



## Lesson from George Washington

By Spencer H. Kim



Spencer H. Kim  
Spencer H. Kim is chairman of CBOL Corp., a California aerospace company. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a founder of the Pacific Century Institute.

About how to deal with North Korea, do we already know it all? Are we so smart that we don't have to listen? Do we already know exactly what they are like and what they will do? George Washington, Americas revered first president, said this in his famous farewell address to the nation: Friends and citizens...Observe good faith and justice toward all nations...nothing is more essential than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations ...should be excluded, and that in place of them just and amicable feelings toward all should be cultivated.

The nation which indulges toward another a habitual hatred or a habitual fondness is in some degree a slave.

It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest. Antipathy in one nation against another disposes each more readily to offer insult and injury, to lay hold of slight causes of umbrage, and to be haughty and intractable when accidental or trifling occasions of dispute do occur.

Based both on a recent trip to Pyongyang and a thorough reading of the latest edition of the excellent journal Global Asia, I am convinced that we had better put aside the hubris that tells us we know all about the nature of North Korea.

We had better open all the channels of dialogue to humbly listen to what is coming out of the country so that we can better understand whether our long-standing, knee-jerk, automatic and, yes, as George put it, permanent, inveterate antipathies are blinding us to changes that present us with opportunities.

The Letter from the Editors that opens the Global Asia edition says, ...Kim (Jong-un) is clearly solidly in control. More important, he appears determined to move the country toward reform and opening, although how that process will unfold remains to be seen.

President Park Geun-hye, in her Dresden speech, emphasized the need to begin a series of low-key contacts with the North to build trust. But she was too tepid.

U.S. President Barack Obama, in his April 24 interview with the Yomiuri Shimbun, said, We're going to stand firm in our insistence that a nuclear North Korea is unacceptable. The burden is on Pyongyang to take concrete steps. So the U.S. policy is essentially to do nothing unless Pyongyang caves first.

Where are we going with all this? Don't we need to be a little more open-minded? Or even a lot more open-minded? George Washington reminds us that those who speak out against the excessive dislike of another often become suspected and odious.

But better that fate than to have history eventually show us that we had an opportunity to take a better road but we were so full of hubris that we didn't bother to take it because we were sure it would lead nowhere.