

# Security in Northeast Asia: Structuring a Settlement

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## Abstract

A potential pathway exists for a Northeast Asian settlement where the Koreans, the United States, China, and Japan can each live within the status quo. Sustaining a settlement will require reining in foreign policy hawks reluctant to allow the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to retain a nuclear arsenal. The United States will also need to engage allies fearful of conflict with North Korea but also disinclined to let a neighboring state enjoy a local nuclear monopoly. The United States should continue outreach to North Korea with the objective of establishing a process that links sanctions relief and security guarantees to a plan for eventual denuclearization. The future China-DPRK relationship must be considered and isolated from the US-China relationship—notably, economic tensions and disputes in the South and East China Seas. It should facilitate Chinese leverage over North Korea and encourage China to reinforce its economic and security ties with North Korea to influence and restrain Pyongyang's decision making. The Trump administration must earn the support of stakeholders across the policy-making and procedural spectrum and facilitate a domestic political consensus in favor of the emerging settlement. Securing a settlement in Northeast Asia may be a productive way of reducing one of the most troublesome spots in US foreign relations.<sup>1</sup>

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The last two years have witnessed among the most substantial shifts in Northeast Asian regional politics in the last half century. With the North Korean nuclear and missile programs advancing at a rapid clip, 2017 and early 2018 saw credible signs that the United States might go to war to limit further North Korean advances.<sup>2</sup> However, the subsequent announcement that President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un would meet in June 2018 to ostensibly negotiate over the North Korean nuclear program sharply changed the dynamic. The Singapore

Summit resulted in an ostensible pledge to “work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.”<sup>3</sup> Since then, policy makers from the United States and North Korea, along with other vested regional actors, have engaged in sustained formal and informal diplomatic bargaining aimed at adding substance to Singapore’s rhetorical framework.

Few analysts believe the process catalyzed by Singapore will result in a substantial resolution of outstanding nuclear issues between the area’s key actors. If anything, analysts warn that the United States’ failure to craft a realistic pathway to North Korea’s “complete, verifiable, [and] irreversible denuclearization” leaves Northeast Asia primed for instability—a situation rendered all the more likely given stalled progress following the February 2019 Hanoi Summit between Trump and Kim.<sup>4</sup> In this view, the fact that North Korea (like other states) is unlikely to surrender its nuclear arsenal raises the possibility that Trump and his team may become disenchanted with North Korea, thereby increasing the chance that the United States may lash out against what will then be a North Korea with a more robust nuclear arsenal.<sup>5</sup> Along the way—so the argument goes—the United States risks seeing its South Korean and Japanese allies lose trust and interest in US security guarantees, undercutting the capacity of the United States to respond should relations with North Korea deteriorate.<sup>6</sup> The fiction of North Korean denuclearization, in other words, creates a framework in which many things may go wrong without actually addressing the North Korean nuclear program. These concerns are valid and cannot be dismissed out of hand.

Still, focusing largely on whether the ongoing negotiations will facilitate denuclearization—or even a slowdown of North Korea’s nuclear program—may overlook the potential that a series of implicit deals and understandings may be emerging that can help stabilize Northeast Asian politics.<sup>7</sup> To be sure, such a “settlement” remains only a potentiality at this point. Nevertheless, history is replete with cases of powerful states finding ways to cooperate and of setting aside past tensions even in the face of notional diplomatic failures and outstanding disputes.<sup>8</sup> Equally important, states regularly bargain and seek an array of political understandings with one another when faced with a significant shift in the distribution of power such as that represented by the DPRK’s nuclear acquisition. Some sort of new equilibrium is the natural result of North Korea’s recent nuclear advances. Given the diplomatic processes, understandings, and shifts that unfolded over the course of 2017–19, reasonable prospects exist for a broader diplomatic and strategic stabilization in Northeast Asia.

To explain this argument and the potential steps needed to reach a settlement, this article proceeds in five parts. First, it covers the logic of settlements in international relations. Then, the piece provides background on the problems posed by North Korea vis-à-vis Northeast Asia's security in the post-Cold War era. Next, it outlines the diplomatic developments that have made a settlement possible followed by the rationale and content of this prospective settlement. Finally, it proposes steps that may be necessary to bring a settlement to fruition and events that could derail the process.

### **Settlements in World Politics**

Because states operate in an anarchic international system with varying degrees of power, the threat of war is omnipresent in international politics.<sup>9</sup> To obtain security for themselves under such conditions, states have two basic options. First, they can arm and prepare for conflict, building up the military, economic, and political tools needed to deter or defeat prospective opponents.<sup>10</sup> Second, they can attempt to resolve their differences with other countries, relying on diplomatic deals of varying degrees of formality to mitigate points of friction.<sup>11</sup> Conflict cannot be foreclosed entirely—in anarchy, states can and sometimes do go back on prior deals.<sup>12</sup> However, addressing outstanding disputes and points of strategic contention can dampen the likelihood that war is a near-term possibility, creating room for states to continue strengthening ties while focusing their energies on other domestic or international issues.<sup>13</sup>

Settlements belong to the latter category. As Henry Kissinger once argued, settlements refer to a “process by which a nation reconciles its vision of itself with the vision of it by other powers”—that is, a dynamic by which two or more states reach an understanding about the general parameters of what they will and will not do with the capabilities at their disposal.<sup>14</sup> In effect, any settlement crafts a framework within which states agree to cooperate or compete with one another on core issues within certain boundaries, without seeking wholesale and unilateral changes to the status quo.<sup>15</sup> No one state party to a settlement is likely to be entirely happy with its terms and conditions; by definition, a settlement requires participants to restrain their ambitions and accept limits on the pursuit of their interests. Still, so long as there is no “grievance of such magnitude that redress will be sought in overturning” an arrangement—if parties essentially have a stake in it and value the benefits of constrained cooperation over the potential of attaining one's maximal ambitions by a resumption of

unconstrained competition—settlements facilitate and incentivize peaceful competition.<sup>16</sup>

