

# A Tragedy of Collateral Damage? The Impact of Sanctions on Inter-Korean Relations

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*The views expressed in this post are those of the author and not necessarily those of Open Nuclear Network or any other agency, institution or partner.*

Since 1993, the North Korean nuclear quagmire has remained unresolved. This has been the case despite a string of critical breakthroughs to the stalled negotiations over the North's nuclear programme that unfortunately proved futile – the Geneva Agreed Framework of 1994, the Six Party Talks' September 19th Joint Statement of 2003, the February 13th Agreement of 2007 for three-stage denuclearisation, the Leap Day announcement of a moratorium on ballistic missile tests in February 2012, and the June 12th, 2018 Singapore Declaration between President Donald Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un. Despite all these agreements, the North resumed nuclear and ballistic missile tests, and the international community responded with a series of United Nations and bilateral sanctions. However, these sanctions neither compelled the North to alter its behaviour nor posed significant constraints on its provocative behaviour. Although the sanctions sent clear warning signals to Pyongyang, they failed to achieve what they set out to do, and a vicious cycle of provocations, sanctions and escalation has aggravated the situation.

Instead of changing North Korea's assertive behaviour, sanctions have caused unintended collateral damage. They have led not only major humanitarian disasters in North Korea, but also profoundly impaired inter-Korean relations, dimming prospects for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. The Moon Jae-in government's ambitious Korea peace initiative, which aimed to build peace through robust economic exchanges and cooperation and eventually an economic community with North Korea, also fell prey to sanctions imposed by the international community and by the ROK itself. This article analyses the intensifying nature of international sanctions on North Korea and traces their impact on inter-Korean relations. We will also

examine how the new DPRK-Russian connection in the wake of the Ukraine War is affecting the sanction regime on North Korea and inter-Korean relations.

## Multiple Layers of Sanctions

No country has ever been subject to harsher external sanctions than North Korea. Multiple layers of international sanctions lie behind many of the hardships the North has been undergoing. The most pressing of them have come from the United Nations. Since 2006, the UN Security Council has adopted 10 sanctions resolutions on North Korea. Sanctions from 2006 to 2015 focused mostly on weapons of mass destruction (WMD)-related technology and financial assets. North Korea's fourth nuclear test in January 2016 was a turning point, fundamentally reshaping the nature of international sanctions. The UN expanded the scope of its sanctions from WMD-tailored ones to a more comprehensive one that banned exports of minerals, coal and iron ore. After the North undertook two additional nuclear and ICBM tests from January 2016 to November 2017, UN sanctions (UNSCR 2321, 2371, 2375) became much more severe. In addition to WMD and conventional weapons-related sanctions, virtually every aspect of the North Korean economy was placed under sanctions ranging from trade, joint ventures and banking and financial transactions to cargo traffic and luxury goods. Following the 29 November ICBM test launch, the Security Council adopted UNSCR 2397, which limited exports of refined petroleum to the North to a maximum of only half a million barrels per year (South Korea's daily consumption of refined petroleum, by way of comparison, is 2 million barrels) and banned Pyongyang's imports of eatables, agricultural products, machinery, electronic equipment, construction materials and ships. As a result, the North Korean economy was totally isolated, significantly hurting the daily livelihood of ordinary citizens.

American unilateral sanctions have been equally harsh. Starting with the Trading with the Enemy Act (1917), seventeen laws, including the Patriot Act (2001) and most recently the Otto Warmbier Banking Restrictions Involving North Korea Act (2017), impose a variety of sanctions on trade, investment, banking and financial transactions, weapons trade, transportation and personal exchanges and assistance to the North other than humanitarian. Even humanitarian assistance is impeded due to the sweeping nature of the sanctions. An offshore application of domestic laws, known as a "secondary boycott," has dealt a critical blow to North Korea because other countries and their companies have been avoiding business transactions with the North out of fear they could face punishment under US secondary boycott provisions.

