

AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

A REVIEW OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT'S STATUS  
QUO NORTH KOREAN FOREIGN POLICY APPROACH AND  
REASONS FOR CHANGE

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

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16 February 2016

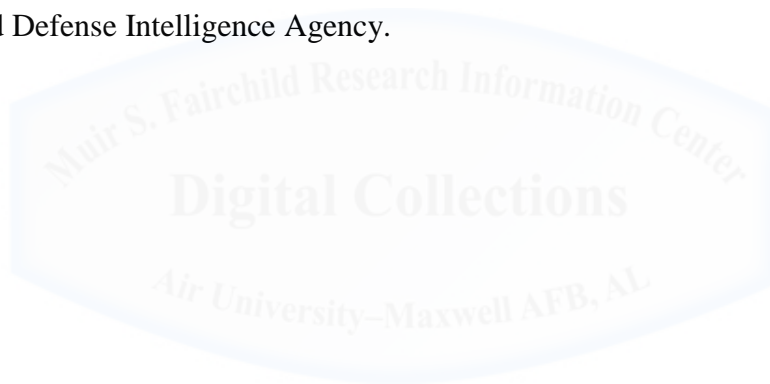
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## **Biography**

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## **Abstract**

Since at least 1994, when the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (DPRK) withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the United States Government (USG) has been concerned about the stability and security on the Korean peninsula, primarily because of the DPRK's nuclear program. As recent as January 6, 2016, the DPRK conducted another nuclear test, which was largely condemned by the international community. United States Government policies are geared towards a denuclearized North Korea and have been mostly ineffective. One of the constant themes has been that before the USG will engage in either direct or indirect dialogue with the DPRK, its leadership would be required to renounce its nuclear ambitions. This paper opines that this approach is not working and continued efforts down this road are counterproductive. It also makes the following recommendations for change in USG policy towards North Korea: 1) change US policy objectives to instead of requiring North Korea to denounce its nuclear program, accept that the DPRK is a nuclear power and guide it to become a responsible actor in the international community, 2) open dialogue without the preconditions of denuclearization, 3) institutionalize the Six-Party Talks, and 4) utilize some key components of the Iran Nuclear Deal.

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## Introduction

The United States National Security Strategy (NSS) asserts that the potential use of nuclear weapons by irresponsible nations or terrorists pose a serious security threat to the United States and the world.<sup>1</sup> Over the last several decades, US presidential administrations have taken multiple approaches to dealing with the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea's (DPRK) pursuit, declaration, and expansion of its nuclear program.<sup>1</sup> Since the DPRK announced its nuclear weapons program, the United States government's (USG) primary policy approach has had one consistent theme; no direct or indirect dialogue with North Korea, unless its government renounces its nuclear ambitions. The USG and the international community have expressed growing concerns towards nuclear states with nuclear stockpiles. In particular, concern focuses on the ability of rogue states or those that do not adhere to nuclear nonproliferation regimes to proliferate nuclear technology, as these activities pose serious threats to America and its allies' security. It appears that international isolation, sanctions, limited economic aid, and strategic patience have not been effective. Coercion through USG and United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) sanctions have not worked. The DPRK has demonstrated a good strategy and great resiliency towards sanctions. Furthermore, its leadership continues to carry out provocative and irresponsible nuclear and missile testing activities, such as its most recent nuclear test on January 6, 2016.<sup>2</sup>

The current US administration has demonstrated the ability to change policy regarding a country where it has had a similar policy of diplomatic isolation. The USG policy towards Cuba has changed. The Obama administration is moving towards normalization of diplomatic relations

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<sup>1</sup> North Korea is a small country in Northeast Asia that is slightly larger than Virginia and borders China, Russia, and South Korea. It has a population of about 24 million people with a GDP per capita of US\$1,800. (CIA Factbook, North Korea, The World Factbook, 2016. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kn.html>)

with the Cuban government, because 54-years of disengagement proved to be a failed approach.<sup>3</sup> In this case, President Obama contended that it was important to give dialogue a try, in order to make inroads after decades of impasse. President Obama stated, “We cannot do the same thing and expect a different result. It does not serve America’s interests, or the Cuban people’s, to try and push Cuba toward collapse.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, this is exactly what the current policy aims are leading towards for North Korea. Porter stated that “strategy is a practical affair, about the optimal way of configuring a nation’s resources towards its goals.”<sup>5</sup> If the current strategy to change North Korean behavior is not effective, why continue? If the USG can consider reengagement with Cuba for the aforementioned reasons, why not consider change with North Korea for even more crucial reasons?