Settlements can be pursued through two basic channels. The first and most obvious is through direct negotiation. Here, diplomats and policy makers meet to directly shape the territorial, institutional, economic, and security arrangements believed necessary to reconcile rival states to one another's interests and power. History is replete with efforts along these lines. Thus, the Congress of Vienna helped craft a stable European settlement in the aftermath of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, allowing the European great powers to manage their inevitable conflicts of interest over the next four decades.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, and although its internal contradictions eventually contributed to the breakdown of European diplomacy and the re-emergence of major war, the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 represented an effort by the victors of the First World War to directly construct a new framework for managing great power relations in Europe and beyond.<sup>18</sup> The Yalta and Potsdam Summits of 1945 entailed a parallel effort to shape the post-1945 world, one that (like its Paris predecessor) failed—contributing to the Cold War—as the United States and Soviet Union declined to live within the negotiated frameworks.<sup>19</sup> Conversely, the United States' reluctance to tie its hands regarding the declining Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s meant that Soviet efforts to organize a similarly negotiated settlement for post-Cold War Europe came to nothing.<sup>20</sup>

Second, and less appreciated, are settlements arranged through tacit understandings and iterated negotiations that gradually contribute to a broader framework. To appreciate this approach, it is instructive to consider the development of the US-Soviet settlement in Cold War Europe. The first 15 years of the Cold War saw the two states nearly come to blows over the division of Europe and whether Germany would be unified or divided, nuclear armed, and/or aligned with the United States or USSR or neutral.<sup>21</sup> However, in the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis and with the United States and USSR able to deter each other with robust nuclear arsenals, the two superpowers changed course to embrace Europe's status quo.<sup>22</sup> The arms race would continue, but the superpowers used a series of diplomatic discussions to remove many of the flashpoints that could precipitate conflict. Thus, Germany would remain divided and nonnuclear, the Warsaw Pact and North Atlantic Treaty Organization would remain intact, and the United States and USSR would accept responsibility for managing security affairs within their respective spheres of influence. Neither side necessarily desired these agreements or anticipated the deals that trans-

pired. Nevertheless, the emergence of what Marc Trachtenberg calls the “European settlement” reduced Cold War tensions to a manageable level, allowing diplomatic wrangling to replace brinkmanship as the coin of European politics.<sup>23</sup>

Regardless of the path taken, the key to identifying a settlement is thus asking whether parties appear to recognize limits to the scope of their competition and seem willing to bargain with one another on the core issues at stake. Put differently, the issue is not whether states are sacrificing some of their interests—all settlements involve some mutual sacrifice—but whether (1) there is a reason for them to do so and (2) senior leaders accept the need for trade-offs without pressing their respective advantages to the hilt. Doing so, in turn, means looking beyond what policy makers say on a day-to-day basis and instead focusing on overarching trends and processes that collectively indicate how states understand and are pursuing their interests.<sup>24</sup>

### **North Korea’s Challenge to Northeast Asia Security**

What, then, are the prospects for a settlement in Northeast Asia? Evaluating the potential for a new equilibrium first requires understanding the multifaceted nature of North Korea’s challenge to post–Cold War Northeast Asia. First, and most obviously, North Korea constitutes a direct military threat to several of its neighbors. South Korea has long lived with the possibility of a North Korean attack.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Japan has been subjected to North Korean assaults on Japanese citizens while its cities are within range of North Korean missiles.<sup>26</sup> As for the United States, North Korea’s nuclear and missile breakout over the last decade raises the prospect of a North Korean strike on the US homeland itself.<sup>27</sup> And although the North Korean military threat could theoretically be eliminated by an invasion or managed by efforts to deter North Korea, the United States has been reluctant to embrace either option.<sup>28</sup> After all, invasion presents real military risks to the United States and its allies,<sup>29</sup> while living with nuclear-armed adversaries has long been unpalatable to American policy makers.<sup>30</sup>

Second, North Korea presents significant entrapment risks.<sup>31</sup> A conflict between North and South Korea, for example, could lead to the United States’ involvement under the provisions of the US–South Korean alliance. A contest between the United States and DPRK might drag in China, fearful of losing a proximate ally and/or seeing American forces poised near Chinese territory.<sup>32</sup> Even if regional states do not value the stakes of a conflict involving North Korea per se, the course or repercussions of such a contest might still lead to their ensnarement.

A final challenge involves the prospect of North Korea's removal as a sovereign actor. In brief, North Korea's survival is not guaranteed. Not only could the state be eliminated through invasion or regime change, but the country's pervasive economic and demographic problems make a domestic implosion a risk as well. Such possibilities carry a host of subsidiary problems. On one level, North Korea's disappearance would present China, the United States, and others with thorny questions surrounding the future of the Korean peninsula and whether a unified Korea would ally with the United States or China or go neutral.<sup>33</sup> To this end, China has tried to avoid threatening North Korea's domestic stability, just as the United States and its allies have expressed discomfort with what might happen if North Korea implodes.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, wrangling over Korea's future status and/or trying to forestall North Korea's disappearance could lead to an escalatory crisis, up to and including a US-China confrontation.<sup>35</sup> In this sense, North Korea's neighbors have needed to live with a fraught situation in which the only thing more problematic than the DPRK's threatening behavior and entrapment risk is its destruction.

The net result has been a fragile status quo in Northeast Asia. Ultimately, steps taken by China, the United States, or other actors to affect North Korea's strategic position could easily jeopardize others' interests, just as North Korean actions could themselves imperil friend and foe alike.<sup>36</sup> Akin to the first part of the Cold War, the result has been a situation prone to crisis and instability.

### **Diplomatic Developments: A Nascent Framework?**

That said, it is possible to envision a prospective settlement emerging in Northeast Asia. To do so, however, requires looking beyond the specific twists and turns of the negotiations over North Korea's nuclear program *per se*. Indeed, with North Korea's vague commitment to denuclearization, the limited progress in influencing North Korea's nuclear and missile programs since Singapore, and the early breakup of the subsequent Hanoi Summit, most analysts note that the Trump administration has failed to attain its stated aim of unraveling North Korea's nuclear capabilities.<sup>37</sup> Instead, the potential for a settlement comes from what strategic understandings and implicit meanings may lurk behind and result from the diplomatic discussions witnessed over the last few years. Building on the recognition that settlements can emerge in evolutionary fashion, five trends suggest that a Northeast Asia settlement is not an impossibility.

