

South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy and Regional Security Cooperation

Young Jong Choi: I would like to thank the Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA for giving me this wonderful opportunity. I'm also very much honored to speak in front of this distinguished audience.

Today's talk, I will talk about three things. First, I will talk briefly about what is going on in South Korea, a very dynamic country. What are the security concerns of South Korea these days? Secondly, I will go over South Korea's middle power activism. Finally, I will talk about what the United States and South Korea can do together to bring an institutionalized security structure to Northeast Asia.

Current Situation in South Korea

About the current situation in South Korea, I will say an ideological warfare is going on both domestic and foreign policy fronts.

The Lee Myung-bak government is now busy with cleaning up the mess caused by the previous two governments, that is, big government, and also pro-North Korean policies. While defining that period as the lost 10 years, the Lee government is attempting to turn the clock back by implementing new liberal reforms and restoring the strained ROK-U.S. alliance. However, there is a strong political backlash against these efforts, and domestic reform is not easy, not just because of Lee Myung-bak's incompetence or strategic mistakes, but also because the leftist opposition is simply too strong and creative.

On the foreign policy front, turning back the clock is first, not easy, again, due to a highly mobilized, globally renowned

domestic opposition. And its most imaginative accomplishment was the creation of the myth of mad cow disease from U.S. beef, which drove tens of thousands of South Koreans into the streets for several months. I think it was largely an outpouring of anti-Americanism disguised in the name of public health and safety.

Secondly, turning back the clock is not a plausible option since the *status quo ante* no longer exists. That means, the world surrounding South Korea right now is not what it used to be 10 years ago when South Korea began its estrangement into the wonderland where the obsession with Pyongyang turned South Korea blind toward the outside world. This is much more fluid and complicated without a clear dividing line between friends and enemies, the U.S.-China relationship is changing from potential enemy to strategic partner, and the U.S.-North Korea relationship is also not fixed in a state of permanent antagonism, and the Japan-China relationship is also moving beyond the stage of perennial suspicion, and Russia is back onto the main stage of regional power politics, and China is also rising, and Japan is normalizing itself into a major military power, and North Korea's survival tactics are ever evolving.

Therefore, simply going back to 10 years ago is not a viable option for South Korea. And what is worse, the short trip back to the past was not that smooth and pleasant. President Lee Myung-bak's effort to restore close ties with the United States and Japan so far caused only North Korea's anger and China's concern. And Seoul also lost a lot of social capital in its relationship with the United States in the process of the beef

incident, and the territorial dispute with Japan is ever aggravating. So the U.S.-Japan-South Korea triangular cooperation that brought both security and prosperity to South Korea during most of the post-World War II period seems beyond the reach of South Korea.

I think it is a tough call who will win in this ideological war and where South Korea will be headed in the future. But I think that South Korea and the United States have a lot to do to prevent history from repeating itself.

Security Concerns

If I elaborate more on South Korea's security concerns, first of all, I will say North Korea is not taken - unlike in the United States - as a serious threat in Seoul. Of course, North Korea's nuclear threat is now taken seriously inside the Blue House where President Lee Myung-bak resides. Even though it is quite a change from the Roh Moo-hyun era, this threat perception is still not widely shared among South Korean people. And North Korea is still considered more as a brother in need than a threat to be stopped. Moreover, the United States had shown a strong commitment to denuclearize North Korea, and other neighboring major powers have a shared interest in stopping it.

So with this kind of insurance in place, South Korea's major concern has been to secure a seat at the negotiating table, and avoid taking undue financial burdens, and South Korea even took a pro-North Korean stance in dealing with Pyongyang's nuclear program. From the perspective of South Korea, the Six Party Talks have worked relatively well in containing North Korea's nuclear threats even if it failed to make North Korea nuclear free.

Anyway, the threat from North Korea is very hard to sell in South Korea's domestic politics. Instead, South Koreans feel increasingly more threatened by China and Japan. China, South Korea's number one trading partner, of course, is a land of opportunity for Korean businesses, and strategically, China holds the key to North Korea's nuclear problem. At one point, former President Roh Moo-hyun appeared to have expected that China would elevate South Korea to the position of a balancer Northeast Asia; then came China's attempt to incorporate a part of ancient Korea's history into its own. And South Koreans came to realize that China was no different from other ascending powers mindful of building their newly gained power for their own national interest.

So South Koreans no longer have a fantasy about China and once back into the reality, the South Korean government is - in addition to alignment with the United States - exploring the possibility of strategic partnership with China. And several days ago, also with Russia, when President Lee Myung-bak visited Russia. Even though its concrete shape, I mean the strategic partnership, is not clear, but it is a substantial departure from South Korea's traditional diplomacy. But South Korean government knows that this strategic partnership is not enough and South Korea needs more than that - I mean a regional structure.

And about Japan, South Korea can no longer take it for granted. South Koreans have considered Japan under a permanent obligation to help or support them whenever necessary due to its colonial past. Japan has not betrayed this expectation, partly due to guilty feelings and partly out of self-interest. And Japan is accelerating its move to become a normal state by

shedding its memory of an inglorious past, beefing up its military strength and pursuing active and assertive diplomacy. Japan is not as hesitant in confronting South Korea as it was in the past, be it the history textbook issue or territorial disputes. And also, instead of being a passive state constantly in fear of a rising China and an uncontrollable Russia, Japan is actively engaging itself with China and Russia. South Korea's strategic value will decrease substantially if China is no longer something to be contained. In that case, a normal Japan may easily bypass South Korea in regional politics. Japan is rapidly becoming an independent variable to South Korea.

So unlike the Cold War period, the security environment surrounding South Korea is very fluid, dynamic and uncertain. And nothing is given for South Korea, including the ROK-U.S. bilateral security alliance. And even a properly working U.S.-ROK alliance will not do to take care of South Korea's security concerns. Also, deepening bilateral relations with China, Japan and North Korea will offer only a partial solution given South Korea's limited leverage over those countries.

South Koreans are feeling increasingly frustrated over their complete inability to influence North Korea, China, the United States and even Japan. If the nationalism and anti-Americanism that brought Roh to the presidency five years ago arose largely from elated self-confidence and national pride, the recent rise of nationalist feelings in South Korea is more a reflection of anxiety, fear, and frustration.

Under these circumstances, South Korea has good reasons to go regional, and a regional security structure can add stability and certainty to South Korea's security

environment. Depending on the strengths of institutional norms and rules, South Korea can also lessen power asymmetry vis-à-vis China, Japan and even North Korea. And a regional security structure will provide breathing space to South Korea which has been unavailable in a tight bilateral alliance with the United States. It will also have the effect of boosting South Korea's self-esteem as well as the legitimacy of its political leaders.

