



Geopolitical Implications of a New Era on the Korean Peninsula



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Foreword

The second summit meeting between the United States and the DPRK in Vietnam ended without a deal.

There is yet no roadmap on how denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula might be possible, nor is there a clear way for North Korea to be able to join the fold of the international community and have sanctions lifted. In short, a great number of uncertainties remain while hopes for peace continue to be strong.

Ahead of the Hanoi summit, experts from the United States and Japan gathered at the Wilson Center on January 30, 2019, to discuss the geopolitical implications of a new era on the Peninsula. Three panels were held: the first to assess the geopolitical implications of diplomatic success with North Korea, and its impact on neighboring China, Russia, and South Korea. The second panel discussed the geopolitical implications of diplomatic failure with North Korea and




Photo: President Donald J. Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, walk together to their expanded bilateral meeting, Tuesday, June 12, 2018, at the Capella Hotel in Singapore. (Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

its impact on Japan and the United States. The final panel considered options for a way forward for the region in dealing with the North Korean threat.

Following are essays from four of the speakers of the conference. Each offers their view on the implications of engaging with Pyongyang to date, and its security implications moving forward.

This event and this publication were made possible through the generous support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. As tensions over North Korea's nuclear status persist, the Wilson Center's Asia Program will continue to convene discussion to assess the evolution of engaging with Pyongyang and possibilities to move forward in the future.

March 1, 2019
Washington DC



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Stability in Northeast Asia and the Reassurance Challenge

Abraham M. Denmark

A key question when considering the implications of diplomatic failure in negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang is how one defines success and failure. To this question, the Trump administration's answer has changed significantly over time. Through 2017, the Trump administration proclaimed its objectives: to seek out North Korea's complete, verified denuclearization while warning "We will not allow American cities to be threatened with destruction."¹ Throughout 2017, the United States and North Korea seemed to be on a collision course, with the Trump administration reported to have seriously considered military options.²

Yet as relations between Washington and Pyongyang warmed in 2018, the Trump administration significantly reduced its ambitions. After meeting with Kim in Singapore, President Trump tweeted "There is no longer a Nuclear Threat [sic] from North Korea" and has since emphasized Pyongyang's halt to nuclear and missile testing as an indication of his diplomatic success.³ To date, the Hanoi summit between President Trump and Kim Jong Un does

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1. President Donald J. Trump, "Remarks by President Trump to the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea," The White House, November 7, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-national-assembly-republic-korea-seoul-republic-korea>.
 2. See Van Jackson, *On the Brink: Trump, Kim, and the Threat of Nuclear War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
 3. Donald J. Trump. (realDonaldTrump). "There is no longer a Nuclear Threat from North Korea. Meeting with Kim Jong Un was an interesting and very positive experience. North Korea has great potential for the future!" June 13, 2018. 2:56 AM. <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1006837823469735936>; Alex Lockie, "Trump doesn't care if North Korea has nukes, as long as they're not pointed at the US," *Business Insider*, September 20, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-doesnt-care-about-north-korea-nukes-while-relations-are-good-2018-9>.

not seem to have substantially changed dynamics between the United States and North Korea, and may only have reinforced the difficult road ahead for diplomatic engagement.

This paper is not a prediction of diplomatic failure, nor is it a statement about the state of diplomacy between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Rather, this paper seeks to look beyond daily diplomatic calculations, and consider the broader consequences of possible consequences for the Indo-Pacific of diplomatic failure between Washington and Pyongyang.⁴

STABILITY IN NORTHEAST ASIA

If North Korea should be able to render its nuclear capability relatively permanent and implicitly (if begrudgingly) accepted, it would pose a significant challenge to the stability of Northeast Asia. While this threat would primarily implicate the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the U.S.-ROK Alliance, the threat would emanate far more broadly. Put broadly, a nuclear North Korea will be empowered to spread instability across the region.

If diplomacy should fail and North Korea acquire a credible and unquestionable nuclear deterrent, North Korea's leaders may believe themselves safe from external aggression.⁵ As a result, Pyongyang may decide to support international terrorism, violate international laws, and even overtly attack its neighbors in the belief that no one would dare risk triggering a nuclear retaliation. This is how a nuclear deterrent, even if acquired for genuinely defensive purposes, can enable aggression and inflame instability.

This dynamic is not unique to the Korean peninsula: the so-called "stability-instability paradox" was an issue of concern between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and remains an issue of concern regarding

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4. For the purposes of this paper, "diplomatic failure" is defined as the determination that further diplomacy would be pointless because North Korea seeks to retain its WMD capabilities and will never completely give up its nuclear weapons and production capabilities.
 5. While North Korea has demonstrated its capabilities in several aspects of what would be needed for an intercontinental nuclear deterrent, it has not demonstrated them all. Therefore, to date, some ambiguity remains about the true extent of North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities.

Pakistan.⁶ As such, this is not an insurmountable challenge—though it would require the United States and its allies to adjust its defense posture and military strategy to account for the evolving threat.

Specifically, the United States and its allies would need to adjust its military strategy to prepare for a limited war on the Korean peninsula while also enhancing its ability to contain the DPRK's asymmetric threats further afield. It would require a renewed effort to counter potential North Korean proliferation and guard against terrorist activities, while also enhancing regional missile defense capabilities.

A REASSURANCE CHALLENGE

Related to the evolved threat posed by a credibly nuclear North Korea would be an intensified need by the United States to reassure its allies of its will and ability to come to their defense. As a result of North Korea's enhanced ability to threaten its neighbors and the United States with a devastating nuclear strike, it is understandable that U.S. allies may be concerned about the reliability of American security guarantees.

Allied fear of abandonment is nothing new within Alliance dynamics, and certainly not unique to the Trump administration. It was ever-present in the Cold War after the Soviet Union developed a credible nuclear capability, and was one of the key factors that drove the UK and France to develop indigenous nuclear capabilities. This history offers two lessons when considering the implications of diplomatic failure with North Korea.

First, the United States has been able to overcome concerns about U.S. commitment to alliances in the past. For all the Cold War concern about abandonment, the United States was able to successfully maintain deterrence while holding its European alliances together. Similarly in East Asia, the United States has maintained its alliance commitments in the face of a highly credible nuclear China, although those alliances have also grown more complicated in the face of China's rising geopolitical power.

6. For a more in-depth analysis of the stability-instability paradox, extended deterrence, and reassurance, see Brad Roberts, "Extended Deterrence and Strategic Stability in Northeast Asia," *NIDS Visiting Scholar Paper Series*, No.1, 9th August 2013, <http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/publication/visiting/pdf/01.pdf>.