For all North Korea's voluntary moratorium in April 2018 to suspend nuclear and ballistic missile activities, the Trump administration imposed eighteen sanctions targeting mostly individuals and firms in third party states that were alleged to be implicated in illicit transactions with North Korea during 2018 and 2020.<sup>[2]</sup> The trend continued under the Biden administration. The Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) imposed sanctions on individuals and organisations in North Korea that are suspected of handling military supply and illicit cyber activities for hacking and money laundering, one in 2021, nine in 2022 and eleven in 2023. These sanctions included non-North Korean thirty party nationality holders too.

South Korea has been complying with sanctions led by the UN and the US. But it has also been imposing its own unilateral sanctions on North Korea. The conservative Lee Myung-bak government shut down the Mt. Kumgang tourist project after a female South Korean tourist was shot dead by a North Korean soldier in the tourist area in July 2008. Worse was yet to come. As North Korea torpedoed the Cheonan frigate in the West Sea in March 2010, the Lee government announced its May 24th measures, a retaliatory move that banned trade and investments as well as all exchanges and cooperation with the North with the exception of the Kaesong Industrial Complex. After North Korea's fourth nuclear test in January 2016, the Park Geun-hye government closed even the industrial complex, and consequently inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation were completely suspended. Although the Moon Jae-in government, which was inaugurated in May 2017, advocated active engagement with the North, the existing sanctions left no room for manoeuvre.

Apart from the UN, the US and South Korea, Japan and the European Union have also undertaken individual sanctions measures against North Korea. The paradox of sanctions is that North Korea's provocative behaviour has been proportional to the intensification of external sanctions in scope and depth, implying that sanctions have not been able to achieve their intended objectives.[3] On the contrary, they have brought about unintended collateral damage. Inter-Korean relations have been pronounced victims of these sanctions.

## Sanctions and their Impact on Inter-Korean Relations

Inter-Korean relations have been gravely affected by these sanctions. Their impacts have been wide, deep and devastating. An immediate victim was trade. For all the May 24th measures, inter-Korean trade peaked in 2015 at a total of \$2.7 billion owing to the robust business at the Kaesong Industrial Complex. But the trade volume plummeted to \$1 million in 2017 primarily due to President Park's decision to close the Kaesong Industrial Complex. But UN sanctions resolutions banning imports of North Korean farm and fishery products, garments, wooden materials and minerals also negatively affected the trade volume. At present, inter-Korean trade is nil. UN sanctions on the transfer of plants and joint ventures caused the most severe damage to South Korean companies that invested in North Korea. For example, Andong Hemp made a huge investment in North Korea immediately after the 2007 Pyongyang summit. But UN sanctions as well as the May 24th measures forced it to close its operations in the North. Subsequently, its entire business operations in the South went bankrupt. Even worse is, according to the Promotion Committee for Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation (an organisation formed by companies participating in economic cooperation projects in South Korea), that 1,100 companies (primary contractors, subcontractors and subsidiaries) which were involved in the Kaesong Industrial Complex and the Mt. Kumgang Tourist project, could not retrieve their investment funds, facilities and manufactured products. Thus, they either went bankrupt or were badly damaged financially.

Investments in North Korea, once considered as a blue ocean, turned out to be a graveyard of risk-taking for South Korean companies. Personal exchanges also decreased from 7,498 people (6,689 visiting the North and 809 visiting the South) in 2018 to zero in 2019 and afterwards, partly because of the failure of the Hanoi summit, international sanctions and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Humanitarian assistance was another victim. In principle, neither UN nor US sanctions prohibit humanitarian assistance. Since 2012, however, North Korea has refused to accept any humanitarian aid such as food, while calling for development assistance. But there were two exceptions. One was cooperation in the medical and public health areas, and the other was forestation and animal husbandry. Circumventing the Seoul government, Pyongyang sought assistance from non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Nevertheless, efforts by NGOs to extend medical assistance were blocked. The Eugene Bell Foundation, known for assisting the North in tuberculosis prevention and treatment, had to stop its support to build treatment shelters for chronic tuberculosis patients because UN sanctions prohibited the shipment of construction materials such as aluminium frames. Through a mutual agreement with North Korea's Ministry of Public Health, Seoul's Full Gospel Center Church agreed to build a cardiology centre in Pyongyang, but it was derailed because sanctions banned the transfer of medical-related computers and other precision equipment. Humanitarian assistance to the North in the areas of forestation and animal husbandry has encountered a similar fate. Likewise, international sanctions critically undermined humanitarian assistance efforts of local governments and NGOs in South Korea.