A regional structure will also be useful for it to manage North Korea. And North Korea's nuclear issue is currently deadlocked even though China has high leverage against North Korea, and the hegemony of the United States has applied a "carrot and stick" approach. So I think it seems a matter of will and strategy, not of power capability. So I think it is worth giving it a try to find a regional institutional solution.

A more serious problem for South Korea is a post-nuclear era North Korea. To reform North Korea in a sustainable and non-threatening way while minimizing costs to South Korea will be a daunting task and a multilateral approach will be better even for burden sharing.

Middle Power Activism

I will talk about South Korea's middle power activism. Regional security cooperation is not just in South Korea's interest, but South Korea is in a good position to take the initiative. As you all know, the United States and North Korea are the most sensitive countries when it comes to state sovereignty. Accordingly, the United States has quite often opted for unilateralism over multilateralism and North Korea has even refused to join the international community. And China is

slightly behind these two countries but still very sensitive to its national sovereignty. And even though Japan is far less sensitive, Japan's leadership is still a cause of concern for countries like China and South Korea. And South Korea, a medium level power with great enthusiasm for active foreign policy, is best suited to take the initiative.

South Korea's enthusiasm for regional institution building is very well known. Starting from the Asia Pacific Council initiated by Park Chung-hee in 1966, South Korean presidents have continuously shown great interest in regional economic and security cooperation. In recent years, Kim Dae-jung gave a clear shape to the future East Asian community by initiating the East Asian Vision Group and the East Asian Study Group in 1998. Roh Moo-hyun ambitiously pushed the Northeast Asian Cooperation Initiative. Building a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula as well as a multilateral security cooperation regime in Northeast Asia were his top foreign policy priorities.

This kind of active regional policy is not strange to a middle power like South Korea. The concept of a "middle power" as a distinctive category of actor in international relations is not unproblematic, particularly concerning its definition. Some define it with attributes like GDP, population and the size of territory, and others define it by behavior, particularly with active internationalist diplomacy. And in recent years, constructivists treat it as a self-created identity or ideology. South Korea may lag behind traditional middle powers like Canada and Australia and most Nordic countries in terms of diplomatic capabilities and commitment to internationalism. However, South Korea has long maintained a strong identity as a middle power.

This diplomatic activism is in part related to South Korea's domestic politics, particularly the five-year single-term presidential system. Under this restrictive system, South Korean presidents have difficulty time-wise in successfully carrying out their own domestic agendas. Foreign policy is an attractive alternative to boost their popularity and legitimacy. Such an incentive is even stronger for presidents from minority parties. This was the case with Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun and it is not coincidental that they were the two strongest advocates of an active foreign policy in South Korea's history. South Koreans have also learned from history that South Korea should not be excluded from the table set to discuss regional political issues.

The actual performance of South Korea's middle power activism, however, does not live up to its rhetoric and efforts. The most notable case was President Roh Moo-hyun's assertive diplomacy geared toward enhancing South Korea's autonomy from the United States, securing North Korea's survival, and institutionalizing regional politics.

The result was a total disaster, and ended up paying a high price for its adventurism in return for nothing. And this failure is largely attributable to the absence of support from the United States. South Korea under President Roh Moo-hyun did not just passively avoid seeking U.S. support, but quite often actively challenged key U.S. interests. South Korea's regional drive was in part driven by the intention to dilute U.S. influence on the Korean Peninsula as well as in East Asia. East Asian community building and the East Asian Summit were enthusiastically sought after since they excluded the United States. In the process, the South Korean

government has quite often showed more affinity with China, Malaysia or other developing countries than with the United States or other advanced countries in the Asia Pacific region.

South Korea needs to learn from the middle power diplomacy of Canada and Australia - the model cases of middle power diplomacy. We may divide middle powers into three groups in terms of their relationship with the United States: allies, distant friends and antagonists. Canada and Australia belong to the first group, in which middle powers pursued an active foreign policy largely with the support of the United States or with its benign neglect. And their middle power diplomacy largely served the United States' hegemony.

Nordic countries like Denmark, Norway, Sweden belong to the second group, in which middle powers kept an arms-length relationship with the United States and they pursued middle power diplomacy independently of the United States, making some differences in PKO activities and human rights issues. Sometimes, they tried unsuccessfully to reform the U.S.-led international order.

The third group includes developing regional powers like Brazil, India, South Africa and even Malaysia. They have openly challenged U.S. leadership but without much success.

So overall, the scorecard for middle power diplomacy shows that the first group performed best in making a meaningful dent in the world of great power politics. And South Korea is very close to the first group with its intimate relationship with the United States. South Korea has no reason to change its course. The history of middle power diplomacy shows that it cannot

succeed by antagonizing the hegemon, particularly in the realm of security. President Roh Moo-hyun's diplomacy was no exception. Therefore, South Korea's middle power activism has to be built solely upon cooperation with the United States.

The Case for U.S-ROK Cooperation

On the part of the United States, South Korea's role deserves more attention. At present, the region does not welcome the direct leadership of the United States. And China is not so trustworthy, and Japan is unpopular, and South Korea is underweight, diplomatically. In the short run, the United States cannot do much about China's credibility or Japan's popularity problems, but it can do a lot about South Korea's diplomatic capacity.

Institutionalized security cooperation in Northeast Asia is South Korea's diplomatic niche, and this area is relatively disregarded by major regional powers like the United States, China and Japan, who have been more concerned about global affairs and ad hoc handling of regional issues. As a result, East Asian economic cooperation has been led by ASEAN and South Korea instead of regional powers like China or Japan. Similarly, Northeast Asian security cooperation is likely to be led by secondary states, and South Korea is more than willing to lead an active diplomacy.

On the part of the U.S. government, its lack of interest in regional initiatives led to the decline of its influence in East Asia. The United States was not only disinterested in regional institutions, but also tried on several occasions to discourage regional initiatives that excluded it. The U.S. government thought bilateral security alliances would do for regional security. However, bilateral alliances are under strain

for various reasons, particularly China sees U.S.-ROK and U.S.-Japan alliances increasingly with suspicion as a scheme to contain its rise.

The United States needs to find a regional institutional structure to complement its bilateral alliance system. A rising China requires sustained and constructive engagement of the United States, and China may feel more comfortable in a regional rather than a bilateral setting with the United States. And it will also be useful to decelerate China-Japan rivalry, which is being intensely waged on a regional scale.