Second, there is a very real potential for allies to pursue indigenous nuclear weapons as a result of diminishing confidence in American reliability and intensifying external threats. In fact, Seoul previously pursued an indigenous nuclear capability when forced to confront the potential of American abandonment.⁷

The United States will need to take more seriously the significant reassurance challenges it faces in East Asia, partially as a result of North Korea's burgeoning nuclear capability. Washington should therefore look to its past reassurance experiences, and identify ways to enhance reassurance mechanisms with Tokyo and Seoul. The need for such action will grow exponentially should diplomacy with Pyongyang fail, as allies will be forced to confront a vastly more challenging strategic reality.

THINKING ABOUT THE UNTHINKABLE

Preventing North Korea from acquiring a credible nuclear capability has been a decades-long objective shared by the entire international community. Diplomatic failure, should it come, will not only be the failure of the United States, but rather of all who sought to prevent Pyongyang from acquiring the world's most dangerous weapons. Still, it is the responsibility of the United States to understand the implications of that failure—both within the Korean peninsula and beyond—and to adjust its strategies accordingly.

Beyond the ROK, the country that will be most directly impacted by a credibly nuclear North Korea will be Japan. Not only has North Korea acquired missiles that can strike targets in Japan, but questions about the reliability of American power in the face of North Korean ICBMs will impact Tokyo as immediately and profoundly as it will Seoul.

Washington cannot focus only on the Korean peninsula in crafting its strategies toward North Korea. The results of any diplomacy with Pyongyang—successful or not—will ripple across the region and have significant implications for regional stability and for the long-term credibility of American power in the Indo-Pacific.

7. Se Young Jang (2016) The Evolution of US Extended Deterrence and South Korea's Nuclear Ambitions, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 39:4, 502–520, DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2016.1168012.

Maintaining Alliances After Trump-Kim Summit Diplomacy

Nobumasa Akiyama

Ahead of the second Trump-Kim meeting to be held in Hanoi, the joint statement from the first summit meeting in Singapore has been closely scrutinized. That document only outlined the principles which would shape a frame of negotiations between the United States and North Korea. It may be impossible to agree on an implementable roadmap for the complete denuclearization in Vietnam too, due to the complicated technical process of denuclearization and the difficulty of eliminating deep rooted mutual suspicion between the United States and North Korea. A wide gap between the two countries' political and security concerns would make it impossible for North Korea to make a full declaration of its nuclear weapons, stockpile of nuclear material and nuclear-related activities. However, it is reasonable enough to expect any kind of agreement on some concrete measures to lead toward complete denuclearization. The most critical issue is to strike a balance between what denuclearization measures are agreed on between the United States and North Korea and what incentives will be given to North Korea in return.

There are growing concerns about a possible decoupling of Japan from the United States in coping with North Korean nuclear threats, and a risk of a further stalemate of denuclearization. In order to avoid a situation whereby Tokyo would be forced to acknowledge North Korea's *de facto* nuclear weapon state status, Japan has preferred achieving the complete denuclearization before providing economic incentives and rewards including the removal of sanctions and provision of economic assistance. However, there is almost no chance that such a deal would be made at the summit. The pragmatic choice for Japan now is to abandon this fundamentalist position and to have a flexibility in accepting a phased approach to denuclearization. Japan should not be the country to close a window of opportunity to keep on engaging North Korea in denuclearization negotiation. In the meantime, the second Trump-Kim summit should not be an occasion to acknowledge the *status quo* of nuclear-armed North Korea as a the new normal,



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Whether the second summit would result in either success or failure can be measured by the following three criteria. First, whether there is an agreement on technical measures that will physically and substantially reduce nuclear threats, with clear prospects for concrete steps to be taken toward the implementation of such measures. Indication of a timeline including deadlines of implementation and a roadmap for the rest of the denuclearization process would be desirable.

Second, a deal should have no negative impact on regional security. If North Korea's nuclear threats are not eliminated, it is vital that the United States does not agree with North Korea in measures to reduce the capability of U.S. forces in the region to reassure allies and partners in the region, and to maintain and shape the regional security order.

Thirdly, a deal should be politically acceptable and sustainable both in the domestic context and in the alliance-management context. While it is important to provide incentives to North Koreans in order to keep a window of opportunity for further diplomatic maneuvers to resolve North Korea's nuclear problem, excessive concessions on the side of denuclearization measures and disproportionate economic and political rewards may prompt political backlash at home, and cause friction between allies. Therefore, it is important to strike a balance in deals between threat reduction and incentives.

So, what kind of deal are the two leaders likely to agree? At this moment, with so many uncertainties, speculating the contents of the deal or agreement based on such media reports would make little sense. However, it is clear that the United States is now ready to work on a partial deal at the second summit, and accept a phased approach towards denuclearization instead of a one-shot deal to cover entire activities associated with denuclearization.

The Dong-a Ilbo reported February 11, that an agreement at the Second Trump-Kim Summit meeting would include a partial reporting of Yongbyon nuclear facilities.⁸ Other media also speculate that a shutdown of nuclear test sites and missile test sites as well as a freeze and abandonment of ICBM development could be included. Meanwhile, the e Korea Times reported that the United States and North Korea agreed in principle that North Korea accept IAEA inspection at the Yongbyon and missile test sites. This is puzzling news

8. "Trump-Kim summit expected to announce peace declaration," Dong-a Ilbo, February 11, 2019. <http://english.donga.com/Home/3/all/26/1635251/1>

and requires more clarification given that the mandate of IAEA is to verify 'civilian' nuclear facilities and material, not missile activities. Further, IAEA verification is to check the completeness and correctness of declaration of material and facilities, for which full declaration is essential and partial declaration will make little sense. If North Korea agrees to host international inspections based on the decent declaration, which constitutes a baseline for assessing full range of North Korea's nuclear activities and assets, it will serve as a credible confidence building measure and an indication of North Korea's commitment to further progress in denuclearization. Meanwhile, if a declaration (or reporting) of Yongbyon remains partial, it would not make much sense as a confidence building measure.

Other measures that have been floating around are inspections for the shut-down of the Tongchang-ri engine test ground and rocket launch pad and Punggye-ri nuclear test site. These measures may halt or confirm the halt of further development of North Korea's nuclear weapon capabilities. However, they do not address the existing nuclear capabilities. If North Korea's nuclear threats are to be physically reduced, nuclear warheads (deployed and in stock), stockpile of uranium, plutonium, and possibly tritium, and missiles must be taken care of.

On the side of incentives, the Dong-a Ilbo reports that end-of-war declaration in exchange for a partial reporting of Yongbyon facilities could be included. This provokes the question of whether such a political declaration for end-of-war or peace would be followed by concrete actions by the United States such as reducing the U.S. military presence in the Korean Peninsula and/or changing its declaratory policies with regard to its security commitment to the Korean Peninsula.

