

Spring 2024 - Marcellus Policy Analysis

## Reorienting US- North Korea Diplomacy Away from Denuclearization

By Jay Lee

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States is at an impasse with North Korea (officially the Democratic People's Republic of Korea – or DPRK). To make advancements towards peace in East Asia, it must reorient its foreign policy objectives away from ensuring Pyongyang's complete denuclearization to one that encourages mutual benefits centered around human rights and humanitarian issues. The United States must take dramatic steps to prevent North Korea from shutting Washington out entirely and drawing closer to U.S. adversaries.

The current U.S. approach, which is essentially a passive, open call for diplomacy, is problematic and will continue to encourage North Korea to seek closer relations with other countries hostile to U.S. interests.<sup>1</sup> As North Korea becomes further entrenched in the networks of adversarial nations like Russia and China, it will be encouraged to support aims that work against U.S. interests. The problem with the Biden Administration's stance is that it hinges on an implicit stipulation: that North Korea must be willing to denuclearize completely, a stance that North Korea would not agree to for a multitude of reasons. Instead of treating diplomatic interventions as a small step towards normalization, the United States is insisting on a condition that North Korea would never agree to, stalling talks before they can begin. While the Biden Administration claims that the United States is open to dialogue without preconditions, a pattern of summits without any results has taught North Korea that Washington will only deal with Pyongyang if it agrees to denuclearize. Therefore, North Korea is incentivized to seek support elsewhere and provide other countries with economic and military support to oppose the United States. If the United States does not pursue active diplomacy with North Korea, it risks North Korea being fully enveloped in the circle of its adversaries and unlikely to ever seek peaceful relations with the United States.

---

**Jay Lee** is a Program Specialist at the University of Southern California Korean Studies Institute. He graduated from the University of Southern California with a B.A. in Political Science and International Relations and a master's in Public Diplomacy. His interests are in diplomacy, foreign policy, and Northeast Asian politics. Jay is also the co-founder of Aurora NK, a nonprofit organization that connects North Korean defectors to social resources.

The United States must reorient its strategy away from being centered around denuclearization of North Korea and instead pursue advancements in humanitarian issues where both the United States and North Korea can make mutual gains. By concentrating on relatively apolitical issues focused on improving the lives of average citizens in North Korea, the two countries can make incremental steps towards a sustainable peace. North Korea would be able to get some assistance to modernize and improve the lives of North Koreans in rural areas and the United States would be following through on its commitment to human rights around the world. At the same time, the improved communication channels and trust built through these practices would contribute to a sustainable security framework in East Asia that does not rely on a continued heavy military presence on the Korean Peninsula.

If the United States seeks to prevent its adversaries from working together against U.S. strategic interests and to create a sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula, it must use exchanges across humanitarian issues to engage North Korea. By doing so, the United States can further its own interests while also providing North Korea with humanitarian assistance it greatly needs.

## **Why Diplomacy with North Korea Needs to Change**

Today, long-term tension on the Korean Peninsula has evolved into a stalemate with both sides building up their militaries in case one side attacks. Despite the relative peace created by this stalemate, North Korea continues to pose a threat to the security of East Asia because of its aggressive rhetoric, missile testing, and antisocial behavior. Furthermore, the passiveness of the U.S. government and its perpetuation of the status quo through a militarized approach and the imposition of harsh sanctions increasingly alienates North Korea, driving it to be more aggressive. Continued joint military exercises, the development of the U.S.-Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea)-Japan military agreement, and the implicit support of the United States for South Korea's increasingly inflammatory gestures and remarks towards North Korea correlate with North Korea shutting out the United States and making formal declarations that

eschew diplomacy.

Currently, North Korea is not a major priority for U.S. foreign policy. Rather than actively engage North Korea, the United States is more concerned about ensuring the situation does not get worse and maintaining the status quo. Instead, the United States is more concerned about the wars in Europe, between Ukraine and Russia, and the Middle East, between Israel and Hamas.

It seems that Pyongyang is in no rush to talk to Washington either. In fact, Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un's recent openness to holding a summit with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan seems to indicate that the regime is willing to engage with anyone except the United States.

However, North Korea's eagerness to approach countries other than the United States is precisely why Washington needs to take an active role in engaging Pyongyang and pursuing normalized relations. The regime is finding support in other countries, most notably Russia.