Washington does not have to take all the responsibilities for maintaining regional stability or building a regional security structure. Cooperation with regional countries is essential. Washington needs to understand the beauty of leadership from below. In this regard, the South Korean card deserves more attention. South Korea has a long history of active regional policy, and despite its recent aberration, it has largely been a faithful alliance partner. Fortunately, a pro-U.S. government is in power in South Korea. Washington has to take advantage of this opportunity, thereby expanding the scope of bilateral cooperation and laying the foundation for a multilateral security structure for the region. And South Korea's activism will not draw as much opposition as China's or Japan's might from regional neighbors.

Tasks Ahead in U.S.-ROK Cooperation

Washington and Seoul should and can work together to bring institutionalized security to the region. For this joint mission, both sides need to rebuild or restore mutual trust and share a common vision for the future of the region as well as the bilateral alliance. Recently, both countries agreed to

strengthen the bilateral security alliance to meet the challenges of the 21st century, specifically, into a more nimble and agile alliance that can deal with various problems arising from a fluid and complex security environment in the region. The task ahead is to share a common vision for the region.

So far, regional major powers like the United States, Japan and China have felt no strong need to come to a mutual understanding on the future of the region. The outcome was sluggish progress toward institutionalization.

The United States needs to strengthen its cooperation with South Korea to make the region more open, liberal and safe. The United States has to recognize South Korea's genuine value and this requires the United States to keep a more balanced position between Japan and South Korea. The KORUS FTA was a right move in that direction, and it must be ratified at the earliest possible moment. And judging from the strong interest expressed by Japan and China in FTAs with South Korea right afterward, the KORUS FTA can not only trigger region-wide economic integration, it can become a starting point for South Korea's genuine middle power diplomacy built upon bilateral cooperation with the United States. Both countries can work together to make success in the economic realm spill over into the security realm.

For the success of this joint effort, South Korea needs to mature politically and diplomatically, thereby reestablishing itself as a trustworthy partner for the United States. South Koreans are still suffering from a victim mentality or an inferiority complex. As a result, they are overly sensitive to words like "autonomy," "sovereignty" or "national pride." Anti-Americanism still commands a wide

audience in Korea these days, and from the perspective of domestic politics, passion has taken over from reason in foreign policy-making. Quite often, South Koreans in the general public forget about budget constraints or the inevitable trade-offs between important values like security and autonomy. Most important of all, South Koreans must realize that its middle power activism can succeed only if the United States is behind it.

A diplomatic process is already underway to create a regional peace and security mechanism in the form of a working group within the Six Party Talks, and this is a good start. Both the United States and South Korea should cooperate closely on the basic framework and detailed design of such a mechanism. And it may start from a mild form of cooperation, say, cooperative security, and then may promote military transparency and joint handling of regional crises. It may gradually evolve into collective defense or collective security, and ultimately into a security community.

There are so many alternatives on the table. I cannot go over details, but I would like to mention one thing. The United States may seriously consider the option to expand NATO into the Asia Pacific region in the name of constructing a security community of democratic states, if China is a problem to the United States. And also, it is not mutually exclusive, we can work on multiple tracks. This kind of expansion, besides being a useful mechanism to contain unruly China, it can also work well to solve regional security problems like terrorism, crimes and human security issues as well as traditional security issues. And it will also have the effect of diffusing domestic opposition in South Korea against too close an alignment with the United States. And also, it can attenuate regional

concerns against the U.S. unilateralism and relieving the security dilemma a normalizing Japan may cause to the region. In addition, this option will be less objectionable to China than a U.S.-Japan-ROK trilateral security alliance. Democratic China may one day join this regime.

In sum, I would like to stress that the United States needs to draw a bigger picture than simply the North Korean nuclear problem. And also, it will be worthwhile to try a multilateral institutional approach for regional security. And also, the United States needs a middleman to apply the leadership from below approach. And it is, I think, South Korea. The United States and South Korea together need to look closely into various options currently floating around the region. Thank you for listening.

Victor Cha: It is a pleasure to be here. Sasakawa's series is a very good one and it is very useful for hearing different voices from Asia.

The 2004 Tsunami

I want to make a couple of comments on this topic of East Asian regionalism, and I want to start with a personal story, which some of you - I apologize in advance - may have heard. It was about my first week at the White House, where then-National Security Adviser Rice said, "Why don't you start once the semester ends? It's your first time in government, it will be Christmas, it will be quiet, you can learn how things work." I said, "That's a great idea." So I started right after I finished grading my exams and then we had the tsunami of Christmas week, 2004 in Southeast Asia - one of the worst disasters if not the worst disaster to hit the Asian region. For me, it was a very eye-opening experience because

for one, literally, on my third day of work, I was being asked to go chair interagency meetings in the White House Situation Room, and I would walk out the door and not even know where the Situation Room was. I had to ask a janitor to tell me which way I should go.

But to me, there are a couple of interesting things about the tsunami and the response that relate to East Asian regionalism. First, as you all know, there was an initial response in which the United States, Japan, Australia and India and then later some others formed a core group - the purpose of which was to put some of the infrastructure down and provide some of the initial investments of cash to allow a disaster relief and recovery operation to begin.

As an academic going into government, to me this whole project was very interesting in terms of regionalism for a couple of reasons. The first was that, I had just come from courses in East Asian security and international relations where everybody is talking about the rise of China. And one of the things that became very clear to me from this initial response to the tsunami was that when a crisis of this proportion hits the region, people did not look to China. In spite of all the talk about the rise of China and the decline of the United States, people did not look to China, they did not look to the United Nations, they did not look to APEC, ASEAN Regional Forum; everybody looked to the United States.

And I think this is one thing we have to remember whenever we talk about future regionalism in Asia. There is a lot of talk about other forms of regionalism indigenous to the region that don't include the United States. It is very difficult for me to imagine effective regionalism in Asia that does not include the United States

because the United States is still seen as the primary provider of collective goods in the region. For better or worse, that is the case. And whether the United States likes it or not, for that reason, it will still be seen as the leader in Asia.

U.S. Alliances and Multilateralism

The second is that Professor Choi talked about the U.S. alliance system in Asia as one of the frameworks. I think the tsunami operation really showed that the American bilateral alliance system in Asia is actually a lot more resilient than people think. People would refer to these alliances as dinosaurs, as anachronisms of the Cold War because they were bilateral and that that was not the direction in which the region was going. One of the things I think the tsunami showed was that you could use these deep bilateral relationships in ways that were very important for addressing regional needs.