Among others, an issue of freeze and abandonment of ICBM development, if it would come up, should be carefully handled as it may cause a divide between Japan and the United States. It can be an important benchmark for the United States to assess the success and failure of negotiation as it would address North Korea's capability of directly threatening the U.S. mainland. Therefore, if North Korea agrees to halt or abandon its ICBM program, the U.S. government can advertise at home this great security achievement, once that has never been achieved by any previous government.

What are the implications for Japan? There are two contradictory interpretations. A positive view sees that the abandonment of ICBM program means the United States mainland would no longer face direct threats of nuclear attack or blackmail by North Korea. Therefore, U.S. commitment to retaliation against

attacks against its allies and partners should be more credible as the United States does not need to worry about being struck back. A pessimist view states that without ICBMs, North Korea would no longer pose direct nuclear threat to the United States mainland. This then may reduce incentives for the United States (or President Trump) to further negotiate towards complete denuclearization. That scenario would leave North Korea's nuclear threats to Japan, which are constituted with medium-range missiles, unaddressed. If the abandonment of the ICBM program is swapped with the provision of security assurance to North Korea, Japan would be trapped by the fear of decoupling. Given President Trump's strong personal belief that U.S. forces stationed abroad must be reduced, this pessimistic view may be viable despite repeated reassurance signals by the United States at various levels including between leaders.

It is highly likely that political confidence building measures will come before tangible and physical threat reduction measures to dismantle existing nuclear weapon capabilities move forward. It is exactly a relationship that North Korea would like to establish with the United States, namely an arms control relationship between nuclear armed states.

As negotiations evolve from arms control and confidence building to disarmament and denuclearization, there are two key points to keep in mind. Firstly, it is important to remind North Koreans that this round of negotiation is not the endgame in itself. A benchmark to measure progress must be set and a deadline for implementation of agreed measures must be established.

Secondly, the United States will continue to reassure its allies and regional security players its commitment to regional security. The strategic significance of providing reassurance to allies will not only preventing North Korea from getting into gaps of interests among allies in denuclearization negotiations. It will also prevent the expansion of China's strategic maneuverability in the East Asian security environment. In addition, it will secure the engagement of allies including European NATO members, QUAD and other security partners in cooperating with the United States in the strategic competition with Russia and China at the global level.



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Geopolitical Implications of Diplomatic Failure with North Korea

Patrick M. Cronin

It is easy to become complacent about the likelihood of a strategic shift on the Korean Peninsula. Decades of stalemate between the United States and North Korea have lulled many into thinking that diplomacy cannot end or substantially affect the Cold War on the Peninsula. Add to that the durability of America's strong alliances with Japan and South Korea, and concern over China's rapid reemergence, there would seem to be many obstacles to a sharp swerve from the status quo. Regardless of whether we are on the cusp of a new era on the Peninsula and in Northeast Asia, the present push for a rapprochement with the Kim Jong Un regime offers a timely opportunity to reflect on some speculative "what-if" scenarios.⁹

Questioning core assumptions can help avert surprise and inform policy. International relations are not permanently fixed but continuously in flux. The tectonic plates of geopolitics can move gradually or abruptly. Because change is inevitable but not its pace or form, the attempt to forecast its trajectory may be quixotic. When change comes, it may arrive from an oblique angle rather than some evident and inexorable trend realized over time.

In this context, diplomacy could have grave geopolitical consequences for the United States and others. This essay focuses on the geopolitical implications of diplomatic failure, although it argues that there are several routes to failure,

9. For additional thinking about how current negotiations with North Korea might evolve, see Patrick M. Cronin and Kristine Lee, *Negotiating with North Korea: How Will This End?* (Washington, D.C.: Center for a New American Security, February 2019), https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/CNAS-Report_North-Korea-How-Does-This-End_Final-WEB-1.pdf?mtime=20190204114900.

including even ostensibly “successful” negotiations. To explain why this is so, it assesses the enduring aspects and value of the status quo, touches briefly on the concept of geopolitics, draws on history to illuminate the seeming inevitability of change, and considers scenarios for near-term and long-term diplomatic outcomes that would be consequential for the United States, Japan, and Northeast Asia.

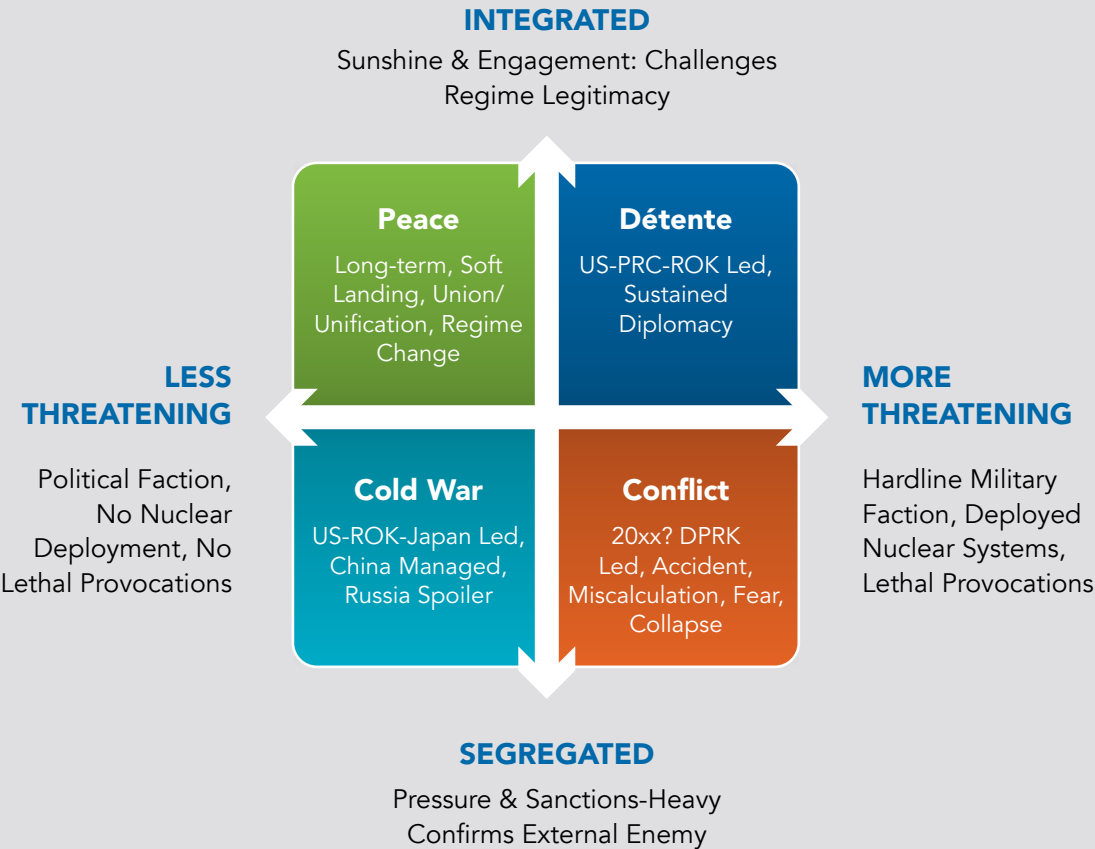
A simple two-by-two matrix shows the box we are in and why many have become skeptical about the possibility of inciting sudden change. Since 1953, we have been locked into an adversarial relationship with North Korea. The Kim family regime appears to both require an external threat for its legitimacy and fear the potential for regime change imposed from outside. Similarly, the United States and its democratic allies in Northeast Asia, both South Korea and Japan, realize that they remain primary targets of Pyongyang’s growing arsenal of weapons and that North Korea’s tyranny is antithetical to the most fundamental values of freedom and human rights. While miscalculation could lead to conflict, rational decision-makers would be unlikely to profit by initiating a hot war. Likewise, the structural impediments to achieving peace are enormous and prevent a grand bargain delivered in one fell swoop. In theory, a gradual, step-by-step thaw to reach a *détente*, which in turn might produce a durable peace, seems the most plausible way to end the Cold War. Peace could be a prelude to geopolitical change. But so many things could derail peace, as suggested by all previous attempts at achieving conciliation with Pyongyang. Hence, failed diplomacy that preserves the status quo, even one with a larger North Korean nuclear arsenal, may be the least likely quadrant to produce a geopolitical transformation.

