

# BEYOND MAXIMUM PRESSURE: A PATHWAY TO NORTH KOREAN DENUCLEARIZATION

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

President Donald Trump's speech in Seoul on November 7 and his success in persuading nations to support the U.S. campaign of maximum pressure on North Korea provide a compelling framework for addressing the threat posed by Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programs. This brief assesses North Korea's strategic intentions, evaluates risks and benefits of potential U.S. policy responses, and lays out a framework for an executable, whole-of-government strategy, using the president's recent Asia trip as a launching pad.

- Kim Jong-un is unlikely to give up his nuclear weapons program, absent unprecedented pressure that succeeds in threatening the internal stability of his regime. However, there are ample policy opportunities as a result of the Trump administration's policy of robust pressure to reorient Kim's behavior and change his calculus.
- Neither a military strike nor an interim agreement toward a phased approach is likely to achieve denuclearization or full control of the North's nuclear weapons:
  - The military strike option exposes the U.S. and its allies to the possibility of a nuclear war or conventional conflict that could instigate an unintended military confrontation with China and inflict

high political and economic costs to the United States. A phased approach to denuclearization could slow the North's progress, but Pyongyang has a consistent record of violating past agreements and Kim has shown no interest in serious engagement leading to any type of meaningful accord that would limit his nuclear and missile capabilities.

- Instead, the president could build on his speech in Seoul by advancing a strategy that both incorporates new and unprecedented pressure tactics, and also resuscitates the idea of negotiations. A "supersized" version of the president's maximum pressure campaign could include a menu of options that fall into three buckets:
  - Strengthening international unity of action;
  - Minimizing the threat from North Korea; and
  - Increasing stress on the North Korean regime.

## 1. ASSESSING KIM JONG-UN'S INTENTIONS AND GOALS

**K**im is highly unlikely to give up North Korea's nuclear weapons program, regardless of threats of military attacks or engagement, absent unprecedented pressure that succeeds in threatening the internal stability of his regime. He sees the program as vital to regime security and his legitimacy as the leader of North Korea and needs a "hostile" external environment to justify his rule.

Kim is violent and aggressive, and his use of repression and rent probably has encouraged sycophants and groupthink within his inner circle. Left to his own devices, Kim could blunder into a situation that leads to rapid and potentially uncontrollable escalation, especially since he has almost no experience in negotiation and compromise in foreign affairs.

- Unlike his father and grandfather who used engagement to manipulate the regional environment, Kim Jong-un has continued to choose isolation, refusing to engage, doubling down on the regime's commitment to nuclear weapons, working toward improving conventional military capabilities, and expanding the North's toolkit of provocations to include cyberattacks and the use of chemical and biological weapons.
- Kim also sees the military programs as a national symbol of prestige and progress, and has pegged his personal legacy and the Kim family dynasty to them.

Pyongyang's current primary objective for its nuclear weapons program is to deter a U.S. attack and invasion. Kim almost certainly recognizes that an attack on the U.S. or its allies with a nuclear-tipped ballistic missile would guarantee a regime-ending response by Washington. Kim is most likely to use his nuclear weapons against the U.S. or against a U.S. ally in a use-or-lose scenario, in which he has to choose between using nuclear weapons first, or die knowing that his nuclear weapons failed at deterring an attack and ensuring regime survival.

Kim seeks to leverage his nuclear weapons program to support coercive diplomacy—including the limited use of conventional force—with the U.S., South Korea, China, and Japan. His goals include weakening Washington's alliances with Seoul and Tokyo, retaining independence of action from Beijing, and maintaining North Korea's strategic relevance amid wealthier and more powerful neighbors.