And this leads to my third point, which is that there is not necessarily a zero-sum relationship between bilateralism and multilateralism in Asia. This is often the assumption that is made in a lot of the academic literature on East Asian regionalism. But if anything, what the tsunami and other sorts of efforts like this have shown is that the two are actually complementary. The core group was a very effective multilateral response to a major crisis in the region. You could not have formed that multilateral response if it were not based on deep bilateral relationships. There was probably no other grouping of countries in the region that could have formed that sort of rapid reaction and multilateral response if it were not based in some deep bilateral relationships. So these two things are not zero-sum; they are

actually quite complementary and they are quite reinforcing.

Patchwork Regionalism

So I think this is going to be the future architecture or future concept of regionalism in Asia. I do not think it is going to be something formal like the East Asia Summit. I think it is going to be much more along the lines of these different groupings that form for dealing with specific problems among countries that have the most interests. It is more functional. And these groupings, they can overlap with each other so, to me, the concept is not an umbrella organization but it is a quilt or a patchwork of different groupings of relationships that are addressing different problems. The U.S.-Japan-South Korea relationship is probably the longest of these sorts of relationships.

Professor Choi mentioned Australia's middle power diplomacy. The Australians are very successful at being the engine behind the concept of TSD, the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue among the United States, Japan and Australia, where the agenda was a wide range of issues, everything from North Korea to tsunami relief to U.N. reform to Iraq - a very useful grouping.

Former Prime Minister Abe had this concept of the quad - U.S., Japan, Australia, India - another idea. The Chinese have been very interested in the concept of a U.S.-Japan-China trilateral, a track one trilateral, which I also think is a very good idea because that is an extremely important three-way relationship to get right.

Today, Asia for the most part is at peace, it is relatively prosperous. These were not the predictions of many international relations

scholars at the end of the Cold War. At the end of the Cold War, many of the top international relations scholars were talking about how the region of Asia was ripe for rivalry or headed for conflict. That clearly is not the empirical reality today. I think one of the reasons it is not the empirical reality today is because if you look at every one of those arguments that were made at the end of the Cold War, they all assumed that there will be some sort of conflict in the U.S.-Japan-China relationship - for reasons of history, power, whatever it might be - that there would always be conflict along that triangle. And there hasn't been; it has actually been fairly good among the three. And that is a very important variable for East Asia, and that is why I think this U.S.-Japan-China trilateral is an important idea.

Northeast Asian Peace and Security Mechanism

The biggest of these groupings is of course the Northeast Asian peace and security mechanism. This idea was developed in the context of the Six Party Talks to create a more formal Northeast Asian peace and security institution. This is, I think, a distinct idea because it is the first attempt at trying to create a formal institution of that nature in Northeast Asia. It would be built upon the success of the denuclearization task of the Six Party Talks. In other words, this Northeast Asian peace and security mechanism is not in lieu of denuclearization. It can only have a chance of being successful if it is built upon the successful denuclearization of North Korea.

When this idea first came up, I was at our first set of working group meetings at the Six Party Talks. I was the U.S. working group representative for this concept, and the thing that we thought, and I do not

know, others who are out there may have much more updated information, but at the time the thing that we thought was very important as you think about building this type of security institution in Northeast Asia is you have to - you do not start by building the institutions, the secretariat and all these as some people might have wanted to do. Well, in my case, you start by going back to IR theory, which is, if you want to build a security regime of some sort, you first have to get an agreement on the norms, rules and principles that many of the actors in the region have about security. I still think this is what they are aiming for: the idea of trying to create a set of principles that all the parties, all the six parties can agree on that are important to thinking about security in the region. And that is the first step in starting to build an institution of one form or another.

But again, I think the important thing here is that this concept of a Northeast Asian peace and security mechanism has its best chance of succeeding if it is built upon progress in the Six Party denuclearization task, because being successful in terms of doing that project really enables the right level of cooperation, dialogue, consultation - the sorts of things that form the basis of building an actual institution in the region. Clearly, the whole of question of whether denuclearization is going to be a successful task is greatly up in the air now with Ambassador Hill still in Pyongyang or on his way back, so we will have to see. But those are some thoughts I wanted to give on the question of regionalism. Thank you.

Derek Mitchell: I want to add my thanks to the Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA as well, it is the second of these that I have spoken to, and I wanted to thank Matt in the back for inviting me and John Ikenberry for leading on this very important initiative of

Asian Voices. And I want to also express my appreciation to Professor Choi for his presentation.

Issues of Regional Architecture

A few things occur to me. I want to first talk about the architecture issue and then talk about the Korea component of this. In Washington, as many of you all know, I think there is a little cottage industry going on in the issue of regional architecture. Everybody is sort of looking at how do we structure things, what do we do. There is a sense that the train is leaving the station in Asia. This is the trend of looking at a new architecture, new multilateralism, and the U.S. has to get on. That it's moving out, but the outcome of these discussions - of this trend, is uncertain. We do not know exactly where it is leading to but we ought to be discussing it. So there is a lot of discussion. I think it is very important to think about. As Americans, I think we are late in this, and I particularly welcome a Korean voice in this. We have to listen to our allies; we have to hear the perspectives of people like Professor Choi.

But as we look at the issue, in my mind, of multilateralism and competing regional architectures, there are obviously competing visions about what this architecture is supposed to do. And it is not binary, it is not either/or, but there seemed to be - and I saw it as a sort of an undercurrent of Professor Choi's discussion - an undercurrent of what is developing into sort of a U.S. perspective on multilateralism and architecture and the Asian view, mostly South East Asia, but again I heard it in the presentation from the Korean perspective. And let me go through some of these somewhat binary - I do not mean to be binary - but competing visions for regional

multilateralism and integration, and they are somewhat related to each other.

First: This issue of symbolism and form versus substance. The importance of the symbolism of having this, the form of what you have together is as important as the substance of what you want to do. In some ways the medium is the message just to have this thing, like an ASEAN, in and of itself is important as a symbolic effort to demonstrate that we have integration. And the substance of what it wants to do is not so critical.

Second: The process by which you do things, process versus outcomes. I think in Asia the process by which you get outcomes is as important as the outcomes you are seeking to arrive at.

Third: Again, all related, confidence building. Do this for confidence building so nations can get along, versus actual problem or conflict resolution. Again, more process than outcome, and the act of getting together builds confidence and that is as important as anything else you might do to address concrete issues.