First, the United States has largely taken regime change off the table and committed to the DPRK's continuation.<sup>38</sup> North Korea's nuclear arsenal

and growing capacity to target the mainland United States alone make any US-led attack on North Korea a much less plausible option than in the recent past.<sup>39</sup> Just as important, events during and after the Singapore Summit reinforced and de facto committed the United States to sustaining North Korea's existence. For one thing, having suggested in 2017 and early 2018 that a military campaign against North Korea was a possibility, the Trump administration has now moved in the opposite direction.<sup>40</sup> Hints of a change were already visible in May 2018 when Trump pledged that any North Korean deal "would be with Kim Jong Un, something where he'd be there, he'd be in his country, he'd be running his country."<sup>41</sup> Since Singapore, however, these steps have kicked into high gear. Not only did the United States sign an agreement pledging security guarantees for North Korea in exchange for the DPRK beginning the denuclearization process, but Trump put deeds behind these words by suspending joint US-South Korean war games that the North claimed were provocative.<sup>42</sup> Nor were these actions a temporary departure. In fact, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo returned to the theme in late June 2018, promising that the United States would "provide security assurances for the North Korean people" so long as North Korea remains committed to denuclearization.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, the run-up to the Hanoi Summit saw the US special representative for North Korea, Stephen Biegun, bluntly declare, "We are not going to invade North Korea. We are not seeking to topple the North Korean regime" in an effort to reassure the Kim government.<sup>44</sup> Neither did the breakup at Hanoi upset the process, as Trump moved in March 2019 to again suspend US-South Korean war games regularly decried as provocative by the North.<sup>45</sup>

Second, North Korea has given the United States latitude to back out of the ongoing standoff over the DPRK nuclear program. After taking office in 2017, the Trump administration maneuvered itself into a corner regarding North Korea's nuclear program. Like the Obama and Bush administrations, it was unwilling to acknowledge the failure of nuclear nonproliferation vis-à-vis the DPRK and accept the political and strategic problems of living with a nuclear North Korea.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, however, it was equally reluctant to pay the costs associated with a military campaign against the North Korean nuclear program. Thus, North Korea's pledge at Singapore to "denuclearize" and—more substantively—its ongoing de facto moratorium on nuclear tests create a useful fiction for the United States.<sup>47</sup> As other analysts suggest, these steps give US leaders a fig leaf to cover their nonproliferation failure, allowing the United States to still declare counterproliferation a success and helping to ratchet down the

threat of war.<sup>48</sup> After all, this fiction allowed Trump to declare that North Korea was “no longer a nuclear threat” immediately after Singapore and his administration to sustain this narrative, even as evidence emerged that North Korea is hiding nuclear assets and continuing work on its nuclear delivery options.<sup>49</sup> More broadly, the North Korean fiction provides a political tool to help the United States resist other states’ proliferation efforts while justifying whatever steps are necessary to make deterring a nuclear North Korea viable. Baldly stated, if North Korea is to eventually denuclearize, then deterring a nuclear DPRK is just a temporary expedient—not a permanent US mission.<sup>50</sup>

Third, there appears to be a nascent framework in which diplomatic dialogue and engagement—helping to regularize North Korea’s role in the region—is occurring. Progress has been intermittent and limited. However, the United States has named a special representative to oversee the negotiations, ministerial- and working-level talks have taken place (and may continue in the future), and Trump himself is taking an increasingly direct role in efforts designed to facilitate the process.<sup>51</sup> No one knows whether these discussions will result in substantive gains. Initial talks ended with North Korea decrying the United States’ attitude toward negotiation, impeding US diplomatic efforts to discuss North Korean nuclear issues, and making largely symbolic concessions to the United States (for instance, offering some verification at the Punggye-ri nuclear testing site) that—as Vipin Narang and Ankit Panda observe—have little “particular bearing on the ‘mass production’ of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons.”<sup>52</sup> Still, the existence of a bilateral US-DPRK diplomatic process reduces the chance of miscalculation and future crises.<sup>53</sup> As important is the presence of a diplomatic framework requiring the United States and North Korea to have a functional, more normal diplomatic relationship—one in which policy makers can exchange views and information through known channels rather than eschewing most contact as had been customary.<sup>54</sup> The net result is that North Korea’s pariah status is increasingly a thing of the past.<sup>55</sup>

The United States is not alone in this task: Japan and South Korea (both American allies) are also crafting a diplomatic process. Through mid-2018, both American allies were unhappy with the prospect of living with a nuclear DPRK, yet just as fearful that the United States would end up entrapping them into a war.<sup>56</sup> The latter concern now appears much reduced. Thus, even while trying to sustain their alliances with the United States, both actors have begun talking in detail with North Korea. In an echo of West Germany’s Ostpolitik outreach to East Germany, South

Korea's Nordpolitik apparently encompasses efforts to engage both North Korea and the United States to shape the terms of any denuclearization package.<sup>57</sup> Building on prior outreach, South Korea has also engaged North Korea in talks aimed at diminishing the DPRK's conventional threat while reinvigorating economic and social connections with North Korea; as of this writing (March 2019), reports further indicate that South Korea is seeking to facilitate future negotiations between the United States and North Korea.<sup>58</sup> Japanese policy makers, meanwhile, have met with North Korean officials to discuss bilateral relations, just as a summit between Kim and Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe remains a possibility.<sup>59</sup> Of course, the risk remains that a widening gulf may open between South Korea, the United States, and/or Japan on North Korean issues and undercut the United States' partnership with one or both countries (particularly should tensions with North Korea spike).<sup>60</sup> Still, South Korean and Japanese leaders have signaled that they see their alliances with the United States as central to addressing North Korean issues, and—since states tend to balance proximate military threats—the trend seems to be toward engaging North Korea without sacrificing ties with the United States.<sup>61</sup> In effect, Northeast Asia may be witnessing the emergence of a less conflictual and more fluid regional security environment.

Finally, China now has a green light to continue as the prime backer and influencer of North Korea. Before mid-2018, China was understandably worried that bilateral US-North Korean talks might result in a deal that pulled North Korea out of China's orbit.<sup>62</sup> Since that time, however, the opposite has occurred. Less than a week after Singapore, North Korean leaders hastened to brief the Chinese leadership on the course of the discussions and confer on a negotiating strategy. Similarly, Kim and other North Korean officials met with their Chinese interlocutors to discuss strategy in advance of the Hanoi meeting.<sup>63</sup> As importantly, US officials including Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and then-Secretary of Defense James Mattis separately visited Beijing in the second half of 2018 to sustain Chinese support for the North Korean denuclearization drive and later praised Beijing's moves; much of this effort involved encouraging Chinese efforts to keep economic sanctions on North Korea.<sup>64</sup> Considering that China is North Korea's primary economic partner, these discussions have only reinforced China's hand: if sanctions are to continue and/or have any bite, China will need to have its interests met.<sup>65</sup>

## **The Prospective Settlement in Northeast Asia**

Individually, no one of these developments would change the security situation in Northeast Asia. Taken together, however, they hold potential for a substantial adjustment of Northeast Asian insecurities—helping reconcile the interests of states in the area such that competition and cooperation can occur within defined boundaries. Much depends on whether the United States and North Korea continue the guarantees-for-denuclearization fiction while vested regional actors sustain the diplomatic momentum seen to date. None of these outcomes are yet assured, all the more so as the Hanoi Summit and its aftermath prompted questions over the American and North Korean willingness to accommodate the other sides' demands.<sup>66</sup> Assuming they come to fruition, however, it is possible to envision the outlines of a new Northeast Asian equilibrium.

