

*Preliminary Note:*

On January 19, 2021 Antony Blinken at his Senate confirmation hearing said: “I think we have to review, and we intend to review, the entire approach and policy toward North Korea, because this is a hard problem that has plagued administration after administration. And it’s a problem that has not gotten better – in fact, it’s gotten worse,”

Several months later, on April 29, 2021, The White House said that its "goal remains the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, with the clear understanding that the efforts of the past four administrations have not achieved this objective." The US will deploy a "calibrated, practical approach that is open to and will explore diplomacy with the DPRK and to make practical progress that increases the security of the United States, our allies and deployed forces."

What policies has the United States implemented over the past four administrations? A short review.

## **Chapter 6**

### **The US Relations with the two Koreas**

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#### **6.1. Introduction**

The bilateral relations between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) since the end of the Cold War have been focused on the nuclear proliferation, trying to prevent North Korea becoming a nuclear-armed country and later trying to reach an agreement for its complete and verifiable nuclear disarmament. The chapter presents the evolution of the US approaches and negotiations since the 1990s to the present, pointing out the increasing differences existing in the regional and international context of the last twenty years and the lack of adequate adaptation of the US proposals and negotiations to this changing regional and international context.

The bilateral relations between the United States and the Republic of Korea (South Korea), while diversified in content, have focus in a substantial part on the changing security relations of the Korean Peninsula. However, these relationships also require a better adaptation to the changing security context of Northwest Asia.

#### **6.2. The talks and negotiations between the United States and North Korea during president Bush's administrations**

The United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) had signed an agreement on 22 October 1994 to end their dispute over North Korea's nuclear program.<sup>1</sup> Several years later, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, the US government linked more closely terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) focusing in particular on States of special concern. President George W. Bush in his speech on the State of the Union on January 29, 2002, branded three countries — North Korea, Iran and Iraq — as rogue States that could provide WMD to terrorists.

North Korea soon became aware of military preparations to force a change of its political regime, becoming bilateral relations very tense. In addition, within the "Nuclear Posture Review" of the new US administration,

a list of States that could be subject to nuclear attacks was established, including North Korea. This would impact very strongly on North Korea.

In October 2002, following a bilateral meeting in Pyongyang, the US delegation, chaired by James Kelly, claimed that the North Korean side had admitted to having an uranium enrichment program -accusations that Pyongyang subsequently denied- This, if it was true, because it has never been convincingly clarified by the United States, meant the DPRK's violation of the 1994 Agreed Framework to freeze the development of nuclear plants and other nuclear activities. KEDO (The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization) agreements were suspended and the International Atomic Energy Agency intervened. Finally, North Korea withdrew from the Non-Proliferation Treaty, citing US aggression.

The United States, seeking to avoid a bilateral negotiation, after considering several formulas, requested the Beijing's support for a five-party negotiation (United States, the People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China and Japan), and, in the end, the persuasive pressures of the People's Republic of China on North Korea achieved the acceptance of an intermediate formula, a trilateral formula. The first meeting in this format was held in Beijing on April 23-24, 2003 between the United States, the People's Republic of Korea and the People's Republic of China. At this meeting, the United States rejected the North Korea's four-stage settlement proposal and established its position: It would only negotiate a political and economic agreement after the complete, irreversible and verifiable disarmament of North Korea. The meeting ended badly and before schedule.

Finally, in August 2003 China managed to host the Six-Party Talks (China, United States, the People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, Japan and Russia) to resolve the nuclear problem created by North Korea, through negotiations, given that, in addition, Li Gun, Deputy Director of the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the meeting in Beijing had informally told James Kelly that North Korea possessed nuclear weapons. It was the first time North Korea representatives had made such a statement.<sup>2</sup>

The Six-Party Talks with the aim of avoiding North Korea should become a nuclear state<sup>3</sup> and a new war in Korea, started in August 27, 2003 in Beijing. After several rounds, finally made a first breakthrough for

resolving the nuclear crisis with the adoption on September 19, 2005 of a Joint Declaration. The North Korea was committed to abandon nuclear weapons and ongoing nuclear programs, to return to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, accepting inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency, in exchange for economic normalization, cooperation, aid in the energy and food sectors and investments, US security guarantees and, at the end, normalization of relations with the United States and Japan. United States and South Korea affirmed that they would not deploy nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula.

The six countries also committed themselves to joint efforts for achieving a lasting peace and stability in Northeast Asia. According to the Joint Declaration, the directly related parties had to negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate separate forum. The six parties agreed to explore ways and means for promoting security cooperation in Northeast Asia.<sup>4</sup> This last point implied the creation of a new security forum for Northeast Asia outside the traditional ASEAN framework.

This important step was soon tarnished, when the US Treasury Department designated Delta Asia Bank as a bank of major concern, accusing the North Korea government of money laundering and corrupt financial activities, freezing fifty accounts it kept there.

This will lead to the launching by North Korea of seven missiles, including a Taepodong 2, which fell into the Japanese Sea, on July 5, 2006. This time, China joined the Security Council resolution, imposing non-mandatory sanctions, sanctions that were increased and became mandatory after the first nuclear test of October 9, 2006. However, the sanctions effectiveness was reduced in the absence of compliance by North Korean neighbors, in particular China.

Beijing push again North Korea to return to the Six-Party Talks and a new joint declaration was agreed in February 2007. North Korea committed to close Yongbyon's nuclear facilities, including the processing plant, in exchange for aid, a normalization of relations and the lifting of the freezing of funds at Delta Asia Bank. In this way, the process took speed again, beginning with the closure of Yongbyon and culminating with the destruction of the reactor's cooling tower on June 27, 2007. The progress of

denuclearization continued in 2008, giving Pyongyang some details of the nuclear program, but a verification agreement was not reached.

In the meantime, a new president took office in Seoul on February 2008, initiating a different approach to inter-Korean relations, a constructive approach of conditional reciprocity, the DNO 3000 proposal, as an alternative to the engagement approach and unconditional economic assistance that formed the foundations of Kim Dae Jung's Sunshine Policy and Roh Moo Hyun's Peace and Prosperity Policy toward North Korea. Most of the inter-Korean projects agreed in the second Pyongyang summit, on October 2-4, 2007 were postponed. Lee Myung-bak government cut in the budget for inter-Korean cooperation and abolished the Ministry of Unification that became integrated in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Lee promised to provide a massive economic assistance and development aid, but North Korea's denuclearization was a precondition. For the new government, critical on human rights violations, North Korea was not its policy priority. It had developed a different perspective on Korea's unification.<sup>5</sup>

This new policy helped Pyongyang to consider that the process initiated in 2007 was no longer suitable for the security interests of North Korea and in November 2008 banned the entry of inspectors to its nuclear installations and restarted its nuclear program.

### **6. 3. United States and the military alliance with South Korea**

The US- South Korea Mutual Defense Treaty, signed in 1953 evolved after the Cold War. During the president Bush administration, it was agreed to transform and re-position the US forces deployed in Korea. This change became quite problematic. South Korean president Roh Moo-hyun was always quite disdainful towards the US policy on North Korea and suffered heavy onslaughts from important members of the US administration. All this added to a political position hostile to a military collaboration with Japan.

The Pentagon, on the other hand, showed low sensitivity and respect for its ally, approving proposals and policies without prior consultation and prior information to the Korean government.

On the one hand, the re-position of forces placing them further south

of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) and possible invasion routes significantly impacted the Korean authorities. Adding to this, a reduction of forces by a third was included, compensating this reduction with the introduction of new weapons systems. In this way, the Pentagon withdrew a combat brigade of 3,600 troops from the Second Division and sent it to Iraq. The level of forces thus decreased, falling from 37,000 to 25,000 in September 2008, despite North Korea's nuclear test in October 2006.

At the same time, Donald Rumsfeld made it clear that US forces stationed in Korea had global missions, they weren't just about to deter an attack by North Korea.

All this increased fear in the South Korean authorities that the US forces stationed in Korea could be used at the regional level to engage in other types of conflicts, especially with China.

Another significant point was the agreement in 2006 for the transfer to South Korea in April 2012 of the Operational Control (OPCON) of military forces, dismantling the command of joint forces that had been led by the United States. President Roh Moo-hyun's government regarded this issue as a matter of national sovereignty.

The effect of these changes and US policy towards North Korea was negative, as the bilateral relationship became quite strained not only at the official level but also at the expert level, for which the US's approach to North Korea was wrong and prevented the improvement of relations between the two Koreas, reaching rather regrettable situations in bilateral meetings, despite progress in the negotiations in the Six-Party Talks.

Fortunately, a new factor helped to improve the situation. In the 2007 presidential election, the Grand National Party won and was elected as new president, Lee Myung-bak, who considered the alliance with the United States a priority. During 2008 the bilateral relations improved very substantially. The new Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, stopped the decline in forces, stabilizing them at 28,500. Coordination to tackle an increasingly bellicose North Korea, following the failure of the Six-Party Talks, was also an important incentive for closer collaboration.

#### **6.4. The president Obama's administration and the policy of engagement with North Korea**

Although president Obama's new administration wanted to change the course and develop a policy of engagement with North Korea, this country, three months after the inauguration of the new presidency, despite the prohibitions established by the Security Council, launched a new Taepodong 2 missile in April 5, 2009, with the consequent condemnation of the Security Council, calling on the United Nations Sanctions Committee to implement the financial sanctions and arms embargo set in the October resolution of 2006. As a consequence, the North Korea withdrew from the Six-Party Talks and the second nuclear test took place on May 25, 2009. Again, the United Nations Security Council condemned the nuclear test and approved an extension of sanctions.<sup>6</sup>

In this new environment, the Obama administration changed drastically its engagement policy and adopted a hardline policy, demonstrated by the US position adopted when the serious incidents of 2010 and 2011 took place: the sinking of the Cheonan Pohang-class corvette in March 26, 2010, that led to the imposition of new sanctions on North Korea by the United States, holding a joint military exercise with South Korea in the Sea of Japan and activating the signing of a free trade agreement with South Korea; and the bombing by North Korea of the Yeonpyeong island. China did not support a policy of greater harshness. President Hu even told president Obama in Toronto on June 24, 2010, that they were impartial in a conflict between the two Koreas.<sup>7</sup> The Chinese Military Commission had previously taken a very weak position after the second nuclear test. It was a colossal mistake.

Re-established the contacts between the two Koreas, as the United States wanted, it was a matter of reaching again a bilateral coordination on the policies and steps to be followed. The fear of destabilization in North Korea was also very present, given the state of health of Kim Jong-il. This was also a topic of conversation between China and the United States.<sup>8</sup>

A new attempt by the Obama administration between July and October 2011 to restart negotiations with North Korea was unsuccessful, as North Korea no longer accepted as a precondition for resuming the Six-Party

Talks, the abandonment of its nuclear program.

Kim Jong-il died on December 17, 2011 and expectations of a better understanding seemed to open up, but these expectations of a policy change did not materialize. The bilateral agreement of February 29, 2012 on a moratorium on uranium enrichment and missile testing and a return of IAEA inspectors to Yongbyon, leading to a resumption of the Six-Party Talks was not finally fulfilled. Kim Jong-un's rise to power in December 2011 and his political consolidation brought, at the end, a re-affirmation of the regime's military policy. Further nuclear tests took place in February 2013 and in January and September 2016 as well as long-range missile tests, generating new condemnations and the reinforcement of sanctions by the United Nations Security Council.

The Six-Party Talks had already lost their meaning. North Korea regarded its nuclear program as a fundamental reassurance for the regime's defense against foreign enemies such as the United States.

In general, we can say that the United States maintained, during the president Obama's administrations, the policy of "strategic patience", in a clear break with president Bush more robust policies, being open to dialogue but imposing increasing sanctions for bad behavior, approving covert sabotages on North Korean missiles, providing anti-missile defense systems to North Korea's neighbors and putting pressure on the Chinese government, considering that China had the key to solving the problem, given its influence on North Korea. This last point would also be a factor of containment in the US relations and approaches towards China.

However, China's justifications and arguments underlining, as a priority, the need to maintain North Korea's stability<sup>9</sup>, putting aside other considerations, proved, over the years, to be increasingly less credible, even if the United States largely assumed these justifications at the official level. It is also important to note that the Obama administration paid more attention to Iran's nuclear and missile programs than to North Korea's programs. A mistake that would also be colossal. Thus, after the North Korea's fifth nuclear test, despite sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council, the United States pressured China to decisively influence the North Korean authorities to end nuclear tests and comply with the Korean peninsula denuclearization treaty. The alternative considered at this time by president

Obama, a pre-emptive strike, was not feasible based on his results, as the intelligence services and the Pentagon informed after a close study.<sup>10</sup>

The North Korea's proposal of 2003 to sign a non-aggression pact, obtain economic compensation and normalize relations with the United States or the declaration of September 19, 2005, were outdated. However, the last point of this declaration on the negotiation of a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula by the six parties at an appropriate separate forum and exploring ways and means for promoting security cooperation in Northeast Asia is still considered by Russia and China as a fundamental item to be present in a negotiation with North Korea.

### **6.5. The strengthening of the US Alliance with South Korea**

The attack on a South Korean corvette and its sinking in March 26, 2010, led to the imposition of new sanctions on North Korea by the United States, holding a joint military exercise with South Korea in the Sea of Japan and activating the negotiations and the signing of a free trade agreement with South Korea.

In the military field, the attack induced to reconsider the transformation of the bilateral alliance and its enlargement, going beyond the defense against North Korea to address also regional and global issues as established in the "Joint Vision" declaration signed in Washington on June 16, 2009.<sup>11</sup> It spurred closer bilateral military planning to address possible contingencies, new joint military activities and the strengthening of the alliance, issues that alarmed China. On 10-11 July, the 2+2 meeting of Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs took place, assessing the situation created by the sinking of the Cheonan corvette, Kim Jong-il's disease and Kim Jong-un's role.<sup>12</sup> Following this meeting, massive military exercises took place. And, in September, in view of the situation, the two States decided to postpone the transfer of OPCOM to the Korean authorities until 2015. The operational roadmap "Strategic Alliance 2015" was established and underlined, and, in addition to this new transition, the itinerary for improving South Korea's military capabilities, changes in the relocation of US forces and the deployment standardization for two or three years as was done in Germany or Japan, were emphasized.

In November 10, president Obama travelled to Seoul on the occasion

of the G20 meeting and he drew the president Hu's attention to the serious consequences of North Korea's nuclear and missile activities, including the visit to the Yongbyon uranium enrichment facilities by three Stanford University professors, all this in a context of an uncertain political transition, given Kim Jong-il's illness. He came to tell that if there was no collaboration he would act on his own.