Fourth: Getting more to the substance, there is a dichotomy or division, I think, when you look at multilateral structures when addressing traditional security issues versus non-traditional. There is a growing sense in the region of the need to address these non-traditional transnational issues, and therefore you need to have multilateral approaches, which is true. But the sense that you can build these structures in order to deal with some of the traditional challenges of competing rivalries or conflict among nations, I think is less felt. Which is why the sort of binary bilateral versus multilateral does not work, in the sense that bilateral alliances, bilateral structures are

still very important to get at the critical baseline issues of conflict among states and that the non-traditional stuff - which I will get to a little bit later - is better handled at the multilateral level.

Fifth: Related again, is who is in and who is out of these multilateral structures. As Victor suggests, they are sort of overlapping and interlocking. As we put it in our 1998 East Asia Strategy Report, there are many different structures going on and they overlap. But the question of whether it is Asian integration versus Trans-Pacific integration, if it is just Asian, do you include India? Do you include Russia? Who is in, who is out is becoming a discussion and whether it is purely Asian or trans-Pacific is another ongoing debate as you have competing visions on what regional multilateralism is about.

The Position of Korea

And then you have this balance that I think Korea - getting to the Korea issue - balance between the alliance system and multilateralism. And for Korea, how do they balance? In other nations, how do they balance the alliance, the importance of the alliance, the viability of an alliance with the United States and keeping that perhaps front and center - we can talk about that - or giving up a bit of that importance in order to cede more importance to the multilateral, to the regional?

This is a question for Korea is. Korea is in a unique position. I think Korea is thinking much more about this than almost any other power in Asia because they are in a particularly delicate position as Professor Choi talked about. They are, like in the old adage, a shrimp among whales, and they have these great powers around them and it has always been about how do we manage

the great power rivalries when we are in the middle. And for years and years of course, I heard it back in 1991 for the first time, that we should be the arbiter, we have never invaded anybody - I think they are too busy being invaded - but anyway, we can somehow be, as I think Roh Moo-hyun meant, this idea of a balancer.

I kind of understood what he meant, not in traditional balance of power political science terms, that might be a little silly, but the idea that Korea is in as a unique position and we can play more of an arbiter role or at least manage the great power rivalries. Given the rise of China, given the end of the Cold War, given the lowering of tensions on the peninsula, the idea of being strictly aligned with the United States is somehow exposing them in a way that they do not want to be exposed and that puts them in quite a different position than Japan. I think Japan views China quite differently than Korea does.

Which gets me to this issue generally about Korea and about Professor Choi's talk specifically. I found it interesting. I think it is consistent, if I may say, that when Koreans talk about their foreign policy, what I detected here was not only a structural view on how to deal with things, I mean, you get the structure right, you get the outcomes right. But it was a very defensive crouch, in essence. It was more a reaction, I think, to the region's alignment of forces and how does Korea play with that, instead of a more positive vision for itself. I did not hear from him what Korea wants to be in the world. What are Korea's interests? What does Korea want to pursue? I did not mention this before, but when it comes to competing visions of multilateralism, what are the values or the interests at heart there? Americans talk more and more about values and norms,

others talk much more about compelling hard security interests. They're not exclusive, one can make the argument that values have a hard security component to them. But I did not hear a positive vision for what Korea wanted, how Korea was going to drive the debate, and what it wanted to do in the world, and have this discussion potentially with the United States and others. It was much more how we prevent others from playing on our turf, how we can play in the system with the hand we are dealt, and a question of how much independence from the United States they ought to have in that environment.

So if the alliance is to be strong, if the alliance is to be revitalized, what is critical is for Korea itself to come to a determination of what its independent strategic goals are and how the alliance plays into that, and what it wants to do. And then we can have a discussion and then we can work together to build the structures of Northeast Asia, East Asia, that will build security in the coming years. And it again gets back to whether the medium is the message for Korea - is simply getting the Chinese and the Japanese, the Americans, the Russians in the same room, talking, is that enough for Korea to manage that, and if that is the outcome, is it a sufficient outcome? That kind of confidence building, that is ASEAN's feeling generally, ASEAN existing in itself is an outcome because they are not fighting each other and they are talking. That may be useful for Korea. The question is, is that appropriate for the United States? Is that what we want?

I welcome this notion of a global Korea. I think this is a great way of thinking about things. This concept is very important. It is what I think Washington is looking for, that it is looking beyond its borders, beyond the peninsula. And I think we need to

understand Korea's perspective on the world and its role in this regard, so I thank Professor Choi for providing his input and I would be interested to hear some more on this.

Q&A

G. John Ikenberry: Very good. First of all, thank you. I think we are going to open it up now and entertain questions.

I might start off by simply asking about the view that I think Victor was presenting, which is that this mechanism that has been proposed as a kind of follow-on to the Six Party Talks, the working group five, I think it is, that Victor was referring to as a concrete expression of the intention to build something that would follow the hopefully successful conclusion of these negotiations on North Korea. And I just wanted to get the views of the other two panelists. Is that the most likely innovation for regional security cooperation? What is your sense of its political viability in Northeast Asia and if there is a constituency for it, why is it not already in place?

I heard from Professor Choi that Korea has a very strong interest in supplementing the alliance with a multilateral security mechanism, and a strong case being made to Washington to let Korea take the lead. The beauty of leadership from below, I think is the term you used. How does that relate to this particular proposal, there in the Six Party context.

And Derek, I guess for you, those dualities between Asian and American views, do those tensions between different approaches to regionalism find themselves manifest in that particular proposal?

Domestic Conflict in South Korea

Choi: About specific proposals, I'm not that well acquainted with the talks going on these days, but I actually like Mr. Mitchell's question about what are the values or interests of South Korea or what is the positive vision South Korea has for the region, and also for the regional security structure.

So that is actually what is missing in South Korea's discussion of that issue. South Koreans have no clear vision for their own nation because South Korea is divided between a left-oriented direction and globalization, global economic integration. So we have to wait and see who will get the upper hand. I think the next presidential election will be a watershed. If South Korean conservatives can hold on to power and pursue a reasonable global policy based upon democracy, free markets, and global integration, then South Korea can play a very positive role in making Northeast Asia and East Asia more open, liberal, and safe.

But if the South Korean left takes power again, then South Korea will be in deep trouble. And so I'm not quite sure - next year we will hear a lot of talk about the revision of the South Korean constitution; in academia and also in the political arena, they are preparing for constitutional revision. Unless South Korean domestic politics and democracy is consolidated and stabilized, consistent and coherent foreign policy is impossible and South Korea cannot have a clear vision.