North Korea's relationship with Russia signifies a shift in DPRK foreign policy. North Korea identifies Russia as an alternative to the U.S. order and knows it can continue to work against the security interests of the United States because it can depend on support from Moscow. As North Korea continues to become friendlier with U.S. adversaries, it may increase its belligerent behavior towards the United States and its allies. For example, North Korea has reportedly shipped thousands of containers of munitions and military equipment to assist Russian President Vladimir Putin in his conflict with Ukraine.<sup>2</sup> Kim and Putin's meeting in September 2023 marked an important turning point, showing that not only is North Korea now firmly moving its foreign policy goals away from engagement with the United States, but that tactics Washington has historically used to try to influence North Korea's behavior are largely ineffective. As U.S. policy has isolated North Korea diplomatically and financially, rather than trying to integrate Pyongyang into the financial order, Washington has inadvertently brought its adversaries closer together.

U.S. policy interventions are largely limited to harsh sanctions aiming to influence North Korea and squeeze it out of the dollar-based global financial

order. Yet North Korea has repeatedly found ways to evade financial pressure, such as with cyber-attacks and cryptocurrency, undermining the effectiveness of sanctions.<sup>3</sup> The circumvention of sanctions through alignment with Russia and other adversaries to the United States is pertinent because by building stronger relations with Russia, North Korea has a reliable partner for aid and other resources that it might need, making it less dependent on a U.S.-backed financial order and less concerned about working with the United States on other interests. Should the United States continue to rely on sanctions to impact the behaviors of other states, more countries will find the alternative order more enticing and forgiving. Sanctioned countries will be incentivized to build relationships with one another for regime survival, rather than to try to act in a way that is amenable to the United States.<sup>4</sup>

The fact that the regime has survived for as long as it has is a testament to its ability to withstand sanctions. The United States must be willing to move away from using sanctions as its primary means of affecting change in North Korea, and it must even be willing to repeal sanctions that get in the way of active diplomacy. Future efforts to engage North Korea must be sustained, creative, and dramatic.

## **The Real Danger of Neglecting North Korea**

The danger of a hostile North Korea is not necessarily that North Korea will start a nuclear war with the United States, but rather that constant tension and aggressive rhetoric invites accidents and skirmishes that could potentially escalate into something much more destructive. Any miscalculation from either side can snowball when channels of communication are virtually nonexistent. In January 2024, North Korea fired more than 200 artillery shells towards Yeonpyeong Island in South Korea. While this event ultimately did not result in casualties or damages, it did evoke memories of a similar incident in 2010 which killed four people during a time when South Korean foreign policy (with American backing) had shifted away from active diplomacy and towards aggressive rhetoric.<sup>5</sup> By adopting a more passive approach to engagement with North Korea, the United States is inadvertently inviting more of these hostile

actions, risking the security of East Asia.

To maximize the effectiveness of an active diplomatic approach, the United States must also extend its active engagement to South Korea. The current administration in South Korea, headed by President Yoon Suk-Yeol, is conservative and is more wary of engaging North Korea. The current South Korean approach to North Korea is characterized by aggressive rhetoric and emphasis on military deterrence towards the DPRK. In 2022, with the election of Yoon, South Korean foreign policy towards North Korea shifted from goodwill diplomacy to harsh rhetoric and increased militarism.

In response, North Korea has engaged in increased weapons testing, emphasized tactical nuclear weapons and changes in its legal doctrines to be more aggressive, called for automatic use of nuclear weapons, and declared South Korea to be an enemy and Korean unification no longer possible.<sup>6</sup> This in turn has led to the United States and South Korea expanding their own military actions, engaging in joint training exercises, deploying U.S. military assets such as aircraft carriers and long-range bombers, and developing the American-Japanese-Korean trilateral pact.<sup>7</sup> North Korea has explicitly stated that missile tests and other belligerent behaviors are a direct result of these actions and ignoring these words would embolden North Korea to ramp up its own military actions.<sup>8</sup>

Accordingly, the United States must do what it can diplomatically to limit cross-border provocations. An accident or a miscalculation could have disastrous consequences. Should the escalation of aggression not be stopped, it would endanger the lives of people in East Asia and the status of other important U.S. allies and partners. If the United States is hesitant to get involved in an instance when South Korea feels its survival is at stake, then South Korea may choose to escalate conflict. America would then be in a precarious situation, as it would face the choice of whether to get involved in another conflict that will further stretch its resources or to not get involved and risk its credibility as an allied security guarantor. To prevent such a scenario from arising, the Biden Administration needs to be actively engaging North Korea. If North Korea refuses to reciprocate, then efforts must be made to bring them to the table.