Within days, on November 23, North Korea bombed Yeonpyeong Island, killing four South Korean civilians and inducing US and South Korean military maneuvers in the Yellow Sea with China's dismay. President Lee Myung-bak threatened a military response if a new provocation occurred and, in mid-December, they conducted new military exercises on the island, closely followed by the United States.

The following year the United States launched the "Pivot to Asia" initiative, later called "Rebalance" that sought to take a strategic turn to its global policies. The new strategy presented from the pages of the *Foreign Policy* journal on October 11, 2011 by Hillary Clinton noted that the future of the United States would be decided in Asia, not in Afghanistan or Iraq. A strategic shift and a re-engagement with this region were needed. One element of the new regional strategy was the strengthening and updating of military alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines and Thailand, considered cornerstones of the new strategy

This new orientation along with North Korea's nuclear and missile tests had a fundamental impact on the restructuring of defensive relations between South Korea and the United States. The number of meetings between Ministers of Defense and Foreign Relations in 2+2 format increased and also the number of issues to be dealt with. The biannual bilateral dialogue on Integrated Defense served as a springboard for the launch of numerous initiatives. In addition, regular meetings took place between Defense ministers at the Security Advisory Meetings. The South Korean Armed Forces modernization and their ability to interoperate with the United States grew significantly in these years.

Bilateral defensive military exercises were also growing in breadth and intensity in correlation to North Korea's provocations with its nuclear tests. These exercises, especially the "Key Resolve" and "Foal Eagle", encompassed land, sea and air components, as well as computer simulations.

In 2013, it was reported by the United States that B-52 and B-2 bombers had participated in the military exercises and, following the 2016 nuclear tests, new strategic B-52 and B-1B bombers participated in the military exercises.

Given the growing tension, in 2014 both states agreed to postpone again the transfer of the US control of wartime operations (OPCOM) to South Korea. The relocation of the US forces deployed near the demilitarized zone to other bases further south also suffered significant delays.

Finally, it should be noted that, in July 2016, as a result of North Korea's ongoing missile testing, the deployment of the Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system was announced in South Korea by the end of 2017, despite serious objections from China which immediately promoted strong retaliatory measures against South Korea, affecting in particular the bilateral trade.

However, the US goal of a trilateral collaboration with South Korea and Japan had a small and short-lived embodiment at the end of Obama's second presidency based on Korean approaches to the moral and material damage induced by the Japanese occupation which, while attempted to be resolved by the signing of an agreement in December 2015, were placed back on the negotiating table with the change of government.

### **6.6. President Trump Administration: North Korea is the “biggest nightmare” and China has the key for a solution**

The Trump administration will inherit as the main problem to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue. According to Bob Woodward, and later confirmed by president Trump himself,<sup>13</sup> two days after the 2016 presidential election, Barack Obama and Donald Trump met at the White House and Obama told Trump that North Korea was his biggest headache and will become the biggest nightmare of the new president.<sup>14</sup> The new administration studied three big options<sup>15</sup> and finally president Trump on March 2017 decided to implement a policy of “maximum pressure”, covering economic, rhetoric assaults, military, diplomatic and covert action if needed.<sup>16</sup>

North Korea had continued shooting off missiles. On February 11, North Korea test-fired a new medium-range Pukkuksong-2 missile over the Sea of Japan and on March 6 four medium-range missiles launches took place, three of which landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone, violating

Again. United Nations Security Council resolutions. This was a new wake-up call, this time more striking, as the launches had taken place from mobile platforms and, according to the North Korean agency KCNA, the targets of the Hwasong artillery units responsible for making these launches were the US bases in Japan. They were no longer missile tests that randomly landed at sea. The missiles fell into an area covered by an extended arc where the base of Iwakuni, the only US Marine base in Japan's central territory, was included. Missiles were becoming increasingly accurate. They certainly constituted a protest backlash against US-South Korea's powerful and massive "Foal Eagle" military maneuvers that were going to start on March 7 with the participation of 17,000 US troops and 300,000 South Koreans, implementing for the first time the OPLAN 5015, and lasting until April 30.

Added to this was the murder on February 13 of Kim Jong-un's half-brother in Kuala Lumpur and the execution of five senior state security officials in February for having provided false information, as officially it was said. North Korea's internal situation was also deteriorating and becoming more unpredictable.

Given the priority of the North Korean dossier, the new US Secretary of the State Department, Rex Tillerson traveled to Japan, South Korea and China in March 15-19. On this first visit to Asia, the Secretary of State put North Korea's nuclear program as the main issue to be resolved. Diplomatic approaches over the past twenty-three years to denuclearization were considered unsuccessful - years in which the United States provided North Korea with aid of approximately \$1,350 million US dollars - and president Obama's policy of "strategic patience" had failed, and thus the threat had become more alarming. By 2016, North Korea had conducted more than 20 missile launches and two new nuclear tests. It was essential to implement the new approach where all possible options, including the military, had to be on the table.

The new approach adopted by the new administration was to be a central element in the conversations to be held with its interlocutors. But the People's Republic of China continued to insist on dialogue and diplomatic channels and showed a strong rejection to the US deployment of THAAD anti-missile systems in the Republic of Korea. This approach was already expected, the new US administration considered that the People's Republic

of China had maintained a weak position with North Korea and could have prevented this growing proliferation. China's proposal to abolish the US-South Korean joint annual maneuvers in exchange for a freeze on North Korea's nuclear program could not be accepted, as it was regarded as biased proposal putting the US defense agreements with South Korea on the negotiating table, and putting aside the North Korea's lack of compliance with the multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions.

The new Trump administration had changed the approach proclaimed in the electoral campaign. From wanting to sit down with Kim Jong-un to negotiate an agreement, as Donald Trump had said, had adopted a hard line, wanting China to use every means at its disposal - including pressure on its banks and businesses - to solve the problem, even trying to establish a linkage with the bilateral trade negotiations to be developed with China and other issues.

On his visit to Tokyo he met with Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe discussing the need for a different approach on North Korea. The subsequent press conference, which mentioned a number of security issues in East and Southeast Asia, noted the critical importance of trilateral cooperation between the United States, Japan and the Republic of Korea and also the China's key role in inducing compliance with United Nations Security Council resolutions. Japan would seek to align its policy with that of the United States on the issue of North Korea and the bilateral Advisory Committee would be meeting soon. The debate in the Japanese Diet on the acquisition of long-range or shorter-range military systems for pre-emptive strikes against North Korean military installations, the US supply of missiles with offensive capability, or the improvement of the missile defense system, were not mentioned.

In Seoul, Rex Tillerson met with Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se and the acting president Hwang Kyo-ahn and visited the demilitarized zone. The main point of discussion was how to realize and make operational the common approach to North Korea's threat. Rex Tillerson made it clear that the policy of "strategic patience" was over and that the military option was already on the table. President Trump had almost simultaneously written a tweet saying that "North Korea was behaving very badly. They had been playing the United States for years. China had done little to help."

At the press conference with Minister Yun Byung-se, Rex Tillerson also emphasized Korea's commitment to defense, criticized China's attitude of retaliating against South Korea over the deployment of THAAD, saying that China had to comply with the sanctions passed at the United Nations Security Council, that US still had room for an escalation in sanctions for the freeze of North Korea's nuclear and missile program was not acceptable - in the face of a remarkable current of opinion from US experts - and that talks with North Korea only would take place once North Korea had been denuclearized and delivered its nuclear weapons.

Prior to his travel to Beijing, the *Independent Journal Review* published an interview where, regarding Tokyo and Seoul acquisition of nuclear weapons, he stated that "the circumstances could evolve to the point that for mutual deterrence reasons, we might have considered that (possibility)",<sup>17</sup> as previously stated during the Bush administration and more recently, in 2016, by vice-president Joe Biden in an interview with Xi Jinping.<sup>18</sup>

Once in Beijing, the secretary of the State Department met with the State counsellor, Yang Jiechi, with the foreign minister, Wang Yi, and the president, Xi Jinping. According to the various official informations and the press conference with Minister Wang Li, these talks covered a wide agenda of topics, including the preparation of the summit between the two presidents, but the two positions clashed regarding North Korea. China continued to bet on negotiation, considering the Six-Party Talks as the right platform to resolve the nuclear issue. The United States and its allies, on the other hand, considered that the Six-Party Talks had aimed to prevent nuclear proliferation and that, once nuclear proliferation had happened, they no longer made sense.

However, the anti-North Korea tone was flattened by Rex Tillerson, limiting in public the discrepancies and saying that tensions on the Korean peninsula had reached a high level and there was a sense of urgency in both countries to convince North Korea to change its policies and abandon the nuclear program, without specifying the steps to be taken - avoiding the outbreak of conflict - and Wang Li insisting that the talks had been candid, pragmatic and productive, the interlocutors had pledged to use diplomatic measures to achieve a peaceful settlement by avoiding the escalation of the

conflict, that they had to keep the head cool, and that tensions had grown precisely because the negotiations had been broken and it was necessary to return to the negotiating table. His support for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, the strict implementation of Security Council resolutions - an unconvincing issue depending on what was happening at the border- and his opposition to the deployment of the THAAD system were again highlighted. President Xi Jinping, for his part, stressed that Rex Tillerson's talks with Wang Yi and Yang Jiechi had been productive and constructive, that further progress in bilateral cooperation was needed and that they hoped for a new era of constructive developments.

In any case, no agreement was announced in China while North Korea apparently successfully rehearsed a new engine system for its missiles, when Rex Tillerson was in Beijing. President Donald Trump again stated that North Korea was behaving very badly and, in turn, North Korea reiterated that it didn't fear a US military attack. In South Korea the situation was beginning to be somewhat fluid, the candidate best placed to win the next presidential election, Moon Jae-in, advocated a return to Roo Moo- hyun's policy of engagement with North Korea, greater exchanges and economic integration, and greater humanitarian aid, opposing to the deployment of the THAAD system.<sup>19</sup>

The following month, on April 4, North Korea launched another mid-range missile, just before the summit between president Trump and president Xi Jinping. This was to be an important topic for discussion alongside economic issues and other bilateral and regional issues. The Chinese leader eagerly awaited to see what America's real approach to Asia-Pacific was. The meeting in Mar-a-Lago on April 7 and 8 produced results considered acceptable for the reconfiguration of deteriorated relations. On the subject of North Korea there was an agreement to coordinate actions to be carried out. Trump tweeted that he offered more favorable trade terms for China in exchange for help in confronting the issue of North Korea and, as a result, China apparently took later a tougher stance toward North Korea intensifying border patrols and also strengthening customs inspections.<sup>20</sup> However, China reiterated that they were contrary to military action and that sanctions would not solve the problem. But the US side made very clear that they were willing to act to solve the problem even without China's support

To reassure key allies about the results of the meeting with Xi Jinping, the threat from North Korea and to press on the economic and trade relations they needed to review, vice-president Mike Pence flew to Seoul, Tokyo and Sydney, also making a stop in Jakarta.<sup>22</sup>

In this complex context, an attempt to clarify the overall US strategy for Asia-Pacific was necessary and, in fact, took place in Singapore on the occasion of Shangri-La's annual dialogue. James Mattis explained the US commitment to the region by stating the main challenges: North Korea, the fight against the Islamic State that in the Philippines was trying to conquer the city of Marawi, and competition with China.

The change was remarkable. From maintaining a position of subordinating the clarification and solution of the appropriation of reefs in the South China Sea to China's pressures on North Korea to resolve the ballistic and nuclear issue, now John Mattis moved to a clear diversification.

From this perspective, he outlined some basic lines that, in part, meant a continuation with the policy of the previous Obama administration, in particular the strengthening of partnerships with Japan, South Korea, Australia and also with the Philippines and Thailand.<sup>23</sup>

In this situation, the first meeting of the Diplomatic and Security Dialogue, as agreed at the Mar-a-Lago, took place in Washington on June 21. The day before, president Trump had declared that president Xi Jinping's efforts to help solve North Korea's problem had not worked. The president was affected by the death on June 19 of the young American, Otto Warmbier, returned by North Korea in a coma.

The meeting served to see how far away the two positions were. They addressed the issue of North Korea as the most pressing issue, agreeing to respect for United Nations Security Council resolutions and preventing companies from doing business with the entities identified in the resolutions. On the US side, they reiterated that China had a diplomatic responsibility and had to push North Korea even more, economically and diplomatically, if they wanted to prevent further steps in the escalation to end North Korea's provocations failing to comply with the prohibitions set by the Security Council. China, for its part, stressed the need to restore dialogue and negotiation, as well as the proposal for a two-track approach, encompassing

denuclearization and establishment of a peace mechanism and the suspension of missile and nuclear tests in exchange for the suspension of US and South Korean military exercises. China reiterated its full opposition to the deployment of the THAAD anti-missile system.

It was a preparatory session before the meeting that would be held by the two presidents in Hamburg on the occasion of the G20 meeting. But the outcome of this discussion was so unsatisfactory that on June 29, the US government announced sanctions against Dandong Bank in China, Daliang Global Unity Shipping, two Chinese citizens who were running screen or covert companies in favor of North Korea, also putting China on the global list of human trafficking countries; and also the sale of arms to Taiwan for a sum of \$1.42 billion.