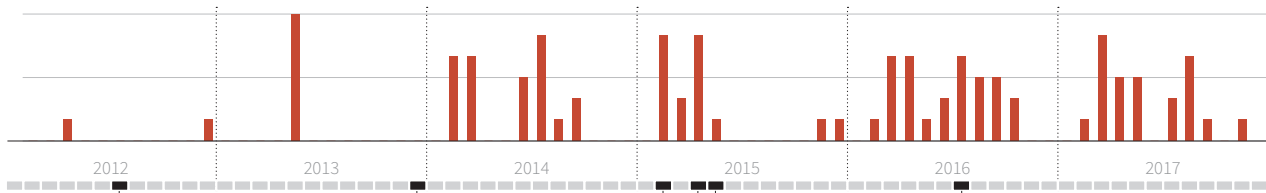
Kim might move toward a more expansive vision of how he could use his nuclear and missile programs to advance offensive objectives—such as creating conditions conducive for the unification of the Korean Peninsula—if his confidence grows that (1) Washington would be deterred from taking military action; (2) Beijing and Moscow will not abandon the Kim regime; (3) the U.S. and China would seek to rein in aggressive South Korean military actions against North Korea; and (4) Washington will restrain Seoul and Tokyo from developing their own nuclear inventories. While the possibility cannot be ruled out that Kim could shift toward harboring offensive ambitions in the future, such an outcome is not foregone and should not be assumed, particularly in the absence of the four conditions outlined above.

Kim is neither irrational nor undeterrable. But deterrence will not be achieved automatically or easily. He is a rational actor capable of calibrating his behavior to avoid risking a U.S. or allied military response. Kim has aggressively pushed forward on nuclear and missile testing since he came to power in December 2011, but has stopped short of actions that might lead to military responses that would threaten the regime. For example, Pyongyang proposed high-level talks with Seoul to defuse tension after the 2015 landmine incident in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that injured two South Korean soldiers and heightened the risk of an escalation to armed conflict.

## Purge and launch

After Kim Jong Un took power, his executions of government officials increased, to peak at 60 in 2015. Then missile tests multiplied.

### Ballistic missile launches



### Executions of government officials (total per year, estimate)



Some reported reasons why officials were executed: Expressing anti-party or counter-revolutionary sentiments; corruption; plotting the overthrow of the state; presenting different opinion to Kim Jong Un; talking back and expressing discontent towards policies; having no fruitful outcome; dozing off during meeting; clapping half-heartedly, and faulty posture during meeting.

Sources: Nuclear Threat Initiative; Institute for National Security Strategy.

C. Inton; D. Cai, 30/11/2017

REUTERS

There are indications that Pyongyang is seeking to validate its assumptions about actions that could trigger escalation. North Korean officials reportedly have been reaching out to American experts and former government officials to understand the Trump administration's intentions. This suggests that Pyongyang does not have a clear idea of what actions would cross the threshold of U.S. military action, raising the prospect of miscalculation and devastating consequences. It might also suggest anxiety about what Trump might do, despite Kim's bravado.

Given Kim Jong-un's personality and strategic goals, the U.S. must aim to minimize the threat of North Korea's nuclear weapons programs without fueling conditions that could invite unintended escalation leading to armed conflict. Below is an evaluation of the most widely-discussed policy options, including a military strike and an alternative approach involving an interim agreement that would lead to phased denuclearization.

## 2. MAINSTREAM POLICY OPTIONS

### 2.1. Military strike options

If North Korea harbors any inkling of offensive ambitions—that is, using conventional force to create conditions conducive to unification of the Korean Peninsula on North Korea's terms—then there is reason for the U.S. to take military action sooner rather than later to prevent Kim Jong-un from engaging in nuclear blackmail to get his way. We note, however, that Washington is unlikely to achieve denuclearization or full control of the North's nuclear weapons through military strike options short of a ground invasion and occupation. This is due to (1) limited visibility into the full scope of North Korea's programs and the consequent possibility that "loose nukes" could end up in the wrong hands, and (2) the probable desire of Kim or possible successors to keep the weapons.