At the heart of this potential settlement is North Korea's removal as a regional flashpoint.<sup>67</sup> Here, the fiction of a denuclearizing North Korea affords the United States and North Korea room to ratchet down tensions. Even if a regular diplomatic relationship never emerges, the resulting structure for discussions will help avoid miscalculations and give both parties a stake in the prevailing strategic situation—potentially helping to keep crises to a minimum. Concurrently, with regime change off the table due to North Korea's nuclear arsenal, the United States can set to work fostering a viable deterrence regime by focusing additional resources on ascertaining the scope of the DPRK nuclear arsenal and determining how best to keep North Korea from crossing American red lines.<sup>68</sup>

South Korea and Japan could also fulfill their security needs within this emerging framework. With overt North Korean nuclear swaggering on the decline, pressure for South Korea and Japan to respond in similarly assertive fashion—including debates over acquiring their own nuclear weapons—are poised to wane.<sup>69</sup> Given the aforementioned South Korean and Japanese outreach to North Korea amid efforts to sustain US–South Korean and US–Japanese relations, this solution could involve a combination of sticks and carrots encouraging all parties to avoid provocative actions while hedging against DPRK backsliding.

China may gain as well.<sup>70</sup> With the threat of a US-led military campaign against North Korea substantially reduced, China now has comparative stability on its northeastern flank. Furthermore, the better North Korean relations with the United States and US partners become, the lower the potential for North Korea to trigger a crisis that ensnares China and the greater China's ability to set the pace and tone of diplomatic developments in Northeast Asia. As such, China can focus on ensuring that North

Korea does not collapse due to internal pressures; much like the Soviet Union with East Germany during the Cold War, China's role becomes sustaining its client's survival from within rather than beating back threats from without. In sum, the emerging settlement embraces the existing territorial and security division in Northeast Asia while implicitly recognizing a Chinese sphere of influence, thus giving China incentives to manage its area judiciously.<sup>71</sup> Even if China seeks to change Asia's security and economic order writ large, the approach described above creates room for competition to remain comparatively peaceful and regulated.

Finally, it is plausible to expect North Korea to embrace the nascent settlement. With its nuclear arsenal intact for the indefinite future, security guarantees from the United States, and ongoing diplomatic engagement from South Korea and Japan, North Korea's strategic position is the best it has been in some time.<sup>72</sup> The DPRK may also gain more in the future if diplomatic negotiations with the United States and other vested parties result in sanctions relief and growing economic opportunities.<sup>73</sup> The cost of these gains is its formal commitment to denuclearization—including a potential roadmap to this end,<sup>74</sup> tacit agreement not to overtly flaunt its nuclear weapons capability,<sup>75</sup> and greater subservience to Chinese influence.<sup>76</sup> In effect, North Korea would gain substantial independence from external challenges in exchange for embracing its client state status.

Critics might argue that the United States has been here before. After all, this is not the first time the United States, the DPRK, and other actors have negotiated over the DPRK nuclear program. Furthermore, many of the prior offers—for instance, the 1990s-era quid pro quo of international economic assistance in return for North Korea freezing its nuclear efforts—echo elements of deals under discussion today.<sup>77</sup> One might therefore wonder whether and why a potential settlement is possible today when previous bargains fell by the wayside.<sup>78</sup>

These parallels are deceiving. The current situation in Northeast Asia is different than in times past owing to the fundamental change in the distribution of power wrought by the DPRK's acquisition of nuclear weapons. In fact, the source of the potential settlement described here is the very thing that seems to make the arrangement implausible: North Korea's ability to target the United States and American allies with nuclear weapons and the United States' comparative inability to deprive the DPRK of its nuclear option.<sup>79</sup> Put differently, a Northeast Asian settlement might have appeared attainable in the past. Still, the inability of the United States to either guarantee North Korea's existence or accept a nuclear North Korea, the threat this ambiguity posed to North Korea and China, and North

Korea's inclination to needle the United States and its allies made a deal near impossible. However, with North Korea's existence virtually ensured by its nuclear arsenal and—potentially—American guarantees, the distribution of power and interests in Northeast Asia is much clarified.<sup>80</sup> The United States has effectively reached the extent of its power and influence in the region. North Korea has found a way to ensure its survival but can most benefit from this situation only by working with long-standing allies and adversaries. China need no longer fear entrapment or the loss of its ally, but it must find new ways of managing its client. Like the US-Soviet settlement after the mid-1960s, the prospective security structure in Northeast Asia—inadvertent and unexpected though it might be—may be the least of several evils for the actors involved as each needs to adapt to the new strategic environment. Incentives for the actors involved to negotiate and operate within limits have increased commensurately.<sup>81</sup>

### **Steps and Missteps: Getting to a Settlement**

Again, there is no guarantee this settlement will come to fruition or prove sustainable. On one level, given the Trump administration's ad hoc approach to foreign policy and internal fissures, it is unclear whether the United States will remain interested in the Singapore deal or judge North Korea a viable partner. Particularly as evidence mounts that North Korea may not be moving toward denuclearization, the current US administration—which has previously delayed and threatened to cancel negotiations in response to DPRK intransigence—may decide to change course.<sup>82</sup> Similar problems involve North Korea, which has a track record of backtracking on agreements no longer seen to suit its interests and a tendency of lashing out if it feels threatened.<sup>83</sup>

Obtaining a settlement may also be difficult due to ongoing tensions in the US-South Korea and US-Japan alliances. Since 2017, US relations with its allies have degraded owing to disputes over the cost of stationed US forces, criticism of allied economic behavior, and suggestions that the United States might more generally reduce ties with long-standing partners. In response, South Korea and Japan have reportedly moved to debate ways of providing greater security for themselves and, in particular, considered acquiring nuclear weapons of their own.<sup>84</sup> Should the latter come to pass in unregulated fashion, it risks antagonizing North Korea and China by rendering US-backed security guarantees moot and setting the stage for regional insecurity spirals that would make any settlement immaterial.<sup>85</sup> Ultimately, securing a settlement requires carefully adjudicating the role and capability of current US alliances in any arrangement. Whether the