## **Reorienting Diplomacy from Denuclearization to Humanitarian Issues**

What should the United States then do to engage North Korea if North Korea does not want to talk in the first place? The U.S. government must signal that North Korea's concerns are not falling on deaf ears. This should be demonstrated through a shift away from denuclearization as an immediate goal for U.S. policy. The nuclear issue in North Korea is still important and presents a realistic threat to global security. However, to get to the point where North Korea would even consider not using nuclear weapons, there must be intermediate steps to lay down the foundations and test the waters for future talks and opportunities for cooperation. North Korea currently has no incentive to denuclearize, and it is foolish to think that dialogue with North Korea would be possible with denuclearization as the primary focus.

### **Hanoi: A Missed Opportunity**

When U.S. President Donald Trump and Kim met in Hanoi for what ended up being the most recent summit to date between the United States and North Korea, many were cautiously optimistic about any developments that might occur from the meeting. While the exact details of the negotiations were held behind closed doors, the result was resounding, yet disappointing. The summit ended without a deal, and many were shocked that the opportunity to engage North Korea came and went.

Although there may have been many factors that contributed to the lack of any progress made in the normalization of U.S.-DPRK relations, it was a fundamental misalignment of expectations of the summit that led to its failure. Kim came to Hanoi fully expecting a deal.<sup>9</sup> Notoriously reclusive when it comes to travel abroad, Kim's presence showed. He came to the meeting expecting small for small negotiations, e.g., shutting down old and dilapidated nuclear plants in North Korea in exchange for modest sanctions relief from the United States.<sup>10</sup> However, Trump came into the meetings insistent on complete denuclearization. Ultimately, denuclearization is unfeasible without intermediate confidence building measures.

## **Denuclearization: The View from Pyongyang**

North Korea's rationale for having nuclear weapons makes quite a bit of sense under a realist theoretical perspective. Because it has a dilapidated conventional military, has few natural partners (let alone allies willing to defend it), and perceives an existential threat across the border in the form of South Korea and its main security ally, the United States, it makes sense that North Korea would prioritize preserving its greatest security guarantee.<sup>11</sup>

Additionally, U.S. actions abroad do not breed confidence in other nations that they are safe just because they agree to denuclearize. Kim has reason to believe that the United States may use underhanded techniques to remove him from power, regardless of whether North Korea behaves as the U.S. government would like it to. North Korea specifically cites instances when denuclearization has led to "tragic consequences" in Libya.<sup>12</sup> When the United States militarily supported an uprising which overthrew dictator Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, it showed North Korea that whatever concessions the United States does make will be prolonged and frustrating at best, and at worst it may ultimately lead to the regime being attacked anyway after giving up its greatest security deterrent. As a result, Kim has learned that for the sake of regime security, he must not abandon nuclear weapons.

With Kim's 2023 codification of North Korea's right to develop and use nuclear weapons in the constitution, the path to denuclearization faces insurmountable obstacles. Even arms control agreements will be difficult to pursue. While it may be hard for some to accept, it has perhaps come time to accept North Korea as a nuclear power. The recent growth of North Korea's nuclear program shows that its nuclear capability is robust and likely not going away anytime soon. In the 2022 United States Nuclear Posture Review, there is already an implicit acceptance of North Korea's nuclear arsenal, discussing the relationship in terms of deterrence, rather than denuclearization. North Korea views its nuclear weapons as a necessity for its survival and it sees the US goals of denuclearization as revisionist and an existential threat.<sup>13</sup>

## **An Alternative Approach: When Diplomacy (and Restraint) Advance Humanitarian Issues**

The United States should reorient its diplomatic rhetoric and goals in the short term around humanitarian issues. Aside from possessing nuclear weapons, North Korea is infamous for its human rights abuses and poor humanitarian conditions. Advancing human rights is another priority in U.S. foreign policy, with the State Department repeatedly making statements regarding the necessity of human rights reform in North Korea and Congress often making sanctions relief conditional upon North Korean improvements human rights.<sup>14</sup> Yet until 2023, the position of the Special Envoy on North Korean Human Rights remained vacant for over six years, signifying that human rights have not been as high a priority for the United States as its rhetoric suggests.<sup>15</sup>

The United States needs to build its credibility when it comes to its humanitarian actions abroad. Peacefully pursuing human rights as for a goal of U.S. diplomacy better frames intentions as mutually beneficial while still advancing U.S. interests. When Washington dictates to countries what to fix in the realm of human rights, it breeds resentment and accusations that it is imposing Western standards on developing countries to restrict their success. But cooperation on issues that are relatively apolitical and beneficial to both parties can build the foundations of trust.