The current course has not achieved the policy objectives – a denuclearized North Korea. If indeed the USG wants to solve the nuclear issue with North Korea’s participation, it is time to do something different, as it is not practical to expect for North Korea to denuclearize. It does not appear that President Obama has considered making similar changes in USG policy towards North Korea, as he has with Cuba. Instead, he extended North Korea a “fig leaf” at the beginning of his first administration and it was met with deceit and distrust; the USG subsequently disengaged. The North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, has applied the same negotiating methods used by Kim Il-Song and Kim Jong-il. It is important to keep in mind that when Kim Jong-un, the current North Korean leader, came into power, he was only 32-years of age.<sup>6</sup>

A nuclear-free peninsula would be more stable; the absence of nuclear weapons in North Korea has the potential to remove an existential threat in the region. This is however a tumultuous world. Geopolitical events present several threats that face nations around the world. There are terrorist groups such as al-Qaida, Islamic State of the Levant (ISIL) or Daesh, and even



nation state threats demonstrated by Russia's invasion of the Ukraine. These threats do not only pose security risks to the United States and its allies, but they also challenge the security of other nations, such as North Korea. To exacerbate the issue, when rogue states must also consider invasion threats posed by the United States, which had befallen Iraq and Afghanistan – both non-nuclear states - one must wonder if denuclearization is a bridge too far. United States congressional political rhetoric that pressed for an invasion of Syria further complicates a rogue nation's security concerns. It can also be argued that small or weak countries that have nuclear weapons technology have been shielded from such intrusions.

It is regime survival, fear, and the desire for international legitimacy that drive the DPRK's regime saber-rattling. For these fundamental reasons, Kim Jong-un will never give up his nuclear program, as the USG is perceived as invaders and thus far cannot be trusted. The North Korean nuclear weapons program is indeed a wicked problem and there are no easy solutions to obtaining some form of resolution. A novel approach is necessary. Years of US missteps, overreaching, and threats will take time to overcome, albeit Pyongyang's behavior has not been stellar. The USG has an opportunity to change course and garner support from the international community. Apparently, changing US policy towards North Korea will be complicated and extensive.

## **Thesis**

The USG should remove the precondition of nuclear disarmament before engagement with the DPRK for three reasons: 1) the Kim regime will not willingly abandon its nuclear ambitions, 2) the current course of status quo or "strategic patience" is too dangerous and ineffective, and 3) the international community that has shown persistent interest is small and

may be willing to support a change in course. If the USG decides to change its approach, it would need to occur sooner rather than later, before North Korean policies calcify.

## **Background**

### **National Identity and Ideology**

The DPRK leadership views the world through international relations theory defensive realist's perspective. According to Walt, defensive realists' nations have very little interest in expansion because the costs outweigh the benefit, and domestically they have developed an exaggerated perception of a threat.<sup>7</sup> Park suggests that this perception stems from Kim Il-sung's world view based on his formative experiences, which was passed to Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un. Many forget that from 1910-1945, Korea was invaded and colonized by Japan.<sup>8</sup> It has not been that long since North Korea was brutally ruled by Japan. During that time, Kim Il-sung emerged as a prominent figure by first fighting to liberate Korea, then becoming the premier of North Korea, and finally became its president.<sup>9</sup> It is clear that North Korea is a fairly new country with a turbulent history of its people being mistreated and colonized. Furthermore, the US atomic bomb strike on Japan had a profound effect on Kim, and it was likely that event that set the country on course to pursue nuclear weapons technology.<sup>10</sup>

### **Kim Regime Survival**

In addition to the impact that Hiroshima played in Pyongyang's decision to develop nuclear technology, the first Kim regime also created its own ideology called Juche that has become an integral part of its society and is still reflected in the DPRK's foreign and economic policies.<sup>11</sup> The Juche ideology is based on self-reliance. This ideology coupled with the "cult of personality" set the stage for the Kims to forever reign over North Korea.<sup>12</sup> The basic concept of

self-reliance and independence evolved into an entrenched dogma.<sup>13</sup> The Juche ideology's origins are derived from Confucianism.<sup>14</sup> During the 1920s, Confucianism concentrated on the individual's role that emphasized family loyalty, as well as the need to avoid confrontation.<sup>15</sup> Kim Il-sung, who established the Juche ideology as the Korean "liberator," successfully shifted that loyalty from the biological family to a patriarchal society, with the Kims as the patriarchs. Park explained that the Juche ideology was developed shortly after Japan's colonization of Korea, which deeply impacted its culture, an element exploited by Kim.<sup>16</sup> Juche also permeates every aspect of North Korean society and is part of its national identity.<sup>17</sup> This national ideology now has characteristics of religion, with the three Kims at the center. They are considered omnipotent and their actions are perceived as right and just.<sup>18</sup>

### **Military First**

Kim Jong-un's father, Kim Jong-il, surrounded himself with the "keepers," a term coined by Bermudez.<sup>19</sup> The keepers comprised a small group of military and powerful elites.<sup>20</sup> The leadership model set before Kim Jong-un is that the supreme leader holds the following leadership roles: Chairman of the National Defense Commission, General Secretary of the Korean Workers' Party (KWP), and Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army (KPA) (a unified armed force consisting of the ground, navy and air forces).<sup>21</sup> Kim is clearly at the center of the decision making process.<sup>22</sup>