Trump administration is able or willing to engage its partners to obtain a settlement—let alone whether South Korea and Japan will trust the United States' initiatives—remains unclear.<sup>86</sup>

Moreover, even if a settlement comes into being, *sustaining* it may not be a straightforward task. The Cold War experience is instructive. After the mid-1960s, American and Soviet policy makers were vexed with domestic and international pressures to ignore their tacit settlement. This situation compelled them to actively manage domestic and international audiences to forestall a return to early Cold War tensions (an effort that was only somewhat successful).<sup>87</sup> Similar dynamics are possible in Northeast Asia. On the American side, sustaining a settlement will require reining in foreign policy hawks reluctant to allow the DPRK to de facto retain a nuclear arsenal (or seek regime change for other reasons).<sup>88</sup> The United States will also need to find a way of engaging allies fearful of conflict with North Korea yet also averse to letting a neighboring state enjoy a local nuclear advantage.

North Korea has problems, too. Kim's rule appears intact, but changes in the DPRK leadership and/or internal unrest could imperil the arrangement. Likewise, North Korea's leaders may be disinclined to accept living with the status quo or to permit China to dominate North Korean international fortunes.<sup>89</sup> The DPRK may also try to use its nuclear assets to extract additional concessions, leaving the United States in the fraught position of either conceding to North Korean demands or risking the failure of a framework in which it has invested much of its own time and energy.<sup>90</sup> China, meanwhile, will need to corral a nuclear-armed client. None of these tasks are simple. Even if a settlement emerges, it may be fragile and fraught with risks.

Despite these uncertainties, securing a settlement in Northeast Asia may be a productive way of reducing one of the most troublesome spots in US foreign relations. To boost the chances of success, the United States should proceed along several tracks. First, the United States and its partners need to continue outreach to North Korea. Rather than immediate denuclearization, the objective should be establishing a process that links sanctions relief and security guarantees for North Korea to a plan delineating particular North Korean actions and policies that reinforce the claim of North Korea's eventual denuclearization.<sup>91</sup> Denuclearization is unlikely to occur, but creating a framework will give policy makers in the United States, North Korea, and other states political maneuvering room while dampening North Korean insecurities. At the same time, affording North Korea something of value gives it a stake in the status quo and provides

the United States leverage if North Korea tries extorting further concessions (for instance, by threatening the resumption of nuclear tests). Plainly stated, this effort raises the costs of North Korea challenging the settlement.

Second, the United States should quietly make clear to China what the United States expects from the future China-DPRK relationship and consider what China seeks from the United States in kind. In other words, diplomatic discussions between China and the United States will be needed to deconflict expectations while arriving at a common understanding of what the Northeast Asian settlement does and does not entail.<sup>92</sup> These discussions cannot cover every twist and turn of Northeast Asian relations. Likewise, policy makers will need to find some way of isolating discussions on North Korea from more conflictual elements of the US-China relationship, including economic tensions and disputes in the South and East China Seas.<sup>93</sup> Still, as a way of creating a common reference point, engagement with China can mitigate the risk that unexpected events or developments in other portions of US-China relations will negatively affect Northeast Asian security.<sup>94</sup>

Third, and relatedly, the United States should begin working with China to facilitate Chinese leverage over North Korea. This will be no easy task. During the Cold War, the United States' ability to influence European allies with nuclear arsenals (e.g., France and Britain) was considerably more limited compared to those lacking them (e.g., West Germany). In fact, owing to their comparatively greater security, nuclear-armed clients were occasionally able to exert a significant degree of independence—as, for instance, Britain showcased during the Suez crisis.<sup>95</sup> With North Korea likely retaining a nuclear arsenal, China's ability to shape North Korean fortunes will be similarly constrained. To maximize Chinese influence, the United States should therefore encourage China to reinforce its economic and security ties with North Korea. Ideally, the growth of bilateral China–North Korean ties will discourage North Korea from brandishing its nuclear sword at the first sign of future trouble by providing the Chinese government with tools to influence and restrain Pyongyang's decision making.<sup>96</sup>

Fourth, American policy makers need to find a way of balancing allied efforts to engage North Korea with (1) reciprocal allied interest in sustaining security ties with the United States and (2) the risk that too little intra-alliance coordination could prompt US allies to hedge against the DPRK in ways that disrupt ongoing diplomatic bargaining. That is, a pathway is needed to simultaneously reassure and engage US allies as a settlement comes to fruition while giving them enough independent leeway to engage North Korea as they see fit. To this end, the United

States should consider stepping up ongoing consultations with its partners before and after talks with the DPRK.<sup>97</sup> A multilateral approach is unnecessary; in fact, it may be counterproductive by limiting North Korea's ability to envision a beneficial shift in the regional diplomatic environment from a settlement. However, US policy makers should work with American allies to discuss the broad parameters of what an ideal settlement would entail. Along the way, it might also be advantageous for the United States to sequence its intra-alliance ambitions so efforts to adjust the alliances' security and economic provisions (e.g., reducing US security commitments and allied economic offsets for the US military presence) occur after negotiations with the DPRK mature. These steps would not only help address allied insecurities in the near term, but they allow any future adjustments to account for North Korea's evolving role in Northeast Asia.

Finally, the Trump administration will need to reorient the US policy-making establishment toward the steps needed to structure and sustain a settlement. This does not mean simply engaging and rewarding DPRK behavior. Rather, and much like the US-Soviet relationship from the mid-1960s onward, resources must be devoted to acquiring the intelligence and military tools needed for a stable deterrence relationship with the DPRK.<sup>98</sup> At the same time, US leaders should facilitate a domestic political consensus in favor of the emerging settlement. This may be an especially challenging endeavor. At root, the initial decision to meet with the North Korean leader was a stark departure from normal policy making. Now, US diplomacy in Northeast Asia is taking on an increasingly partisan cast as many Democrats and Republicans question the president's approach.<sup>99</sup> To avoid having future US policy makers back away from any settlement and to put US policy on a sound long-term footing, the Trump administration will need to earn the support of key decision makers and stakeholders across the policy-making and procedural spectrum.