The next day, Donald Trump met with South Korea's new president, Moon Jae-in, who wasn't in favor of keeping sanctions on North Korea, but wanted to undertake a line of commitment and cooperation, breaking with the policies of the Grand National Party, returning to a position close to that maintained by the president Moo Roh-hyun of the former Millennium Democratic Party<sup>24</sup> and also close to China's position. President Moon had to commit to a very receptive policy of coordination on North Korea - but the joint declaration did not mention the deployment of the THAAD anti-missile system - to strengthening the bilateral alliance, the trilateral cooperation with Japan, seeking a trade balance by opening its markets, given America's growing deficit in the bilateral trade.<sup>25</sup> President Trump, at the joint press conference, stated that patience was over.<sup>26</sup>

Days later, on July 7, the meeting between Donald Trump and Xi Jinping took place. Three days before, precisely on a special date, the 4th of July, North Korea had tested a new intercontinental missile capable of reaching Alaska and Seattle.<sup>27</sup>

There was no significant progress in the meeting. China was unwilling to drown North Korea further to the point of forcing North Korea to end its long-range ballistic missile tests and nuclear tests. Xi Jinping, on the other hand, had to renew his leadership in China and other Chinese leaders who had to renew his term in the 19th Communist Party Congress, could not agree to the imposition of drastic measures, giving the impression that they were capitulating to the United States. The result was disappointing

for the US, even more so given the measures taken on June 29 that did not result in a spur to policy change. North Korea continued its tests, without interruption, and on July 28 launched a long-range missile. Apparently, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, and New York were already within range of North Korea's missiles.<sup>28</sup> President Trump reacted with a twitter pointing to his disappointment with China, criticizing previous American leaders who had allowed China to get hundreds of billions of dollars a year through trade, but who did nothing for them on the North Korean issue.<sup>29</sup>

China, knowing the US military preparations, opened its hand at the United Nations Security Council, which finally approved serious sanctions on North Korea, banning all North Korean exports of coal, iron, lead and shellfish, imposed new restrictions on the North Korea Foreign Trade Bank, banned joint ventures or commercial cooperatives between North Korea and other states, as well as new investments in existing joint ventures, and also banned new recruitment of Korean workers by other states.<sup>30</sup>

North Korea's reaction was very hard, calling the sanctions a crime that the United States would pay for hundreds of times. And Trump's response was blunt, promising to respond to North Korea with "fire and fury." Senator Graham on an NBC program said the president had told him that "if thousands died, they would die there not here." Herbert R. McMaster in an interview on the MSNBC claimed they were prepared to launch a pre-emptive war. All of this caused great alarm in South Korea, and president Moon had to speak out and claimed that unilateral military action against North Korea would be intolerable, "no one was allowed to decide military action on the Korean peninsula without the agreement of the South Korean government." Xi Jinping, in a phone call to Donald Trump, sought to calm the tension and the maximum military pressure.<sup>31</sup> But North Korea continued its missile tests in August, even after the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2371. The Pentagon considered that they needed more aggressive response options in the implementation of the maximum military pressure.<sup>32</sup>

The following month, on September 2, a new nuclear test took place, larger than those ever conducted, ensuring North Korea that it was a thermonuclear devise. President Trump in a tweet pointed to South Korea and the policy he was pursuing with North Korea, which was not to his liking:

“South Korea is finding, as I have told them, that their talk of appeasement with North Korea will not work, they only understand one thing! ” He didn't talk to president Moon on the phone as Shinzo Abe did. It was a sensitive moment, as even Donald Trump had instructed his advisers to prepare the necessary documentation for the withdrawal of the bilateral trade agreement, with South Korea (KORUS), signed on March 15, 2012, given the increasing bilateral trade deficit.<sup>33</sup>

The Security Council, with the previous consent of China and Russia, proceeded to adopt a new resolution that proved much weaker than the one advocated by the United States. It established an oil embargo and other penalties such as the prohibition of travel to other States and the freezing of funds from the Korean leader and his government, as well as the use of force to board ships that had violated the sanctions imposed by the Security Council. In any event, Resolution 2375 prohibited the export of textiles, natural gas and their condensates, and reduced oil imports by 30%, prohibited labor authorizations for North Korean nationals by other States, except in special cases, the existing and new joint ventures or cooperative entities, and included Pak Yong Sik, member of the Military Commission, in an annex. His funds were frozen and he was banned from traveling to other States. In a second annex, the funds of three important institutions of the regime were frozen<sup>34</sup>

Such was the irritation that, from the US General Assembly podium, president Trump called the North Korean regime a depraved regime. He considered that it was an outrage that there were States that traded, supplied arms and financially supported this country, stating that no one had any interest in seeing "this gang of criminals arm themselves with nuclear weapons and missiles." He added that the United States had great strength and patience, but that if they were forced to defend themselves and their allies, they would have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea, warning that “Rocket Man is on a suicide mission for himself”

The tremendous speech indicated president Trump's exasperation at North Korea's continued challenge and the lack of an adequate international response. Both Japan and South Korea<sup>35</sup> aligned themselves with the US president, strengthening president Trump's tough position, but in his General Assembly address, Moon Jae-in had advocated for peacefully resolving the nuclear issue.<sup>36</sup>

Donald Trump ordered on the 21st an extension of US sanctions to North Korea, severing its relations with the international banking system, sanctioning its banks and focusing as a target on its major industries and shipping<sup>37</sup> and on September 25 the US command simulated an air attack using B-1 bombers and 20 planes crossing the Northern Limit Line in the sea that separated the two Koreas. This was considered by South Korea an extremely provocative action.<sup>38</sup> War had become a real possibility.<sup>39</sup>

It could also be said that China, weighing the possible military consequences, in August and September was more receptive to the interests of the United States on this issue.<sup>40</sup> But the problem was still far from being solved. The Trump administration still believed, quite rightly, that China was the key to the solution. and, in this sense, preparations were made for president Trump's visit to Beijing.

#### **6.6.1. The first trip of Donald Trump to Asia on 3-14 November. North Korea and the launching of the Indo-Pacific strategy**

On September 29, the US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson arrived in Beijing for talks with the Chinese leaders, preparing the upcoming visit to China by US President Donald Trump. Two important topics were discussed in the meetings with Xi Jinping, Yang Jiechi and Wang Yi: The Nuclear Crisis with North Korea and the US-China trade. The issue of Korea was boiling after the growing sanctions adopted by the United Nations Security Council and the increase of unilateral US sanctions. Nevertheless, the United States had open channels of communication with North Korea and both countries were in touch. Rex Tillerson acknowledged the existence of two or three channels of communication and reiterated on September 30 that they would not recognize North Korea as a nuclear power and had no intention of overthrowing the regime. There were even rumors of possible US secret discussions with China on planning for a scenario of North Korean collapse and the control of the nuclear arsenal, something that had been always avoided but, given the increasing possibility of a conflict, the subject could no longer be avoided.<sup>41</sup> But Beijing didn't want to go that far. On the economic issue, the concessions that China had to make were inevitable, as the mute imposed by the new administration on the trade issue, waiting for China's support on the North Korea issue could not be maintained for a long time.

Donald Trump, for his part, disavowed the Secretary of State on the issue of a negotiation with North Korea and said it was wasting time.

Preparations were made in the White House in October for a long trip that would involve president Trump directly with Japan, South Korea, China and the ASEAN States, regardless of other interviews with Vladimir Putin, Narendra Modi and Malcolm Turnbull.

The economic and commercial issue, despite its conditionalities, remained a priority. On the central issue of Korea, the United States was better disposed with China following the adoption of the last two resolutions at the United Nations Security Council. But the emphasis was also going to be placed on South Korea and its policies. Besides, the launch of the strategy for a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” was high in the agenda. This was going to be an important novelty.

From November 5, to November 7, Donald Trump and his wife paid an official visit to Japan and from Tokyo traveled to Seoul, visiting US troops stationed at Camp Humphrey, 67 kilometers from Seoul. The US president had a long meeting with president Moon and a joint press release was approved, underlining the alliance, “built upon mutual trust and shared values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, remains a linchpin for security, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific”<sup>42</sup>, and at a press conference they reviewed the most important issues of bilateral relations: The policy regarding North Korea, where Donald Trump showed some restraint, although he claimed that it was time to act urgently and with great determination reiterating that they were prepared to defend the United States and its allies using the full panoply of their military capabilities if necessary, that China had a unique capacity for influence, and included an interesting message to North Korea, saying that it “makes sense for North Korea to come to the table”, and to “do the right thing, not only for North Korea but for humanity all over the world”. This statement meant a departure from the former threatening US approach. He also emphasized the importance of strengthening the military alliance and purchasing billions of dollars of US military equipment; improving economic relations, rebalancing them with the renegotiation of the KORUS bilateral free trade agreement; and the cooperation to address global challenges.<sup>43</sup> The next day, Donald Trump addressed the National Assembly where he praised the South

Korea's progress in the face of the "prison state" and horror, misery, slavery, hell, military worship, and tyranny of North Korea. The time for excuses was over and it was time for strength, adding that the world could not tolerate the menace of a rogue regime that threatens with nuclear devastation. He called on the international community, China and Russia to comply with Security Council resolutions, downgrade diplomatic relations and sever all ties of trade and technology.<sup>44</sup> The hard speech was very applauded.

After spending about 24 hours in South Korea, president Trump arrived in China on the afternoon of November 8, visited the Forbidden City, followed by afternoon tea, watched an opera performance with Xi Jinping and his wife, and had dinner inside the Forbidden City. The next day had a day full of meetings. Donald Trump was widely flattered by his hosts and in particular received high praise from president Xi, to such an extent that he was able to leave some observers out of place based on what was previously claimed by president Trump in South Korea and Japan about common values as the foundation for security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific, for example when he claimed that "The United States, working with China and other regional partners, has an incredible opportunity to advance the cause of peace, security, and prosperity all across the world".<sup>45</sup>

The most important issues addressed, as reflected in official information and press conferences were as follows: First, North Korea. President Trump said at the meeting with the Chinese business representatives that China could fix the problem easily and quickly; if president Xi "works on it hard, it will happen. There's no doubt about". President Xi, for his part, in his statements to the press, stated that they were committed to achieving denuclearization and complying with United Nations Security Council resolutions, but the two sides had to commit themselves to finding a solution through dialogue and negotiation. They were willing to discuss with the relevant parties the way that could lead to a lasting peace and stability.<sup>46</sup>

From Beijing, president Trump traveled to Danang in Vietnam, for the APEC meeting where he laid the foundations for the new American vision on the Indo-Pacific. Subsequently he visited the Philippines and on November 13, he attended the US-ASEAN Summit and also participated in bilateral meetings with president Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines and met

with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. And returned to Washington on 14 of November, skipping the East Asia Summit (EAS).

It can be said that one important result of this trip was that in the main issue of the agenda, the North Korea's nuclear challenge, a breakthrough of some importance was achieved, although China continued to propose a de-escalation program and a freeze for freeze, which president Trump did not accept. Given the information received by secret channels, James Mattis saw an opportunity to start the negotiations if North Korea halted its nuclear and missile tests, but North Korea did not agree to negotiate while military exercises continued to take place in South Korea.<sup>47</sup>

But on November 28, North Korea launched a new missile that, depending on the trajectory, could reach a distance of about 13,000 kilometers, putting the entire US territory within range. The challenge was getting bigger. New military exercises began in South Korea and North Korea's Foreign Ministry, through its spokesman, said the United States was begging for a nuclear war and called president Trump a demon. Herbert R. McMaster again indicated that China could do more and that the armed conflict was getting closer. In fact, the possibility of a military attack, limited to a symbolic target in North Korea, was shuffled in response, which, in the end, did not occur.<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, the United States negotiated a new resolution in the Security Council, chaired by Japan at the moment, receiving support from China. Resolution 2397 was adopted unanimously on 22 December. The resolution included new and stronger sanctions<sup>49</sup>, but it did not allow North Korean ships to be boarded in international waters, as China and Russia argued that this opened the door to possible armed conflicts. The question that remained in the air was whether all these sanctions would be enough, how long it would take to see its effectiveness and the calculations North Korea's leaders might be making. It was obvious that new sanctions were no longer virtually available, except extraterritorial or secondary sanctions.

### **6.6.2. Fixing the US position on North Korea: The new National Security Strategy, The National Defense Strategy and the Nuclear Posture Review**

A key milestone in the clarification of the US policy towards Asia Pacific and North Korea was the adoption of the new Security Strategy. The document, which pointed out from the outset, that it was an "America First National Security Strategy", published on December 18, initially presented a world that was increasingly competitive in the political, economic and military fields. China and Russia defied the power of the United States and forced to revise the US policies, protecting four fundamental interests: the American people, the homeland, and the way of life of the United States; American prosperity; peace through strength; and the influence of the United States. Various Indo-Pacific States were mentioned in these four pillars. In the first, highlighting weapons of mass destruction, appeared North Korea and improvements in the capabilities of China and Russia.

The strategy, in its final section, specified all these approaches for protecting the fundamental interests in the various regional areas.

With respect to the Indo-Pacific region, the document focused on China and stated that a geopolitical competition was taking place between two world-class visions, one free and one repressive. North Korea appeared with its cyber, nuclear and ballistic programs, its provocations and the consequences on nuclear proliferation in the area and even beyond. North Korea was considered a very serious threat, a country seeking the capability to kill millions of Americans with nuclear weapons and also pursuing chemical and biological weapons which could also be delivered by missiles. Continued provocations by North Korea will prompt neighboring countries and the United States to further strengthen security bonds and take additional measures to protect themselves. Missile defense was a priority. It was also stated that in the case of a North Korean aggression, an overwhelming response was needed and they had to improve the options to force the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.<sup>50</sup>

In the National Defense Strategy published on January 19, 2018, North Korea again appeared as a rogue regime destabilizing the region, trying with its weapons of mass destruction programs and its missile capabilities to achieve a coercion capability over South Korea, Japan and the

United States.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, in the third core document, *The Nuclear Posture Review*,<sup>52</sup> North Korea received special attention. North Korea had “accelerated its provocative pursuit of nuclear weapons and missile capabilities, and expressed explicit threats to use nuclear weapons against the United States and its allies in the region. North Korean officials insist that they will not give up nuclear weapons, and North Korea may now be only months away from the capability to strike the United States with nuclear-armed ballistic missiles”. Furthermore, North Korea posed “a ‘horizontal’ proliferation threat as a potential source of nuclear weapons or nuclear materials for other proliferators. North Korea’s nuclear weapons program also increases nuclear proliferation pressures on nonnuclear weapon states that North Korea directly and explicitly threatens with nuclear attack”. The US objective was the achievement of a complete, verifiable and irreversible nuclear-free Korean peninsula.

### **6.6.3. The evolution of the main threat**

Apparently, a window of opportunity was opened at the beginning of January. Kim Jong-un in the New Year's speech stated that 2017 had been a year where he had won a great victory, being already able to counter any nuclear threat from the United States. The entire US territory fell within the range of its ballistic and nuclear systems. The nuclear weapons research sector and the rocket industry should mass-produce nuclear warheads and ballistic missiles. And, in 2018, the central task facing socialist economic construction was to enhance the independence and Juche character of the national economy and improve the people's standard of living, as well as inter-Korean relations.<sup>53</sup> On January 2, 2018, president Trump in a new tweet said that pressures were beginning to have a big impact on North Korea and that the "rocket man" for the first time wanted to talk.<sup>54</sup>

For the United States a new approach on North Korea was complicated. Considering the North Korean interest in improving the economy and the standard of living, the approval of increased sanctions was very complicated. Neither China nor Russia were willing to accept the imposition of new sanctions at the UN. The alternative was going alone confronting North Korea.