Through this course, the United States not only peacefully advances its interests in promoting dignity for all people and builds its credibility as a champion for universal values, but also advance its interests in maintaining peace in East Asia. Currently, Pyongyang feels threatened by the increasing military pressure coming from Washington and Seoul, leading the North Korean government to prioritize spending more money to build and maintain its military rather than on the welfare of citizens of North Korea. By moving away from militarism and aggressive sanctions, U.S. policy can move towards an approach that improves the conditions for life in North Korea.

## **When Active Engagement with North Korea Works**

Historically, actively pursuing diplomacy instead of

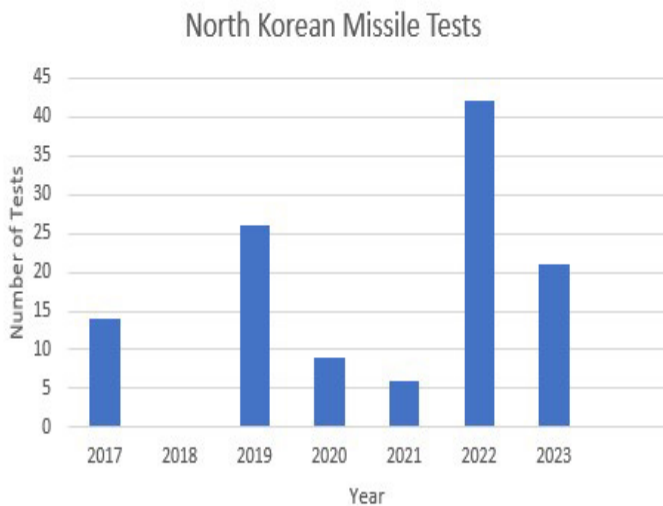
isolation has led to mutually beneficial outcomes. In the case of Cuba, decades of sanctions and aggressive rhetoric led to no observable changes in the regime's behavior. However, in 2014, American President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro agreed to lift travel restrictions, reduce restrictions on remittances, permit economic support, and facilitate people-to-people exchanges.<sup>16</sup> While active diplomacy was underway, and opportunities existed for the two governments to communicate on human rights, the United States was able to request the release of 53 imprisoned dissidents. Following this, the two governments began bilateral talks to discuss normalization.<sup>17</sup> The United States' humanitarian approach towards Cuba should serve as an example of how a diplomatic strategy centered around human rights can lead to normalization of relations.

During periods of active diplomacy with North Korea, the security tensions with the United States were relatively low and there was essentially a peace that was sustainable on the Korean Peninsula. The period between 1994 and 2008 marked a period of relative peace and increased humanitarian cooperation between the United States and North Korea.<sup>18</sup> During this time, the United States undertook major efforts to engage with North Korea to discuss the 1994 U.S.-DPRK Agreed Framework. While the goal then was to denuclearize the country, it was during a time when North Korea's nuclear program was infantile compared to its capabilities today. But the diplomatic atmosphere helped to create foundations for dialogue and interactions across different sectors, like diplomacy, military, and economy. In addition to high level talks between government officials, numerous NGOs were able to enter North Korea and provide aid and assistance on health, environmental, and other humanitarian issues.<sup>19</sup> Exchanges were also prominent during this time, with approximately 800 to 1000 US citizens traveling to North Korea each year.<sup>20</sup> The purposes of these visits varied, from people separated by the Korean War visiting their families, to tourism and academic and scientific exchanges.

There were some setbacks during this time, including the testing of North Korea's first intermediate-range missile in 1998, but these issues did not lead to escalation because of the channels for communication brought on by robust diplomatic engagement.<sup>21</sup> Importantly, during periods of active diplomacy, North Korean aggression and tension between North

Korea and the United States remained low. In 2018, during the height of diplomatic summits between Trump and Kim, there were no missiles fired by North Korea, whereas in 2022, when North Korea had given up hopes for dialogue with the United States, North Korea tested 42 missiles, 7 times as many as in 2021.<sup>22</sup>

**Figure 1**



Source: <https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/cns-north-korea-missile-test-database/>

## Avenues for Humanitarian Diplomacy

While the end goal of denuclearization may not be imitable, the actions to create a more amicable relationship can still be employed to establish a foundation for cooperation across various sectors such as health diplomacy, climate change agreements, and exchanges. These areas are avenues that carry less political weight and can be used as a foundation for signaling intentions and building trust between the two countries. This in turn can reduce violent incidents on the Korean Peninsula and encourage North Korea to be more open to opening channels of communication and cooperating with the United States on other interests in the future. And in the process, North Korea will be less enveloped in the circles of U.S. adversaries.

