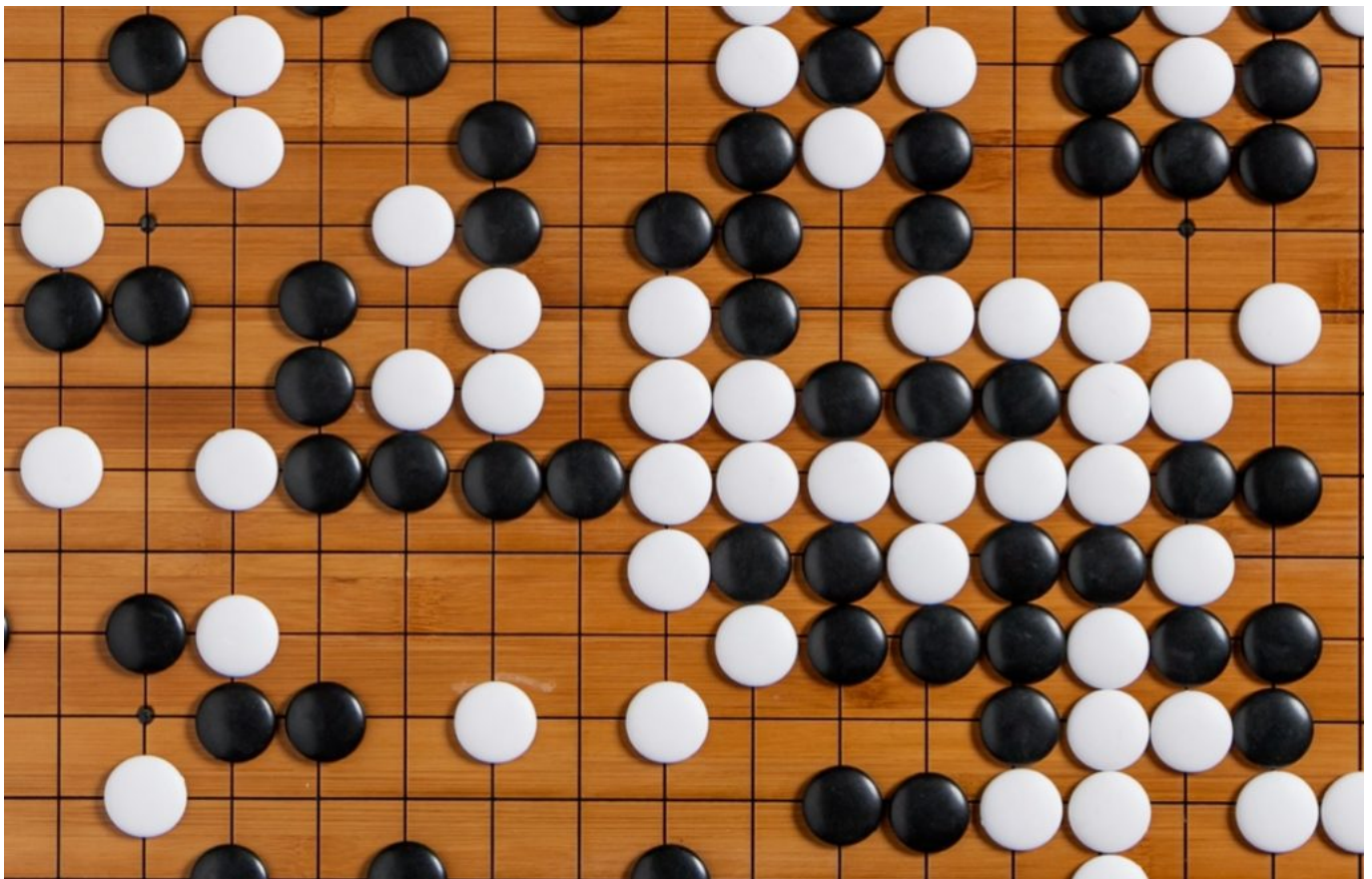




EXCELLENT KOREA OPTIONS FOR THE LONG TERM



The NAPSNet Policy Forum provides expert analysis of contemporary peace and security issues in Northeast Asia. As always, we invite your responses to this report and hope you will take the opportunity to participate in discussion of the analysis.



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I. INTRODUCTION

In this essay, James Goodby argues that there are excellent options for dealing with North Korea's nuclear weapons program "but these can become visible only if one approaches the problem posed by North Korea with the long view in mind." These include the steps needed to end the Korean war; a limited nuclear weapons-free zone that would include not only non-nuclear states in Northeast Asia, but also partial coverage of intermediate range nuclear systems in China and Russia; and the creation by the United States, China, and Russia of a global joint enterprise of nations committed to working together that would work together to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons

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Banner image: [Game of Go](#)

II. NAPSNET POLICY FORUM: EXCELLENT KOREA OPTIONS FOR THE LONG TERM

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August 1, 2017

Most analysts today assert that the United States has only bad options when it comes to North Korea's nuclear weapons program. This is not quite true. There are excellent options, but these can become visible only if one approaches the problem posed by North Korea with the long view in mind. This is why it is so important to have a US-ROK review of where we jointly want relations with the DPRK to go in the longer term. Other nations that participated in the Six-Party Talks should also be consulted, of course, but the ROK is the nation with the most at stake.