GEOPOLITICAL CHANGE AND THE KOREAN PENINSULA

By dint of geographical location, “[t]he Korean Peninsula has historically been a victim of the tragedy of great-power politics.”¹⁰ In the past half-century alone, the Peninsula has been fought over and profoundly shaped by conflict and diplomacy. Sixteenth-century Japanese daimyo Toyotomi Hideyoshi sought to conquer Korea in the 1590s. In the 1620s and ‘30s, Manchu invasions succeeded

10. Scott A. Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads: Autonomy and Alliance in an Era of Rival Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

Korean Peninsula Futures



This simple two-by-two matrix depicts a description of the basic options for breaking out of a U.S.-North Korean Cold War by considering the level of overt threat and degree of integration between the two Koreas. While a lurch into conflict is always possible, both war and peace seem remote relative to the tried-but-failed path of a gradual easing of tensions.

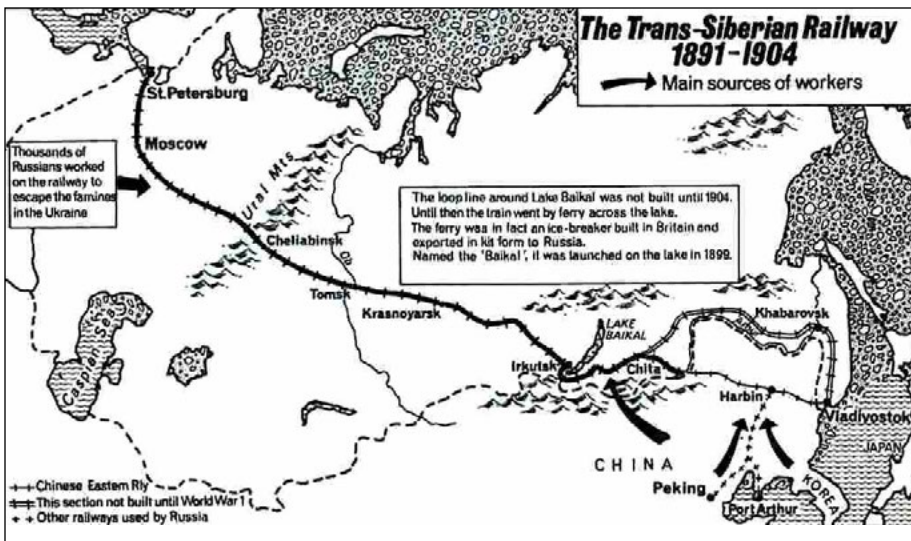
in making the Joseon Dynasty of Korea a tributary of China's Qing Dynasty. In the 1800s Korea cut off outside contact, save with China, until a rising Japan forced open its ports, defeated the Qing in the 1894–95 Sino-Japanese War, and triumphed over Russia in the 1904–05 Russo-Japanese War. The region's then dominant power colonized Korea from 1910 until it was defeated in 1945, some three-quarters of a century ago. Soviet and American forces proceeded to divide the Peninsula at the 38th Parallel. The post-World War II reality in the Asia-Pacific, codified in the 1951 San Francisco system of peace with Japan and alliances has adapted and endured ever since. Notwithstanding decades of relative continuity, Korea's geography remains unchanged, and geopolitical change will eventually recur on the Peninsula. And changes could alter, renew, and intensify major power competition over the Peninsula.

The last significant play for shifting the geopolitics on Korea before Japan's occupation involved a confrontation between the Japanese and Russian Empires. Japan defeated China in 1894/95, only a quarter century after the Meiji Restoration ended Japan's quarter-millennium of isolation. It was then in a position to dominate East Asia. Because the Crimean War obstructed Russian access to Europe, Russia had expanded its reach into the Far East. The Trans-Siberian Railroad reached its terminus in Vladivostok in 1904, a few years after Russia acquired the warm-water Port Arthur at the tip of the Liaoning Peninsula. Japan feared this scenario. As one historian wrote, "...the establishment of Russia in the Liao-tung peninsula and the intentions she soon displayed of further expansion in the area aroused Japan's worst fears. Here was the very situation she most dreaded, the possibility of a first-class Power securing a position of dominance on the nearby mainland."¹¹

Competition would catalyze conflict, with Japan emerging victorious in 1905. As historian Alistair Horne writes, "The climactic battle, for which Russia's newly formed Second Pacific Squadron spent more than half a year voyaging eighteen thousand miles around the world, was to be fought and won within a span of roughly half an hour.... Thus, similarly, the destiny of nations."¹² Russia's abrupt turn of fortune through war underscores the question of whether America's strategic influence could suffer equally decisive

11. Russell Grenfell, *Main Fleet to Singapore* (London: Faber and Faber, 1941), 21.

12. Alistair Horne, *Hubris: The Tragedy of War in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper Collins, 2015), 60.



consequences from effectively losing the long Cold War—whether through failed or putatively successful negotiations.

Contemporary events can catalyze geopolitical change on the Peninsula. Since 1953, the world has witnessed the occasional lethal skirmish, the frequent resort to brinkmanship, and the periodic attempt at diplomatic breakthrough, only to see all fall back into a seemingly permanent competition. But this does not preclude significant alterations with geopolitical implications. Those who think fundamental change on the Peninsula is impossible should recall that a similarly rigid mindset existed three decades ago before the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet Union dissolved. Few foresaw the end of the bipolar East-West contest, but it came anyway.