## Health Diplomacy

Health diplomacy is an area of potential cooperation with North Korea and for advancing human rights. Historically, North Korea used a form of health diplomacy to strengthen its relations with other

countries, demonstrating medicine as an issue important to the country. In the past, the government would train medical professionals and export them to other countries to serve underprivileged communities.<sup>23</sup> Whether this exercise of public diplomacy had a positive impact on other countries' perceptions of North Korea is questionable. However, it does show that North Korea has experience in engaging with medical diplomacy to build mutual understanding.

North Korea faces widespread health issues, being unable to provide care for much of its rural population. Natural disasters and environmental degradation contribute to North Korea's ability to nourish its citizens, making them more susceptible to diseases. In 2022, the United Nations (UN) reported that undernourishment in North Korea had reached 41.6%.<sup>24</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic further demonstrated the susceptibility governments have to global pandemics and the need to cooperate to withstand their impacts. North Korea closed its borders and further isolated itself from the global community, harming its economy and putting the people who live there under harsher restrictions.<sup>25</sup>

North Korea's aversion to outside help and the ensuing health issues that plague its citizens are an effect of multilateral sanctions which reduce the amount of aid and resources that can get into the country. The North Korean government regularly expels humanitarian groups and refuses food and vaccines due to suspicions about donor stipulations.

To be able to engage in effective health diplomacy then, the U.S. government can work with third parties to ensure neutrality and focus on a common goal of health improvement. The United States would be able to stake a claim to improving the living conditions of North Koreans holistically rather than choosing to only protect civil and political rights. By centering the conversation around how to best help ordinary North Korean people and work with the North Korean government to better provide for its people, Washington and Pyongyang can build trust.

## Environmental Protection

The United States and North Korea also have a mutual interest in addressing the climate crisis and its environmental impacts. U.S. foreign policy under the Biden Administration has prioritized addressing

climate change and its impacts on access to natural resources and necessities.<sup>26</sup> Like with health, climate change presents a challenge that affects all countries of the world. It requires cooperation to minimize the negative environmental impacts caused by human interference. A major factor in U.S. interests in climate security is ensuring that environmental issues do not affect people's access to necessities and U.S. actions should reflect those priorities.

Despite its isolationist reputation, North Korea embraces international climate change efforts, largely because of the environmental degradation that affects the country.<sup>27</sup> The food shortages in North Korea led to people cutting down trees in large numbers, affecting the soil quality leading to coastal erosion and impacting the country's barriers for natural disasters.<sup>28</sup> As North Korea seeks to improve food security, it recognizes the importance of environmental protection in achieving those goals. Food shortages in the past have led to defections, increased crime rates, and decreased workplace productivity.<sup>29</sup> Since 2015, Kim has emphasized reforestation policies and carbon emission reduction.<sup>30</sup>

Climate change is one of the few issues where the hermit kingdom is particularly eager to work with the international community, regularly participating in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the annual Conference of the Parties (COP).<sup>31</sup> North Korea pledged to reduce its carbon emissions by 8%, but also indicated that it could reduce its carbon emissions by 40% with international financial support.<sup>32</sup> While calls from North Korea for foreign aid should be scrutinized, the genuine need to address its environmental problems should be taken seriously. This is an instance where sanctions relief would be conducive to diplomacy. By allowing for international aid to be used for a problem that is mutual to all nations, the United States can further prove that it has good intentions behind its actions.

The United States should also promote exchanges to help North Korea with its environmental issues. U.S. experts in climate science and agricultural science can work with North Korean counterparts to share ideas and work together to restore the environment. To ensure that North Korea is complying with such agreements, international bodies can use noninvasive monitoring techniques such as satellite imagery

to observe progress on reforestation and coastal erosion.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, exchanges and the sharing of ideas increases mutual understanding at a bottom-up level. Such an approach is important for trust building between countries.

## **People-to-People Exchanges**

Exchanges can be an effective diplomatic tool if used correctly. Dialogic communications between regular people are the foundation of mutual understanding. Contact between groups leads to a reduction in prejudice. While North Korea is notoriously totalitarian, increased contact and diffusion of information and points of view will begin to sow the seeds for civil society, allowing for more opinions to reach authority. Like most diplomatic interventions, exchanges are useful for long term results. It is in the best interests of U.S. security to create these channels for communication to not only prevent conflict in the short term, but to also begin the process of shaping a North Korea that is more amenable to the United States and its liberal values.