According to Bermudez, North Korea has approximately 10-16 nuclear weapons, which are used primarily for the purpose of deterrence.<sup>23</sup> Further, high-level US military officials publically state that North Korean missiles have the capability to reach the continental United States.<sup>24</sup> These weapons are maintained by the KPA. The KPA are believed to have one million active-duty members, which would make it one of the largest military forces in the world.<sup>25</sup> The

DPRK continues its priorities towards the progression of its nuclear program, evidenced with its most recent nuclear test.<sup>26</sup> Revere stated that the nuclear program was “enshrined into the DPRK’s constitution.”<sup>27</sup> Pyongyang continues to devote its efforts and the majority of its resources toward a *military first* policy ensuring the security of its borders and the growth of its infamous nuclear program. It is this type of Korean culture of self-reliance that has allowed the Kims to maintain power even through the horrible famine, in which over 240,000 people starved to death, with some estimates of over two million.

### **Provocations – seeking legitimacy**

North Korea would not be an international topic if not for its nuclear weapons capability. Bermudez also asserts that North Korean policy objectives include: regime survival, maintain and grow nuclear capability, military first, legitimacy, and credibility in the international community.<sup>28</sup> It’s nuclear and missiles testing and evaluation activities are the most worrisome, particularly for regional states, and remains a major security concern. Several nuclear and multi-state rocket tests, steady progress to enrich uranium, and a successful launch of an object into earth’s orbit, are all actions of North Korean’s defiant government. Snyder states that North Korea’s successful launch of an object into earth orbit “... challenged the international community by revealing that the UN resolution did not have ‘teeth.’”<sup>29</sup> Other experts contend that North Korean’s nuclear activity is to seek international legitimacy.<sup>30 31</sup>

## **USG Approach**

*“There has been no denying that America’s North Korea nuclear policy since 2000 has been a failure.” – Gregory Moore*

The USG and the international community have pursued a variety of policies and approaches to rid North Korea of its nuclear program and end its proliferation of nuclear and

missile technology. Yet, since 1994 the DPRK withdrew from the NPT, ejected the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), proliferated nuclear materials, technology, and missile hardware to places like Iran, Pakistan, and Syria, and continues to conduct dangerous and internationally illegal nuclear and missile tests.<sup>33</sup> Provided in Table 1 are primary policy approaches that the USG has taken over the last couple of decades. History shows that despite these diplomatic efforts, North Korea continues to threaten regional stability with its nuclear weapons program and testing of its nuclear technology and missiles. As demonstrated in Table 1, all three presidents unsuccessfully attempted to eliminate North Korea’s nuclear weapons program.

**Table 1. USG’s North Korea primary policy approaches 1994-2016**

<i>Year</i>	<i>USG Admin</i>	<i>Primary Policy Approach/Obj</i>	<i>North Korean Actions</i>	<i>International Community Involvement</i>
1994-2001	Clinton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed Framework / 3-stage process to eliminate North Korean nuclear weapons program</li> <li>• Imposed sanctions</li> <li>• Established Trilateral Coord &amp; Oversight Group with (ROK and JPN)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Announced withdrawal from the NPT</li> <li>• Ejected IAEA inspectors</li> <li>• Nuclear proliferation activities</li> <li>• Conducts missile launch tests</li> </ul>	Japan Russia South Korea
2001-2009	Bush	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committed to dismantling DPRK’s nuclear program</li> <li>• Questions Pyongyang’s commitment</li> <li>• Canx delegation to North Korea – naval skirmish between N-S Korea</li> <li>• Imposed sanctions for missile transfer activities</li> <li>• Named DPRK as one of the “Axis of Evil”</li> <li>• Trilateral talks with USA, PRC, PRK</li> <li>• Six Party Talks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canx talks with Washington and Seoul</li> <li>• DPRK formally withdraws from the NPT</li> <li>• Continued development of missile technology</li> <li>• Continued proliferation activities</li> <li>• Conducts ballistic missiles &amp; nuclear testes</li> </ul>	United States China Japan North Korea Russia South Korea UNSC

2009-2016

Obama

- Continue commitment to rollback DPRK's nuclear program
- Attempt to continue Six-Party Talks
- High-level US-North Korea meeting
- Impose sanctions
- Conduct combined US-South Korea exercise
- Strategic Patience
- Proliferation Security Initiative
- Continued development of missile technology
- Several nuclear/missile/satellite tests/launches
- Withdraw from Six-Party Talks
- Sinks South Korean patrol ship
- Test ballistic missile from submarine