More importantly, international sanctions thwarted the Moon Jae-in government's Korea peace initiative. After having gone through an acute crisis in 2017 in which North Korea undertook its sixth nuclear test and 15 rounds of ballistic missile tests including an ICBM test in November 2017, President Moon has sought a peace-keeping strategy through the strengthening of military deterrence and alliance with the US. However, the Moon government has pursued two additional strategies. First is a peace-building strategy that aims at promoting peace through active economic exchanges and cooperation with the North. Second is a peace-making strategy aimed at tension-reduction, confidence-building and ultimately transformation of the armistice agreement into a sustainable peace regime, while fostering negotiations for the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. In 2018, President Moon held three summits with Kim Jong Un and adopted the Panmunjom Declaration on April 27 and the Pyongyang Declaration on September 19, all of which were designed for peace-building and peace-making.

In the two declarations, the two leaders agreed on the implementation of economic exchanges and cooperation in four major areas that are essential for peacebuilding. They are: (1) launching of railway and road connections as conditions allow; (2) resumption of the Kaesong Industrial Complex and the Mt. Kumgang Tourist Project as well as mutual consultation for the West Sea Joint Special Area and the East Sea Tourist Joint Special Area projects; (3) promotion of North-South environmental, forestation and industrial cooperation; and (4) cooperation in medical, public health and the prevention of infectious diseases.

The Moon government, however, failed to deliver what it had agreed with the North. Sanctions on the direct or indirect sale or transfer of industrial machinery, transportation equipment and

steel and metals aborted the railway and road reconnection projects. The Kaesong Industrial Complex could not be resumed because of UN sanctions that ban the transfer of industrial plants and equipment and joint ventures with North Korea. Moreover, the secondary boycott mechanism by the US deterred South Korean banks from getting involved in the industrial complex. Subtle pressures from the US even hampered South Korean businessmen who invested in the industrial complex from visiting and checking on their production facilities in the Kaesong complex. Although UN sanctions resolutions do not ban visits by individual tourists to Mt. Kumgang if no bulk cash is transferred, sensing US fear of diversion of tourist income to nuclear weapons development in the North, the Moon government did not allow such individual tourist visits. UN sanctions on metallic equipment also blocked Seoul's efforts to seek cooperation in forestation and animal husbandry. Cooperation in public health and prevention of infectious diseases did not work either. The most notable example is the case of Tamiflu and flu rapid diagnosis kits. In October 2018, the Moon government pledged to provide the North with Tamiflu medication for 200,000 persons as well as 50,000 flu diagnosis kits. But because the use of trucks to transport the goods was subject to sanctions, the Moon government could not deliver them.[4]