## **Conclusion**

Ultimately, the United States has failed in its stated goal of denuclearizing North Korea. This situation is unlikely to change in the future. Nonetheless, this outcome should not blind us to the broader strategic consequences of US diplomacy. On the horizon is a potential pathway for a Northeast Asian settlement where the Koreas, the United States, China, and Japan can each live within the status quo. There is no guarantee that the potential described in this article will be reached. Furthermore, even if a settlement takes shape, it will take real efforts by policy makers over the long term to see the arrangement sustained. Still, durable settlements in international

politics are not always immediately apparent; sometimes they develop informally if not tacitly and emerge only after periods of tension, posturing, and disappointment. Just as the early Cold War unexpectedly fostered a security system in which the United States, European actors, and the Soviet Union could survive and bargain, so too may an analogous arrangement be possible in Northeast Asia. The United States has thus far failed to denuclearize North Korea, but this failure may be an inadvertent success. **SSQ**

## Notes

1. For input on prior drafts, I thank James Walsh, Adam Mount, Brendan Green, and Jennifer Lind, as well as the three anonymous *SSQ* reviewers.

2. Evan Osnos, “The Risk of Nuclear War with North Korea,” *New Yorker*, 18 September 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/>; and BBC, “North Korea-US Tensions: How Worried Should You Be?,” 25 September 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/>.

3. “Joint Statement of President Donald J. Trump of the United States of America and Chairman Kim Jong Un of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea at the Singapore Summit,” The White House, press release, 12 June 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>. On the diplomatic process, see Mark Manyin and Emma Chanlett-Avery, “A Possible Second U.S.–North Korea Summit: What Diplomacy Has and Hasn’t Achieved,” *CRS [Congressional Research Service] Insight*, Report IN11023, 23 January 2019, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IN11023.pdf>; and Kelsey Davenport, “Chronology of U.S.–North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy,” fact sheet, Arms Control Association, March 2019, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron>.

4. “Complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization” was the Trump administration’s stated goal vis-à-vis North Korea heading into the Singapore discussion; see David Welna, “‘Complete, Verifiable, Irreversible’ a Tough Goal for North Korea Summit,” *npr*, 6 June 2018, <https://www.npr.org/>. On stalled progress following the Hanoi Summit, see Richard Johnson, “Learning from Hanoi: Where Do We Go from Here?,” *38 North*, 18 March 2019, <https://www.38north.org/>; Jed Babbin, “Three Concessions and Walkout: Hanoi and Its Aftermath,” *American Spectator*, 4 March 2019, <https://spectator.org/>; and Uri Friedman, “How the White House Is Spinning the North Korea Summit Collapse,” *The Atlantic*, 12 March 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/>.

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12. For contemporary examples, see "NATO Accuses Russia of Breaking Nuclear Missile Treaty," *BBC*, 4 December 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/>; "Donald Trump Confirms US Withdrawal from INF Nuclear Treaty," *Guardian*, 1 February 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/>; and Joe Gould, "Pence Calls on EU Allies to Withdraw from Nuclear Deal in Latest Trans-Atlantic Rift," *Defense News*, 14 February 2019, <https://www.defensenews.com/>. On the consequences of such violations, see Charles Lipson, "Why Are Some International Agreements Informal?," *International Organization* 45, no. 4 (Autumn 1991): 504–14..

13. Charles L. Glaser, "Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help," *Security Studies* 5, no. 3 (Winter 1994–95): 50–90.

14. Henry Kissinger, "The Congress of Vienna: A Reappraisal," *World Politics* 8, no. 2 (January 1956): 264.

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16. Kissinger, "Congress of Vienna," 265. For a similar treatment on the origins of international order, see G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3–20, 50–79.

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21. James McAllister, *No Exit: America and the German Problem, 1943–1954* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); and Leffler, *Preponderance of Power*, chaps. 8, 11.

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51. These elements do not always overlap. Since Hanoi, for instance, Trump has reportedly blocked efforts by his special representative to resume back-channel negotiations with North Korea, preferring instead to oversee the process himself. See John Walcott, "President Trump Just Sidelined His Own Top Negotiator on North Korea," *Time*, 20 March 2019, <http://time.com/>. That said, the key issue here is that the United States remains supportive of diplomatic dialogue, and on this score it looks to be sustaining efforts at engagement. Indeed, the United States has not only downplayed the importance of evidence that North Korea (as of late March 2019) might be preparing to resume tests of a satellite launch vehicle but also underscored its openness to negotiations. For the continued engagement, see Friedman, "How the White House Is Spinning"; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "A Conversation with U.S. Special Representative Stephen Biegun," transcript, 2019 Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference, Washington, DC, 11 March 2019, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/ceipfiles/pdf/NPC19-SpecialRepresentativeBiegun.pdf>; and Department of State, "Senior State Department Official on North Korea," 7 March 2019, <https://www.state.gov/>. For the broader US efforts at engagement since mid-2018, see for example David Brunnstrom, "Pompeo Expects to Return to North Korea 'Before Terribly Long,'" Reuters, 18 June 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/>; David Brunnstrom and Jeff Mason, "Pompeo Heads to North Korea as Doubts Mount about Its Intentions," Reuters, 2 July 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/>; Michelle Kosinski and Zachary Cohen, "Pompeo Names Special Representative, Announces

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53. Bell and MacDonald, “Toward Deterrence.”

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63. Adam Cathcart, "Pivot to Beijing? Kim Jong Un's Play for Economic Stability after Hanoi," *NK News*, 3 March 2019, <https://www.nknews.org/>; Zhenhua Lu and Lee Jeong-ho, "North Korea's Kim Jong-un in China for Two-Day Trip 'to Brief Xi Jinping on Donald Trump Summit,'" *South China Morning Press*, 19 June 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/>; and Christopher Bodeen, "Kim Looking to 'Achieve Results' in 2nd Summit with Trump," Associated Press, 10 January 2019, <https://www.apnews.com/>.

64. Lolita C. Baldor and Christopher Bodeen, "Mattis, China Leaders Strike Positive Tone despite Tensions," Associated Press, 27 June 2018, <https://www.apnews.com/>; "China, US Talks on North Korea Get Off to Frosty Start," *BBC*, 8 October 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/>; and Leo Byrne, "China a 'Good Partner' in Denuclearizing North Korea: Pompeo," *NK News*, 7 January 2019, <https://www.nknews.org/>.

65. That said, there is evidence that China has taken a laxer approach toward enforcing existing sanctions on North Korea since the Singapore Summit. See U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2018 Report to Congress* (Washington, DC: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, November 2018), 420–21.