In this regard, in May 2017, Mike Pompeo, under instruction of Donald Trump, had set up The Korea Mission Center “to harness the full resources, capabilities, and authorities of the Agency in addressing the nuclear and ballistic missile threat posed by North Korea”. The team studied Kim's personal profile, interviewing around 200 people who had met and treated Kim in person. A conclusion of the CIA's analysis was that Kim had a fascination on Western culture and an evident interest for economic development. Another practical conclusion was that if a negotiation started, there was a high possibility that North Korea would respond favorably to a proposal that included a safeguard of the North Korean political regime, avoiding the Beijing protectorate.<sup>55</sup>

Taking into consideration this analysis, the Trump administration, despite Tillerson's serious objections, considering China as central for North Korean policy, began moving toward direct talks with North Korea while trying also to eliminate the decisive influence Beijing had on the issue. Herbert R. McMaster said: “China has made many promises over the years but rarely performed. The previous multi-party format did not work. We thought that bilateral engagement with North Korea had the best chance for success.”<sup>56</sup>

For all this, though a US unilateral approach to solve the nuclear problem had clear limitations, Donald Trump in 2018 started to move to a policy of engagement maintaining in parallel the policy of maximum pressure,

Apparently, the US new strategy got some results. Little by little the negotiating path could be opened up.

Kim Jong-un in the New Year address had said that he was considering the participation of North Korean athletes in the Olympic Games to be held in Pionchang, South Korea, between February 9 and 25, 2018. Three days later, in a phone call, president Trump and president Moon agree to postpone the annual joint Foal Eagle military exercise to de-conflict the Olympics and military exercises. On January 10, it was announced that the vice president Mike Pence was going to travel to Republic of Korea, Japan, and lead the presidential delegation to the 2018 Olympic Winter Games.

On February 9, he sat very close to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's sister during the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics, but the arranged luncheon meeting was finally cancelled by the North Koreans given his criticism of the North Korean regime in his remarks in Tokyo and Seoul.

However, a breakthrough announcement occurred in the Games when the North Korean delegation gave an invitation to the president of South Korea to visit North Korea. In fact, on March 5 Kim Jong-un met in Pyongyang with a South Korean delegation, including the National Security Adviser and the director of National Intelligence. The two sides agreed to hold a summit in April and North Korea also expressed an interest in talking with the United States about denuclearization and normalization.

In this meeting, the South Korean delegation tried to push the unification process and launched an important initiative, a summit meeting between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un.<sup>57</sup> On March 8, the South Korea's National Security Adviser and the director of National Intelligence met with McMaster, cabinet members and president Trump who supported the inter-Korean summit and accepted the invitation.<sup>58</sup>

But China did not want to be put aside - Tillerson approach was right. - and Kim Jong-un visited Beijing on March 25-28 meeting president Xi Jinping, trying to strengthen the deteriorated relationship with China, and explaining the denuclearization process they wanted to implement.

Mike Pompeo in the Easter weekend met in Pyongyang Kim Jong-un discussing the creation of a working-level meeting for preparing the agenda of the summit and the four promises made by Kim to Chung Eui Yong.<sup>59</sup> In this new situation, Kim Jong-un announced that from April 21 on, North Korea will stop nuclear tests and launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles, adding that further tests were unnecessary because Pyongyang's nuclear capabilities had been "verified".<sup>60</sup> He had to meet Moon Jae-in the following week for the first inter-Korean summit in over a decade.

The inter-Korean summit took place on April 27. In the final declaration of Panmunjeom, both States committed, *inter alia*, to making joint efforts to alleviate the acute military tension and practically eliminate the danger of war on the Korean Peninsula and cooperate to establish a permanent and solid peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. They confirmed

the shared goal of achieving a nuclear free Korean Peninsula but did not discuss the issue of denuclearization as Bolton had warned to Chung Eui Yong. Japan was also skeptical about the process and wanted to avoid the "action for action" formula and pushed for a quick dismantling of the nuclear program.<sup>61</sup> South Korea had another position with a greater approximation to North Korean positions and advocated a step-by-step policy. This was also the position of China and Russia.

Another important commitment was to establish a permanent and solid peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, agreeing "to actively pursue trilateral meetings involving the two Koreas and the United States, or quadrilateral meetings involving the two Koreas, the United States and China with a view to declaring an end to the Korean War, turning the Korean Armistice Agreement into a peace treaty, and establishing a permanent and solid peace regime".<sup>62</sup> This became an important point in the bilateral negotiations between US and North Korea in the following years.

As direct talks between Washington and Pyongyang showed signs of progress, Beijing was also trying to regain lost ground and in May 8, Xi Jinping met again Kim in Dalian and agreed to provide assistance toward North Korea in the form of chemical fertilizers and food as well as provide support to increase agricultural production and tourists to North Korea.<sup>63</sup> The following day Kim met Mike Pompeo in Pyongyang in order to finalize plans to the summit.

On May 22, 2018, in remarks to reporters, Trump said he was disappointed that Kim had appeared to change his attitude due to the contact with China. Two days later, president Trump, citing anger and hostility of the statements of North Korean officials, call off the meeting with Kim Jong-un in Singapore.<sup>64</sup> A high-ranking US government official said the cancellation was a message to Kim that he faced a choice between the United States or China.

#### **6.6.4. The Singapore summit**

It was a serious setback that was quickly resolved. President Moon Jae-in met again with Kim Jong-un on 26 May at the North Korean side of Panmunjom. Moon acted as a mediator between Trump and Kim laying the ground for the US-North Korea summit, in Singapore on June 12, 2018.<sup>65</sup>

Both leaders signed a Joint Statement. The preamble stated that president Trump had pledged to provide security guarantees and president Kim Jong-un had reaffirmed his commitment to a complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. In this regard, both leaders recognized that mutual confidence building can promote the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The Joint Statement stated the following:

The United States and North Korea commit to establish new US–North Korea relations in accordance with the desire of the peoples of the two countries for peace and prosperity.

The United States and North Korea will join their efforts to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.

Reaffirming the April 27, 2018 Panmunjom Declaration, North Korea committed itself to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

The United States and North Korea committed themselves to recovering POW/MIA remains, including the immediate repatriation of those already identified.

President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong-un committed themselves to implement the stipulations in this joint statement fully and expeditiously holding follow-on negotiations, at the earliest possible date, to implement the outcomes of the US– North Korea summit.<sup>66</sup>

In the press conference, president Trump pledge to suspend the annual US-South Korea military exercises, apparently a surprise for the US military and the South Korean government, a major concession, and said that North Korea promised to destroy the facility for testing its ballistic missiles engines.

The Joint Statement was a declaration of principles and said nothing, including the press conference, on the declaration of weapons for denuclearization, the time frame or the verification protocols. It did not include details, neither a commitment to dismantle North Korea’s ballistic missile program.

Adding to this, the statement “the DPRK commits to work toward

complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula” was problematic. It was introduced in the Joint Declaration of January 20, 1992 between North and South Korea.<sup>67</sup> Several months before, in October 1991 the North Korean proposal for a nuclear weapons free zone included some points unacceptable to the US such as the prohibition of transit, landing and visiting of any nuclear-capable aircraft and/or vessel on the territory of the Korean peninsula, the abolition of the US extended nuclear deterrence, any kind of military exercise involving nuclear weapons and the withdrawal of all US forces and nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula.<sup>68</sup> And several years later, in an official statement dated July 6, 2016, the denuclearization was redefined. Achieving the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula meant the dismantling of nukes in South Korea and its vicinity, demanding that “all nuclear weapons of the United States, which it has neither confirmed nor denied after bringing them into South Korea, must be publicly disclosed”, “all the nukes and their bases should be dismantled and verified in the eyes of the world”, “the US should ensure that it would never bring again the nuclear strike means to South Korea, which the US has frequently deployed on the Korean Peninsula and in its vicinity”, the US “should commit itself to neither intimidating North Korea with nukes or through an act of nuclear war nor using nukes against North Korea in any case”, “the withdrawal of the US troops holding the right to use nukes from South Korea should be declared.”<sup>69</sup> In December 20, 2018, the State-run Korean Central News Agency in another statement said that “the proper definition of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is completely eliminating the American nuclear threat to North Korea before eliminating our nuclear capability.”<sup>70</sup>

North Korea for its part obtained important benefits from the summit. A “pariah” State under heavy UN international sanctions got a meeting with the president of the world's first power, a better international image, audience, acceptance and legitimacy.<sup>71</sup> North Korea state media informed also that Kim Jong-un won important concessions, including an agreement to a phased step-by-step process of denuclearization. Adding to this, Donald Trump said, on his return from the summit, that North Korea no longer posed a nuclear threat,<sup>72</sup> when nuclear and missile disarmament had not yet begun.

Many critics and hard-liners were dissatisfied with the results because they saw in the Joint Statement several diplomatic statements used also since

1994, but without a roadmap for denuclearization, easing much of the economic and diplomatic pressure. From now on the return to the policy of maximum pressure was problematic. They feared that North Korea will continue its nuclear and missile programs, buying time while extracting concessions, as it had always done. The lack of trust was reciprocal.

Others contended that North Korea has acted in bad faith during negotiations and likely never intended to completely denuclearize, instead buying time to continue its nuclear program while extracting concessions. Cheong Seong Whun, formerly president of the Korea Institute for National Unification, attributed the failure of previous deals and policies to North Korea's "chronic habit of noncompliance." Former US Assistant Secretary of State, Susan Thornton, on September 28, 2017, also cited the "DPRK's track record of violating the spirit and the letter of negotiated agreements and commitments."

In any case, president Trump, surprisingly said that "there is no longer a nuclear threat from North Korea."

Days after this summit, on June 19, Kim Jong-un traveled to Beijing, thus showing the importance he attached to China, which was not isolated in this process, meeting again with Xi Jinping.

China immediately called for sanctions to be eased. Neither China nor Russia were willing to accept a bilateral approach between US and North Korea for resolving the nuclear issue. Both countries relaxed the implementation of sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council. Thus, investments, people, oil and black-market commerce continuously flowed across the borders. North Korea, for its part, achieved some adaptation to the new economic barriers and sanctions imposed.

The main question was how to start the process of denuclearization, the sequence of actions to be taken and who should make the first move.

For the US and South Korea, the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula meant the denuclearization of North Korea but this country had other ideas.

Mike Pompeo came to Pyongyang on July 6 to try to get the North Koreans to match their vague commitment to denuclearization, a declaration

of weapons sites, a timeline of deconstruction efforts and, perhaps, a written statement that the North's definition of denuclearization matched Mr. Pompeo's. Washington insisted that North Korea had to disclose all the details of its nuclear weapons program, dismantle its facilities and let outside inspectors verify the steps. The idea was to remove all the North's nuclear weapons and its ability to build more, before offering any significant rewards.

The North, who had always rejected such an approach, instead demanded that the United States had to take "phased simultaneous actions", reciprocal measures in each step it takes toward denuclearization. They wanted security guarantees before denuclearization, and verification would be only after denuclearization avoiding a "before and after" comparison.<sup>73</sup> Far from dismantling its weapons facilities, North Korea had been expanding them and taking steps to conceal the efforts from the United States.

Pompeo could see Kim Yong Chol again but not Kim Jong-un and, at the end, the North Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement accusing the Trump administration of pushing a "unilateral and gangster-like demand for denuclearization"

The process was blocked, giving the impression that North Korea, as on other occasions, was trying to reorganize and hide its nuclear facilities.<sup>74</sup>

On August, 23, Stephen Biegun was nominated as the day to day negotiator. Three weeks later, the White House informed that Kim Jong-un has requested a second summit in a letter to president Trump and the two sides were working on the details. The letter, dated September 6, put some conditions on denuclearization: meaningful steps one at a time in a phased manner, such as the complete shutdown of the Nuclear Weapons Institute or the Satellite Launch District and the irreversible closure of the nuclear materials production facility.<sup>75</sup>

In this context, in September 18-20 Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in met for their third summit, this time in Pyongyang. The two leaders signed the Pyongyang Joint Declaration, which includes agreements to expand the "cessation of military hostilities" between the two countries, advance

economic, humanitarian and cultural cooperation and exchanges, pursue complete denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula and the Kim visit to Seoul "at an early date." North Korea committed to dismantle the Dongchang-ri missile engine test site and launch platform under the observation of international experts and to take additional steps, like the dismantling of the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon, if the United States "takes corresponding measures in accordance with the spirit of the June 12 US-North Korea Joint Statement."

An agreement on the "implementation of the Panmunjom Declaration in the Military Domain" was adopted as an annex to the Pyongyang Joint Declaration. The annex includes commitments for North and South Korea to establish no-fly zones along the border, halt military drills close to the demilitarized zone (DMZ) between the two countries and dismantle several guard posts inside the DMZ.

The following day, Mike Pompeo in a statement said that there was a commitment by North Korea to end the denuclearization negotiations by January 2021- a comment made by the leaders in the inter-Korean summit<sup>76</sup>- and that he invited the North Korean Foreign Minister, Ri Yong Ho, to meet in the New York next week.<sup>77</sup>

This meeting took place on September 7 and the Secretary of State agreed to travel to North Korea to work towards a second summit at the invitation of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

Two weeks later, at the United Nations Assembly, Moon Jae-in said that something miraculous had taken place in the Korean Peninsula, emphasizing the reunification efforts and the summit held in Singapore. In this new environment, it was a must to encourage North Korea to stay on the path leading to a permanent and solid peace.<sup>78</sup> He considered that Kim Jong-un was sincere in his will to denuclearize. It was sufficiently clear that South Korea maintained its own vision and policies, but this diplomatic game was very difficult to keep it consistently.

In his turn, Ri Yong Ho, the minister of Foreign Affairs of North Korea, explaining the North Korean position at the General Assembly was

more incisive. He said that the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula should be realized along with the building of a peace regime under the principle of simultaneous actions, step by step, and giving priority to trust-building. They did not see any corresponding response from the US, which, instead of addressing the North Korean concerns for the absence of a peace regime in the Korean Peninsula, insisted on denuclearization first, increasing the level of pressure by sanctions and objected to the declaration of the end of war.<sup>79</sup> The coercive methods were lethal to trust-building. In his opinion, under the present circumstances, without any trust in the US, there was no way to unilaterally disarm North Korea first.<sup>80</sup>

Two days before this speech, Russia and China had call at the United Nations Security Council for sanctions relief to reward North Korea for the measures it has taken.