- A military strike—assuming that it is limited, Kim and his advisors believe it is limited, and North Korea’s military responses is scaled to be proportionately limited—could shatter Kim’s confidence in his ability to drive events on the Korean Peninsula. This would also invalidate Pyongyang’s key assumption about Washington’s unwillingness to use military force, which has sustained the regime’s perception that it is free to poke and prod and test the limits of international tolerance. Pyongyang’s future risk-taking might be curtailed by the fear of another military attack.
- Kim or his successor(s) might consider entering negotiations with the United States and its allies on the nuclear weapons program to buy time and goodwill from Beijing and Moscow, possibly driven by the voices of newly emboldened actors in the regime who might urge caution or apply a brake on Kim’s ambitions.
- Beijing and Moscow, fearing more assertive U.S. military action, could try to use their potentially increased economic aid as a lever to get Kim or his successors to move toward denuclearization.
- If Kim survives and North Korea continues to exist as a state, his commitment to pursue and maintain his weapons is likely to be reinforced by the U.S. attack, and he probably will use the attack to rally the North Korean populace around him. The pursuit of nuclear weapons and the existential war with the United States is in Kim’s DNA; his grandfather, Kim Il-sung, became interested in a nuclear program in the devastating aftermath of the Korean War. A U.S. attack on North Korea would be a fresh reminder of the need for nuclear weapons for generations of North Koreans who have only known a nuclear North Korea and for whom the Korean War had been a historical memory.
- Kim likely would respond to a limited strike with symmetrical military action, such as artillery strikes against South Korea’s islands along the maritime border or shorter-range ballistic missile launches against South Korean or Japanese targets, to show that he will not be intimidated, and to maintain the initiative in driving events on the Korean Peninsula. We have low confidence in how Kim might respond and through what methods, but Kim’s aggressive personality, desire to project strength, need to demonstrate resolve to protect his domestic standing, and his efforts over the years to improve North Korea’s conventional military capabilities and diversify his nuclear arsenal and their launch locations all suggest that Kim is inclined to risk escalation in order to respond to strikes on North Korea.
- Removing Kim also does not provide a guarantee the North will denuclearize. The new leadership could seek to develop nuclear weapons covertly—much of North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs have been indigenized. The new regime, like the Kim family, might also see nuclear weapons as a way to maintain leverage and protect itself in a hostile strategic environment.

The hypothetical benefits above are highly unlikely to materialize because Kim’s interpretation of U.S. actions is likely to be muddled by the fog of war and potential policy confusion and dysfunction as a result of the groupthink among his inner circle of advisors. This would also be Kim’s first major challenge of his six-year reign and we do not know how Kim would respond. Any military strike against North Korea—even with clear signaling from the U.S. that it is not a prelude to a decapitation attempt—would present Kim with a potential use-or-lose dilemma. The U.S. might face the possibility of a nuclear war or conventional conflict that could instigate an unintended military confrontation with China and inflict high political and economic costs to the United States.

- A military strike on North Korea against South Korea's wishes would severely damage the alliance.
- Even if they are notified in advance regarding Washington's actions and goals, Chinese and Russian leaders might increase economic aid to North Korea to try to prevent regime collapse, and simultaneously push to dial back U.N. sanctions, claiming that the U.S., not North Korea, is threatening regional stability. Future Chinese and Russian cooperation on pressuring North Korea could also become more difficult to obtain.
- If China grows concerned about U.S. efforts to compel regime collapse and impose unification of the Korean Peninsula on Seoul's terms, Beijing might intervene militarily, possibly to maintain leverage in a quickly evolving situation. At the height of U.S.-North Korea tension in August 2017, the state-run *Global Times* stated in an editorial that "If the U.S. and South Korea carry our strikes and try to overthrow the North Korean regime and change the political pattern of the Korean Peninsula, China will prevent them from doing so."<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, South Korea almost certainly would also mobilize to defend its stake and status in a potential reunification scenario.
- A preventive strike not premised on an imminent threat would also draw widespread international condemnation from U.S. partners and allies as an illegal act of aggression contravening the U.N. Charter and international law.
- The Seoul metropolitan area, located only 35 miles from the DMZ with about 25 million inhabitants and nearly 200,000 Americans—and a million Chinese—would be very difficult to defend against conventional strikes, and virtually impossible to defend against strikes involving weapons of mass destruction, including chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. Tokyo, with a population of around 38 million, would be similarly difficult to defend.
- A second Korean War—potentially involving China, Japan, and South Korea (respectively, the world's second-, third-, and 11th-largest economies)—would have global economic ripple effects, affecting electronics, automobiles, and energy markets. For example, South Korea is the fourth-biggest producer of electronic products and the second-biggest producer of semiconductors in the world. In addition, nine of the world's 10 busiest container ports are in Asia.<sup>2</sup>
- A conflict could significantly increase federal debt in the U.S. and upend domestic policy agendas.

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1 "Chinese paper says China should stay neutral if North Korea attacks first," *Reuters*, August 10, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles-china-media/chinese-paper-says-china-should-stay-neutral-if-north-korea-attacks-first-idUSKBN1AR005>.