United States  
China  
Japan  
Russia  
South Korea  
UNSC



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<sup>ii</sup> Clinton Administration Agreed Framework. In October of 1994, the USG and North Korea adopted an “Agreed Framework” that would require the DPRK to 1) eliminate its nuclear facilities, 2) dismantle three nuclear reactors, 3) remove 8,000 spent nuclear reactor fuel elements to be removed, and 4) allow the IAEA to verify compliance. In exchange, the North Korea would receive two light water reactors (LWR) that would be financed through the Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO) – a multinational consortium. Intense diplomatic negotiations ensued to freeze, reverse the progress on North Korea’s nuclear program, and reenter the DPRK back into the NPT. The USG offered diplomatic normalization, some form of security guarantee, and lifting of sanctions. There is evidence that the DPRK continued missile technology development and tests, and proliferation activities with countries like Pakistan and Iran while the negotiations ongoing. South Korean President Kim Dae-jung announced its Sunshine Policy in 1998 to improve relations with North Korea through “peace, reconciliation, and cooperation.” (Davenport, *Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear & Missile Diplomacy*, 5) North Korean officials insisted on compensation of one billion dollars per year to end its missile exports, which the USG rejects. However, did agree to move towards “economic normalization.” After seven rounds of missile talks, with the last one taking place in November 2000, the Clinton administration was unable to conclude the negotiations. Therefore, these negotiations required the incoming Bush administration to buy-in, implement the agreement and continue the diplomatic effort. (Moore, *America’s Failed North Korean Policy*, 115-136)

<sup>iii</sup> Bush administration’s strategy. Though the USG remained committed to ending North Korea’s nuclear program, its tone towards North Korea became inconsistent starting with Secretary of State Powell initially stating continuation of talks with the DPRK, and then recanting that statement. It initially abandoned the Clinton strategy. After 9/11, President Bush used “Axis of Evil” rhetoric, naming North Korea as one of the axis, along with Iran and Iraq, in his 2002 State of the Union Address. Subsequently, Bush 43 led the nation into two wars, in Iraq and Afghanistan. (Ibid, 115-136) As a result of the Iraqi invasion, US military forces were able to capture Saddam Hussein, and supported the new Iraqi government to depose the former dictator. Clearly the message was Iran and North Korea would be next, but the USG became mired in two simultaneous wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan. During type time, reportedly Kim Jong-il went into hiding, fearing a US invasion of North Korea.<sup>iii</sup> Interestingly, Bush allows the US funding of the LWR to continue. By January 2003, the DPRK formally withdraws from the NPT. Furthermore, it admitted to possessing nuclear weapons for the first time, during trilateral talks with the US and Chinese representatives. In mid-2003, six party talks commence in Beijing, including: envoys from the United States, China, Japan, South Korea, Russia, and the DPRK. By the end of the Bush administration the six-party talks ultimately led to the disablement of the Yongbyon facility and cooling tower and a preliminary agreement to give inspectors access to 15 declared sites related to North Korean plutonium production, as well as undeclared sites. In return, the US administration removed North Korea from the State Department’s terrorism list, 2008, and a US shipment of a total of 550,000 tons of heavy fuel oil for energy assistance to North Korea.<sup>iii</sup> The DPRK continued development of its missile technology in January of 2009 claimed they had a stock of plutonium that was weaponized and would not allow inspections. (Davenport, *Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear & Missile Diplomacy*, 5)

<sup>iv</sup> Obama administration DPRK policy review. Initially the Obama administration also sought negotiations through Six-party offering official US aid. In his inaugural address... “he would offer an outstretched hand to those who will unclench their fists.” Secretary Clinton wasted little time naming Ambassador Bosworth as US special envoy for North Korean policy. The US officials became tired of stalled talks that officially ended in February 2012. Gates mentioned that the USG “would not buy this horse for a third time.” Since has turned to “strategic patience” with ratcheted up sanctions from both congress and the UN. There is also the Asia rebalance policy ... with hopes to obtain Chinese cooperation on North Korea again. A mainstay of US policy is to require that Pyongyang renounce its nuclear program to begin dialogue.

## Who Cares?

There have been a handful of countries actively pursuing a denuclearized North Korean state: the United States, Japan, South Korea, China, and Russia. The rest of the international community acts primarily through the United Nations (UN). The UN has played an active role in dealing with North Korea and its dangerous nuclear and missile tests – considered as provocative by the USG and the UN.<sup>34</sup> Aside from the UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) votes and the handful of countries listed above, the preponderance of the international community has been largely silent or apathetic on North Korean nuclear ambitions, missile technology advancements, and provocations. There may also be some NPT membership concern; however, it is not reflected in public actions.