On October 7, Mike Pompeo met in Pyongyang with Kim Jong-un and high officials for more than three hours, In this fourth visit he tried “to make sure we understand what each side is truly trying to achieve”. They made a clarification and evaluation of the four pillars of the Singapore summit declaration. Kim Jong-un complained at length about the US sanctions. On the question of denuclearization, the main issue on which the other issues depended for the United States, he promised to dismantle and destroy all of its plutonium and uranium enrichment facilities and Mike Pompeo did not pressed again for an inventory of nuclear devises and its production and storage sites, its missiles and missiles launchers, backing away from the goal of North Korea denuclearization completed by January 2021. Kim said that he will allow inspections of the closed Punggye-ri nuclear test site. However, he indicated it wanted “corresponding” concessions for its efforts to denuclearize that were discussed, as well as the steps North Korea had to take toward denuclearization. Apparently, there was no breakthroughs, except for the question of inspections. The talks on the time and location of the next summit did not reach final agreements.<sup>81</sup> In any case, they agreed to restart the working-level discussions.<sup>82</sup>

The following day Mike Pompeo arrived in Seoul and later moved to Beijing where he met Wang Yi, not Xi Jinping, but China was unwilling to make any substantial changes to its policy. Previously, before going to Pyongyang, he had stopped in Tokyo. All the countries concerned by the

North Korea nuclearization, except Russia, were visited. The US was losing support for its policy of maximum pressure, despite the fact that North Korea has not implemented concrete steps for nuclear disarmament or halting its programs. The case of South Korea was, in particular, paradigmatic. It was being accused by China of not being independent and the United States, in turn, accused it of moving too quickly with Pyongyang.<sup>83</sup> On September 30, South Korea had started to remove the mines at Panmunjom and at Arrow Head Hill and tried to implement a no-fly zone in the border that United States opposed.<sup>84</sup> Later, it proposed to lift some unilateral sanctions imposed on North Korea that president Trump bluntly retorted, saying that Seoul could do nothing without the approval of the United States. In this vein, on October 15, North and South Korea agreed to begin work to establish road and rail links, as mentioned in the Panmunjom declaration of April 27. One month later, on November 24, the U.N. Security Council granted a sanctions waiver to allow the Koreans to conduct a joint field study for connecting their railroads after the United States reversed its opposition to the waiver.

In order to avoid unilateral initiatives and strengthen bilateral coordination, on October 31 the United States and South Korea agree to form a working group to enhance cooperation on a range of issues related to North Korea, including sanctions implementation and “inter-Korean cooperation that comply with the United Nations sanctions.”

Mike Pence in November 15 said that they would not require a complete list of nuclear weapons and locations before the second summit, adding that “I think it will be absolutely imperative in this next summit that we come away with a plan for identifying all of the weapons in question, identifying all the development sites, allowing for inspections of the sites and the plan for dismantling nuclear weapons.”<sup>85</sup>

But in December talks were still stalled. A meeting programmed for November between Secretary of State Pompeo and North Korean General Kim Yongchol in New York had been postponed, citing schedule problems. Although Pompeo maintained the coordination with the South Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kang Kyung-wha was growing exasperated that there had been no progress on the points spelled out at the Singapore summit, including the US war remains transfer. This was worrisome because vice-president Mike Pence had stated in separate interviews that a second summit

between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un would be held in 2019 and Donald Trump, on his return from the G-20 summit in Argentina on November 30, had said that he would probably meet with Kim Jong-un in January or February 2019.

For its part, North Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ri Yong Ho, amid the stalled talks, started a diplomatic offensive with visits to China, Syria and Vietnam. The border trade between China and North Korea was booming and North Korea was expanding a missile base at Yeongjeo-dong.

The United States maintained its policy of maximum pressure and on December 10 announced sanctions against three senior North Korean officials including Choe Ryong-hae, the right hand of Kim Jong-un, over brutal human rights abuses. North Korea protested saying that in the past six months the US State Department and the Treasury Department have carried out eight rounds of sanctions against DPRK companies, individuals and ships as well as other third countries through false pretexts. The sanctions were to block the path to denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.<sup>86</sup>

In this deadlocked situation, Stephen Biegun travelled on December 19 to Panmunjom for a second meeting of the US-South Korea working group. They discussed how to break the impasse in the process of denuclearization and the allies' policies towards DPRK, including sanctions. South Korea was moving too quickly and a better coordination was needed, easing some of maximum pressure measures, turning softer. For South Korea the denuclearization process had reached the point of no return and entered an irreversible phase. Both delegations sought not working at cross purposes with the two sets of talks, undermining each other. Biegun declared that they were willing to ease the rules for facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid, lifting travel ban, reviewing the US policy on private humanitarian assistance to North Korea. On the military side, scaling back the military exercises and adjusting to smaller military drills were discussed between the US and South Korean militaries.

All this meant a less for less approach, a softer approach. US was turning softer on DPRK but it was too early to relax economic sanctions. The two Koreas economic cooperation projects were clouded by sanctions on materials and investments needed for new industries, constructions, interconnections, including reopening the Gaesong complex. Joint economic

projects were still banned until North Korea took major steps toward denuclearization. But South Korea insisted again on broader exemptions to the sanctions.

Nevertheless, the process took on a new dynamic and on December 25 Donald Trump received a letter from Kim Jong-un where he pointed out that they still had to face crucial issues in the new year 2019 and that they had to meet in another historic meeting “reminiscent of a scene from a fantasy film.” Trump responded mentioning that Hanoi or Bangkok could be suitable places for the next summit.

In parallel, in another letter to president Moon Jae-in, dated December 30, Kim Jong-un expressed his interest in meeting with him often next year “to move forward discussions on peace and prosperity and resolve the issue of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.”

The next day, Kim Jong-un in the New Year address said he was ready to continue denuclearization talks with Donald Trump in 2019 but warned that he could be forced to take a “new path” if US sanctions and pressure against the country continued.<sup>87</sup>

Donald Trump confirmed that negotiations were underway for the next summit but said that sanctions will remain in full force and effect until the US see very positive results.

In this new environment, Kim Jong-un departed on January 8 to Beijing to prepare the next summit and Kim Yong-chol visited Washington on January 17 for discussing the summit. On January 18, the White House announced that a second Trump-Kim summit would be held in February 2019, at a location to be announced at a later date.

North Korea replaced the chief negotiator in talks, the counterpart of Stephen Biegun, nominating Kim Hyok-chol, and started the working level talks with a new approach, accepting the “parallel and simultaneous approach” that China and South Korea supported or the “action for action formula”. The first step was no longer going to be the demand of negotiations would try to get a roadmap for negotiations and declarations of North Korean complete inventory of nuclear assets and the working-level negotiations

would try to get a roadmap for negotiations and declarations of the desired outcomes of the joint efforts. The focus shifted from full and immediate denuclearization to a longer-term denuclearization process.

John Bolton made the preparatory briefings for Donald Trump and after discarding the draft prepared by Stephen Biegun, following his talks in Pyongyang and Hanoi,<sup>88</sup> president Trump considered that there were three possible outcomes: a big deal, a small deal or "I walk". The first did not seem feasible, given the results of the negotiation, the second was not acceptable as it implied a weakening of the sanctions, and the third was the most plausible way out.<sup>89</sup>

### **6.6.5. The Hanoi summit**

The summit finally took place in Hanoi on February 27-28 and the results were clearly unsatisfactory. The central issue was denuclearization and its meaning. Kim Jong-un offered merely the dismantling of Yongbyon in exchange for the lifting of all post-2016 United Nations Security Council sanctions. President Trump tried to convince him that a larger concession was needed by giving up not only Yongbyon but five nuclear sites.<sup>90</sup> After several meetings, where both leaders appeared at times irritated and frustrated, coming and going on the subject, it was obvious that they had reached an impasse they could not resolve. Not even a joint statement was agreed.<sup>91</sup> The declaration of the end of war, as South Korea wanted, didn't happen, although the top US government lawyer was present at the summit.<sup>92</sup>

The result was a clear failure due to several factors: Firstly, the delay in the completion of the negotiation by the working-level groups, leaving the central aspect of the negotiation to the two leaders; secondly, the North Korean counterparts were not empowered to negotiate on denuclearization. And also the diversity of positions within the US administration itself, where Stephen Biegun took a negotiating position, obviously with the knowledge of Mike Pompeo<sup>93</sup>, accepting different points that will be rejected by the national security advisor, John Bolton, upon receiving the report in his mid-flight to Hanoi, managing to attract to his position the president, the vice-president and other prominent members of the Trump administration.<sup>94</sup>

Adding to this, there was a clear-cut division in the US political establishment. Nancy Pelosi did not believe that North Korea intended to

denuclearise<sup>95</sup> and the former Director of National Intelligence, Dan Coats, said publicly that "[W]e continue to assess that North Korea is unlikely to give up all of its nuclear weapons and production capabilities, even as it seeks to negotiate partial denuclearization steps to obtain key US and international concessions. North Korean leaders view nuclear arms as critical to regime survival."<sup>96</sup>

North Korea reportedly executed its principal nuclear negotiator, Kim Hyok Chol, and it was even reported that Kim Yong Chol had been sentenced to forced labor.

The reaction of the United States' main allies was mixed. President Moon, who had been left with less room for maneuver, appointed Kim Yeon-chul, a controversial academic and a staunch baker of Korean unification, as the new Minister of Unification. He would seek a "creative solution" to the stalemate. At the same time, in his visit to the White House on April 11 he tried to convince Donald Trump that it was essential to maintain momentum and hold a new summit. The Blue House had suggested a phased-in deal in which North Korea would freeze its nuclear weapons production while receiving some form of sanctions, as a part of a gradual process, blaming John Bolton for the Hanoi failure. Trump was open to a smaller deal and did not oppose to a new summit but said that a prior agreement on the issue of denuclearization was needed.<sup>97</sup> President Abe's position was diametrically opposed, considering the outcome of the summit to be positive and insisting on maintaining sanctions.

On the US side, president Trump still believed that he and Kim Jong-un could negotiate a deal, but did not agree to the re-establishment of the back channel with the North Koreans at the United Nations mission. Sanctions were maintained and military exercises with South Korea continued to be downgraded. Even Stephen Biegun declared that there was room for the development of confidence building measures such as the establishment of a US diplomatic liaison office in North Korea, but he stressed that the US would not accept partial denuclearization nor a step by step approach for elimination of nuclear weapons.<sup>98</sup> However, president Trump wanted at all costs to maintain a good relationship with Kim Jong-un and tried to lower the level of pressure, avoiding further sanctions. North Korea began restoring a portion of the Dongchang-ri missile site and later on

May 4 began testing short-range missiles, the first ballistic missile tests since November 2017, in violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions. Donald Trump tried to downgrade the problem by calling them “artillery” tests, as South Korea also did by calling them “projectiles”, playing down the significance of the missile launches. Japan, however, maintained a more consistent position, considering that they violated the Security Council sanctions.

New launches of short-range missiles took place on May 9, and president Trump said he did not believe North Korea was ready to negotiate but did not consider the recent launches “a breach of trust”. He even rebuked John Bolton who had told reporters that the missile tests violated Security Council resolutions. The US Senate, for its part, tried to strengthen the US position, including new sanctions against North Korea with bipartisan legislation in the annual Defense Bill.<sup>99</sup>

Simultaneously, North Korea strengthened its relations with Russia and later with China making two summits. On April 25, Kim Jong-un met Putin in Russki. The central topic in the discussion was denuclearization, but they also discussed the situation on the Korean Peninsula and the stability of the region. Putin emphasized that North Korea needed solid security guarantees to give up its nuclear arsenal and considered that the Six-Party Talks were the only efficient way for dealing with denuclearization.<sup>100</sup> Xi Jinping, for his part, with his visit to Pyongyang on June 20-21, sought to strengthen relations and increase his influence on the North Korean decision-making process, discussing in particular the economic cooperation and the nuclear issue, supporting the new strategic line adopted by North Korea, trying also to promote the negotiation process according to its traditional criteria.<sup>101</sup>

South Korea, in turn, urged the holding of a new summit<sup>102</sup> and North Korea, a little bit irritated, urged South Korea to stop mediating between the US and North Korea.<sup>103</sup>

#### **6.6.6. The Panmunjom summit and its consequences**

On June 27, president Trump traveled to Osaka for the G-20 meeting and had two full days of meetings in Japan. Surprisingly, in a tweet on June 29, Trump offered to meet North Korea's Kim Jong-un at the demilitarized zone

(DMZ) without having a pre-established plan. Donald Trump had received a letter dated June 10 from Kim Jong-un, alluding to his special friendship and pointing out the need for a new approach to resolving outstanding issues and inviting him to have another meeting. President Trump agreed to this proposal in his June 12 response.<sup>104</sup> On June 30th, during approximately one hour, Trump and Kim Jong-un met at Panmunjom, inside the DMZ. The two leaders agree to restart bilateral talks.<sup>105</sup> The months since the Hanoi summit had been a holding pattern.

And it was clear that something was starting to move. The US negotiating position was relaxing. Stephen Biegun maintained now that a sustained working level negotiation was necessary, empowering the North Korean negotiators, and a flexible approach. In his opinion, nuclear progress was not a condition for resuming talks. Trying to speculate considered that the new approach would begin with a significant but limited first step by North Korea, expanding the Kim Jong-un offer in Hanoi, including many more facilities and accepting intrusive inspections in return for lifting the most onerous sanctions. He believed that enough progress could be achieved without meaningful and verifiable steps on denuclearization. Two days before the new summit at the DMZ, Biegun had told his South Korean counterpart, Lee Do-hoon, that Washington wanted “simultaneous, parallel” progress on the agreement reached in Singapore.<sup>106</sup> And, after the improvised new summit between the two leaders, in a briefing to the press, he again insisted that the new approach would begin with a meaningful first step, pointing out that for president Trump a nuclear freeze was a groundbreaking.<sup>107</sup> But this meant a tacit acceptance of North Korea as a nuclear state, in a long process of denuclearization, something extremely problematic for South Korea.<sup>108</sup>

All this clashed again with the positions held by John Bolton and prominent Republican party figures such as Lindsay Graham. Curiously enough, Michel Pompeo, considered a hawk by North Korea<sup>109</sup>, was letting go. On July 9, a State Department spokesman said that the United States would hope to see a freeze in the North Korean nuclear program as the start of a process of denuclearization, ahead of fresh talks with Pyongyang supposed to take place in July<sup>110</sup> considering a break of 18 months in the sanctions. In this way, the negotiating activity was swiftly resumed. The

North Korean ambassador to Vietnam, Kim Myong-gil, was appointed as Stephen Biegun counterpart. China, which had urged flexibility in the negotiations, was informed by the United States of what had happened at the summit. And Stephen Biegun left for Europe, visiting Brussels on July 8-9 and Berlin on July 10-11 for meetings with European officials and with Lee Do-hoon, "to advance our shared efforts to achieve the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea."<sup>111</sup>

But in the middle of the month, North Korea, claiming that the United States was still conducting military exercises with South Korea, even though the deals had been reconfigured to be smaller, threatened to stop the negotiation process already initiated and to restart missile and nuclear tests. On July 25, North Korea launched two newly designed KN-23 missiles not affecting the US government position on talks<sup>112</sup>, and on July 31, conducted its second missile test in less than a week. On August 6, fired again two short-range missiles and, in a show of force, two new short-range missiles were launched in the tests that took place on August 10, August 16 and August 24 (KN-25 type). This testing activity was perceived as a brinkmanship, increasing pressure on Seoul and Washington. In any case, the military drills -largely computer simulated war games- proceed and Japan, United Kingdom, France and Germany condemned the launches as violation of the Security Council sanctions. Nevertheless, the US officials played down the tests and president Trump said that these kinds of missiles did not violate the promises made to him by Kim Jong-un, although it was clear that North Korea was trying to modernize its arsenals, developing greater range missiles that could reach South Korea, Japan and the US bases in both countries.