To begin this process, the United States should lift the travel ban on North Korea. Since 2017, the U.S. State Department has restricted travel to North Korea. Between 1994 and 2008, educational exchanges were relatively common.<sup>34</sup> Tourism to North Korea was also possible until 2017.<sup>35</sup> Like the U.S. approach towards the Cuba thaw, people-to-people exchanges should begin with reuniting families, this time those separated by the Korean War. In fact, in Congress, there is bipartisan support for reuniting Korean Americans with their family members in North Korea.<sup>36</sup> The process faces political barriers and the lack of initiative shown by the United States to pursue a bilateral agreement with North Korea to reunite families means that Americans are often neglected in reunion activities.<sup>37</sup> This is further exacerbated by the inability of Americans to travel to North Korea. Should the United States lift the travel ban, however, the reunification of families presents an interesting opportunity for the U.S. government to work with the North Korean government.

## **Recovering US Servicemen Remains**

Another humanitarian issue on which the United

States and North Korea could work together is the matter of recovering the remains of U.S. servicemen killed during the Korean War. There are more than 5,000 servicemen remains which are believed to be in North Korea.<sup>38</sup> After the Korean War, there was an agreement to allow a brief period of recovery and evacuation of servicemen remains.<sup>39</sup> Since then, the repatriation and accounting of missing and deceased prisoners of war (POW) and individuals missing in action have proceeded when diplomatic relations between the United States and South Korea were strong. Between 1996 and 2005, the United States government and North Korean government worked together to recover 153 U.S. servicemen remains.<sup>40</sup> Agreeing to recovering the remains of U.S. servicemen would demonstrate that the United States does have a commitment to the people who die for their country and to honoring their memory.

## **Diplomacy as a Means, Not an End**

Opponents to restructuring U.S. diplomacy towards the DPRK would suggest that engaging North Korea would be normalizing and acquiescing to a belligerent country. But diplomacy is necessary to minimize risks that endanger the region. While it would be better to be able to dismantle North Korea's nuclear capability as well as improve its human rights record without making concessions, there are currently too few options when it comes to engaging North Korea. The U.S. government must create opportunities where it can. A minor propaganda win for the Kim regime is preferable if it means that both parties gain something in the long term.

The United States should consider making gestures that indicate a shift in U.S. policy. This can take the form of symbolic gestures that are more rhetorically driven, like a peace agreement. Many experts see a formal end of war agreement as a conducive means to bringing North Korea to the negotiating table. An end of war declaration would act primarily as a means to create a foundation for talks rather than creating a severe political shift. It would show that the United States is open to making the initial steps to talk to North Korea and resolve mutual issues. It would also signal to North Korea that the United States is open to making concessions where necessary to achieve peace.

Actions like an end of war agreement should be the

model for a "small-for-small approach," wherein each side makes a small concession in the hopes of building to a bigger agreement down the line. In the grand scheme of things, it is easy to assume that symbolic gestures and incremental steps are ineffective in achieving change in North Korea's behavior. But the process towards peace is a slow one. Aggressive behaviors make achieving peace in East Asia more difficult in the long run. Military pressure creates barriers to communicating with North Korea and are not conducive to behavior change, leading to tense standoffs that could have disastrous consequences. Sanctions like Resolution 1718 by the UN Security Council make it harder to use diplomatic tools.<sup>41</sup> Small relief from these sanctions to allow for humanitarian interventions to enter North Korea and help its citizens would lead to positive results in the long-term.

It may have been easier to signal to North Korea about diplomacy in the past, when it was open to the possibility of denuclearization down the line. Now, it will take bolder actions to open up now that it has shifted its own foreign policy goals. Maintaining U.S. diplomacy around denuclearization of North Korea is short-sighted as it keeps US-DPRK relations stagnant. Diplomacy would be more beneficial for the United States and North Korea to work together on common goals, even if they are not to the full liking of the United States. Negotiation and diplomacy are about finding common ground, not about winning. Yet, the insistence upon denuclearization and military deterrence prevents any actual progress being made in those areas. America ought to remove these obstacles so that there can be greater communication between the two countries to prevent accidents and reduce the probability of conflict. Diplomacy is a useful tool and it should be used to achieve meaningful gains, not solely used as a reward for acting in ways that align with U.S. beliefs.



