

Support Diplomacy With North Korea

Diplomacy Is Making Progress

While much work remains to be done, diplomacy between the U.S., South Korea, and North Korea has made impressive strides. **Recent diplomacy has already secured significant concessions and commitments from North Korea,**¹ such as:

- Freezing testing on nuclear bombs and ballistic missiles while talks are ongoing;
- Releasing three American prisoners;
- Returning 55 boxes of remains of U.S. service members killed during the Korean War;
- Agreeing “to carry out disarmament in a phased manner, as military tension is alleviated and substantial progress is made in military confidence-building;”
- Reaffirming “the Non-Aggression Agreement that precludes the use of force in any form against each other [North and South Korea], and agreed to strictly adhere to this Agreement;”
- Confirming “the common goal of realizing, through complete denuclearization, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.”

The only significant concession the U.S. has made thus far is suspending major military exercises between the U.S. and South Korea, a critical step to reducing tensions, but insufficient to move the diplomatic process forward.

To Secure a Nuclear Agreement, We Need a Peace Agreement

To advance the goal of a denuclearized Korean Peninsula, **the administration should adopt South Korea’s goal of signing a peace agreement to formally end the Korean War.**

- The Korean War ended with the signing of the 1953 Armistice Agreement, which calls for the conclusion of a formal peace treaty, yet no such treaty has ever been signed. This perpetual state of war is at the root of the nuclear crisis, as North Korea views its nuclear arsenal as a deterrent against invasion by countries that it is technically still at war with.
- South Korean President Moon Jae-in has **expressed**² his desire for a peace agreement to formally end the Korean War. The U.S. should support our key ally’s position on this.
- North Korea has said it is willing to denuclearize if it is offered security guarantees, and a peace agreement would be a major step towards providing security guarantees.
- Signing a peace agreement would be hugely beneficial for the U.S., increasing stability in the region and opening up new economic opportunities.
- President Moon has **asked the U.S.**³ to sign a declaration with North and South Korea announcing an end to the Korean war. This is a logical next step in negotiations that would help pave the way for a formal peace agreement.
- Neither a declaration of the end of the war nor a formal peace agreement would have any legal effect on the commitments set forth in the 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty between the U.S. and South Korea.

¹ Full text of joint declaration issued at inter-Korean summit, Yonhap News Agency, April 27, 2018

² Kim, E. Tammy, *News Whiplash and a Sense of History in the Making in South Korea*, The New Yorker, May 29, 2018

³ Friedman, Uri, *The ‘Compliment Trump’ Doctrine*, The Atlantic, September 26, 2018

Clearing Road Blocks on the Diplomatic Path

While some signs point to a shift in the Trump Administration's negotiating posture, **the administration's maximalist positions continue to stymie progress in negotiations.**

- Past demands for the complete denuclearization of North Korea prior to any sanctions relief have been a non-starter and have no place in productive negotiations.
- Reports that national security advisor [John Bolton may have derailed a potential agreement](#)⁴ at the Hanoi Summit with 11th-hour demands for disclosures of North Korea's biological and chemical weapons illustrate the need for a more staged approach to talks.
- Revoking humanitarian sanctions exemptions and restricting travel to North Korea have had little impact on the North Korean government, but have [significantly impacted the ability of humanitarian groups to deliver aid](#)⁵ to North Korean civilians, fueling famine and the spread of tuberculosis. Strengthening humanitarian exemptions and lifting the travel ban are important confidence building measures that would help move the process forward.

Next Steps Worth Supporting

In the lead up to the Hanoi summit, reports outlined [some of the steps under discussion](#).⁶ While the summit ended without an agreement, some of these steps are still worth pursuing.

- An agreement to verifiably dismantle the Yongbyon facility (a [cornerstone of North Korea's nuclear program](#))⁷ would represent tangible progress towards denuclearization.
- Sanctions relief aimed at increasing economic cooperation and interdependence between North and South Korea would benefit the economic, political and military security of North and South Korea as well as the United States.
- Setting up liaison offices in Washington and Pyongyang would foster the type of ongoing dialogue necessary to advance the goal of a denuclearized Korean Peninsula.
- A declaration of the end of the Korean war and a formal peace agreement to officially end the war are mutually beneficial steps that everyone who favors peace should welcome.

Steps Members of Congress Can Take

- **Co-sponsor H.Res. 152 introduced by Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA)** calling for the signing of a peace agreement to formally end the Korean War, for the administration to present a diplomatic strategy to Congress, and for other important steps to advance diplomacy.
- **Speak out in support of diplomacy and the pursuit of a peace agreement with North Korea.** Support the signing of a declaration of the end the Korean war. Give a floor speech, write an op-ed, or do other media outreach to support diplomacy with North Korea, support the pursuit of a peace agreement, and oppose any preventive military action.
- **Engage the administration** in policy discussions focused on a process of reciprocal security guarantees and work to extract a diplomatic plan from the administration. Oppose further sanctions and punitive legislation while talks are ongoing, and support citizen and parliamentary diplomacy.
- **Protect humanitarian operations in North Korea** by holding hearings on the humanitarian situation and pressuring the administration to strengthen humanitarian sanctions exemptions and rescind travel restrictions.

4 O'Connor, Tom, *Donald Trump's North Korea Deal Fell Apart Because of John 'Bomb-em' Bolton, Experts Say*, Newsweek, February 28, 2019

5 Jasper, Daniel, *Volume III: Engaging North Korea: A Toolkit for Protecting Humanitarian Channels Amid "Maximum Pressure"*, American Friends Service Committee, June, 2018

6 Davenport, Kelsey, and Alicia Sanders-Zakre, *Hanoi Summit Ends Abruptly: What's Next?*, Arms Control Now, March 6, 2019

7 Chesser, Ronald, Joel Wit and Samantha Pitz, *A How-To Guide for Disabling and Dismantling Yongbyon*, 38 North, February 15, 2019