Anyway, the launches complicated the attempts to restart the negotiations. North Korea rejected also the dialogue with Seoul.

At the beginning of September, Stephen Biegun declared in a speech at the University of Michigan that North Korea blocked the resumption of nuclear talks<sup>113</sup> and three days later, North Korea responded that it wanted to have direct talks in late September. The next day, September 10, president Trump ousted John Bolton who "wasn't in line" with his agenda. President Trump wanted a "new method" in talks. North Korea, hours before, had launched two more missiles (KN-25 type).

On October 1 it was announced by North Korea that they would begin working-level talks on October 5, and the following day, in a show of strength, launched from the sea a ballistic missile.

In any case, the working-level talks in Stockholm, where the US team brought “creative ideas” and “a number of new initiatives”, failed once again breaking down in an hour. Pyongyang accused the US of maintaining a “hostile policy” and set the year-end deadline to make new proposals on sanctions relief<sup>114</sup> and security guarantees, threatening to resume nuclear and ICBM tests. New missile tests (NK-25 type) took place on October 31 and, in November, a new effort was made by the US to renew the talks but North Korea rebuffed the US offer of December talks not seeing a particular improvement in the US position and concessions, considering the offer made a trick to buy time. On November 28, two short-range missiles (NK-25 type) were launched again.

Although the United States had suspended the planned military exercises with South Korea, on December 7, North Korea carried out an "important" engine test at a long-range rocket launch site. At the same time, its ambassador to the UN said that denuclearization was off the negotiating table with the United States.

In a new appeasement attempt, the US blocked a UN Security Council meeting on North Korea human rights violations, receiving severe criticism from Joe Biden. New tests followed, but sanctions were not lifted as proposed by Russia and China.

Kim Jong-un, in the speech to the 5th Plenary Meeting of the 7th Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea held from December 28 to 31, stressed that North Korea would no longer be “unilaterally bound” to any former concessions made, including the long-range missile and nuclear test moratorium and he confirmed that the world will witness a new strategic weapon to be possessed by the DPRK in the near future.<sup>115</sup>

The result of the process open in Singapore was disastrous. North Korea had never scaled back its nuclear and missile programs during all this negotiating period. In a new election year in the United States it was no longer possible to consolidate a negotiation with such conflicting interests.

### **6.7. The US and South Korea relations under president Donald Trump**

It can be said that bilateral relations during president Trump's administration have been quite complicated and inconsistent on a number of issues, particularly those relating to the policy to be implemented with North Korea. In this regard, on October 31, 2018 the United States and South Korea agreed to form a working group to enhance cooperation and coordination on a range of issues related to North Korea, but significant disagreements in method and proposals remained.

On economic issues, the United States sought to remedy the existing imbalance in the trade relations in goods and services in favor of South Korea, although Korean FDI in the United States had gradually increased. On April 27, 2017, president Trump announced his intention to renegotiate or terminate the KORUS FTA treaty due to the trade imbalance, and even in September he considered withdrawing from the agreement. In October he finally decided to renegotiate it. On September 24, 2018, both presidents signed the new treaty in New York City. The new agreement included an increase in US auto exports from 25,000 to 50,000 with the safety regulations exclusively adopted in the US, plus a delay until 2041 in reductions to US light truck tariffs. At the same time, import restrictions were imposed on Korean products such as aluminum, steel, washing machines and solar products. In the case of steel, South Korea reduced the amount of its steel exports and were exempted from the 25% increase in steel tariffs that the United States imposed on other countries. But the trade deficit in goods and services continued.<sup>116</sup>

Along with the economic issue, the issue of the military alliance was particularly complicated. President Trump, who was unaware of key issues in US relations with South Korea, considered the military alliance to be costly and outdated, and felt that South Korea, a rich country, had to pay much more for the U.S military presence, even more so given the large deficit in bilateral trade (“We’re suckers”<sup>117</sup>). In short, he had a transactionalist view of military alliances. Added to this was the fear of his main collaborators on various occasions, that he might decide to get US troops out of South Korea, considering that the military presence in Korea did not serve US interests.<sup>118</sup>

The question of the increased South Korean contribution to the cost

of the US military presence has remained unresolved in the four years of Donald Trump's presidency. The US-South Korea "Special Measures Agreement" (SMA) on the determination of the costs of the military presence expired at the end of 2019 without any agreement being reached thereafter. On the US side, a 400% increase in the Korean contribution was requested, so that it would reach \$5/5,5 billion. This increase in the contribution was discussed directly by president Trump in April and June 2019 with president Moon<sup>119</sup> without apparent results, as the increase was very substantial when looking at the 2018 and 2019 figures paid by the South Korean government. In 2018 South Korea provided about \$830 million, roughly 40 % of the cost of the deployment of 28,500 US soldiers and on February 10, 2019, the chief negotiators from the two countries signed a new cost-sharing plan, which required South Korea to pay about \$924 million in 2019, postponing the reckoning for one year. But the Korean counterpart has not been willing to accept this increase.

It should also be mentioned that South Korea paid \$9.7 billion - about 94% of total costs - to construct new military facilities for relocating US military forces deployed in bases and facilities near the North Korean border and Seoul. The new US Army Garrison Humphreys, located within the seaport city of Pyeongtaek, along the western coast of South Korea, is the world's largest overseas US base.

Apart from the issues of usefulness and cost, another important aspect must be mentioned. After the Singapore summit, to facilitate negotiations with North Korea, president Trump ordered the cancellation of major annual military exercises with South Korea, creating serious problems over the readiness of the US troops, but given the military pressures, smaller exercises continued.<sup>120</sup>

Another problem that dragged on from previous years, the transfer of OPCON, was not solved either. The two allies had also tentatively agreed to relocate the Combined Forces Command headquarters in central Seoul to the new US Army Garrison Humphreys by 2021. Seoul and Washington are now eyeing 2022 as the target year for OPCON transfer.

Finally, another point of special concern in this period was South Korea's decision to abandon the ROK-Japan military intelligence sharing

pact eroding the US-ROK-Japan security cooperation. After heavy US pressure, Seoul in November 2019 agreed to delay its withdrawal from the agreement.

### **6.8. Conclusions**

We can highlight several points in the U. S. relations with the two Koreas in the last thirty years.

Firstly, the unstoppable progress of North Korea's nuclear systems, short-, medium- and long-range missiles and the consolidation of North Korea as the main threat to the United States.

Secondly, the disastrous negotiating process carried out by the United States from the Clinton administration to the Trump administration in order to address the nuclear non-proliferation in the Korean peninsula, especially under the Obama administrations, which was particularly ill-fated. Policies of "firmness" have been followed by policies of engagement, strategic patience, maximum pressure, and also appeasement, or even a mixture of several of them. Diplomatic approaches have lacked unity, intelligent evaluations on possible supports and allies, continuity and strategic vision, reaching somewhat striking situations in recent years with the implementation of what can be called "bromance diplomacy". To this must be added the continuous pressures from the government of president Moon, whose main objective has been to facilitate unification, introducing distorting elements in the negotiation and, according to John Bolton, being the promoters of the summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un ("a diplomatic fandango").

The Trump administration attempted to reverse the situation when president Obama himself confessed to the new president that North Korea had become the main threat to the United States and that for various reasons, including Seoul's proximity to the DMZ, there was no military solution.

Initially, the Trump administration sought China's support, considering this country as the key to the solution, even accepting China's traditional position on the different dangers of North Korean destabilization,

approaches that had been largely overcome. However, once the main issue, strong sanctions to North Korea, had been achieved in the UN Security Council in 2017, it tried to go alone by marginalizing China and, in another order, Russia, with very little results. The possibility of a military confrontation had vanished and China did not accept its isolation.

This policy, on the other hand, was proven wrong. North Korea strengthened its consultations and cooperation with China and neither China nor Russia not only were not willing to accept the imposition of new sanctions but also did not strictly comply with the Security Council resolutions. Investments, people, oil and black-market commerce continuously flowed across the borders. North Korea, for its part, achieved some adaptation to the new economic barriers and sanctions imposed.

In 2018 Donald Trump moved to a policy of engagement maintaining in parallel the policy of “maximum pressure”. However, with very limited results. North Korea didn’t trust the United States and, in this negotiation process, tried to slice “the salami” too thin, demanding the building of a climate of confidence first by lifting sanctions, offering in parallel some denuclearization steps and asking for legally binding security guarantees. Thus, the denuclearization process and building a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula should last a significant period of time and done only in a multilateral framework, given the Northeast Asia new geopolitical and security environment.

Nevertheless, the US negotiating position changed in 2019, in particular after the John Bolton resignation, adopting a more flexible and incremental approach, and a policy of appeasement, in order to resume talks. But in vain. The incremental approach offered by the US, first in the working-level groups and later in informal conversations, was considered insufficient by North Korea.

The implications of this negotiating process are critical. The personal connection of Donald Trump with King Jong-un apparently was clearly insufficient to move the negotiating process. Adding to this, a clear cut

division exists in the US political establishment among the Republican party, the Democrats and the Intelligence Services.

There are also concerns regarding the consequences of the increasing modernization of North Korean nuclear and missile arsenals that took place in the last few years of negotiations and the implications of these negotiations for the US future presence in the Korean Peninsula, if denuclearization and reunification were coordinated with the gradual withdrawal of US troops, given some proposal advanced. South Korea, even taking into account its strong military modernization in recent years, cannot face alone the security threats that affects the country and the region. It needs the US nuclear umbrella or it must develop its own nuclear umbrella.

Moreover, the US allies are worried after the publication in the newspapers of a proposal to dismantle the long-range missiles- not the short and middle-range missiles- in the incremental process of negotiations. Adding to this, the US was silent during the continuous testing of short-range missiles by North Korea during 2019, violating the UN Security Council resolutions. The risk of decoupling between US and its allies is evident.

Other important concern was the following: easing the US demands with the new negotiating methodology and the acceptance of the nuclear freeze involve giving a precious time to the consolidation of North Korea as a *de facto* nuclear country and constitutes a clear problem and danger for South Korea This result is not acceptable and clashes in addition with the negotiating philosophy adopted by the US with Iran. Thus, the possible global and regional implications (“going nuclear”) are very serious.

Additionally, we can say that, at the regional level, the role of South Korea is clearly limited. South Korea cannot be a mediator in the scientific meaning of the term, but it can use its good offices, especially between the US and North Korea. Adding to this, the UN sanctions to North Korea and the geopolitical security issues generate insurmountable barriers that block the freedom of movement needed for expanding the inter-Korean relations (unless the government of South Korea, giving the top and first priority

to unification, considers appropriate an Acheson line, changing the traditional security rationale, when North Korea and China are flexing their military muscles).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The bilateral agreement kept secret many details of how the accord will be put into practice Robert L. Gallucci, said the US and North Korea had signed a separate confidential document that was more specific than the four-page "agreed framework" that was made public See: Riding Allan: "U.S. and North Korea Sign Pact to End Nuclear Dispute", *The New York Times*, 22 October 1994, at <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/10/22/world/us-and-north-korea-sign-pact-to-end-nuclear-dispute.html>.

Concerns regarding the DPRK intentions and programs increased and the US demanded inspections to verify compliance that led to "a cat- and-mouse game" reaching a heigh with the launch of a series of missile tests, including the launch in August 31, 1998, of a new, long-range Taepodong-1 ballistic missile which overflowed Japan. After that, started "the Perry Process" that resulted in the suspension of DPRK missile tests and the beginning of talks on DPRK plutonium and uranium nuclear programs in 1999. See Carter Ash (2019): *Inside the Five-Sided Box*, New York, Dutton, pp. 303-307.

<sup>2</sup> Marquina Antonio: "Los Conflictos Internacionales con Irán y Corea del Norte: El Proceso Negociador", *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, n°. 13 (Enero/January 2007), pp. 117-122, at <http://www.unisci.es/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Marquina13.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> On the Six-Party Talks it is interesting to read the memoirs of different US protagonists or important members in the decision-making process Rumsfeld Donald (2011): "*Known and Unknown. A memoir*", New York, Sentinel, pp.641- 644 (very critical). Rice Condolezza (2011): "*No Higher Honor*", New York, Broadway Paperbacks, (She explains *in extenso* the negotiations). Cheney Dick (2011): "*In My Time*", New York, Threshold Editions, pp.463-477 (very critical). Hill Christopher R. (2014): "*Outpost*", New York, Simon & Shuster. (He explains the negotiations).

<sup>4</sup> The text of the Joint Declaration is the following: For the cause of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia at large, the Six Parties held,

in the spirit of mutual respect and equality, serious and practical talks concerning the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula on the basis of the common understanding of the previous three rounds of talks, and agreed, in this context, to the following:

The Six Parties unanimously reaffirmed that the goal of the Six-Party Talks is the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner

The DPRK committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and returning, at an early date, to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to IAEA safeguards.

The United States affirmed that it has no nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula and has no intention to attack or invade the DPRK with nuclear or conventional weapons.

The ROK reaffirmed its commitment not to receive or deploy nuclear weapons in accordance with the 1992 Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, while affirming that there exist no nuclear weapons within its territory.

The 1992 Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula should be observed and implemented.

The DPRK stated that it has the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The other parties expressed their respect and agreed to discuss, at an appropriate time, the subject of the provision of light water reactor to the DPRK.