So I think this is a very critical moment. The South Korean government is willing to cooperate with the United States and I think both governments, particularly if the new administration is in power next year, the new president has to consider the fact that

South Korea needs to be stabilized and also has to play a very important role. That is, as of now, all I can say.

**Agenda or Structure:
Which Should Come First?**

Mitchell: Maybe I will betray some of my biases on this, which maybe I betrayed in my talk. I mean, I think the Six Party, among other frameworks that people are talking about in Washington, everyone is trying to come up with the architecture. I mean, again, the dichotomy is: do you have a structure in search of an agenda or an agenda in search of a structure to support it? I'm one of those who thinks we should have an agenda. We should have outcomes that we are looking for, a goal, and then build the structure to support that. And the idea of saying, well, we need a Six Party process, let's do that. Then what do we do with it? Should we have a Six Party process in a vacuum outside the North Korea issue? I mean, I do not think we should rush to doing something that, first of all, has not really succeeded on the core issue which it sought to address. And secondly, I think we ought to think about practical outcomes. We have a tremendous agenda in the region, which we need to work multilaterally on, but I do not think we should have artificial structures to deal with it. I mean, everything from maritime security to energy security to climate change is going to be critical, the environment, drug trafficking and all the rest of it. And I think we ought to look at these, taking something like climate change and energy as maybe at the top - the critical ones - and think about the right ways to address this. There is not going to be one structure to address them all, there may be multiple structures and multiple ways to get at them.

So you know, Six Party, if there was some screaming need or screaming desire, if there was something like ASEAN, where you needed that confidence-building mechanism as an outcome in itself, then maybe you can push this. But I do not see that as necessary right now given the time that we put into it in Washington and elsewhere, it might be more useful to think much more bottom-up in the sense of an agenda that we have in search of a structure to support it.

Now, I think we should also - and this goes to our approach to ASEAN - we ought to be sensitive to regional sensibilities. Korea has this thought that this is important in order for it to feel more comfortable, perhaps, in working with us. It might be easier for them to work with us within an alliance if there are other structures that they can buffer their alliance system with that may expose them to China. I think we can think about that. We have to think about it a little more strategically. They may have their version of what these structures are meant to achieve, and we have our own, and that is fine. We can have, as they say, same bed, different dreams to pursue some of these things. But I think personally I'm not committed to structure over agenda. I really think it should be the opposite way.

Ikenberry: Victor, anything you want to add?

Cha: Sure.

Ikenberry: I know you disagree with that.

Mitchell: I know you do. Oh you do?

Ikenberry: No, no, no, Victor disagrees.

Mitchell: Oh, oh. I thought you did.

Ikenberry: I might a little bit, too.

Mitchell: I think you do.

Cha: Well, structure in search of an agenda, I mean, I don't - that is clearly not what the Six Party Talks is, there is a clear agenda -

Mitchell: Currently, yes, I understand that.

Cha: - in a structure of the most important players that was built to address that agenda. But I think the interesting thing about the evolution of this Six Party process is that, part of the idea is that when you bring a grouping together to deal with a particular problem, the members develop greater transparency, habits of dialogue and consultation; these sorts of things which are supposedly then helpful for dealing with other issues.

And I think in the practice of the Six Party Talks we have seen that. There were numerous occasions in which you'd come together in a Beijing plenary or head of delegations sessions, the primary issue was North Korea, but then you also had a side discussion on Burma, or you had a side discussion on bringing together the concept of the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate. Or, at a time when the Japanese and the South Koreans were arguing over some historical issue, you could have a side discussion on that.

So the primary forum is obviously to deal with the North Korean nuclear problem, but that forum then allows for other sorts of side discussions to take place, which is part of what successful institutions do. And I think that we are seeing that to an extent with the Six Party Talks and this Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism.

South Korea's Role

A second point on Korea and a more positive role. As Professor Choi said, I think the new government in South Korea is trying to delineate very clearly the concept of a global Korea, a larger player on the international scene. I think one of the most important things in that regard for any future government that is looking to put forward that vision - larger provider of ODA around the world, contributing to peacekeeping operations, actively involved in clean energy development and climate change, counterterrorism, all these sorts of issues - any leader of Korea needs to have the ability to de-link that agenda from the inter-Korean agenda. Because what has often happened in the past is there is a lot of talk about global Korea, but then when it comes to putting the resources towards that global Korea concept, the internal debate comes, "Well, shouldn't we be using that money for North Korea?" And this was a real problem in the Roh Moo-hyun government, they talked about global Korea, but at the same time, the albatross around their neck all the time was, well, we really have to save all of our resources for dealing with North Korea.

I think Lee Myung-bak, although it is still very early in his government, I think he is trying very clearly to de-link those two when he talks about how he is going to treat North Korea more like a normal country, an ordinary country, than something special. So I think this is one of the internal dilemmas that a Korean government has if it tries to define this positive global role that these two people were talking about.

Values-Based Regionalism

Questioner: Thank you. I would be interested in the views of the panel on

whether they think values-based regionalism has any place in the future architecture of East Asia. Victor mentioned a couple of organizations, the trilateral strategic dialogue, the Quad - that's a more nascent institution - that you could argue are values-based. And there are a few other emerging institutions like the Northeast Asian Peace and Security Mechanism - the outgrowth of the Six Party Talks. So I'm just interested in the views of the panel on whether they think that has a future in East Asia.

Mitchell: You're talking in terms of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization versus the League of Democracies kind of thing?

Questioner: Yes, but I guess the sort of institutions we see in Europe like NATO and the EU. I'm not saying East Asia is ready for those sorts of things, but the organizing principles behind those institutions are a common strategic outlook and to a degree a shared set of values.

Mitchell: It depends how you define values, I suppose. There are number of values that we share with China that we do not share with some of the rogue actors and such, and so you can build based on those types of common values and common interests, there are a whole host of things. But if you mean democracy, norms like that, then - I'm very strong on the need to have a U.S. foreign policy based on norms and values. The question is how you build that and how you promote that.

