do you want to add anything?

EG: Yeah. I'm not enough of a specialist, I think, in South Korean politics, which is to say I'm not a specialist at all, in South Korean politics, to really give you a proper assessment of Moon Jae-in. What I would say is I'm not sure fortitude is quite the right characteristic you need for negotiations. Certainly, any negotiation necessitates sacrifice or compromise, at the very least, otherwise it's not going to be any kind of success at all. Look closely at Brexit negotiations at the moment, you'll see some good examples of that. He's already given some way in the overtures that he's got with Kim Jong-un at the moment. So the willingness to actually go and meet him, it's a bit of a political gamble, I think, for a South Korean president, because if this goes wrong there's still a big swell of feeling in South Korea that this is a country we're at war with, that we have never actually settled peace with. So we saw some of these protests in the Winter Olympics, and they were protests against the unified Korean team, and a significant minority of South Koreans were really quite angry that South Korea was marching in its own Olympics without its own flag. And so, it is a big political gamble, and I suppose the pay-off for him, if it all works out, he probably wins the Nobel Peace Prize, doesn't he, in the end of it? Certainly, he would have to make some sort of sacrifices, but how much he can actually give and what can he give the North Koreans that will still leave him secure at home? I'm not sure.

NA: Rod, do you want to have anything to add to that question?

RW: Just a few remarks on summit diplomacy, that generally speaking the only way to have a successful summit is to have had an awful lot of pre-summit preparation by lower-level officials, either overtly or covertly. But somehow, a lot of negotiation has to take place beforehand, and the fortitude, if you like, comes from the strategic direction from the leader saying 'I want this to happen', and then the bureaucracy, as it were, comes into action and works out something that the leaders, then, at the summit can by and large confirm. Because it is comparatively rare for face-to-face negotiations by leaders to work out every particular problem. Usually it's done beforehand. Not always, and sometimes leaders to make a difference, but it is very difficult — I don't know much about South Korean politics or personalities, but I think it would be a real challenge for President Moon to have a meeting with President Kim and find themselves having reached a real breakthrough. He needs a lot of fortitude, he needs a lot of fortitude and courage to have done what he has done, and that is a really impressive achievement, but the next steps are going to be really even more difficult, and it's not so much courage in the face of Kim Jong-un, it's courage in the face of his own people and his own democracy that he needs.

NA: We move on to our last question. After the question has been asked if I could ask each member of the panel to respond to the question but also include a closing statement if that's OK. So our last question is with Ila Christianson

Audience: Hi, I'm Ila Christianson, I'm a final year Korean Studies student. Like you were mentioning, the US seems to have a sense that the [...] South Korea, so would it be a realistic possible outcome of the proposed summit [...] return to formalised policies, such as the six party talks, or is that too optimistic?

NA: Perhaps we can start with Maria on that one.

MR: So the question was will it be a more likely outcome that there will be a return to the six party talks?

Audience: Is it a realistic possible outcome, yes.

MR: It's not unrealistic, I think. I can't imagine that the Trump administration is going to be able to achieve all of the outcomes that it wants through one summit meeting, and at the moment there doesn't seem to be enough Korean expertise in place at the state department for them to do as Rod suggested, which is to have lots of advance negotiations. I just don't think the Trump administration are organised enough to be able to do that. So I think the best conceivable alternative might be that they come up with agreement on a step-by-step process going forward. I would see that as the best possible outcome.

NA: Rod, do you want to weigh in?

RW: I agree, President Trump talks of being able to do a deal, but the content of that deal is far from clear, whatever deal that might be. And even if there were a deal in reach, there would then have to be a follow-up process of how that deal is actually implemented and working through the fine — and increasingly finer and more difficult — details of what that deal seems to have reached. Secondly I think, even though it is clearly very important for there to be direct contact between the United States and the DPRK, and the more of that surely the better, they are not the only people with interests in that region. The Chinese would certainly not wish to see any deal done that excluded them, where their interests were not taken fully into account. The Russians too. The Japanese too, I think. And the South Koreans. Nobody wants deals done by self-appointed arbiters of the future of the world, especially if those two self-appointed arbiters are President Trump and President Kim. It is very difficult to see how any other parties could be confident in working with a process like that, and there needs to be some kind of process.

The six party talks… I don't think there's a great deal of enthusiasm for reviving those, especially in that particular format, but in some way or other the interests of those concerned in the Korean peninsula do have to be taken into account. And I would also say that somehow the interests of the United Nations, since all the sanctions were done through the United Nations, since the armistice is somewhere there at the root of all of the problems that we are having to deal with, there is another non-state but real interested party.