The often posited first step - the freezing of North Korea's missile and nuclear weapons program at their present levels - would be important but it is an interim step. Unless that step is followed quickly by much broader agreements, North Korea is likely to abandon the freeze and resume testing missiles and nuclear warheads. Aside from receiving economic benefits, the North would seek to strike agreements in two areas, North-South Korean relations, and resolving the issues left over from the 1950-53 Korean War. Agreements in these areas could also benefit the United States and its friends in Northeast Asia if properly framed.

It is for the two parts of divided Korea to manage North-South relations. In my view, human rights should be on this agenda, as it was in 1991, when Kim Il-sung, the founder of North Korea, negotiated the so-called "Basic Agreement." It contained a provision for the freer movement of people, information, and ideas similar to those in "Basket III" of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. The agenda would almost certainly provide for renewing economic relations and should include negotiating reciprocal transparency measures and consultative mechanisms to reduce the risks of a war that neither side wants but that both sides have prepared for. As its close ally, the United States will have its say in the ROK's stance in inter-Korean rapprochement, but ultimately, these matters

are for the two Koreas to sort out.

The second area of probable interest to the DPRK – resolving issues left over from the 1950-1953 Korean War – inherently involves the United States as a principal party. Dealing with issues arising from the Korean War means negotiating an agreement or a series of agreements to replace the armistice agreement of 1953. This negotiation must involve China and the United States, as well as North and South Korea, the countries that implemented the armistice agreement.

Items on this agenda would include borders on land and at sea, establishing diplomatic relations, some measures to regulate military activities on and around the Korean Peninsula, and pledges to refrain from the use or threat of force to resolve differences. A high-level meeting hosted by China might be a way to kick off these talks and a system for periodic monitoring of the talks at the summit level should be installed. Close consultation with Japan would be essential.

A "peace treaty" this is not, because it would have an interim character until the nuclear issues are resolved to the satisfaction of all the nations involved in these talks, as well as other stake-holders, primarily Japan and Russia. It is almost certain that North Korea's nuclear/missile programs can be rolled back only in the context of a broader negotiation.

One proposal for resolving the nuclear weapons issue that has been studied for many years deserves a fresh look. This is the idea of creating a nuclear weapon-free zone in a geographically defined area in Northeast Asia. My take on this is as follows: South and North Korea would join with Japan in pledging to renounce their possession of nuclear weapons in accordance with the Nonproliferation Treaty. China, Russia, and the United States would retain their status as nuclear weapon states under the terms of the Nonproliferation Treaty but would pledge to support in concrete ways the decision of North and South Korea and Japan to renounce nuclear weapons. First, Russia and China might agree to redeploy specific short- and medium-range nuclear delivery systems out of range of Japan and the Korean Peninsula. China's DF-21 and Russia's SS-21, now being replaced with the SS-26, would be candidates for such redeployment. Second, the United States and South Korea would have less need for the THAAD system to be deployed in South Korea if North Korea accepted the status of a non-nuclear weapon state under the terms of the Nonproliferation Treaty and could deactivate that system in parallel with the redeployments of Chinese and Russian short-and medium-range nuclear delivery systems. Third, China, Russia, and the United States would join with other Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council in proposing a global joint enterprise of nations committed to working together to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons. In addition to supporting the creation of a de facto nuclear weapon-free zone in Northeast Asia, this move would put the nuclear weapon states of the Nonproliferation Treaty, and their allies, in a better position to respond to those nations that will probably bring a treaty to ban nuclear weapons into force in late 2018.

Note that sea-based nuclear systems are not included in my description of a nuclear weapon-free zone in Northeast Asia. This is because I regard these as strategic systems that should be covered in a negotiation that would specifically address such systems, either in a renewal of US-Russia START talks or in a forum created as part of the joint enterprise referred to above.

What now should be done to stabilize a nuclear/missile freeze while broader negotiations are proceeding? Confidence-building measures would be in order and, in addition to those that might be developed in other Korea-centered talks, these could include measures like mutual security guarantees extended on a reciprocal basis by nations involved in any of these negotiations, suspending the US-South Korean annual military exercises, and steps by North Korea to prevent fast launch procedures in its missile forces.

One confidence-building measure that should be considered for insertion into the process of negotiations at almost any time would be to restore the Joint Recovery Teams that worked from 1996 to 2005 to recover the remains of American soldiers still missing in action. This would be a win-win agreement for the United States and North Korea and, morally, it would be one of the most satisfying. In a small way, it might also help to underwrite assurances of peaceful intent by all parties. It would reassure Pyongyang that an American preemptive attack was not likely while American soldiers were visiting grave sites and old battlefields in the North and would give Washington some hope that Kim Jong-un might share the opinion once voiced by Winston Churchill that jaw jaw is better than war war.

III. NAUTILUS INVITES YOUR RESPONSE

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