When we go further back in history, there was a much larger international spotlight focused on the Korean peninsula, when Kim Il-sung led an invasion into South Korea. The Korean War coalition was comprised of 53 nations. Fifteen nations provided ground combat and other military forces and equipment. This concerted military effort resulted in the establishment of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) and the Armistice Treaty signatories included the USG, UN, DPRK and Peoples Republic of China (PRC).<sup>35</sup> Since the UN coalition preserved South Korean sovereignty in 1953, the broader international engagement has been concentrated on passing UNSC Resolutions, with the most recent UNSCR actions being UNSCR 1718 and 1874.<sup>36</sup> China has been an integral part of passing some of those resolutions.

Though China has voted in favor of sanctions and hosted Six-Party Talks, the USG believes that China can do more.<sup>37</sup> Secretary Kerry states that Chinese cooperation is central to the successful denuclearization of North Korea and to ensuring regional stability.<sup>38</sup> Recently, the PRC even stated that it shares the same interest to have a nuclear-free Peninsula.<sup>39</sup> Many contend



that the PRC is merely interested in propping up the Kim regime, with economic aid to maintain a buffer between its borders and US-allied South Koreans.<sup>40</sup> The PRC's actions may be considered symbolic, but it also published a 900-item control list banning export on dual-use items to North Korea.<sup>41</sup>

### **Why Change? A lack of positive international leadership.**

This section is focused on international influences that may shape the behavior of Kim Jong-un, as it is his decisions causing the security concerns on the peninsula. The security situation on the Korean peninsula has not improved in three decades; instead, the DPRK's actions are more pronounced and volatile than before. Isolating North Korea from the international community has not only created an information vacuum, but also a leadership void. There is little to no positive interaction and dialogue between the USG and/or its allies with the Kim regime, except for limited South Korean (ROK) outreach.

Furthermore, Kim Jong-un is a young ruler that has been western-educated and appears to enjoy western pleasures, but is currently being shunned by Western leaders.<sup>42</sup> There is one, perhaps two primary countries that may have influence in the DPRK regime - China and possibly Russia.<sup>v</sup> Neither country is considered friendly to the USG. Therefore, Kim Jong-un is being self-mentored by the legacy of his ancestors and/or he is being influenced by potentially two countries that are deemed unfriendly to the USG. This has the potential to be problematic, and

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<sup>v</sup>The Soviet Union / Russians. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR or Soviet Union) heavily supported the development of North Korea's nuclear capability, beginning in 1959, according to Zhebin. (Zhebin, North Korean Nuclear Program, 27-59) Yet, when the North Koreans worked with the Russians to develop a program, it was propagated to be developed for peaceful purposes. In the late 1950's, the North Koreans experienced acute electrical power shortages and still do today. Therefore, it was reasonable to pursue nuclear technology. Kim Il-sung sent scientists to Japan, China, and West Germany to study nuclear technology. (Kaurov, North Korean Nuclear Program, 21) In the 1970s, Kim decided that the DPRK needed to build nuclear weapons capability. (Ibid, 22)

may not be necessary. It is my opinion that the opportunity to positively influence the DPRK's supreme leader, who is approximately 35-years of age, to become a responsible nuclear power is quickly diminishing.<sup>43</sup>

## **Recommendations**

Nations that have dialogue are less likely to be surprised by each other's actions, such as how the North Korean recurrent testing and evaluation of its nuclear program continues to surprise the international community. Some form of diplomatic relations is important. Diplomatic negotiations addressing North Korea's nuclear program could reap significant dividends and lead to a more stable Northeast Asia and possibly create the opportunity for peaceful dialogue between the north and south. Strategic patience, isolation and awaiting North Korea to implode, is a questionable US policy, at best. How does the USG achieve stability, accountability, and opportunity for the North Korean population without engagement? The recommendations, put forward in this essay, are based on the argument that the current approach has been more detrimental to the North Korean population than it is to the regime, and therefore counters US values and ideals.

Engagement could be viewed to serve a multifold purpose: guide North Korean leaders to become a responsible nuclear power, improve conditions for North Koreans, and improve North-South relations. To further this point, I believe that Kim Jong-un wants open dialogue with the United States and other Western countries. This is represented in his open adoration of western movies and sports, as well as being educated in Switzerland. Mr. Kim invited Dennis Rodman to visit his country, who has made several trips.<sup>44</sup> Former President Bill Clinton was able to successfully negotiate the release of US citizens imprisoned in North Korea.<sup>45</sup> These actions

could be viewed as overt demonstrations of Mr. Kim's willingness to begin US-North Korean dialogue.

The USG has taken relatively the same approach over the last several decades to deal the threat of a nuclear-capable North Korea, since its covert nuclear program was discovered in 1994. A direct and novel approach is warranted to make change in regime behavior. The recommendations include: 1) changing US policy objectives to instead of requiring (at least initially) North Korea to denounce its nuclear program, accept that the DPRK is a nuclear power and guide it to become a responsible nuclear power, 2) open dialogue without the preconditions of denuclearization, 3) institutionalize the Six-Party Talks, and 4) utilize key components of the Iran Nuclear Deal. These recommendations are understood to be polemical, but not insurmountable.