## Endnotes

- 1 Lee, Christy. 2024. "US Remains Committed to Diplomacy Despite North Korea's Nuclear Escalation." *Voice of America*, May 3, 2024. <https://www.voanews.com/a/us-remains-committed-to-diplomacy-despite-north-korea-s-nuclear-escalation-/7596178.html>.
- 2 Jazeera, Al. "North Korea Sent Russia Millions of Munitions in Exchange for Food: Seoul." *Al Jazeera*, February 28, 2024. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/28/n-korea-sent-russia-millions-of-munitions-in-exchange-for-food-says-seoul>.
- 3 Nichols, Michelle. "Exclusive: UN Experts Investigate 58 Cyberattacks Worth \$3 Bln by North Korea." *Reuters*, February 8, 2024. <https://www.reuters.com/technology/cybersecurity/un-experts-investigate-58-cyberattacks-worth-3-bln-by-north-korea-2024-02-08/>.
- 4 Yap, Trixie, and Florence Tan. "APPEC: Sanctions Against Russia Bringing BRICS Closer, Executives Say." *Reuters*, September 6, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/appec-sanctions-against-russia-bringing-brics-closer-executives-say-2023-09-04/>.
- 5 Bae, Gawon, Jessie Yeung, and Brad Lendon. "South Korea's Military Says North Korea Fired Artillery Into Maritime Buffer Zone in 'Provocative Act.'" *CNN*, January 5, 2024. <https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/05/world/north-korea-yeonpyeong-island-artillery-intl-hnk/index.html>.
- 6 Choi, Soo-Hyang, and Hyonhee Shin. "North Korea Amends Constitution on Nuclear Policy, Cites US Provocations." *Reuters*, September 28, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/north-korea-parliament-amends-constitution-enshrine-nuclear-policy-kcna-2023-09-27/>.
- 7 Kim, Hyung-Jin. "US Flies Bombers for Joint Drills With South Korea, Japan After North's Long-range Missile Launch | AP News." *AP News*, December 20, 2023. <https://apnews.com/article/koreas-us-bomber-drills-icbm-4c75e09f8832a84301b9dd4386260167>.
- 8 Shin, Hyonhee. "North Korea Denounces South Korea-US Military Drills, Warns of Consequences." *Reuters*, March 5, 2024. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/north-korea-slams-south-korea-us-drills-warns-consequences-kcna-says-2024-03-04/>.
- 9 United States Institute of Peace. "U.S.-North Korea Negotiations: What Happened in Hanoi?," n.d. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2019/02/us-north-korea-negotiations-what-happened-hanoi>.
- 10 Wit, Joel S., and Jenny Town. "What Happened in Hanoi? - 38 North: Informed Analysis of North Korea." *38 North*, February 28, 2019. <https://www.38north.org/2019/02/editor022819/>.
- 11 Revere, Evans J.R. "North Korea's New Nuclear Gambit and the Fate of Denuclearization." *Brookings*, March 26, 2021. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/north-koreas-new-nuclear-gambit-and-the-fate-of-denuclearization/>.
- 12 Moran, Matthew, and Wyn Bowen. "What North Korea Learned From Libya's Decision to Give up Nuclear Weapons." *The Conversation*, n.d. <https://theconversation.com/what-north-korea-learned-from-libyas-decision-to-give-up-nuclear-weapons-95674>.
- 13 "2022 Nuclear Posture Review." US Department of Defense, 2022.
- 14 Acheson, Ray, Christine Ahn, Kozue Akibayashi, Elizabeth Beavers, Maria Butler, Youngmi Cho, Henri Féron, et al. "Path to Peace: The Case for a Peace Agreement to End the Korean War." Edited by Kathleen Richards. *Korea Peace Now! Women Mobilizing to End the War*, 2021. <https://koreapeacenow.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Path-to-Peace-WEB.pdf>.
- 15 King, Robert R. "Special Envoy for North Korea Human Rights Confirmed by the Senate, but Still Not in Office at the State Department." *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, October 11, 2023. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/special-envoy-north-korea-human-rights-confirmed-senate-still-not-office-state-department>.
- 16 Rodas, Ronnan. "The Cuban Thaw." *Towson University Journal of International Affairs*, April 30, 2019. <https://wp.towson.edu/iajournal/2019/04/29/the-cuban-thaw/>.
- 17 Ford, Dana, and Juan Carlos Lopez. "Cuba Releases 53 Political Prisoners." *CNN*, January 12, 2015. <https://www.cnn.com/2015/01/12/americas/cuba-prisoners-release/>.
- 18 Aum, Frank. "Exploring Peaceful Coexistence With North Korea." *United States Institute of Peace*, n.d. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/01/exploring-peaceful-coexistence-north-korea>.
- 19 ibid
- 20 Lee, Matthew, and Josh Lederman. "US Bans Travel for Americans to NKorea After Warmbier Death." *AP News*, July 21, 2017. <https://apnews.com/article/11c39275b9eb42399ba7ce8a0d2d746e>.