I think yes, for instance, when John McCain talks about a League of Democracies, I say we have one in Europe, it is called NATO. And we have that in Asia, it is called our alliance system. And I'm not sure that to have something that is explicitly about this, about values, is necessarily the right way to

go as an organizing principle. That does not mean that we do not have the U.S., Japan, Australia, India, Indonesia working all together in promoting our values and promoting norms. So I have more of the feeling that it is how you do it, rather than whether you do it, whether you are explicit in that way - if that is what you mean by values. Clearly the SCO and what China is doing is largely based on that idea. They want people to come together according to their ideas of a new security concept, with Central Asia and Russia to build a kind of new, alternative norm-based community. So we have to be aware of that and I think we should be out there with our partners, with our allies, with Korea, if they are willing, promoting our values and norms.

And this is the issue I did not raise before, how willing - I mean, the elite may or may not, as Victor says, want to go forth and do certain things in the international community, but how much are the Korean people willing to do these things? That is a separate issue.

Cha: Well, two points. The first is this notion of values-based plurilateral groupings. I agree with Derek in the sense that how you do it is important. At the same time though, it is fairly natural, I think, in the sense that the countries that we share common values with, for the most part, tend to have similar sorts of interests and agendas around the world. And I think that naturally lends towards groupings where you come together and you can have a discussion about a whole range of issues and see that for the most part you are not very far apart from each other.

So having those conversations is not a bad thing. It also helps from the U.S. perspective in terms of broadening, having our bilateral relationships more broad in

their scope, which I think is also good for the whole concept of alliance relationships. So I think, again, you do not want to sort of go around beating people over the head with it, but I certainly think there is nothing wrong with it, in fact it is a very natural progression of things.

U.S.-China Relations

The other thing, very practically speaking, is that the success of these sorts of values, democracy-based plurilateral groupings in Asia, the success of them will clearly be directly related to the strength of the U.S.-China relationship. Because if the U.S.-China relationship is fairly good, then the Chinese are fairly open to discussions about democracy. They are open to talking about it as being part of their future - maybe not as quickly as others would like - but they are open to talking. But if the U.S.-China relationship is extremely bad, then it is very difficult and all these things are seen as tools of containment. So practically speaking, I think there is a relationship between the U.S.-China relationship and where it is and the ability to put forward these ideas about democratic institutions.

Mitchell: Just to add to that, not only if the U.S.-China relationship is not good will China view this poorly, but I think the region will not go for it. The region will be very sensitive to how China views things. So to the degree that we're too explicit about this, a values-based approach like a formal League of Democracies, or if the U.S.-China relationship is not somehow managed well, then I think the region is going to be much more reluctant and neuralgic about going along with us on values-based stuff. So it has a core, another extending effect.

Ikenberry: Just one footnote on that. I have been part of something called the Princeton Project on National Security and we put out a report, Anne-Marie Slaughter and I, a year and a half ago, where we proposed a Concert of Democracies, which is not John McCain's League. It is a different concept, although it would be a democracy grouping. And we got our most vigorous pushback in Asia, and not just the Chinese, who did push back very hard when we made presentations in Shanghai and Beijing. But generally speaking, across the region, we did not detect any appetite for a kind of ideologically driven movement that could be read as anti-Chinese.

And I guess one other proposal on the table, to kind of look at its political fate, Aso's - now Prime Minister Aso's proposal for an Arc of Freedom and Prosperity - which itself has run through an arc. He didn't mention it in his Diet address the other day. So that would have been a kind of Japanese version of a values-based regional grouping and I get the sense that we might sign Japan up - the U.S. might - to some kind of formal, explicit sort of grouping, but we would not get a lot of other takers. But I do agree that the state of U.S.-Chinese relations would shape the atmosphere of various proposals along these lines.

Mitchell: And you know, Georgia was in the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity for the Japanese, and I'm sure they are glad they did not put that on paper, institutionalize that too quickly.

Korean Unification

Questioner: My question is one, to me, that is a very big potential issue for East Asian political security cooperation, in fact it could be the biggest challenge thrust upon it

at very short notice: the possibility of a peaceful unification of the two Koreas. Each year, the contrast between the enormous success of the South and the enormous failure of the North is more obvious. Kim Jong-il looks like he's on his last legs, there's no dynastic succession, so this issue could be put before us on a Christmas Eve, with new people in this government. And the question is, where are the major players - Japan, South Korea, China, the U.S. - you read commentaries in the press and it's not very clear to me where they are on this as a possibility, is it something that perhaps together should be pursued? There have been some academic studies, you don't do it like the Germans, blah, blah, blah. On the specifics, where are the East Asian governments? Starting with the U.S., is the U.S. government seriously looking at this? How would one go about it? And working with the others, are we doing any bilateral talks with Japan, South Korea, about perhaps pursuing this option, depending on what happens when Kim Jong-il leaves the scene. So my question, where is this issue that could potentially be a big issue, and in fact to me, it could be a very positive opportunity.

Cha: Why don't I start? When Derek goes into the next government in Washington, on his second day at work there will be a crisis on the Korean Peninsula and then I'll call you and say "I told you so!"

Mitchell: Come back, Victor!

Cha: No, thanks. Well, your question is an important one and it is one that has long been out there: what do you do, how do you deal with a change in the status quo on the Korean Peninsula? Those questions seem even more salient today given concerns about the health of the leadership in the

North and the absence of any clear succession plan.

The history of this is that the United States and South Korea have wanted to have discussions or have had discussions at a concept level on how you deal with potential instability in the North. Those discussions were cut short with the last South Korean government for a variety of reasons. The newspapers are at least saying that they are beginning to restart those discussions now.

It is clearly an extremely important issue. If there is something that happens in the North, as some of you have seen me write about recently, my main concern is that there is not enough discussion or pre-discussion among the key players, the U.S., South Korea, and China about how to deal with that sort of instability. Unfortunately, it was one of the topics in the context of the Six Party Talks, if we are talking about a regional institution, where that kind of conversation was really difficult to have because the Chinese and the South Koreans and some Americans thought you cannot even have that discussion unofficially because if it ever gets out that you are talking with others about preparing for a collapse of the North, that will be read as a plan not to prepare for a collapse of the North but a plan to collapse the North. And for this reason it has been very sensitive. You know, the danger today is that we have a very uncertain situation now in the North and there is not a lot of discussion taking place about how you deal with that.

Choi: I'm not representing the Korean government you know, but my personal opinion is that peaceful unification is far from my mind. As long as North Korea can reform under the guidance of China or Russia or whatever, I would prefer that to

the current situation. There is a lot of talk going on in South Korea about the potential influence of China in the event of the collapse of the North Korean regime. But I'm not actually very concerned about that possibility. As long as North Korea takes the road of China, that much reform, I would welcome it. And peaceful reunification will come after the reform of North Korea, I think. That is my understanding.