### **Accept North Korea as a Nuclear Power**

North Korea is a state with a nuclear stockpile. The international community should stop denying this reality. It is ludicrous, especially in today's unstable geopolitical environment, to require any current nuclear power to denuclearize. It is not far reaching to accept North Korea as a nuclear state. First of all, it already has a nuclear stockpile. Secondly, the DPRK has enshrined its nuclear program into its constitution. Thirdly, the US State Department recognizes that the North Korean government will not give up its nuclear program.<sup>46</sup> Lastly, events since 2002 have caused North Korean leaders to take pause, and carefully consider US international actions. The US Iraq invasion and subsequent deposing of Saddam Hussein, North Korea's being named one of the axis of evil, and Russian's annexation of Crimea (a former Ukrainian territory) and what appeared to be USG's lack of support to Ukraine – to an outsider, which North Korea is. Further, USG actions appear inconsistent and troubling.

## **Begin Dialogue**

The USG should remove the precondition that North Korea must renounce its nuclear program in order to pursue dialogue. Historically, the USG has chosen isolation diplomacy with nations considered adversaries, forcing those states to meet preconditions before formal engagement.<sup>47</sup> The USG has declined diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, the PRC, Cuba, Vietnam, Libya, Iran (though US interests were represented through the Swiss Embassy), and obviously North Korea (1948-present).<sup>48</sup> This non-engagement diplomatic tool is predominantly used by the USG. Wiseman contends that this is squandering an essential element inherent in diplomacy.<sup>49</sup>

It creates a dilemma for those attempting to create a long-term vision to resolve nuclear issues peacefully with North Korea.<sup>50</sup> Wiseman questions whether this approach is sustainable, and asserts concern over its cumulative effects over a long period of time. Further, her analysis indicates this method is simplistic and overlooks “a great deal that distinguishes national diplomatic cultures and styles that affect international affairs.”<sup>51</sup> United States interests evolve and so should US policy and diplomacy. According to Weisman, traditional realists have grounds for believing that American diplomacy, as characterized here, fails to achieve its objective of advancing the country’s national interests.<sup>52</sup> There are doubts that this method advances international cooperation. Unfortunately, the US population and government are typically impatient in the international arena. This impatience has caused primarily a resort to hard power, to the detriment of soft power - referred to by Weisman as “hard-power security culture.”<sup>53</sup> Hard power costs more, and in a more economically constrained environment, soft power should be better utilized and resourced. Weisman concludes that the reason for this hard-power security culture is because there is skepticism that soft power will work.<sup>54</sup> Additionally,

there is the concern of the perception of appeasement with hostile adversaries, as well as condoning of human rights abuses. Without soft power, how does a nation tackle human rights concerns? How does a state change behavior without dialogue? This situation will continue to plague US diplomatic efforts.

As isolated and besieged as North Korea may be, there is a real reason to doubt that its government will make meaningful compromises on its nuclear program, despite the painful impact of the sanctions. So far, North Korea has been resilient to any external pressure, and Kim Jong-un will likely never give in. North Korean officials have stated that “it will not give up its nuclear weapons for a billion dollars.”<sup>55</sup> That sounds pretty emphatic. Kim Jong-un may believe that the USG is only interested in regime change. The carrot and the stick approach is well within the United States’ wheel house. Considering a different approach is therefore advisable. Perhaps utilizing a more enticing deal, a renewed offer of engagement, combined with potentially harsher punishment, as utilized in the Iran Nuclear Deal could also be considered. Politically, this makes sense and the benefits could reap Washington security and financial dividends of a more secure peninsula, and result in less focus on the possibility for military conflict, or worse yet nuclear catastrophe.

### **Institutionalized Six-Party Talks**

Moore argues for institutionalized Six-Party Talks and this paper agrees.<sup>56</sup> Institutionalized Six-Party Talks solves the problems of changing US administrations. As mentioned earlier, President Bush initially abandoned the diplomatic efforts with North Korea at a critical juncture.<sup>57</sup> Institutionalizing this process provides some form of reassurance to the interested regional nations that have vested interests, which may invest diplomatic efforts, resources and time. Countries are less willing to invest this type of political and financial effort

when it is likely that the change of a critical partner's interest may drastically switch course. It would also demonstrate a reinforced US commitment to our allies in the region towards solving the North Korean nuclear weapons problem. Additionally, building trust takes time.

Unfortunately, destroying this trust can only take a few words such as labeling North Korea as one of the "axis of evil."