Of course, geopolitical change can usher in a period of greater fluidity than new fixity. Put differently, big changes—such as a negotiated U.S. departure from the Peninsula, a unified Peninsula, a Peninsula under the sway of Beijing, or a North Korea that realigns with the United States and South Korea—any and all of these scenarios might be a prelude to a new regional disorder rather than another long period of relative stability. The end of the East-West Cold War was not quite the end of history, a reminder that geopolitical change can produce subsequent fluctuations. Indeed, contemporary setbacks to what many officials and experts assumed was a “Europe whole and free” and ironclad transatlantic

relations might well be described as delayed reactions to the absence of a single, unifying threat since 1991.

Geopolitical change can also result from leaders with agency or ideas with potency. Certainly, President Moon Jae-in believes his legacy should be the permanent end of hostilities between the two Koreas. His successor may disagree, but individual policymakers can reevaluate their country's interests and the costs and benefits of carrying on past policies. President Donald Trump's populist foreign policy narrative at time questions the value of America's forward military posture and hub-and-spokes alliance system. During the recent U.S.-South Korean negotiations to renew a Special Measures Agreement on host-nation support, President Trump complained that Seoul had been paying only 10 percent of the \$5 billion-a-year it cost to maintain U.S. presence on the Peninsula.¹³

It is the combination of North Korea's past deviousness, South Korea's present determination to seek peace at almost any cost, and America's current ambivalence toward alliances that stokes fears of significant geopolitical consequences resulting from summits with Kim Jong Un. There has always been an isolationist strand in U.S. foreign policy, although since World War II it has remained subordinate to the prevailing view that the United States is better served staying active and engaged well forward from its shore. But this does not mean we should discount fears that under the right circumstances of diplomacy with North Korea, the rise of Asia and the growing burdens and inward-looking nature of the United States might not produce the perfect conditions for a major pull out of U.S. troops from the Korean Peninsula. Acceding to China's interest to re-establishing a larger sphere of influence, for instance, could be seen as a bargaining chip for achieving a new equilibrium—if not a “G-2—between Beijing and Washington. It is not yet likely, but no doubt those favoring it could quote British statesman Lord Palmerston famous remarks to the House of Commons: “We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow.”¹⁴

13. Choe Sang-Hun, “Trump Says South Korea Is Paying \$500 Million More for U.S. Troops. The Deal Says Otherwise,” *The New York Times*, February 13, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/13/world/asia/trump-south-korea.html>.

14. Lord Palmerston, Speech to the House of Commons, March 1, 1848, *Oxford Essential Quotations* (4th ed.) (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), published online, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191826719.001.0001/q-oro-ed4-00008130>.

National interests may endure, but there is nothing permanent about international relations, alliances, or any particular national strategy.

Despite the obstacles, heightened diplomacy with North Korea can trigger a geopolitical change in Northeast Asia. More than a year after commencing the most recent attempt to find a rapprochement with Pyongyang, there is ample reason to believe that we will fall back into the same pattern the world has witnessed for the past two-thirds of a century. But fail, succeed, or soldier on, diplomacy with North Korea could produce consequential results for the United States and its allies. In the simplest terms, negotiations with the Kim regime could lead to (1) a genuine peace, (2) a phony peace, or (3) a breakdown of peace and order, and each those three pathways could be more or less favorable to the national interest of the United States and allies such as Japan. So, rather than focus on diplomatic failure, let us delve into the question of truly geopolitical change and what this might portend for the Peninsula.

GEOPOLITICS AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Geopolitical interests are among those at the apex of concern to national security officials because they could pose the gravest of threats to the United States and its allies. Why this is the case requires a brief discussion of foundational thinking regarding geopolitics.

English geographer Sir Halford Mackinder bifurcated the world into a potentially self-sufficient “heartland” comprising Eurasia and Africa and a “periphery” encompassing the “islands” of the Americas, Australia, Japan, the British Isles, and Oceania.¹⁵ Although Mackinder never used the term “geopolitics,” he gave the idea meaning by “reinforc[ing] anxieties that there might be a route for a hostile power...to eventual world domination.”¹⁶ It is no accident that longstanding U.S. grand strategy has centered on creating a favorable balance of power and preventing the domination of Eurasia by a single hegemonic power that might pose an existential threat to the United States.

At the core of geopolitics is the constancy of geography. During the interwar years preceding the Second World War, American political scientist Nicholas Spykman framed U.S. foreign policy choices as a debate between isolation and

15. Quoted in Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 120–121.

16. *Ibid.*, 122.

intervention.¹⁷ Whichever strategy was adopted, Spykman contended that “foreign policy must aim above all at the improvement or at least the preservation of the relative power position of the state.” He then tied those existential objectives to geography:

“Power is in the last instance the ability to wage successful war, and in geography lie the clues to the problems of military and political strategy. The territory of a state is the base from which it operates in time of war and the strategic position which it occupies during the temporary armistice called peace. Geography is the most fundamental factor in the foreign policy of states because it is the most permanent. Ministers come and ministers go, even dictators die, but mountain ranges stand unperturbed.”¹⁸

Without succumbing to geographical determinism, there is both a geographical as well as cultural and linguistic gravitational force pulling the two Koreas together, and a seemingly natural inclination of the strongest power in Northeast Asia to want to exercise a degree of control over the Peninsula. Should negotiations or other forces prompt the United States to retrench from playing an active balancing role in Asia, Northeast Asia might again be ripe for domination by a single power, as it was before the United States assumed its prominence in the regional order after World War II. Spykman seemed to foresee this possibility and its implications in the midst of that war: “The power potential of the former Celestial Kingdom is infinitely greater than that of the Land of the Cherry Blossom and once that power potential begins to express itself in actual military strength, the position of a defeated Japan as a small off-shore island near the Asiatic mainland is going to be very uncomfortable.”¹⁹

Although the leap from negotiations with North Korea to the fear of a Eurasian hegemon may seem far-fetched to some, uncertainties about China’s continued rise and America’s staying power provide a plausible backdrop for such a scenario.

17. Nicholas J. Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 3.

18. *Ibid.*, 41.

19. Nicholas J. Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017; originally published in 1942 by Harcourt, Brace and Company), 469.

THE GEOPOLITICAL IMPACT OF DIPLOMACY

Throughout history, diplomacy and negotiation have at times been decisive and momentous.