EG: I think I would echo a few of the things that some of my colleagues here said, particularly Maria, you said that probably the best thing to come out of this would be a step-by-step agreement, so certainly an instant return to the six party talks I think is probably a bit optimistic, but we do need something to come out of this, I think, so Rod you said that the more contact there is the better. Surely contact between the United States and North Korea is a good thing, it's better than not having any contact. So if there is something that can be formalise in the future that will involve more regularised contact between the US and North Korea, it will involve South Korea. I do think it needs to involve China, because it needs China to be in there, but at the risk of repeating myself about Japan, I don't think Japan does need to be in there. I think Japan probably feels like it needs to be in there, but I don't think that it does. I don't think it will actually help, and I sort of feel the same way about Russia as well. I think if there could be some kind of regularised contact between those countries, maybe not necessarily one that created some kind of new alphabet soup

or regional organisation, we've probably got enough of those, but at least some formalised mechanism through which diplomats or leaders or representatives could at least meet and discuss these issues, that would be a positive step for the region. I also fear that because we are in the hands of Donald Trump at the moment that he does seem to believe that it's possible to do a deal and at the end of that it'll all be sorted out. I've never met anyone sensible who believes that that's how the North Korean situation will be resolved, so while I do think it's realistic to hope that something of a step-by-step nature could come out of this, it certainly is quite optimistic, given who we've got there. But, you never know. Three months ago I didn't think we'd be sitting here talking about this, so what do I know?

NA: Virginie?

VG: I think the six party talks is just a—. I mean, we're talking a decade ago. We haven't seen anything meaningful over the past decade, even though we were — and you know, it's not even a Trump problem, it's actually an Obama problem as well, because under the Obama administration, I very much remember when Kim Jong-il died, it was a few days before Christmas, he passed away, and I thought the stars were aligned. I thought 'right, Kim Jong-il has passed away, there's going to be this vacuum, it's an Obama administration, we are going to see some sort of movement, some sort of contact'. But nothing has happened. Under the Obama administration you had strategic patience, which hasn't done anything in the meantime when North Korea has tested numerous numerous numerous times. I think there's the question of the deal, and you both mentioned this, there was a deal under the six party talks, a sort of a nineties deal which was hailed as very very much a great — and in that deal North Korea was going to denuclearise. The counterpart to this was that there would be a conversation about replacement of energy at a certain time. And that was what was in the provision, this was facilitated by China, China was actually the country that was the driver to bring those states together, because everyone else was busy in the Middle East and outsourced that diplomacy to China with regard to North Korea. So you have that deal. 'At an appropriate time', for North Korea, meant the day after. 'At an appropriate time', for the United States, meant never. Or as late as possible and possibly never. So you have a deal, but if you have a deal that you can't enact then you have nothing. So anyway we have to be very careful about this whole idea of having a deal at any cost, because that is not how it's going to work. When it comes to the six party talks, there were a lot of problems within the six party configuration. Japan was using this to bring its own agenda — the abduction issue — and North Korea hated it and left the negotiating table a number of times because they were say 'well, look, Japan is bringing its own agenda into this'. They didn't want that. Then there was CBID, which you talked about. You know, [...] and every time that term was used North Korea absolutely hated it as well. They did not want to have it on any documents. We can't go back to that. In the meantime what do we have? We have a nuclear North Korea. I think we have to stop saying North Korea doesn't have nuclear weapons, because it does have those capabilities. What it doesn't have, probably, is a proper reentry system. We were talking about hitting the American shore, that is actually the problem, with missiles that would go out of the atmosphere then reenter — that reentry technology is not there yet. That means they are not able to send that bomb to New York, let's say, tomorrow. OK? They are working on it. So, we have a nuclear North Korea. What I've been suggesting for a number of years is maybe we need to have a conversation about how to be a responsible nuclear stakeholder. Not denuclearisation, but how we go on from that, because that is actually something that would be very problematic for North Korea. If you tell them 'you know what? Fine. We know you have nuclear weapons. Now, be responsible, let's talk about how to secure those

safely so that we don't have accidents, so that we don't have this, we can't do that…' It's in a way killing the anger and the reason to be upset. And it's launching the discussion in a different direction. I think that's where I would like to see things go, to actually have a different discussion, because bringing back discussions and situations that we had fifteen years ago isn't going to work. Russia is a different Russia. China is a different China. The US is different. South Korea is very different than fifteen years ago.

NA: I think one thing that's become very clear is that this obviously is a very important topic, and one that is consistently changing. I think if we were to hold this same panel again in a few weeks' time there would be very different things that we could have a discussion on. It does just go to show how important the area is, and it should, hopefully, reinforce for so many of you the importance of the degree which you are taking, and I want to extend my appreciation for you coming this evening and listening to this conversation, and I hope that you have found it very rewarding. I also want to say if you can please give a nice warm congratulations and thanks to our panelists, who have ventured all the way up here to Preston to give this talk to you. So please give them a nice big round of applause. Thank you.

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