The Moon government's failure to implement its pledges disappointed and even infuriated Pyongyang, severely damaging inter-Korean relations – more so because Kim Jong Un specifically expressed his desire to resume the Kaesong Industrial Complex and the Mt. Kumgang tourist project in his 2019 New Year Day speech. None of the items on his wish list as laid out in the mutual agreements in the two declarations materialised. Pyongyang's disappointment and fury over economic exchanges and cooperation instantly produced negative impacts on peace-making efforts. On June 4, 2020, Kim Yo Jong, sister of Kim Jong Un, issued a menacing statement condemning the Moon government and even declaring that inter-Korean relations have now turned into hostile ones and that the North Korean military might re-take the Kaesong Industrial Complex and the Mt. Kumgang Tourist project. The statement was on its surface a response to North Korean defectors' dispatch of balloons containing anti-Kim Jong Un propaganda materials but could be seen as an expression of her anger over the Moon government's failure to keep the pledges embodied in the two declarations. On June 20, North Korea publicly demolished the Kaesong North-South Korean liaison office, which served as a landmark of reconciliation and cooperation between the two Koreas. Pyongyang showed an unprecedented welcome to Seoul's delegation during the 2018 Pyongyang summit with the hope that Seoul would persuade Washington to relax sanctions, so that there could be radical changes in inter-Korean relations. Likewise, sanctions devastated not only inter-Korean economic exchanges and cooperation, but also peace-making efforts between the two Koreas.[5]

## **From Bad to Worse: New Twists under the Yoon Seok-yol Government**

Under the Yoon Seok-yol government, which was inaugurated in May 2022, inter-Korean relations became bad to worse. While denouncing the previous Moon government policy on

North Korea as a 'failed fake peace' initiative, it took a hardline policy on North Korea framed around 'Three Ds (Deterrence, Dissuasion and Dialogue).' It believes that deterrence and dissuasion are the best tools to bring the North to dialogue and negotiation and to change its behaviour. Underlying these are two assumptions: one is the logic of crime and punishment. Its provocative behaviour such as nuclear and ballistic missile testing is a criminal act that should be reciprocated with harsh punishment. The other is the wishful thinking that since North Korea is weak and fragile, the deterrence, coercive diplomacy and maximum pressures through sanctions will make the North either surrender or collapse.

The Yoon government has intensified its sanction measures on North Korea under this assumption. As of November 2024, sanctions were imposed on 96 North Korean individuals and 60 organisations that are believed to be involved in nuclear and missile development and illicit activities such as cyber hacking and money laundering. Such sanction measures have been of limited effect since inter-Korean relations have been completely suspended.

North Korean responses to sanctions and other hardline policy measures have been equally tough. Kim Jong-Un reciprocated them by declaring inter-Korean relations as 'relationship between the two hostile states,' which was a sharp departure from the traditional definition of 'a special relationship in the direction of unification.' As Seoul did, Pyongyang also designated South Korea as the main enemy. Consequently, inter-Korean relations in trade, investment and human exchanges come to a complete stop. More worrisome is an increase in hostile interactions in the military domain. The North reacted to ROK-US joint military exercise and training by undertaking test fire of long-range artillery pieces and ballistic and cruise missiles.

On 21 November 2023, North Korea successfully launched a spy satellite the Malligyong-1 on a new type of Chollima-1 rocket after two failed attempts in May and August. In response, the Yoon government announced a partial suspension of the Comprehensive Military Agreement (CMA) that has served as a useful vehicle for inter-Korean military confidence-building by establishing buffer zones, no fly zones and prohibiting a wide range of other military activity near the border. On 23 November, North Korea reacted by declaring the nullification of the CMA in its entirety and immediately restoring all military measures halted under the deal such as the deployment of more powerful armed forces and new-type military hardware in its guard posts in the front and the resumption of fire drills in the West Sea and in the border.

In the past, the escalation of acute crisis was prevented through various confidence-building measures, but the old cycle of crisis, dialogues, negotiation and return to normal relations seems no longer possible.<sup>[6]</sup> It is precisely because all communication lines between two Koreas, which is an essential CBM measure, are now suspended. Hot lines between leaders of the two Koreas were terminated after the inauguration of the Yoon government.

Communication channel between the National Intelligence Service in Seoul and the Department of United Front of WPK in Pyongyang, which used to be most useful, was also suspended in May 2022. The Ministry of Unification and its counterpart in the North used to maintain an official administrative hotline in Panmunjom, but the North has refused to pick up the phone. Most importantly, the military has maintained hotlines in the West Sea, the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) and the East Sea. They are not working either. Against this backdrop,

the South Korean government had to rely on either the United Nations Command hotline or South Korean media in communicating with the North.[7] This is quite a scary development.