The Six Parties undertook, in their relations, to abide by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and recognized norms of international relations.

The DPRK and the United States undertook to respect each other's sovereignty, exist peacefully together, and take steps to normalize their relations subject to their respective bilateral policies.

The DPRK and Japan undertook to take steps to normalize their relations in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration, on the basis of the settlement of unfortunate past and the outstanding issues of concern.

The Six Parties undertook to promote economic cooperation in the fields of energy, trade and investment, bilaterally and/or multilaterally.

China, Japan, ROK, Russia and the US stated their willingness to provide energy assistance to the DPRK.

The ROK reaffirmed its proposal of July 12th 2005 concerning the provision of 2

million kilowatts of electric power to the DPRK.

The Six Parties committed to joint efforts for lasting peace and stability in Northeast Asia.

The directly related parties will negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate separate forum.

The Six Parties agreed to explore ways and means for promoting security cooperation in Northeast Asia.

The Six Parties agreed to take coordinated steps to implement the afore-mentioned consensus in a phased manner in line with the principle of "commitment for commitment, action for action".

The Six Parties agreed to hold the Fifth Round of the Six-Party Talks in Beijing in early November 2005 at a date to be determined through consultations.

<sup>5</sup> Yang Eunsook: "South Korean Government under the former CEO, President Lee Myung-bak", *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, n°. 18 (Octubre / October 2008). In July 2008, a South Korean woman was shot dead at the Kümkansang mountain resort and all the South Korean tours were cancelled.

<sup>6</sup> Regarding the Obama administrations we have very few consistent elaborations of the policies developed in the published memoirs of the main protagonists. Clinton Hillary Rodham (2014): *Hard Choices*, New York, Shimon & Shuster. These memoirs are disappointing. She mentions the importance of China pp.53-58 and practically nothing on sanctions, p.235, 432. Rice Susan (2019): *Tough Love*, New York, Simon & Shuster, mentions the approval of three major resolutions by the UN Security Council after the resolutions of 2016, pp.255-260 and how reluctant the Obama administration was to exert the maximum pressure on North Korea, p.450. Gates Robert. M. (2014): *Duty*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, mentions various incidents, debates on missile defense, and the issue of North Korea in his talks with Chinese authorities. Panetta, Leon (2014): *Worthy Fights*, Penguin Press, mentions also the importance of China, p. 276, p.276 and 446 and the contingency planning pp.274-276. Carter Ash (2019): *Inside the Five-Sided Box*, New York, Penguin Random House, mentions the work on war plans pp.303-311, and exposes the need to take an incremental, step by step, negotiating approach, involving the other countries in the risk of war in the Korean Peninsula and considering patience as the most critical ingredient in such negotiations, p.310. Kerry John (2018): *Every Day is Extra*, New York, Shimon & Shuster, surprisingly does not say any relevant thing on North Korea. And the book by Power Samatha (2019): *The Education of an Idealist*, London, William Collins, briefly mentions sanctions and human rights.

<sup>7</sup> Bader Jeffrey A.: "Obama and China's Rise: An Insider's Account of America's Asia Strategy", Washington DC, Brookings Institution., p.86

<sup>8</sup> Marquina Antonio: "Las pretensiones nucleares de la República Popular Democrática de Corea y la aproximación de la República Popular China", Comentario UNISCI n°. 124, 18 September 2017, point 3, p. 4, at <http://www.unisci.es/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/124MARQUINA-1.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> See these critics in *Ibid.*, point 3.

<sup>10</sup> Woodward Bob (2018): *Fear*, New York, Simon & Shuster, pp.91-95.

<sup>11</sup> "Joint vision for the alliance of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea", The White House, 16 June 2009, at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/joint-vision-alliance-united-states-america-and-republic-korea>

<sup>12</sup> Gates Robert. M. (2014): *Duty*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf., p.418.

<sup>13</sup> Seib, Gerald F., Solomon Jay and Lee Carol E.: "Barack Obama Warns Donald Trump on North Korea Threat. White House says new president's top foreign priority should be nuclear Pyongyang" *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 November 2016, at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-faces-north-korean-challenge-1479855286>; Nakamura David and Gearan Anne: "Obama warned Trump on North Korea. But Trump's 'fire and fury' strategy wasn't what Obama aides expected", *The Washington Post*, 9 August 2017, at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-warned-trump-on-north-korea-but-trumps-fire-and-fury-strategy-wasnt-what-obama-aides-expected/2017/08/09/f3f02e0e-7d19-11e7-9d08-b79f191668ed\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-warned-trump-on-north-korea-but-trumps-fire-and-fury-strategy-wasnt-what-obama-aides-expected/2017/08/09/f3f02e0e-7d19-11e7-9d08-b79f191668ed_story.html); Baker Peter: "The War That Wasn't: Trump Claims Obama Was Ready to Strike North Korea", *New York Times*, 16 February 2019, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/16/us/politics/trump-obama-north-korea.html>

<sup>14</sup> Woodward Bob (2018): *Fear. Trump in the White House*, New York, Simon & Shuster, p 98. Woodward Bob (2020): *Rage*, New York, Simon & Shuster, p 39-43.

<sup>15</sup> According to Woodward the range went from accepting North Korea as a nuclear power all the way to regime change (for doing that they needed the cooperation with China) or a military attack. Woodward Bob: *Rage, op.cit.* p.39.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p.40

<sup>17</sup> Johnson Jesse: "Amid North Korea threat, Tillerson hints that 'circumstances could evolve' for a Japanese nuclear arsenal", *The Japan Times*, 19 March 2017, at <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/03/19/national/amid-north-korea-threat-tillerson-hints-circumstances-evolve-japanese-nuclear-arsenal/#.W975HpNKhPY>.

<sup>18</sup> “Japan could get nuclear weapons 'virtually overnight,' Biden tells Xi”, *Japan Times*, 24 June 2016, at

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/06/24/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-get-nuclear-weapons-virtually-overnight-biden-tells-xi/#.XiAnvSN7mUk>

<sup>19</sup> About this trip see Brunnstrom David, Torbati Yeganeh: “Tillerson to press China on North Korea in tough first Asia trip” *Reuters*, 14 March 2017, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-asia-tillerson-idUSKBN16L2SZ?il=0>;

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<sup>20</sup> Minemura Kenji: “3 years later, Trump still lacks clear strategy to deal with China”, *Asahi Shimbun*, 8 February 2020, at <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13100266>

<sup>21</sup> During the dinner with Xi Jinping, the United States launched an attack on Syria in retaliation for a chemical weapons attack, not previously informed to Chinese interlocutors, probably to stress that they were ready for unilateral action against North Korea.

<sup>22</sup> Rampton Roberta, Funakoshi Minami: “Pence kicks off Japan talks, both sides seek ‘near term’ results”, *Reuters*, 17 April, 2017, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pence-asia-japan/pence-kicks-off-japan-talks-both-sides-seek-near-term-results-idUSKBN17J1GI>; Rampton Robert: “Vice President Pence heads to Seoul as North Korea tensions flare”, *Reuters*, 14 April 2017, at <https://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCAKBN17G08X-OCATP>; Rucker Philip: Trump: ‘We may terminate ‘US-South Korea trade agreement’”, *The Washington Post*, 27 April 2017, at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-we-may-terminate-us-south-korea-trade-agreement/2017/04/27/75ad1218-2bad-11e7-a616-d7c8a68c1a66\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-we-may-terminate-us-south-korea-trade-agreement/2017/04/27/75ad1218-2bad-11e7-a616-d7c8a68c1a66_story.html); Fifield Anna: “Pence tells North Korea not to underestimate American resolve”, *The Washington Post*, 16 April 2017, at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/north-korea-tops-pences-agenda-during-four-nation-asia-trip/2017/04/16/0ec696c0-2282-11e7-836b-e91b113bf060\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.edb21d3f146a](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/north-korea-tops-pences-agenda-during-four-nation-asia-trip/2017/04/16/0ec696c0-2282-11e7-836b-e91b113bf060_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.edb21d3f146a); “Remarks by the Vice President at ASEAN”, The White House, 21 April 2017, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-asean/>; Parameswaran, Prashanth: “What Did Pence’s Indonesia Visit Achieve?”, *The Diplomat*, 22 April 2017, at <https://thediplomat.com/2017/04/what-did-pences-indonesia-visit-achieve/>; “Donald Trump’s Vice President Mike Pence arrives in Sydney”, *News Corp Australia Network*, 23 April, 2017, at <https://www.news.com.au/national/politics/donald-trumps-vicepresident-mike-pence-arrives-in-sydney/news-story/1eb311d4953ad4e93c0551a85c7d02a1>

<sup>23</sup> “Remarks by Secretary Mattis at Shangri-La Dialogue”, US Department of Defense, 3 June 2017, at <https://dod.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/1201780/remarks-by-secretary-mattis-at-shangri-la-dialogue/>

<sup>24</sup> Moon Jae-in was personal adviser and chief of staff of president Moo Roh-hyun

<sup>25</sup> “Joint Statement between the United States and the Republic of Korea”, The White House, 30 June 2017, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/joint-statement-united-states-republic-korea/>.

<sup>26</sup> “Trump declares ‘patience is over’ with North Korea”, *The Guardian*, 1 July 2017, at <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jul/01/donald-trump-declares-patience-is-over-with-north-korea>

<sup>27</sup> According to Woodward, the Commander of the US forces in Korea, General Vincet Brooks, with the approval of Mattis, ordered the fire of a tactical missile from a beach, running in parallel to the North South border and travelled 186 into the East Sea. It was the exact distance between the launching point of the US missile and the North Korean missile test. But there was no indication that North Koreans realized “that the missile could have easily been aimed north at the test side or at Kim”. Woodward Bob: *Rage, op.cit.* p.75

<sup>28</sup> Again, the Commander of the US forces in Korea, General Vincet Brooks, with the approval of Mattis, ordered the fire of a tactical missile with a deep-strike precision capability, but apparently the authorities of North Korea did not understand the message. See Woodward Bob *op. cit.* p.76.

<sup>29</sup> “Xi Jinping Meets with US president Donald Trump”, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China”, 9 July 2017, at [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjb\\_663304/zzjg\\_663340/bmdyzs\\_664814/gjlb\\_664818/3432\\_664920/3435\\_664926/t1477416.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zzjg_663340/bmdyzs_664814/gjlb_664818/3432_664920/3435_664926/t1477416.shtml); Mason Jeff: “Trump keeps it friendly with Xi at G-20 on North Korea threat”, Reuters, 8 July 2017, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-g20-germany-trump-xi/trump-keeps-it-friendly-with-xi-at-g20-on-north-korea-threat-idUSKBN19T0SP>; Phillips Tom: “Donald Trump say China does ‘nothing’ to thwart North Korea’s nuclear quest”, *The Guardian*, 30 July 2017, at <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jul/30/donald-trump-says-china-does-nothing-to-thwart-north-koreas-nuclear-quest>

<sup>30</sup> Resolution 2371 (2017), 5 August 2017, at [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2371%282017%29](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2371%282017%29);

McCurry Justin, Holmes Oliver: "North Korea vows 'thousands-fold' revenge on US over sanctions", *The Guardian*, 7 August 2017, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/07/north-korea-vows-thousands-fold-revenge-on-us-over-sanctions>

<sup>31</sup> Oliphant James, Blanchard Ben: "In call with Trump, China's Xi urges restraint over North Korea", *Reuters*, 8 August 2017, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles-china-idUSKBN1AO011>

<sup>32</sup> Woodward Bob, *Rage, op.cit.* p.77-80

<sup>33</sup> "South Koreans puzzled by US President Donald Trump's North 'appeasement' tweet", *The Straits Times*, 4 September 2017, at <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/south-koreans-puzzled-by-us-president-donald-trumps-north-appeasement-tweet>. This position was criticized for being unwelcome in both Washington and South Korea, where the response from the Blue House was a mensurated statement: "We will not give up and will continue to push for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through peaceful means working together with our allies."

<sup>34</sup> Resolution 2375 (2017), Adopted by the Security Council at its 8042nd meeting, on 11 September 2017, at <https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/s/res/2375-%282017%29>

<sup>35</sup> Shinzo Abe stated that they did not need dialogue but pressure and Moon Jae-in, in his meeting with Donald Trump stated that "North Korea has continued to make provocations and this is extremely deplorable and this has angered both me and our people. But the United States has responded firmly and in a very good way" ... "Mr. President, in the UN general assembly you made a very strong speech, and I believe that the strength of your speech will also help to change North Korea", "Remarks: Donald Trump Meets with Moon Jae.in of South Korea", 21 September 2017, at <https://factba.se/transcript/donald-trump-remarks-moon-jae-in-south-korea-september-21-2017>

<sup>36</sup> "Full Text of S. Korean President Moon's address to UN General Assembly", 21 September 2017, at <https://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2017/09/21/0301000000AEN20170921013400315.html>

<sup>37</sup> Baker Peter, Sengupta Somini: "Trump Moves to Widen US Sanctions on North Korea", *The New York Times*, 21 September 2017, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/21/world/asia/trump-korea-japan.html>

<sup>38</sup> Woodward Bob: *Rage, op.cit.* p.80.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* p.81-82.

<sup>40</sup> Woodward explains some Pentagon preparations, military pressure and fears. Woodward Bob: *Rage, op.cit.* Chapter 11.