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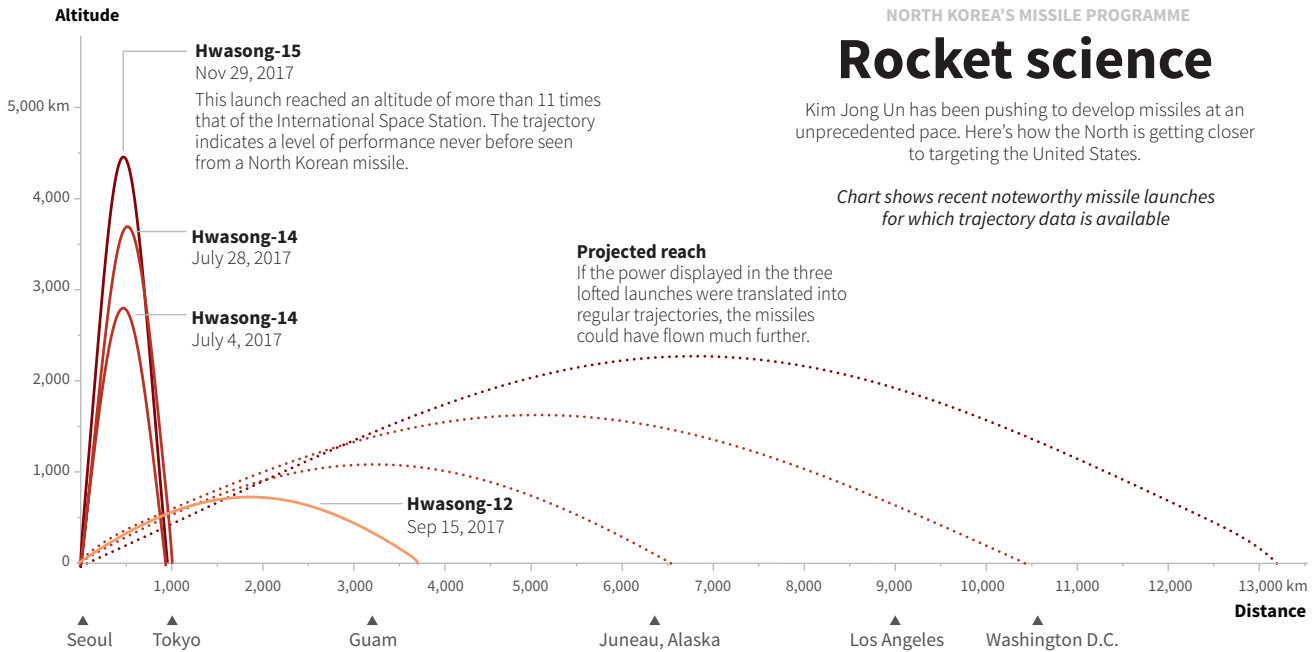
2 Anthony Fensom, "Why war with North Korea could cost trillions of dollars," *The National Interest*, September 11, 2017, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-war-north-korea-could-cost-trillions-dollars-22255>.



# Rocket science

Kim Jong Un has been pushing to develop missiles at an unprecedented pace. Here's how the North is getting closer to targeting the United States.

*Chart shows recent noteworthy missile launches for which trajectory data is available*



Sources: The CNS North Korea Missile Test Database, Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI); David Wright, Global Security Program at Union of Concerned Scientists  
S. Scarr, J. Wu and W. Cai, 29/11/2017



## 2.2. Interim agreement toward a phased approach to denuclearization<sup>3</sup>

This option acknowledges complete denuclearization as Washington's long-term goal, but argues for an initial measure to reduce tensions and move toward a near-term, verifiable freeze on North Korean missile and nuclear testing and production of fissile material. This would require a declaration and suspension of all covert nuclear activities. North Korea almost certainly would demand reciprocal U.S. steps, such as a freeze in U.S.-South Korean military drills. This option, in and of itself, is unlikely to lead to complete denuclearization in the near- or mid-term, but could slow North Korea's progress toward developing and

demonstrating an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capable of delivering a nuclear weapon against the U.S., and give more time for sanctions to take a bite on the North Korean economy.