The absence of back-channel diplomacy between the two Koreas has posed another problem. As two Koreas were engaged in hostile interactions, major breakthroughs to the crisis and stalemate came from behind-the-scenes government contacts or through the mediating role of non-governmental actors.[8] National Intelligence Service in the South and the Department of United Front in the North used to be key players in this back-channel diplomacy as intelligence and covert action organisations. The July 4th joint communique, the Basic Agreement of 1992 and three Korean summits in 2000, 2007 and 2018 were all arranged through these agencies. When inter-Korean relations were so bad to initiate such back-channels, NGOs used to play a mediating role. But the Yoon government has declared that it won't rely on such back channels for interactions with the North. More critically, on 30 December 2023, declaring that reconciliation and peaceful unification with the South is no longer conceivable, Kim Jong Un instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to eliminate or reorganise WPK agencies responsible for exchange and cooperation with the South. And the North has been refusing to meet NGOs from the South since December 2019. Thus, for the time being, prospects for back-channel diplomacy seem dim.

Equally troublesome is limited or no roles for big powers such as the US and China. Facing acute security crisis in the past, the American government has played a double role in which it persuaded the Seoul government to show self-restraint, while urging the North to come to dialogue and negotiation. And the US government has maintained communication channels with the North. Under the Biden administration, however, the US does not seem to have such communication channels. Although it played a major mediating role during the Six Party Talks, the Chinese government seems to be disinterested in facilitating inter-Korean talks. Worsening China-US rivalry, its displeasure with policy line of South Korea and the US, and its limited influence over Pyongyang have made China a rather passive by-stander. Since the war in Ukraine, Moscow has taken the side with the North, whereas Japan is preoccupied with its own agenda of kidnapped Japanese. Thus, virtually no roles for major powers can be envisaged.

The Yoon government's sanction is not the only sole determinant of worsening inter-Korean relations. But its sanction policy has reinforced Pyongyang's perception of Seoul's hostile intention and policy without making any substantive impacts on the alteration of North Korean provocative behaviour.

## **The Russian Connection and Holes in the International Sanction Regime on North Korea**

Since the end of the Cold War, Russia has not played any significant role in influencing North Korea's behaviour. In the wake of its invasion of Ukraine, however, Russia has become a critical actor because the Pyongyang's Russian connection is creating new holes in the existing sanction regime on North Korea. Immediately after the Kim Jong-Un-Putin summit in the Russian Far

East in September 2023, President Putin mitigated international concerns on the Russian loosening of sanctions on North Korea by stating that “Russian will comply with international obligations and cooperate with the North within the framework of international rules.” The statement was seen as his commitment to the international sanction regime on North Korea.

But as North Korea’s support of Russia in the Ukraine conflict becomes more pronounced, Moscow began to change its stance. In March 2024, the Russian government vetoed the extension of experts panel of the UN Security Council sanction committee on North Korea. On June 18, 2024, just one day before his visit to Pyongyang, Vladimir Putin contributed an article to the Rodong Shinmun, the daily newspaper of the Korea Workers’ Party, in which he said “We are willing to closely cooperate in turning our international relations into more democratic and stable relations. For this, we will develop trade and payment clearance system that is not subject to Western control and will jointly oppose unilateral, illegal restrictions.” Misery loves company. Defying international sanctions is serving as a common bond that binds the two countries.

On 19 June, Kim Jong-Un and Vladimir Putin signed a new treaty on comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership between the two countries. Article 4 of the treaty stipulates "the extension of military and other support without delay when one party faces the state of war by armed attack by a country or a group of countries," elevating the new DPRK-Russian relationship to the level of alliance. Articles 9 and 10 specify a wide range of areas for cooperation. Whereas Article 9 includes cooperation in the areas of food, energy safety, cyber security, climate change, public health and supply chain, Article 10 designates trade and economy, investment, science and technology, space technology, peaceful use of nuclear energy, artificial intelligence and information technology as additional fields for mutual exchange and cooperation. Many of these items are subject to UN Security Council sanctions.