Indeed, regional allies would need to support this agreement before publicly announcing it, particularly South Korea and Japan. Reassurance would also need to be given to these allies that US Security Agreements are strong as ever, and that the USG would hold North Korea accountable to any signed agreements. Moore suggests that regional partners would also need to be assured that this change would be a confidence-building measure and that these changes should not be considered as a compromise or concession.<sup>58</sup> Institutionalized Six-Party Talks would also allow for smoother administration personnel changes. If these talks are institutionalized, less buy-in is required by following administrations. Recently, Secretary Kerry traveled to China in order to urge the PRC to pressure a North Korean leadership to end its dangerous nuclear tests.<sup>59</sup> If there were institutionalize Six-Party Talks, emergency sessions could be called to discuss this issue. Such dialogue would require China's engagement. With the PRC's cooperation, it could alleviate concerns of a North Korea implosion and the chance of mass migration and humanitarian nightmare, spillover effects on its borders.

### **Use the Iran Deal as a Model**

*"... successful sanctions are likely to be those coupled intelligently with diplomacy, the threat of force, economic incentives, or other tools." - Meghan O'Sullivan*

O'Sullivan makes a crucial point here, on the effective use of diplomacy referencing the Iran Nuclear Deal. The Iran Nuclear Agreement provides a successful model of US diplomacy and coordination with the international community, though the significant differences between Iran and North Korea are noted. There are a few key points that should be highlighted for consideration that may be applied to the North Korean case: 1) pursue policy change implementation at the beginning of the presidential administration, 2) leverage European leaders as the lead for negotiations and gain more international involvement, and 3) use big carrots and big sticks.

Clearly, a change in US policy towards North Korea would be carefully scrutinized, not only for security concerns, but also for political reasons. Radical changes in US policy will not be popular, regardless of political party. For example, both Republicans and Democrats voted to block the Iran Deal and then increased sanctions on Iran, only a few weeks after the deal was implemented.<sup>60</sup> Despite international accolades, US political theater continued with vitriolic rhetoric opposing the accords and potentially jeopardizing progress. These elements indicate the incredible difficulty in moving away from the status quo. Additionally, had the administration not pursued the policy change early on, the JCPOA would not have come to fruition with a US signature. Hence, the newly elected president would need to commence policy changes upon entering the office and must be prepared to expend extensive political capital.

Key members of the international community played a critical role in obtaining the agreement on Iran's nuclear program. The permanent UN Security Council members, Germany, and the European Union (EU) worked in concert. This effort was indeed a win for diplomacy and demonstrated why unilateral actions should be considered as a last resort - though the threat of military force was not taken off the table.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, successful implementation of this

agreement also provides momentum for integral members of the international community to continue to work together in order to deal with other wicked problems, such as North Korea's nuclear weapons program. European leaders' role in this agreement also boosted the importance of the IAEA, particularly in implementing treaty safeguards.<sup>62</sup> Iran's compliance with the agreement, followed by the removal of sanctions, and Iran's ability to freely conduct international relations, also instills trust into international systems. As Dempsey suggests, this diplomatic solution has the ability to reinforce the moderate political forces in Iran and set the stage for internal political reform.<sup>63</sup>

O'Sullivan states that sanctions must be accompanied with other tools of national power.<sup>64</sup> The sticks are clear and have been enforced for years. They include: US imposed unilateral sanctions, multilateral sanctions by other Western nations, UN Security Council resolutions and the threat of military action. Before key Western allies and partners came together, the sanctions imposed were disjointed, and they were not accompanied with any incentives.

The big sticks and big carrots approach proved to be an effective strategy. The Iran Nuclear Agreement was successfully negotiated, partially due to the synchronized international sanctions that were applied by US and other major world powers in a near unison fashion.<sup>65</sup> This was an immense diplomatic commitment to align the international community's shared interests and to bring about change in Iran's government's behavior. International synergy brought Iran to the negotiating table. Additionally, the carrots were substantial as well. Now that Iran has complied with the agreement, the benefits to the country will be felt almost immediately. With the sanctions being lifted and trade opening up to Iran, the Iranian population should begin to feel economic relief. The nuclear agreement also removes the political obstruction from Iran's



government and provides the opportunity to become a responsible regional power.<sup>66</sup> Lifting sanctions and ending North Korea’s international isolation could be used as big carrots to entice North Korea to also act responsibly and join the international community.<sup>67</sup>

### Constraints and Impediments

In order to make any US foreign policy changes on North Korea, there will certainly be a vigorous political debate. It will be a complicated, lengthy, and potentially contentious process. Hard earned political capital will need to be expended in order to change foreign policy priorities. The biggest road block will be Congress. As we enter into this transition period, the next president has an opportunity to make North Korea a high profile priority. If the next administration takes a page out of the Iran Deal handbook, it would begin this effort within the first year of its administration. Provided below in Table 2 is a list of potential constraints and impediments that can be anticipated in today’s current political climate.