- An interim agreement would seek a verifiable halt to fissile material production, cap the size of North Korea's nuclear arsenal, and ban nuclear and long-range missile tests.
- As a prominent expert has argued, "freezing North Korea's capabilities in key areas would reduce the technical challenges and expenses that the United States and its allies would otherwise face in pursuing military measures to deter and counter North Korea's capabilities, especially in fielding missile defenses that could stay ahead of the North Korean missile threat."<sup>4</sup>
- An interim agreement with North Korea could also provide insight into regime intentions and capabilities and open dialogue channels that could be used to avoid miscommunication and miscalculation.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Einhorn, "Approaching the North Korea Challenge Realistically," (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2017), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/approaching-the-north-korea-challenge-realistically/>; Ryan Hass and Michael O'Hanlon, "On North Korea, don't get distracted by the hydrogen bomb test, we can still negotiate," *USA Today*, September 3, 2017, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2017/09/03/north-korea-hydrogen-bomb-test-leaves-room-for-trump-to-negotiate-column/629729001/>; Robert Einhorn and Michael O'Hanlon, "Walking back from the brink with North Korea," *Order from Chaos* (blog), Brookings Institution, September 27, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/09/27/walking-back-from-the-brink-with-north-korea/>.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Einhorn, "Approaching the North Korea Challenge Realistically."

- A willingness to engage would puncture Chinese assertions that U.S. obstinacy is the obstruction to de-escalation, and would negate Chinese arguments for holding off on further pressure to preserve space for engagement. If North Korea demonstrates its unequivocal opposition to engagement, there will be less reason for China to hold back from increasing pressure.

A phased approach also has drawbacks and limitations, given North Korea's consistent record of violating past agreements. Moreover, Kim Jong-un has shown no interest in serious engagement leading to any type of meaningful accord that would limit his nuclear and missile capabilities.

- A U.S. move toward engagement to achieve an interim freeze that contains a weak commitment to complete denuclearization could be seen by Pyongyang as “caving” to North Korea, and as *de facto* recognition of its status as a nuclear weapons power. This would strengthen Kim's position and credibility with his domestic audience. President Trump has already signaled that he will not accept a nuclear North Korea. Any appearance of walking back from this statement could undermine the president's credibility on this and other global threats.
- Negotiations without rigorous and intrusive verification, enforcement, and monitoring would allow Kim to buy time to covertly develop his programs while he extracts concessions, while also giving Beijing the political cover to loosen sanctions enforcement.
- North Korea almost certainly would demand financial compensation, which the regime could redirect toward the programs that the U.S. is trying to eliminate.
- Even if an agreement were to be reached, Pyongyang almost certainly would not allow intrusive verification and inspections, without which we would have little confidence that the

North Koreans had declared and suspended all nuclear activities.

### 3. A FRAMEWORK FOR TRANSLATING THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENTS INTO STRATEGY— SUPERSIZING MAXIMUM PRESSURE, WITH A SIDE OF ENGAGEMENT

The president could build on his speech in Seoul by advancing a strategy that both incorporates new and unprecedented pressure tactics, and also resuscitates the idea of negotiations, without undercutting the administration's current stance. This combination of pressure and engagement could create the time, space, and leverage necessary to moderate North Korea's belligerent approach and complicate the decision calculus for Kim, who has heretofore rebuffed all efforts at engagement.

- This “maximum pressure plus” model would credibly incorporate momentum from the clearly-stated willingness of the U.S. to use military force against an imminent threat and would not detract from the president's forceful statements.
- Supersizing maximum pressure with the prospect of meaningful engagement could reshape Kim's calculus, constrain his ambitions, and cause him to question his current assumptions about his ability to absorb increasing external pressure. The opportunity to reorient Kim's approach still exists. We can still test Kim's willingness to pursue a different course and shift his focus toward moves that advance denuclearization, of which an interim agreement described above can be a stepping-stone.
- As the prominent defector Thae Yong-ho has recently testified, “while on the surface the Kim Jong-un regime seems to have consolidated its power through [a] reign of terror ... there are great and unexpected changes taking place within North Korea.”<sup>5</sup>

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5 Thae Yong-ho, “Testimony of Minister Thae Yong-ho,” (testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs,

- Trends in North Korea’s internal developments, such as greater information penetration, marketization, and the growth of a moneyed class, will place stresses on the Kim regime and potentially overwhelm the regime as it buckles under the weight of internal contradictions and rising expectations.
- International sanctions against North Korea have never been sharper and need time to bite. In aggregate, the recent U.N. Security Council resolutions, successful U.S. efforts to compel countries to cut off trade and financial links with North Korea, and the executive order authorizing broad secondary sanctions have the potential to squeeze North Korea’s ability to earn hard currency for the regime.
- Sanctions that undermine Kim’s ability to reward elites and suppress the elites’ ability to make money for themselves or raise money for loyalty payments to the regime could make Kim more willing to consider engagement to relieve that pressure.
- Investing in a strategy that incorporates diplomacy could give Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo an opportunity to cultivate a network of North Korean interlocutors within the regime who could, over time, become politically and financially invested in engagement and become a stronger voice in regime decisionmaking.