The summit diplomacy began to bear fruit. While having closed its door to the outside world, as of November 2024, North Korea has exchanged 49 delegations with Russia in the areas of diplomacy, the military, agriculture, forestry, science and technology, tourism and law enforcement officers. They even held a joint exhibition of information technology products in October 2024. Some evidence indicates an increase in Russian exports of coal and refined petroleum to North Korea,<sup>[9]</sup> both of which are items under sanction. Officials from Moscow and Pyongyang also discussed the North Korean exports of apples and ginseng to Russia and Russian exports of farm and dairy products to North Korea. North Korean apples and ginseng are on the sanction list. Noticeable is a sharp increase in personnel exchanges between the two countries. As of October 2024, about 1,000 Russian tourists are known to have visited North Korea. In the third quarter of 2024 (July-September), 5,000 North Koreans visited Russia of which 3,765 are known to be students with study visa, a ten-fold increase, compared with that in the second quarter.<sup>[10]</sup> It is feared that these North Korean visitors could turn into foreign exchange earners, violating UN sanction regulations.

Most worrisome is exchange and cooperation in the military domain that can undermine the entire sanction regime as well as threaten South Korea’s security. There have been news reports on North Korean exports of lethal weapons, especially ammunitions for artillery and short-range missiles. North Korea is reported to have exported up to 10 million rounds of artillery



ammunitions and short-range missiles to Russia.<sup>[11]</sup> On 25 November, Reuters also reported that North Korea has been expanding a key weapons manufacturing complex in Hamhung that assembles a type of short-range missiles (KN-23, KN-24) used by Russia in Ukraine.<sup>[12]</sup> Another concern is the possibility of the Russian transfer of critical military technologies related to ICBM re-entry, hyper-supersonic missiles, military satellites, upgrading of nuclear weapons (multiple warheads) and nuclear submarines to North Korea. Russia has been warning about such a possibility if South Korea provides Ukraine with lethal weapons. Should this happen, it will bear very perilous implications for South Korea's national security.

The Pyongyang's Russian connection poses a major challenge to international sanction regime against North Korea. By showing its unquestionable support of the Russian cause in Ukraine, including the dispatch of 10,000 troops, Pyongyang is playing a risky game of trying to realise its goal of upgrading its nuclear and missile capabilities, while thwarting sanction efforts by international society. Such efforts will further aggravate inter-Korean relations and strain Moscow-Seoul relations.

## What is to be done?

Collateral damage caused by international sanctions on North Korea has been devastating. Inter-Korean economic exchanges and cooperation were suspended, and even humanitarian assistance to the North was hard hit. South Korean traders, investors, local governments and non-governmental organisations have fallen prey to them. Ordinary citizens in North Korea also became victims. Worse was the Moon government's policy on North Korea. Its peace-building efforts through a "peace economy" were halted, and sanctions also had negative spillover effects to its peace-making initiative. Consequently, inter-Korean military tensions got heightened, and negotiations over the North Korean nuclear problem became stalled. Under the Yoon Seok-Yol government, the situation has gotten much worse. While sanctions have had virtually no impact in compelling Pyongyang to alter its behaviour, military tensions on the Korean peninsula have been on the rise, causing a deep public concern that the Korean Peninsula could become another flashpoint at any time. The Pyongyang's new Russian connection has emerged as another worrisome spoiler of the existing sanction regime, while causing acute security concerns for South Korea and international society.