Economic Globalization

Questioner: I have an itch that has not been scratched yet, and I just wonder if anyone on the panel would like to comment on it. The problem that we had illuminated in the last couple of weeks here is not one of politics or even armies and security. It's one of cash and credit and the problems of the economies. The world economy is converging, whether we like it or not, at an amazing speed. The Chinese are involved now in things that were unimaginable just a decade ago.

North Korea, the thing that brought it to its knees was not military insecurity but economics, it was Banco Delta Asia. This is obvious. To me it seems to be the 900 pound gorilla that isn't being fed. Somehow there has got to be an accounting that takes into the process this enormous communications convergence, economic convergence, that our societies are moving so fast, that unless we sit down and think and include the processes that are happening right under our feet - we are going to have these collapses over the next few years that are going to be destructive beyond imagining. And I just wonder what the panel might do when you talk about the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. How does that fit in this larger - it is not the old stuff, it is the new stuff that is the problem.

Mitchell: You hit it spot on. When we talk about regional architecture, there is also a need to have a discussion about global architecture because the institutions that exist today may or may not have the right players in them because of the rise of India, the rise of China, the rise of the rest, as is now the term of art. As you say, I think the future is, we are becoming more and more interlocked and what happens? Win-win solutions are critical. I mean, what happens in China, what happens in Asia is going to affect us back here. And what happens in China is going to affect all of Asia. What happens here affects them. We have to think about just how intermeshed we are in that regard. So economics is the key. And this gets to the issue of values. To some degree we have different values. In other respects we have very, very common values that we need to be thinking about in broad terms. And I think it gets beyond the regional.

Now, when it comes to the SCO, that's one of those sort of traditional, regional, cross-border, China trying to balance its norms against ours. Those countries have nothing to do with China's growth or development except as small markets or maybe to get some energy from them. But on the big picture stuff, they know their game is not with the SCO. Their game is with the United States and with Japan and the major institutions, both economic and otherwise. So yes, I mean you raise a critical point as we look at some of the more traditional forms of security. The economic security component raises a whole other host of questions about how we deal with China and how we deal with its major power rise.

Cha: I think most of the discussion today about Asian regionalism and the U.S. place has been largely driven by these sort of security-type issues, or climate for that

matter, where I do not think - I mean, from a U.S. perspective, I do not think there is a - I do not have a concern that an architecture of some sort won't form or that the United States will not be a part of it. To me that is not a problem. The one place where it is a problem for the United States is on the financial side because that is one area, based on past experience, where the United States is not seen as a provider of a collective good as it is other issues, on security or counterterrorism or whatever it might be. You know, the primary example of that was the Asian financial crisis, where there were proposals for creating an Asian Monetary Fund that the United States was not very enthusiastic about. And that is the one real Achilles' heel of the United States in terms of Asian regionalism, and could form without the United States.

President Lee's Agenda

Questioner: I just want to go back to the original presentation and thank Professor Choi for a very logical, conservative rationale for Korea's activism in terms of promoting regionalism. But so far, I have not heard anything actually from the Lee Myung-bak government about its views on regionalism. So I was wondering if you could say something about what we can expect from the current administration in this regard. And then I also just wanted to ask if Professor Choi could address the question: is there a future for values-based regionalism from the perspective of South Korea.

Choi: President Lee Myung-bak is very busy with a lot of domestic troubles and also a growing financial crisis added on to that. Lee Myung-bak's original plan was that a Japan-South Korea FTA and the KORUS FTA would be the building blocks of economic integration. When he visited

Japan, that plan seemed to be moving smoothly, but the Dokdo issue came up and reasoned rationality stopped right at that point and he's at a loss about what to do. That's what it is now. It's not easy, actually, for Korea to overcome those kinds of sensitive issues like Dokdo or history textbooks or something like that. But somehow I think South Korea should overcome those things under a consultative settlement, say, Japan recognizes that those rocks belong to South Korea and South Korea will use them only for scientific research or the protection of the environment or something like that.

I'm against Koreans' oversensitivity on that kind of issue. South Korea actually possesses those rocks, and I think Japan has the right to say anything about those disputed rocks. So we can just disregard Japan, but Korean domestic politics does not allow that kind of benign or malign neglect of Japan's words. I think Korea has to overcome that, and then Korea can play a constructive role in regionalism. So that is kind of deadlocked because of Korean domestic politics.

I think we need time and effort like what I'm trying to do; I'm very open to the outside world and an outside-in perspective on South Korea. So I think that is also part of my job, I'm working on that kind of project - I'm working on changing South Korea's foreign policy structure with ten other professors and I will make a blueprint for the next president. I think you'd better pay attention to me!

"Strategic Relations"

Questioner: I have a question on a possible diplomatic dilemma for South Korea. Observing the new administration's upgrading of the alliance and relying upon

the strong alliance with the U.S., recently South Korea upgraded its relationships with China and Russia, with China in May it upgraded the relations to “strategic relations.” On Monday of this week it also upgraded with Russia, also “strategic.” A lot of people talk about a possible clash between the dragon and the eagle, between two high-stakes relationships of South Korea. For Korea, where might it stand in the near future and in the long term?

Cha: I guess with regard to the whole question of a lot of the press - I mean no offense to any press people out there - but whenever Lee Myung-bak goes to Beijing or Moscow, the press always focuses on whether they use this word “strategic” to describe their relationship in their joint statement or joint communiqué or whatever.

I think the word strategic has kind of lost its meaning, because it is supposed to designate something very important and profound. Yet if it is used both to describe the U.S.-ROK alliance and the ROK-China or -Russia relationships, to me that is less an indicator of whether those two relationships are catching up with the United States and more an indicator of how meaningless the term has become. The depth and breadth and scope of the U.S.-ROK alliance and relationship is so much deeper than China or Russia. To use the same term does not do justice to the term or to the relationship.

Mitchell: Just a corollary in 30 seconds. China uses that term liberally, and they use it to show the hierarchy of their interest in a certain relationship. So those at the top they call “strategic relations.” But it is a term, and countries go along with it because they just want to get along with China, and

they use that term, but it denotes nothing else than simply rhetoric, really.

Choi: It is typical Asian diplomatic rhetoric. “Strategic,” I think, means we will cooperate as long as we share interests or as long as it is profitable. But if not, we will not. That is, I think, strategic in that sense.

Ikenberry: Well, I want to thank you all for coming to this strategic summit, and for our strategic thinkers who have been strategically talking about strategy, would you join me in thanking them. Thank you very much.