- 21 Wudunn, Sheryl. "North Korea Fires Missile Over Japanese Territory." *The New York Times*, September 1, 1998. <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/01/world/north-korea-fires-missile-over-japanese-territory.html>.
- 22 NTI. "The CNS North Korea Missile Test Database." The Nuclear Threat Initiative, April 15, 2024. <https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/cns-north-korea-missile-test-database/>.
- 23 McPherson, Poppy. "The Curious Case of North Korea's Overseas Doctors." *The Diplomat*, April 23, 2015. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/04/the-curious-case-of-north-koreas-overseas-doctors/>.
- 24 FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022: Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable*. Food & Agriculture Org., 2022.
- 25 Park, Kee B. "Building Trust Through Health Cooperation With North Korea." United States Institute of Peace, March 18, 2024. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/03/building-trust-through-health-cooperation-north-korea>.
- 26 The White House. "Fact Sheet: Prioritizing Climate in Foreign Policy and National Security," October 21, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/10/21/fact-sheet-prioritizing-climate-in-foreign-policy-and-national-security/>.
- 27 Stangarone, Troy. "Climate Change as a Path to Engagement With North Korea." United States Institute of Peace, March 11, 2024. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/03/climate-change-path-engagement-north-korea>.
- 28 Chemnick, Jean and E&E News. "With Widespread Deforestation, North Korea Faces an Environmental Crisis." *Scientific American*, February 20, 2024. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/with-widespread-deforestation-north-korea-faces-an-environmental-crisis/>.
- 29 Lee, Sang Yong. "North Korea's Agricultural Policies: Embracing a Chinese Model for Increased Productivity? - 38 North: Informed Analysis of North Korea." *38 North*, March 6, 2024. <https://www.38north.org/2024/03/north-koreas-agricultural-policies-embracing-a-chinese-model-for-increased-productivity/>.
- 30 Davies, Christian. "Natural Disasters Drive North Korea's Embrace of International Climate Goals." *Financial Times*, January 10, 2022. <https://www.ft.com/content/d637c465-fc9e-4254-8191-193ac5eae30e>.
- 31 Stangarone, "Climate Change as a Path to Engagement With North Korea."
- 32 Democratic People's Republic of Korea. "Intended Nationally Determined Contribution of Democratic People's Republic of Korea," September 2016. Accessed October 27, 2020. <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/submissions/INDC/Published%20Documents/Democratic%20People's%20Republic%20of%20Korea/1/DPRK-INDC%20by%202030.pdf>.
- 33 Stangarone, Troy. "Climate Change as a Path to Engagement With North Korea." United States Institute of Peace, March 11, 2024.
- 34 Lee, Karin J., ed. US-DPRK educational exchanges: Assessment and future strategy. Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, 2011.
- 35 Lee, Matthew, and Josh Lederman. "US Bans Travel for Americans to NKorea After Warmbier Death | AP News." *AP News*, July 21, 2017. <https://apnews.com/article/11c39275b9eb42399ba7ce8a0d2d746e>.
- 36 Tim Kaine. "Kaine & Rubio Introduce Bipartisan Bill to Reunite Separated Korean American Families | U.S. Senator Tim Kaine of Virginia," March 6, 2024. <https://www.kaine.senate.gov/press-releases/kaine-and-rubio-introduce-bipartisan-bill-to-reunite-separated-korean-american-families>.
- 37 Enos, Olivia. "For Korean Americans, Divided-Family Reunification Act Is a Ray of Hope | the Heritage Foundation." The Heritage Foundation, n.d. <https://www.heritage.org/asia/commentary/korean-americans-divided-family-reunification-act-ray-hope>.
- 38 Burns, Robert. "U.S. Soldier Identified From Remains Held by North Korea." *The Diplomat*, January 26, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/u-s-soldier-identified-from-remains-held-by-north-korea/>.
- 39 Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. "Operation Glory." Accessed May 13, 2024. <https://dpaa-mil.sites.crmforce.mil/dpaaFmWbInOperationGlory>.
- 40 Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. "Korean War Personnel Accounting," April 25, 2024. Accessed May 13, 2024. <https://dpaa-mil.sites.crmforce.mil/KoreanWar/PersonnelAccounting>.
- 41 United Nations Security Council. "Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006)," n.d. <https://www.un.org/>

securitycouncil/sanctions/1718.