Sanctions are a means, not an end in themselves. They are a tool to foster change of North Korea's behaviour, to restrain it and to drive it to a negotiated path to its nuclear problem. Their goal is to make North Korea reduce and eventually remove its weapons of mass destruction completely. But it has been proven that sanctions driven by a maximum pressure strategy have failed to alter or constrain North Korea's behaviour or prevent its provocative behaviour. It is time to reconsider the sanctions strategy on North Korea. The US government needs to be more flexible in applying sanctions. There must be ways to be effective in restraining or altering Pyongyang's behaviour, while minimising collateral damage. In this regard, the snap-back approach warrants a careful examination. An incremental, simultaneous exchange of partial sanctions relaxation in return for concrete moves toward halting, roll-back and eventually incremental denuclearisation could be a more desirable approach than rigid, unilateral

maximum pressure sanctions. If the North cheats or does not comply with the agreed mandates, the international community can impose strengthened sanctions on North Korea. As Sigfried Hecker aptly points out, the process of North Korea's denuclearisation could take decades. Thus, neither a "big deal" nor a "one-shot deal" is conceivable solutions. An incremental process of "halt, roll-back and dismantling" seems to be the only realistic solution. Sanctions need to be flexibly utilised in this process.

It should also be remembered that since his inauguration, Kim Jong Un has always wanted to seek economic development through reform and opening. That might be the best way to win the hearts of the North Korean people, as evidenced by inmindaejungjeiljuui (people first ideology), and to sustain his regime. Sanctions have been the major hindrance to his efforts toward an open-door economic policy and greater prosperity.

But Kim Jong Un has recently undergone fundamental changes. He made it clear that denuclearisation of North Korea is not up for any negotiation and that diplomatic normalisation with the US is no longer the top priority. Russia is gradually replacing the US in Pyongyang's diplomatic landscape. This implies that Kim is willing to confront international sanction regime up front partly through the promotion of self-reliance and partly through the cooperation with Russia and its allies and friends. South Korea also does not have any place in Kim Jong Un's new economic calculus. Judged by these changes, it might be difficult to bring him to dialogue, negotiation and ultimately change.

Nevertheless, we believe that he will respond in kind if Trump 2.0 softens its hostile policy on North Korea by suspending ROK-US joint military exercises and training as well as forward deployment of American strategic weapons. Placing diplomatic normalisation at the entrance of nuclear negotiation rather than at the exit could offer another incentive for North Korea. More importantly, the snap-back approach based partial sanction relief in return for North Korea's concrete steps toward halt, roll-back and denuclearisation could serve as a viable starter.

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[2] “트럼프 행정부 4년간 27차례 대북 독자제재...인권제재 포함.” Voice of America. VOA 한국어. 14 January 2021. [https://www.voakorea.com/a/korea\\_korea-politics\\_trump-admin-dprk-sanctions/6054210.html](https://www.voakorea.com/a/korea_korea-politics_trump-admin-dprk-sanctions/6054210.html).

[3] The correlation seems more complicated—deadly provocations on South Korea like Cheonan stopped, but strategic provocations involving nuclear/ICBM/missile testing increased dramatically.

[4] Although the ROK government attributed the failure of the delivery of Tamiflu to regulations by the United Nations Command (UNC), UNC officials told the authors that it was the ROK government that decided not to send the Tamiflu. There seems to be a point of contention.

[5] It might sound unfair to blame the Moon government solely for the implementation failure. Pyongyang was already backing away from inter-Korean cooperation like demining in the DMZ even before the failure at Hanoi. And President Moon did about as much as he could to set up negotiation over sanctions relief for Yongbyon closure at Hanoi- it is not his fault Kim and Trump couldn't reach an agreement.

[6] Moon, Chung-in. “A New Korean War Is Not Imminent. Accidental Escalation Might Be.” The National Interest, February 2024, [nationalinterest.org/blog/korea-watch/new-korean-war-not-imminent-accidental-escalation-might-be-209015](https://nationalinterest.org/blog/korea-watch/new-korean-war-not-imminent-accidental-escalation-might-be-209015).

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## Tags

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