**Table 2. Constraints and Impediments**

<i>Circumstances</i>	<i>Primary Stakeholders</i>	<i>Actions</i>
National security and decision making process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be a slow and unwieldy process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• President</li> <li>• Congress</li> <li>• Interest groups</li> <li>• US public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convince congress that North Korean nuclear program is a higher priority than daesh (ISIS/ISIL)</li> <li>• DPRK officials claim that tits missiles can reach CONUS.<sup>68</sup></li> <li>• Explore executive order options</li> <li>• Executive/legislative intense negotiations<sup>69</sup></li> <li>• Focus on human rights for North Korean population</li> <li>• Consider conducting confidential negotiations initially</li> <li>• Concentrate on diplomatic benefits</li> </ul>
Negotiations with boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive branch</li> <li>• DPRK</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other Western governments could lead negotiations and/or include more</li> </ul>

Continue non-proliferation regime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive branch</li> <li>• DPRK</li> <li>• NPT members</li> </ul>	international partners (GBR, DEU, other EU nations) <sup>vi</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage/pressure the PRC to lead</li> <li>• Change paradigms</li> <li>• View this policy obj thru Eastern lens</li> <li>• Treat North Koreans with respect</li> </ul> N/A
Significant amount of political capital and will needs to be expended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US State Dept</li> <li>• DPRK</li> <li>• ROK</li> <li>• China</li> </ul>	Pursue change in policy objs during the first year of administration  Develop terms of expectations from the DPRK <sup>71</sup>

Notes. <sup>vi vii</sup>

## Conclusion

This essay contends that the current USG approach to changing DPRK’s behavior is ineffective. It also raised questions on changing the current policies to something innovative and

<sup>vi</sup> This will assist giving North Korea the international recognition it has been seeking from world powers... it wants to be taken seriously on the world stage – powerful people have successfully negotiated with North Korea to obtain prisoners – Clinton, Carter, Dennis Rodman.

“Imagine the tremendous diplomatic advantage if we had simply said, ‘We are willing to talk,’” Burn told me that day. “Offering to talk would have increased our leverage any way those talks worked out. If the Iranians accepted the offer to talk, we would have been able to probe their bottom line.” “We would have been able to figure out whether there was a coherent government on the other side that could have a real conversation with us.” This proclivity that the US has in severing diplomatic ties with our enemies simply does not make sense,” Burns said, echoing a position many of the administration’s critics made.<sup>vi</sup>

<sup>vii</sup> Information end note. Congress has been an impediment in working with the North Koreans. This is representative during the mid-1990s, when executive branch negotiators attempted to award North Korea by lifting sanctions, but was hindered by Congress in doing so. (O’Sullivan, Iran and the Great Sanctions Debate, 7-21) In Mitchell Reiss’ Negotiating with Evil – a state must begin with confidence-building measures that could open the door to dialogue, which may be best left in the confidential realm. DPRK wants to be treated with respect. It wants to be legitimized and it want to be incorporated into the international community.

bold. Similar to Cuba and Iran, it may be time to also consider changing relations with North Korea. Instead of requiring North Korea to denounce its nuclear program, the USG with strong international support may consider guiding North Korea to become a responsible nuclear power, focused on ending the dangerous nuclear and missiles tests and reinserting the IAEA. Perhaps by engaging in this form of dialogue, the USG could end North Korea's illegal international behavior.

Secondly, the US State Department should open dialogue without the preconditions of denuclearization. Engaging in dialogue without prerequisites is important for all the aforementioned reasons. Though initial discussions will not likely begin with high-level officials, it is important that high-level USG officials are visible in the process, such as the US Secretary of State. Recall that legitimacy is a key factor for North Korea's nuclear weapons program. This element provides credence to US credibility and emphasizes the level of commitment that key regional nations can anticipate. It is recognized that North Korea is a small country and would not necessarily receive this type of notable attention. However, it has become strategically important.

Due to USG international actions, over last decade or so, the United States may have lost some credibility with regards to the North Korean issue. This is where a page from the Iran Deal may be helpful. Note the role the international community played in pursuing the Iran Nuclear Agreement, which could be considered as an option. Additionally, the involvement of powerful countries from the European Union (EU) should be considered viable courses of action to contemplate.

The recommendations put forth in this essay are ideas that challenge conventional wisdom, as something new is required. More research should be conducted on this topic to

explore successful negotiations with Asian countries. It is time to move away from a Western lens of viewing this problem set. Another example may be found in reviewing the evolution of USG policies towards Pakistan's nuclear program.

There is a temporal aspect to effectively moving forward on changes regarding North Korea, as the current supreme leader is a very young ruler, relatively speaking. The longer the Western world takes to genuinely engage, the more entrenched in his behaviors Kim Jong-un will become. Indeed, the USG has several security challenges it must address; however, it is the existential threats that should be higher prioritized. It is important that terrorism is effectively combated, but nuclear threats are clearly more dangerous. Further, the US national security decision making process creates clear obstacles to addressing this issue. Therefore, a significant amount of political capital and will would certainly need to be expended to move the dialogue away from Daesh and towards solving this very important problem.

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