Although Kim Jong-un’s regime has repeatedly stated that it is unwilling to negotiate away its nuclear weapons program, there are some signs that Pyongyang is looking for an opening that could, at minimum, buy time to determine whether maximum pressure could alter Kim’s calculus.

- North Korean officials, probably tasked by Pyongyang, have been seeking insights from former U.S. officials and Republican insiders on President Trump and the administration’s

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Washington, DC, November 1, 2017), <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20171101/106577/HHRG-115-FA00-Wstate-Yong-hot-20171101.pdf>.

conflicting messaging regarding North Korea,<sup>6</sup> suggesting that the regime might be looking for a credible U.S. interlocutor.

- These officials are also engaging in several Track 2 meetings, indicating a desire to keep channels to influential U.S. persons open.<sup>7</sup> Choe Son-hui, a senior North Korean Foreign Ministry envoy said in May 2017 that Pyongyang would be willing to meet with the Trump administration if unspecified “conditions are set,” thereby at least dangling the possibility for Washington. It was probably also intended, in part, to mollify Beijing and Moscow.
- U.S. basketball player Dennis Rodman reportedly provided a North Korean official a copy of Trump’s *Art of the Deal* for Kim during his trip to North Korea in spring 2017.<sup>8</sup> If Kim read it, he might be seeking a “deal” with Trump early in his administration to lock in some concessions through negotiations, including deepening cleavages in the U.S.-South Korea alliance, entangling Washington in bilateral talks on non-nuclear issues, increasing his domestic and international standing, and weakening the sanctions regime.

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6 Anna Fifield, “North Korea taps GOP analysts to better understand Trump and his messages,” *The Washington Post*, September 26, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/north-korea-seeks-help-from-republican-analysts-whats-up-with-trump/2017/09/26/ea91909e-a278-11e7-8c37-e1d99ad6aa22\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.a4eaeb3cae98](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/north-korea-seeks-help-from-republican-analysts-whats-up-with-trump/2017/09/26/ea91909e-a278-11e7-8c37-e1d99ad6aa22_story.html?utm_term=.a4eaeb3cae98).

7 “Plans for first post-Trump US contact with North Korea cancelled, says report,” *Reuters*, February 25, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/25/plans-for-first-post-trump-us-contact-with-north-korea-cancelled-says-report>; “Official: North Korea open to US talks under conditions,” *Associated Press*, May 14, 2017, <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2017/05/13/official-north-korea-open-to-us-talks-under-conditions.html>; Bruce Klingner and Sue Mi Terry, “We participated in talks with North Korea representatives. This is what we learned,” *The Washington Post*, June 22, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-participated-in-talks-with-north-korean-representatives-this-is-what-we-learned/2017/06/22/8c838284-577b-11e7-ba90-f5875b7d1876\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-participated-in-talks-with-north-korean-representatives-this-is-what-we-learned/2017/06/22/8c838284-577b-11e7-ba90-f5875b7d1876_story.html).

8 Jason Silverstein, “Dennis Rodman gives copy of Trump’s ‘The Art of the Deal’ to Kim Jong Un,” *New York Daily News*, June 15, 2017, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/dennis-rodman-art-deal-kim-jong-article-1.3249646>.



- Pyongyang has been inviting Western journalists to North Korea,<sup>9</sup> possibly to use international media to amplify its message, but it could also be an attempt at a mini-charm offensive.
- While Kim has pursued nuclear weapons, he is also personally invested in the improvement of the North Korean economy, certainly a weak point and a tall order given the gravity of the aforementioned sanctions and diplomatic isolation.