If the Congress of Vienna established a century of relative peace in Europe, the draconian penalties the Versailles Treaty imposed on Germany sowed the seeds of a second conflagration. As John Lewis Gaddis writes about British and French diplomatic demands following World War I: “Haunted by sacrifices the war had required, [they] insisted that the Germans admit ‘guilt’ and pay reparations—even if this precluded the peace through reconciliation the Congress of Vienna had achieved....”²⁰

During the Cold War, summit meetings variously heightened or reduced tensions between the two nuclear superpowers. Nikita Khrushchev used the downing of the American U-2 spy plane to scuttle a four-power leaders’ meeting slated to be held in Paris in May 1960, and from that incident one can draw a direct causal link to the Soviet leader’s famous temper tantrum at the UN General Assembly in October and the parlous Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. Subsequent U.S.-Soviet summit diplomacy, however, produced a series of productive if imperfect arms control agreements, from SALT and START to the once-popular INF Treaty.²¹

Depending on one’s perspective, the multilateral negotiations producing the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran was a signal achievement to limit or enable nuclear proliferation. The court is still out as to whether the U.S. decision to unilaterally withdraw from the deal in 2018 was “a grave error”²² or will eventually more tightly collar Iran into having to negotiate “all of their malign activities.”²³ Meanwhile, the famous “war of choice”²⁴ aimed

20. John Lewis Gaddis, *On Grand Strategy* (New York: Penguin Press, 2018), 274–5.

21. Washington and Moscow engaged in Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT) from 1969 until 1976, have pursued Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties (START) since the 1980s, and signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 1987.

22. Mark Fitzpatrick, Michael Elleman, and Pauline Izewicz, *Uncertain Future: The JCPOA and Iran’s Nuclear and Missile Programmes* (London, Taylor & Francis, 2019), <https://www.iiss.org/events/2019/01/adelphi-jcpoa-iran-nuclear>.

23. Sean Illing, “Why Trump is Right to Pull Out of the Iran Nuclear Deal,” *Vox*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/5/8/17326650/iran-nuclear-deal-withdraw-trump-speech-goldberg-interview>.

24. Richard N. Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010).

to oust Saddam Hussein that started in 2003 produced a “fiasco.”²⁵ A recently completed official, two-volume study of the Army in the Iraq war concluded that “an emboldened and expansionist Iran appears to be the only victor.”²⁶

None of these historical examples of consequential diplomacy is meant to equate Trump–Kim summits with the Congress of Vienna or superpower arms control talks. In fact, there is as much theater to the current negotiations as there is substance. Let us not forget that Winston Churchill once quipped that “Diplomacy is the art of telling people to go to hell in such a way that they ask for directions.” It is entirely possible Kim Jong Un is doing little more than hewing to a well-worn family script to achieve both military and economic clout. But negotiations—successful and failed alike—can also produce huge consequences with major geopolitical impact, including a genuine peace, a phony or ineffectual peace process, or a renewed breakdown of peace leading to either another chapter of Cold War on the Peninsula or, possibly, triggering another hot war.

SUCCEEDING TO FAIL

There are numerous ways successful diplomacy could produce geopolitical failure. The momentum behind negotiations with North Korea could spur a revival of interest in active efforts to achieve reunification. Even if this might be construed as a success of a sort, it could produce a unified Peninsula hostile to U.S. and Japanese interests and in the thrall of China. Should diplomacy fail, a weakened U.S.–South Korea alliance could potentially leave the Peninsula vulnerable to a “hard landing” involving military force and producing unity on North Korean terms. Thus, it is conceivable that either successful or failed diplomacy could facilitate detrimental geopolitical outcomes for the United States, Japan, and others.

I am not arguing that the worst-case scenarios are likely. In fact, it may be at least or more likely that successful or failed diplomacy could result in a united, democratic, non-nuclear Peninsula allied with the United States. As I have

25. Thomas Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2003 to 2005* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

26. Todd South, “Army’s Long-Awaited Iraq War Study Finds Iran Was the Only Winner in a Conflict That Holds Many Lessons for Future Wars,” *Army Times*, January 19, 2019, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/01/18/armys-long-awaited-iraq-war-study-finds-iran-was-the-only-winner-in-a-conflict-that-holds-many-lessons-for-future-wars/>.



Panel left to right: Yoshihide Soeya, Abraham M. Denmark, Patrick M. Cronin

written elsewhere, this would be a highly favorable geopolitical development, albeit perhaps too favorable for a powerful China to accept.²⁷ Even so, a unified Peninsula might adopt a range of foreign policy postures, including a turn eastward toward continental Asia and in support of China; a turn inward, focusing largely on integration, reconciliation, and development; or an outward maritime turn, maintaining close security ties with the United States, while simultaneously engaging with China.²⁸ Of course, less decisive results than unification or war are also possible, if not probable. Thus, let us peel back the onion of geopolitics by considering relative rather than absolute gains or losses.

Moving beyond the dichotomy of Heartland and Rimland, Spykman lumped states into one of three baskets: “landlocked,” “island,” and “states which have both land and sea frontiers.”²⁹ Diplomacy with North Korea could result in

27. Patrick M. Cronin, et al., *Solving Long Division: The Geopolitical Implications of Korean Unification* (Washington, D.C.: CNAS, December 2015), <https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/Korean-Unification-151204-final.pdf?mtime=20160906082409>.

28. Ibid., 9.

29. Nicholas J. Spykman, “Geography and Foreign Policy II,” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. XXXII, No. 2 (April 1938), 214.

joining both Koreas to the Eurasian landmass by removing impediments to connectivity, while simultaneously granting North Korea far greater access to the open ocean. This connectivity could happen gradually, far before a potential union of the two Koreas and without necessarily the clear-cut deviations from the present-day implied above in the discussion regarding Mackinder. In short, engagement with North Korea could well produce a slow shift in the geopolitics of the Peninsula: ending North Korea's isolation and status as a pariah nation; allowing South Korea to break out of its de facto "island economy" and benefit from continental commerce and lines of communication; possibly strengthening both China's and Russia's influence on the Peninsula and weakening American influence in Northeast Asia; and perhaps marginalizing Japan's interests on the Peninsula.

All of these developments could have colossal geopolitical and strategic implications for the United States. So let us now turn to the role of diplomacy and negotiations as it might break the Korean Peninsula out of a state of semi-permanent Cold War.

FAILING TO SUCCEED

Diplomatic failure might result more from breakdown in talks, a hollow or unproductive peace process, or external crises that interact with ongoing talks. Diplomacy could fail, leading to either hot or cold conflict. Should talks with North Korea falter, one possibility is a return to "fire and fury" brinkmanship, which would reintroduce the fear of escalation leading to war. Recall President Trump's 2017 ultimatum from his golf course in New Jersey: "North Korea best not make any more threats to the United States. They will be met with fire, fury and frankly power the likes of which this world has never seen before."³⁰ Many feared the American President was preparing for war, although in retrospect it seems far more logical that he was preparing to negotiate. As Secretary of State John Foster Dulles once opined, "The ability to get to the verge without getting into war is the necessary art. If you try to run away from it, if you are scared to go to the brink, you are lost."³¹ However, nuclear powers would almost surely

30. Ali Vitali, "Trump Vows North Korea Threat Will Be Met With 'Fire and Fury,'" NBC News, August 9, 2017, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/trump-vows-north-korea-could-be-met-fire-fury-n790896>.