66. Friedman, "How the White House Is Spinning"; Uri Friedman, "Is Trump Giving Up on a Nuclear-Free North Korea?" *The Atlantic*, 2 March 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/>; and Joyce Lee and David Brunnstrom, "North Korea May Suspend Talks with 'Gangster-Like' U.S., Rethink Nuclear Test Freeze," Reuters, 14 March 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/>.

67. For a related treatment of US policy toward North Korea writ large, see Adam Mount and Andrea Berger, *Report of the International Study Group on North Korea Policy* (Washington, DC: Federation of American Scientists, 2019), <https://fas.org/wp-content/uploads/media/FAS-DPRK-SG.pdf>.

68. On deterrence and North Korea, see Scott Sagan, "The Korean Missile Crisis," *Foreign Affairs* 96, no. 6 (November–December 2017); John Dale Grover, "North Korea Still Requires Deterrence and Diplomacy," *National Interest*, 31 July 2018, <https://nationalinterest.org/>; and Michael Singh, "Trump Should Focus on Deterring North Korea," *Foreign Policy*, 17 October 2017, <https://foreignpolicy.com/>.

69. For concerns that North Korean nuclear weapons may prompt Japan and South Korea to pursue their own nuclear weapons, see Christopher Hughes, "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons: Implications for the Nuclear Ambitions of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan," *Asia Policy* 3 (January 2007): 75–104; and Harshaw, "Winning the Nuclear Game."

70. Indeed, some analysts were quick to propose that China was the primary "winner" of the Singapore Summit. See Bonnie S. Glaser and Oriana Skylar Mastro, "The Big Winner of the Singapore Summit," *Foreign Affairs* (Snapshot), 15 June 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/>.

71. For a related discussion, see Isaac Stone Fish and Robert Kelly, "North Korea Is Ultimately China's Problem," *Foreign Affairs* (Snapshot), 8 June 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/>.

72. Michael Green, "Deciphering Kim Jong Un's Motives," *Foreign Affairs* (Snapshot), 16 May 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/>.

73. Warden and Panda, “Goals for Any Arms Control Proposal;” Eric Gomez, “What the US Should Take Away from Kim Jong Un’s New Year Address,” *The Diplomat*, 4 January 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/>; and Patrick Cronin and Kristine Lee, “Preparing for a ‘Decent Chance’ of Success and Failure with North Korea,” *38 North*, 1 February 2019, <https://www.38north.org/>.

74. Remarks by US officials in early 2019 posed the question of whether North Korea must denuclearize before obtaining sanctions relief. Despite suggestions that the United States might be willing to proceed in a step-by-step fashion in which North Korea progressively wound up its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief, Biegun and other officials have elsewhere implied that North Korea must embrace “complete denuclearization . . . as a condition for all other steps.” In practice, there may be less of a discrepancy than meets the eye. As Biegun explained in mid-March 2019, the United States is interested in moving forward with both denuclearization and in “transforming relations with the DPRK”—code for sanctions relief and economic integration—but “nothing can be agreed until everything is agreed.” In the same remarks, he elaborated that the “foundation” of US policy “is denuclearization. And until we can get to some point where we have the same traction on that issue that we have on the other issues, that makes it very difficult for us to move forward.” Combined, it appears that the United States is unwilling to officially embrace a step-by-step approach that would trade sanctions relief for denuclearization efforts without a defined end state. However, Biegun’s formulation also implies that the United States is open to a roadmap for improving US-DPRK relations (including sanctions relief) provided the United States and DPRK reach agreement on denuclearization (and what denuclearization entails) as a desired—if not necessarily attainable—end state. If so, the approach would be a step-by-step policy in practice, if not officially. On Biegun’s remarks and the ambiguity of the early 2019 position, see Carnegie Endowment, “Conversation with Special Representative Stephen Biegun,” 11–12.

75. In downplaying its nuclear capabilities, North Korea would, in essence, be following a path taken by other nuclear-armed states such as Israel and Pakistan that would suffer strategic repercussions if their nuclear arsenals were made public. For discussion of states hiding their nuclear capabilities, see Nicholas Miller and Or Rabinowitz, “Keeping the Bomb in the Basement: U.S. Nonproliferation Policy toward Israel, South Africa, and Pakistan,” *International Security* 40, no. 1 (Summer 2015): 47–86; and Austin Long and Joshua Shiffrin, “How Long until Midnight? Intelligence-Policy Relations and the U.S. Response to the Israeli Nuclear Program, 1959–1985,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 42, no. 1 (Winter 2019): 55–90.

76. There is a legitimate question over whether formal commitments—such as codified agreements, treaties, and declarations—are binding for personalist regimes like Kim’s North Korea. One might argue that personalist autocracies enable leaders to quickly defect from agreements if their interests change. That said, given an anarchic international system, it is nearly impossible to bind any state (regardless of regime type) to uphold the terms of an agreement if its interests mandate otherwise. Certain regimes (e.g., democracies) may be poised for greater compliance, but it is neither automatic nor divorced from state interest. In this sense, the above analysis suggests that even Kim’s North Korea may embrace and sustain a formal commitment to denuclearize because the resulting settlement benefits North Korea in other ways. On the difficulty of compliance, as well as variation in compliance by regime type and interests, see Robert Axelrod and Robert Keohane, “Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions,” *World Politics* 38, no. 1 (October 1985): 226; and Brett Ashley Leeds, “Domestic Political Institutions, Credible Commitments, and International Cooperation,” *American Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 4 (October 1999): 979–1002.

77. Thanks go to James Walsh for this observation. For the parallels on the security guarantee issue, see note 34. For details on past offers, see Marc Champion, “A Rough Guide to North Korea’s Many Promises to Abandon Nukes,” *Bloomberg News*, 11 June 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/>.

78. For the best analysis of the tradeoffs involved in prior debates over relations with North Korea, see Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang, “The Debate over North Korea,” *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 229–54; and Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang, *Nuclear North Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

79. On the limitations imposed by nuclear weapons and the resulting diplomatic and security consequences, see Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989). Of course, recent research shows that the United States has long sought ways of disarming other states' nuclear arsenals. Moreover, ongoing US advances in counterforce targeting and ballistic missile defenses may leave smaller nuclear states especially vulnerable. Still, it remains unclear how confident US strategists are that these investment will work in practice—indeed, even after investing billions of dollars in trying to hold the Soviet nuclear force at risk, US policy makers retained a healthy respect for the Soviet nuclear program through the end of the Cold War. Ultimately, although the United States may seek ways of getting after the North Korean nuclear arsenal, such efforts appear to be very costly and of questionable reliability, leaving the United States with few ways of depriving North Korea of its nuclear options. Even accounting for US counterforce and missile defense options, nuclear weapons therefore look likely to still induce real caution in the United States' dealings with other countries. On US counterforce efforts during the Cold War and after, see Austin Long and Brendan Rittenhouse Green, "Stalking the Secure Second Strike: Intelligence, Counterforce, and Nuclear Strategy," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 1-2 (January 2015): 38–73; and Keir Lieber and Daryl Press, "The New Era of Counterforce," *International Security* 41, no. 4 (Spring 2017): 9–49.