Recasting the U.S. policy of maximum pressure and engagement, with a serious U.S. point of contact for negotiations, could create space for diplomacy that currently does not exist. It could also strengthen U.S. leverage against North Korea (and China) by harnessing collective efforts with South Korea and Japan; a successful North Korea strategy requires alliances that are demonstrably in lockstep on the approach. The U.S. must signal clearly that it will pursue this strategy indefinitely, making analogies to the U.S. commitment to the collapse of the Soviet Union, by putting in place (1) steps to demonstrate international unity of purpose and North Korean isolation; (2) the infrastructure to minimize the threats posed by the North's nuclear weapons program, particularly those elements that show that Washington will not allow Pyongyang's coercive diplomacy to succeed; and (3) new tactics to increase stress on the North Korean regime. Steps that could support such an approach include:

### ***Strengthening international unity of action***

- Appoint and empower a White House envoy to manage the maximum pressure process, while presenting this individual as a channel for potential engagement. Thus far, the possibility

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9 Evan Osnos, "The risk of nuclear war with North Korea," *The New Yorker*, September 18, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/09/18/the-risk-of-nuclear-war-with-north-korea>; Nicholas Kristof, "Inside North Korea, and Feeling the Drums of War," *The New York Times*, October 5, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/05/opinion/sunday/nuclear-north-korea.html>; "CNN Special Report Presents Secret State: Inside North Korea," CNN, September 14, 2017, <http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2017/09/14/cnn-special-report-presents-secret-state-inside-north-korea/>.

for shaping North Korea's ambitions has been heavily weighted on military threats and sanctions. The appointment of a point of contact with President Trump's stated confidence could help to unleash the maximum pressure campaign on multiple levels by: ensuring coordination among allies and other international partners, including through shuttle diplomacy between Seoul, Tokyo, Beijing, and Moscow; invigorating efforts to compel countries to sever financial and diplomatic links with North Korea; making clear to North Korea and the world that the U.S. is prepared to engage on denuclearization; and reducing the possibilities for miscommunication and miscalculation.

- Such an individual would also be empowered to engage North Korea as necessary and appropriate, possibly to work on a road map of confidence building measures, such as the interim approach outlined above in Section 2.2.
- Appoint and confirm key diplomatic personnel such as the assistant secretary of state for East Asia, assistant secretary of defense for Asian and Pacific security affairs, and the ambassador to South Korea.
- Convene five-party talks with South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia as a signal of international unity of purpose in addressing North Korea's proscribed programs.

### ***Minimizing threats from North Korea***

- In coordination with Seoul and Tokyo, develop a menu of actions that the United States, South Korea, and Japan are jointly prepared to execute in the event that North Korea continues on its current trajectory of nuclear and missile development. This menu could include covert and overt actions against North Korea, as well as steps that Seoul and Tokyo each would take to strengthen their own security if certain conditions are reached.

- With Seoul and Tokyo's support, the White House envoy would take this menu to Beijing to present the Chinese with a choice of either selecting where China would be prepared to work collaboratively to advance the menu of actions, or stepping aside as the U.S., South Korea, and Japan move forward.
- Increase public visibility into the broad contours of new defensive capabilities that could be brought on line to mitigate the threat posed by North Korean weapons against the U.S. and its allies.

### ***Increasing stress on the North Korean regime***

- Make additional investments in programs that encourage further information and disinformation penetration into North Korea, which would help to increase regime fragility or Kim's perception of regime fragility.
- Encourage overseas North Koreans to defect and cooperate with international law enforcement in breaking up illicit networks and raise public awareness of the identities of North Korean officials that are implicated in human rights abuses.
  - As part of the above, the U.S. and South Korea should craft and effectively disseminate to the North Korean populace, a credible, alternative vision for a post-Kim era. Currently, the North Korean people are well aware of the hardships that defectors face in South Korea and elsewhere; they also fear the loss of prestige, privilege, and potentially their lives if the regime were to collapse.
- Ramp up contingency planning efforts with South Korea, Japan, and possibly China. Consider forming working groups—managed by the White House envoy and composed of bipartisan groups of North Korea and regional experts—to discuss in a deliberate, strategic, and coordinated manner issues pertaining to collapse scenarios, including transitional justice, humanitarian and disaster relief, medical and operational capabilities in the event of chemical and biological weapons use, and refugee flows.
  - These working groups should also try to determine how to take advantage of existing North Korean bureaucratic structures and social organizations—for example, how the U.S. could exploit existing market relationships, local groups and networks, and military organizations.
- Work with China to shut down malicious North Korean cyber actors operating in China or using Chinese networks, and also the network of North Korean mules carrying contraband and hard currency through Chinese territory.

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