31. James Shepley, "How Dulles Averted War," *Life*, January 16, 1956.

seek to avert open military conflict. Thus, a second scenario resulting from failed diplomacy would be a return to the longstanding Cold War on the Peninsula. This would require the United States, South Korea, Japan and others to pursue an agreed upon strategy of containment, deterrence, and sustainable pressure.

Diplomacy could result in a process that for a time improves the atmospherics but not the underlying threat and sources of tension. This faux peace would embrace tension reduction without denuclearization. Because such a peace would be quickly reversible and tenuous, it shows that a nominal diplomatic success could well produce failure, leaving the United States and South Korea subject to strategic surprise. Failure is partly in the eyes of the beholder. As suggested above, North Korea's strategy might well be designed to buy time, weaken international pressure in the form of sanctions and alliances, and emerge with both military and economic strength. Yet others including the current South Korean government could well argue that declarations and a prolonged diplomatic process constitute a success. As former German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer reportedly once remarked, "The one sure way to conciliate a tiger is to allow oneself to be devoured."

Finally, there are scenarios in which major events might indirectly affect the Korean Peninsula. A crisis could interrupt diplomacy, putting all powers on edge. The recent tensions between Japan and South Korea stemming from South Korean combatant locked on its fire-control radar on a Japanese patrol aircraft in December 2018, suggests how America's key allies could face an escalatory situation, possibly intruding on diplomacy with North Korea. An internal black swan within North Korea leading to a regime change or even collapse remains thinkable. And a U.S. decision to retrench from the region would obviously have profound geopolitical implications, even if not necessarily driven by diplomacy with North Korea. These are some of the myriad ways that external events not directly related to North Korea diplomacy could upset the status quo.

In retrospect more than at any particular time, the Korean Peninsula has remained stable or at least free from open war since 1953. Cold War, brinkmanship, and occasional lethal incidents have marked the past six and a half decades. If the current round of diplomacy in search of a new arrangement works or fails, the future may be more susceptible to lapsing into new and more unpredictable scenarios than this relatively frozen period.



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The Outlook on the Korean Peninsula: A Japanese Perspective

Yoshihide Soeya

BEWILDERING CHANGES

Changes in Korean affairs initiated by North Korea since the Pyeong Chang Winter Olympics in February 2018 are somewhat bewildering. Pyeongyang dispatched about 20 athletes to Pyeong Chang led by Kim Yong-nam, President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, also accompanied by Kim Yo-jong, the younger sister of North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un. This typical charm offensive by North Korea was followed by three summits between South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong-un on April 27, May 28, and September 18 and 19, 2018.

In the meantime, U.S. President Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un held a historic summit in Singapore on June 12, which accelerated the process of change even further. The Trump-Kim summit agreed on a basic framework for dialogue and negotiations between the United States and North Korea, consisting of three pillars: (1) to establish new U.S.-DPRK relations; (2) to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula; and (3) to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Even though concrete results of significance have yet to emerge, let alone complete denuclearization of North Korea, the momentum of dialogue was revitalized in late February 2019, when Trump and Kim met again in Vietnam, but were unable to reach a deal.

Over a timespan of just one year, Kim Jong-un has met with Donald Trump twice, and with Moon Jae-in three times. This activism on the part of the North Korean supreme leader is unprecedented, begging the question as to his intention and requiring well thought-out responses by the countries concerned, including Japan.

IS KIM JONG-UN SERIOUS?

A key concept that gives some clue to understanding the recent moves of Kim Jong-un is his “byong-jin” or dual-track policy, announced in March 2013 upon consolidating power after the death of his father Kim Jong-il in December 2011. This policy pursues dual goals of nuclearization and economic development, with the assumption that nuclear weapons are cheaper than conventional armaments and thus residual resources could be diverted to economic development programs. Although it is called “dual-track,” Kim apparently pursued a path toward developing missiles and nuclear weapons first before shifting his focus to economic development.

This is obvious from the chronology of missile and nuclear tests conducted by North Korea (those in parentheses were conducted by Kim Jong-il).

Upon assuming the position of supreme leader, Kim Jong-un conducted four nuclear tests and twenty missile launches, with three nuclear tests and seventeen launch tests of medium- and long-range missiles occurring in less than two years between 2016 and 2017. Of more significance is the fact that Kim has stopped both tests completely after fall of 2017, and that the destinations of Kim Jong-un’s inspection visits have shifted from military facilities to civil and economic ones also after this time. These are circumstantial, but apparently solid pieces of evidence to reveal that Kim Jong-un shifted his strategic focus from nuclear development to economic construction under the scheme of “byong-jin” policy.

Then, for Kim Jong-un, the Pyeong Chang Winter Olympics which had been scheduled for February 2018, was a natural opportunity to take advantage of and to engage in a charm offensive. Perhaps, encouraged by its success, Kim Jong-un declared a “great victory” of the “byong-jin” policy at the Workers’ Party Central Committee meeting on April 20.

Therefore, Kim Jong-un strategically decided to focus on the economic development of the nation about nine months before the historic summit with U.S. President Donald Trump in June 2018. It is plausible, therefore, that Kim Jong-un has now embarked on a long journey toward creating an environment on and around the Korean Peninsula favorable to his regime security as well as economic prosperity.

STILL, UNCERTAINTIES REMAIN

In the original construction of the “byong-jin” policy, there was a logical obstacle to the realization of denuclearization. As stated above, the combination of



Missile Tests



Nuclear Tests

1993

● May

1994–
1997

1998

● August

1999–
2005

KEY

- Conducted by Kim Jong-il
- Conducted by Kim Jong-un

2006

● July

● October

2007

2008

2009

● April

● May

2010

2011

2012

● ● April, December

2013

● February

2014

● June

2015

2016

● February

● ● January, September

2017

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
● ● ● ● ● ● February,
March, March, April, April,
April, May, May, May, June,
July, July, August, August,
September, November

● September

nuclearization and economic development implies that nuclear weapons are cheaper than conventional armaments and that residual resources can be converted to economic projects. If indeed the Trump-Kim negotiations should trigger the process toward a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, this could lead to the reduction of conventional arms. This would then increase the importance of nuclear weapons as the ultimate guarantor of regime survival for North Korea, precisely in order for Kim Jong-un to concentrate on economic development of the nation.