80. On the importance of a clarified distribution of power for ensuring successful diplomatic bargains, see Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 3rd ed. (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1988).

81. This is not to say that North Korea is poised to turn into a "good neighbor." Rather, the point is that a nuclear North Korea creates incentives for the United States, DPRK, and others to find some way of pursuing their interests—which sometimes conflict with one another—within limits and more-or-less understood rules of the road. Thanks go to an anonymous *SSQ* reviewer for suggesting this point.

82. Warden and Panda, "Goals for Any Arms Control Proposal"; "Trump Calls Summit Cancellation a 'Tremendous Setback,'" *CBS News*, 25 May 2018, <https://www.cbsnews.com/>; and Josh Rogin, "Why Trump Canceled Pompeo's Trip to North Korea," *Washington Post*, 27 August 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/>. That the US position may have hardened after Hanoi makes this issue especially pressing, all the more so as it is unclear how North Korea may respond if US policy shifts. On the hardening of the US position, see Jennifer Hansler, "US Envoy Says Trump Administration Won't Accept Phased North Korean Denuclearization," *CNN*, 11 March 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/>.

83. Kelsey Davenport, "Chronology of U.S.–North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy," Arms Control Association fact sheet, March 2019, <https://www.armscontrol.org/>; and Kim Hjelmggaard, "North Korea Threatens 'Unimaginable' Strike on United States," *USA Today*, 19 October 2017, <https://www.usatoday.com/>.

84. Gordon Lubold and Warren Strobel, "Trump Wants South Korea to Pay More for U.S. Troop Presence," *Wall Street Journal*, 7 December 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/>; Daisuke Kikuchi and Tomohiro Osaki, "Questions Arise over Trump-Abe Ties at Critical Juncture for Japanese Prime Minister," *Japan Times*, 15 April 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/>; Scott Snyder, "Can South Korea Trust Trump?" *The Atlantic*, 7 November 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/>; Mike Mochizuki, "Three Reasons Why Japan Will Likely Continue to Reject Nuclear Weapons," *Washington Post*, 6 November 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/>; and Euan Graham, "Why South Korea and Japan Should Not Go Nuclear," *Interpreter*, 6 November 2017, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/>.

85. For a general treatment of insecurity spirals in East Asia, see Thomas Christensen, "China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia," *International Security* 23, no. 4 (Spring 1999): 49–80.

86. On the general problems of US credibility given the shifts in US politics, see Keren Yarhi-Milo, "After Credibility: American Foreign Policy in the Trump Era," *Foreign Affairs* 97, no. 1 (January/February 2018): 68–77.

87. Marc Trachtenberg, "The Structure of Great Power Politics, 1963–1975," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume 2: Crises and Détente*, eds. Melvyn Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (London: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 482–502.

88. On this issue, as well as North Korean efforts to isolate foreign policy hawks in US domestic debates, see Panda and Narang, "Diplomacy without Denuclearization"

89. For how nuclear weapons can cause states to expand their foreign ambitions, see Mark Bell, "Beyond Emboldenment: How Acquiring Nuclear Weapons Can Change Foreign Policy," *International Security* 40, no. 1 (Summer 2015): 87–119.

90. Miller and Narang, "Year of Living Dangerously."

91. For elements of what such a deal might entail, see the pieces by Narang et al. in Kazianis, Glover, and Van Oudenaren, "North Korea and America's Second Summit." Also useful is Harshaw, "Winning the Nuclear Game."

92. On the value of negotiations with China over North Korea, see Michael Mullen and Sam Nunn, *A Sharper Choice on North Korea: Engaging China for a Stable Northeast Asia* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2016).

93. On these tensions, see Helene Cooper, "U.S. Disinvites China from Military Exercise Amid Rising Tensions," *New York Times*, 23 May 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/>; and Deirdre Shesgreen, "US-China Tensions Flare as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo meets with Counterparts in Beijing," *USA Today*, 8 October 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/>.

94. On the salience of "reference points" for strategy debates and diplomatic negotiations, see the useful discussion by Jack Levy, "Deterrence and Coercive Diplomacy: The Contributions of Alexander George," *Political Psychology* 29, no. 4 (July 2008): 542–48.

95. A. Menon, *France, NATO and the Limits of Independence 1981–97: The Politics of Ambivalence* (Springer, 2000); Bell, "Beyond Emboldenment;" Wilfred L. Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); and Gene Gerzhoy, "Alliance Coercion and Nuclear Restraint: How the United States Thwarted West Germany's Nuclear Ambitions," *International Security* 39, no. 4 (Spring 2015): 91–129.

96. On the dynamics of alliance restraint, see Jeremy Pressman, *Warring Friends* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

97. For current efforts, see "Pompeo, in Japan, Seeks Allied Unity Before North Korea Talks," *NBC News*, 6 October 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/>; and Isabel Reynolds and Youkyung Lee, "Feud between Major Allies Japan and South Korea Deepens as Trump Sits It Out," *Japan Times*, 5 February 2019, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/>.

98. I am indebted to Brendan Green for conversations on the US-Soviet nuclear competition from the 1960s onward. Likewise, debates over what targets or set of targets would most credibly deter the Soviet Union were a regular feature of US policy discussions during the Cold War. Given the opacity of the North Korean government, it is reasonable to expect that crafting a deterrence relationship vis-à-vis North Korea will generate similar debates.

99. Thanks go to James Walsh and James Goldgeier for observations on Trump's departure from standard practice. On political skepticism, see Eli Stokes, "Republicans Remain Skeptical despite Trump's Boasts of a Breakthrough with North Korea's Kim," *Los Angeles Times*, 12 June 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/>; and Peter Beinart, "Why Can't Democrats Give Trump Credit on North Korea?" *The Atlantic*, 15 June 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/>.

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