In the end, the prospect for denuclearization, a common goal for all members of the international community dealing with North Korea, depends not only on the progress of denuclearization negotiations, but also those over U.S.-North Korea relations and the Peninsula's peace regime. If all three areas, as agreed upon at the first Trump-Kim summit in June 2018, should record harmonious progress, then denuclearization would begin to come in sight. However, this would only be possible toward the end of the long-term negotiation process, and that of denuclearization is bound to become a phased one.

COPING STRATEGY

A critical issue for the rest of Northeast Asia is how best to cope with this new move, which appears a strategic and somewhat long-lasting one for the North Korean leader. Such a task requires close coordination among those countries concerned, particularly the United States, South Korea, Japan, China and Russia. Specifically, North Korea, China and Russia appear to be forming a loose coalition, while the other three governments are diverging in regards to the assessment of the situation as well as approaches to be taken.

While President Trump remains unpredictable, the current relationship between South Korea and Japan is virtually that of mutual neglect. The verdict by the South Korean Supreme Court in late November 2018, in favor of South Koreans seeking compensation from Japanese firms for their wartime forced labor, was of course a severe blow to the relationship. Even more grievous is the fact that the court case originates from a lower-court decision in 2012, and that neither side had let six years pass by idly knowing that the Supreme Court verdict would be in order.

The Japanese government, thus, is suspicious of South Korean reconciliatory moves toward North Korea, and still appears to believe in putting economic as well as military and political pressures as an effective tool to achieve simultaneous

solutions of abduction, missile and nuclear issues. Supporters of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's hardline policy toward North Korea tend to see dialogue as a way for North Korea to deceive not only Japan, but South Korea and even President Trump. The best partner for Japan in this respect is the United States, no matter how unpredictable President Trump is. Indeed, the Abe administration and the Trump administration are the drivers of pressure strategy, while Prime Minister Abe constantly seeks support of President Trump for the abduction issue. Abe is also making a not-so-subtle effort to ensure that Trump does not make concessions easily on security-related issues in general, and more specifically on Japanese concerns about short- and medium-range missiles.

Having said this, there are some indications that Prime Minister Abe has recently changed his positions. While his speech at the United Nations General Assembly on September 20, 2017 emphasized almost entirely the importance of pressures for North Korea, the tone of his address this year was quite different. On September 25, 2018, Abe said at the UN General Assembly:

Japan's policy of seeking to settle the unfortunate past and normalize its relations with North Korea once the abductions, nuclear, and missile issues are resolved will not change.... In order to resolve the abductions issue, I am also ready to break the shell of mutual distrust with North Korea, get off to a new start, and meet face to face with Chairman Kim Jong Un.

Commitment to the abduction issue is what raised Abe's political standing. Abe as Prime Minister repeatedly expressed his determination to resolve the abduction issue during his tenure, linking it to solving the missile and nuclear issues. Realistically speaking, preoccupation with the abduction issue is nothing but an obstacle. Abe to get on the same boat with others to sail toward a peace on the Korean Peninsula including denuclearization. Kim Jong-un may still be ready to take up the abduction issue in one way or another, as indicated by the Stockholm Agreement in May 2014 in which North Korea agreed to conduct a comprehensive and full-scale investigation on the abductions. Kim Jong-un may be thinking of using the abduction card sometime, but Japan remains a low priority for North Korea, and the use of said card would be towards the end of the process.

Nevertheless, Japan needs to remain all eyes to the process of the negotiations, and in the end an advantage for Japan is the Pyongyang Declaration signed by Junichiro Koizumi and Kim Jong-il on September 17, 2002. The

declaration laid out a comprehensive framework for diplomatic normalization, and the document is still treated as valid by both Tokyo and Pyongyang. Most importantly, item 2 of the declaration, keeping in mind the diplomatic normalization with Seoul in 1965 as a precedent, said as follows:

The Japanese side regards, in a spirit of humility, the facts of history that Japan caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of Korea through its colonial rule in the past, and expressed deep remorse and heartfelt apology.

Both sides shared the recognition that, providing economic co-operation after the normalization by the Japanese side to the DPRK side, including grant aids, long-term loans with low interest rates and such assistances as humanitarian assistance through international organizations, over a period of time deemed appropriate by both sides, and providing other loans and credits by such financial institutions as the Japan Bank for International Co-operation with a view to supporting private economic activities, would be consistent with the spirit of this Declaration, and decided that they would sincerely discuss the specific scales and contents of the economic co-operation in the normalization talks.

Both sides, pursuant to the basic principle that when the bilateral relationship is normalized both Japan and the DPRK would mutually waive all their property and claims and those of their nationals that had arisen from causes which occurred before August 15, 1945, decided that they would discuss this issue of property and claims concretely in the normalization talks.

Both sides decided that they would sincerely discuss the issue of the status of Korean residents in Japan and the issue of cultural property.

In return, North Korea agreed to take measures regarding the abducted Japanese and maintain the moratorium on missile launching. Significantly enough, the Pyongyang Declaration also has a paragraph saying:

Both sides confirmed that, for an overall resolution of the nuclear issues on the Korean Peninsula, they would comply with all related international agreements. Both sides also confirmed the necessity of resolving security problems including nuclear and missile issues by promoting dialogues among countries concerned.



Panel left to right: Yoshihide Soeya, Katie Stallard-Blanchette, Robert Litwak, Abraham M. Denmark

Now, however, the situation surrounding North Korea appears to be evolving in quite a different direction from that at the time of the Pyongyang Declaration. U.S. policy under President George W. Bush premised on distrust of North Korea, calling it part of the axis of evils together with Iraq. President Bush had also thrown cold water on Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine Policy when Kim visited Washington in March 2001. Only then did Kim Jong-il come out of his shell to reach out to Japan for survival. But now, North Korea is talking to South Korea and the United States, which is supported by China and Russia. Pressure is not necessarily an effective tool to influence North Korea.

There still remains strong underlying distrust of North Korea among many politicians, opinion makers, and general public in Japan. In order for Japan to change its current approach, the bottom-line requirement is to assume that Kim Jong-un is serious about his long-term strategic goals to establish a peace-regime on the Korean Peninsula as a means to guarantee regime survival and achieve economic prosperity.

As stated above, even if Kim Jong-un is firm on his long-term aspirations, whether denuclearization will be achieved in the process is still uncertain. Nonetheless, one thing that is obvious is denuclearization as a precondition

to engaging in negotiations would not work. Unless the countries concerned, the United States and Japan among others, change this entrance approach to denuclearization, there are always chances for the process to stall. The important thing for the countries concerned is not to make such prospect a self-fulfilling prophesy. This is not to trust North Korea necessarily, but to craft a truly strategic approach and policy coordination toward a peaceful and prosperous future of Northeast Asia.



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