<sup>41</sup> The New York Times echoed these possible contacts, considering that while it had always been avoided, no longer could be avoided. Sanger David E.: “In Tillerson’s China Stop, Questions on North Korea but Slim Chance of Clarity”, *The New York Times*, 29 September 2017, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/29/world/asia/rex-tillerson-china-north-korea.html>

<sup>42</sup> “Joint Press Release by the United States of America and the Republic of Korea”, The White House, 8 November 2017, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/joint-press-release-united-states-america-republic-korea/>

<sup>43</sup> “Remarks by President Trump and President Moon of the Republic of Korea in Joint Press Conference | Seoul, Republic of Korea”, The White House, 7 November 2017, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-president-moon-republic-korea-joint-press-conference-seoul-republic-korea/>; “Joint Press Release by the United States of America and the Republic of Korea”, The White House, 8 November 2017, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/joint-press-release-united-states-america-republic-korea/>;

<sup>44</sup> “Remarks by President Trump to the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea | Seoul, Republic of Korea”, The White House, 7 November 2017, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-national-assembly-republic-korea-seoul-republic-korea/>

<sup>45</sup> “Remarks by President Trump and President Xi of China in Joint Press Statement, Beijing, China”, The White House, 9 November 2017, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-president-xi-china-joint-press-statement-beijing-china/>

<sup>46</sup> “Remarks by President Trump at Business Event with President Xi of China | Beijing, China”, The White House, 9 November 2017, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-business-event-president-xi-china-beijing-china/>; “Remarks by President Trump and President Xi of China in Joint Press Statement | Beijing, China”, The White House, 9 November 2017, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings->

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<sup>47</sup> “China renews call for North Korea, US ‘freeze-for-freeze’”, *Japan Times*, 17 November 2017, at <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/11/17/asia-pacific/china-renews-call-north-korea-u-s-freeze-freeze-agreement/#.W-vc3ehKhPY>; Denyer Simon: “China says it hasn’t dropped its plan for Korean de-escalation, despite Trump”, *The Washington Post*, 16 November 2017, at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/china-sticks-by-freeze-for-freeze-korea-de-escalation-proposal-contradicting-trump/2017/11/16/802f5df8-caaa-11e7-b0cf-7689a9f2d84e\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.9097145cf496](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/china-sticks-by-freeze-for-freeze-korea-de-escalation-proposal-contradicting-trump/2017/11/16/802f5df8-caaa-11e7-b0cf-7689a9f2d84e_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.9097145cf496); “Jim Mattis sees opportunities for talks if North Korea halts missiles tests, development”, *Reuters*, 16 November 2017, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles-usa-military/mattis-sees-opportunity-for-talks-if-north-korea-halts-missile-tests-development-idUSKBN1DG2B9>; Nevehay Stephanie: “Exclusive: North Korea rules out negotiations on nuclear weapons”, *Reuters*, 17 November 2017, at <https://in.reuters.com/article/northkorea-nuclear-envoy-idINKBN1DH1OP>

<sup>48</sup> “North Korea: Trump is ‘begging for nuclear war’”, *CNN*, 2 December 2017, at <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/12/02/asia/north-korea-trump/index.html>; Collins Pádraig: “Risk of war with North Korea grows each day, says Trump’s security adviser”, *The Guardian*, 3 December 2017, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/03/risk-of-war-with-north-korea-grows-every-day-says-trumps-security-adviser>; Lewis Jeffrey: “Trump is Bluffing About Attacking North Korea in 2018”, *Foreign Policy*, 28 December 2018, at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/12/28/trump-is-bluffing-about-attacking-north-korea-in-2018/>

<sup>49</sup> Imports of petroleum products were further limited. A ban on North Korea from exporting food and agricultural products, machinery, electrical equipment, land and stone, wood and ships was introduced, and a ban on other States from supplying, selling or transferring to North Korea, industrial, transport vehicles, iron, steel and other metals with the exception of spare parts for their civil aviation was also included. It extended the prohibition of work authorizations to North Korean nationals in other States, having to return to their country within 24 months. Maritime measures to prevent prohibited exports were strengthened, and insurance and reinsurance services were included in the prohibitions. States were required to remove ships from registration if they were engaged in illegal activities. “Resolution 2397 (2017), Adopted by the Security Council at its 8151st meeting”, 22 December 2017, at

[https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7b65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7d/s\\_res\\_2397.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7b65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7d/s_res_2397.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> “National Security Strategy of the United States of America”, December 2017, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905-2.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> “Summary of the National Defense Strategy”, US Department of Defense, 19 January 2018, at <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>

<sup>52</sup> “Nuclear Posture Review”, Office of the Secretary of Defense, February 2018, at <https://dod.defense.gov/News/SpecialReports/2018NuclearPostureReview.aspx>

<sup>53</sup> “Kim Jong Un's 2018 New Year's Address”, The National Committee on North Korea, at <https://www.ncnk.org/node/1427>

<sup>54</sup> Pramuk Jacob: “Trump: Sanctions are having a ‘big impact’ on North Korea”, *CNBC*, 2 January 2018, at <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/01/02/trump-says-sanctions-are-having-an-effect-on-north-korea.html>.

<sup>55</sup> Minemura Kenji: “3 years later, Trump still lacks clear strategy to deal with China”, *Asahi Shimbun*, 8 February 2020, at <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13100266>

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> According to John Bolton, Chung Eui Yong “later all but admitted that it was he who had suggested to Kim that he make the invitation in the first place. This whole diplomatic fandango was South Korea’s creation, relating more to its “unification” agenda than serious strategy from Kim’s part or ours”. Bolton John (2020): *The Room Where It Happened*, New York, Shimon & Shuster, p.78.

<sup>58</sup> According to Bob Woodward, Chung Eui Yong explained that Kim had made four explicit promises:1. Commitment to denuclearization. 2. Refrain from any further nuclear or missile tests.3. Routine military exercises between US and South Korea could continue.4. Kim was eager to meet with Trump. Woodward Bob: *Rage, op.cit.* p.91.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* p.100-101.

<sup>60</sup> North Korea 'halts missile and nuclear tests', says Kim Jong-un”, *BBC*,21 April 2018, at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-43846488>

<sup>61</sup> Bolton John, *op.cit.* p.78-79.

<sup>62</sup> Panmunjom Declaration on Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula, 27 April 2018. at <http://english1.president.go.kr/BriefingSpeeches/Speeches/32>

<sup>63</sup> Chinese customs statistics showed that China provided North Korea with 160,000 tons of fertilizer and 1,000 tons of rice at no cost between June and September 2018. See Minemura Kenji: “3 years later, Trump still lacks clear strategy to deal with China”, *op.cit.*

<sup>64</sup> Woodward Bob: *Rage, op.cit.* p.107

<sup>65</sup> Minemura Kenji: “3 years later, Trump still lacks clear strategy to deal with China”, *op. cit.* There are several stories about the preparations and what happened at this meeting. The most significant is that of John Bolton who was present at the meeting of the two leaders. See Bolton John, *op.cit.* p.80-116

<sup>66</sup> “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, 12 June 2018, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/joint-statement-president-donald-j-trump-united-states-america-chairman-kim-jong-un-democratic-peoples-republic-korea-singapore-summit/>. “Assessment of the Singapore Summit”, CSIS, 12 June 2018, at <https://www.csis.org/analysis/assessment-singapore-summit>

<sup>67</sup> Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, US Department of State, 20 January 1992, at <https://2001-2009.state.gov/t/oc/rls/or/2004/31011.htm>. In the point 4 stated: The South and the North, in order to verify the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, shall conduct inspection of the objects selected by the other side and agreed upon between the two sides, in accordance with procedures and methods to be determined by the South-North Joint Nuclear Control Commission.

<sup>68</sup> Garrido Vicente: “El Programa Nuclear y de Misiles Balísticos de Corea del Norte: ¿Optimismo, pragmatismo u optimismo pragmático?” *Revista UNISCI/ UNISCI Journal* n°. 51 (October/Octubre 2019) pp. 160-161.

<sup>69</sup> Carlin Robert: “North Korea Said it is Willing to Talk about Denuclearization...But No One Noticed”, Commentary, *Foreign Affairs* 12 July 2016, at <https://www.38north.org/2016/07/rcarlin071216/>

<sup>70</sup> Kim Joeongmin, Smith Josh: “North Korea media says denuclearization includes ending U.S. nuclear threat”, *Reuters*, 20 December 2020, at

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-usa-denuclearisation-idUSKCN1OJ0J1>

<sup>71</sup> “Assessment of the Singapore Summit”, CSIS, 12 June 2018, at <https://www.csis.org/analysis/assessment-singapore-summit>

<sup>72</sup> Sullivan Eileen: “Trump Says ‘There Is No Longer a Nuclear Threat’ After Kim Jong-un Meeting”, *The New York Times*, 13 June 2018, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/13/us/politics/trump-north-korea-nuclear-threat.html>

<sup>73</sup> Bolton John, *op. cit.*, p.118

<sup>74</sup> Significant details on the US perception of a waste of time and the possible role of China in *Ibid.* p 118-126.

<sup>75</sup> Woodward Bob, *op. cit.* p. 172

<sup>76</sup> Mike Pompeo said later that “My comment about 2021 was not mine. I repeated it but it was a comment that had been made by the leaders who had their inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang. They talked about 2021 when they were gathered there. So, I was reiterating this as a timeline that they were potentially prepared to agree to.” See: Haas Benjamin: “Pompeo backs away from North Korea denuclearization timeline”, *The Guardian*, 4 October 2018, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/04/pompeo-backs-away-from-north-korea-denuclearisation-timeline>

<sup>77</sup> “Pompeo says North Korea nuclear talks to be completed by January 2021”, *CNBC*, 19 September 2018, at <https://www.cnn.com/2018/09/19/pompeo-says-north-korea-nuclear-talks-must-be-done-by-january-2021.html>

<sup>78</sup> “Address by President Moon Jae-in of the Republic of Korea at the 73th Session of the United Nations General Assembly”, 26 September 2018.

<sup>79</sup> This last question was not explicitly agreed upon at the Singapore summit and apparently, as it was mentioned before, was part of the South Korean policies for unification. The possible implications for the US military presence and regional security were considered to be serious. See Bolton John, *op. cit.* p.322.

<sup>80</sup> “Statement by H.E. RI Yong Ho, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic People’s Republic of Korea at the General Debate of the 73rd Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations”, 29 September 2018. The official news agency KCNA on 16 October said in a lengthy commentary that “hostile policy and reciprocity cannot go together.”

<sup>81</sup> Simultaneously, the deputy Foreign Ministers of Russia, China, and North Korea met in Moscow and signed a joint statement calling for adjusting the U.N. Security Council sanctions against North Korea at an appropriate time. And Russia and North Korea deputies agreed to work more closely on issues of regional security

<sup>82</sup> Bolton John, *op. cit.* p.126

<sup>83</sup> Within South Korea there was a division on the extent of consultations to be held with the United States See Sin Hyonhee: “Growing Split in Seoul over North Korea Threatens detente and nuclear talks”, *Reuters*, 5 December 2018, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-southkorea-unification-dis-idUSKBN1O32VV>

<sup>84</sup> The United Nations Command and military officers from South Korea and North Korea met several times, starting in October 16, to examine the plans for demilitarizing the border. removing firearms and guard posts.

<sup>85</sup> Mike Pence: ‘Now We Need to See Results’ On North Korea Denuclearization | *NBC News*, 15 November 2018, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMPjZe8PAgA>

<sup>86</sup> Sang-Hun Choe: “Hard-Line U.S. Tactics Will ‘Block’ Path to Denuclearization, North Korea Warns”, *The New York Times*, 16 December 2018, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/16/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-talks-us.html>

<sup>87</sup> The address was divided into three parts: The central part dealt with the need for strengthening the independent socialist development of the economy and improving the people's standard of living radically. The second explained the measures adopted for achieving a great turn in the relations between the two Koreas. And the third part of the speech dealt with peace and security and the strengthening of friendship with different countries. In this regard Kim Jong-un emphasized the North Korea- US summit and talks developed, mentioning that “we would neither make and test nuclear weapons any longer nor use and proliferate them”, warning that if the US attempted to “unilaterally enforce something upon us and persists in imposing sanctions and pressure against our Republic, we may be compelled to find a new way for defending the sovereignty of the country.” “Kim Jong Un's 2019 New Year Address”, The National Committee on North Korea (NCNK), 1 January 2019, at [https://www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/kimjongun\\_2019\\_newyearaddress.pdf/file\\_view](https://www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/kimjongun_2019_newyearaddress.pdf/file_view)

<sup>88</sup> The Biegun draft was known by Bolton when he was already in flight to Hanoi and maneuvered to redirect the prepared US-North Korea statement. See the opinions by John Bolton on the Stephen Biegun draft in Bolton John, *op.cit.* p.323-

324, According to the press the working level talks covered more than 12 items in the pre-summit talks, “US, N. Korea covered more than 12 items in pre-summit talks: envoy”, *Korea Herald*, 13 February 2018, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20190213000095>

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Woodward Bob, *op. cit.* p.175

<sup>91</sup> Bolton John, *op. cit.* p.325-332.

<sup>92</sup> Sang-Hun Choe: “Trump and Kim May Declare End of War at Summit, South Korea Says”, *The New York Times*, 25 February 2019, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/25/world/asia/trump-kim-jong-un-hanoi-summit.html>

<sup>93</sup>And the president. It is hard to believe that Donald Trump didn't know the guidelines for this negotiation.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*p.323.

<sup>95</sup> Wagner John: “Pelosi needles Trump after collapse of talks with North Korean leader”, *The Washington Post*, 28 February 2020, at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/pelosi-needles-trump-after-collapse-of-talks-with-north-korean-leader/2019/02/28/ec0fa21e-3b72-11e9-a2cd-307b06d0257b\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/pelosi-needles-trump-after-collapse-of-talks-with-north-korean-leader/2019/02/28/ec0fa21e-3b72-11e9-a2cd-307b06d0257b_story.html)

<sup>96</sup> Remarks as prepared for delivery by The Honorable Dan Coats Director of National Intelligence, Annual Threat Assessment, Opening Statement Tuesday, 29 January 2019, at [https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Testimonies/2019-01-29-ATA-Opening-Statement\\_Final.pdf](https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Testimonies/2019-01-29-ATA-Opening-Statement_Final.pdf)

<sup>97</sup> Bolton John, *op. cit.* p. 338-340. Taylor Adam and Ye Hee Lee Michele: “With North Korea outreach stalled, South Korea's Moon looks to Trump for a way forward”, *The Washington Post*, 9 April 2019 at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/with-north-korea-outreach-stalled-south-koreas-moon-looks-to-trump-for-way-forward/2019/04/09/45ecc0e2-5abc-11e9-98d4-844088d135f2\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/with-north-korea-outreach-stalled-south-koreas-moon-looks-to-trump-for-way-forward/2019/04/09/45ecc0e2-5abc-11e9-98d4-844088d135f2_story.html)

<sup>98</sup> Burns Robert: “US envoy: NKorea denuclearization must not be incremental”, *Associated Press*, 11 March 2019, at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2019/mar/11/us-envoy-nkorea-denuclearization-must-not-be-incre/>. *The Washington Post* in an editorial advocated that, given the fact that North Korea was not prepared to undertake full disarmament,

and may never be, the logical course would be to send lower-level negotiators to the table to work on smaller steps. “Going big on North Korea failed. Trump should go small”, *The Washington Post*, 15 March 2019, at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/going-big-on-north-korea-failed-trump-should-go-small/2019/03/14/1c47aece-442f-11e9-8aab-95b8d80a1e4f\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/going-big-on-north-korea-failed-trump-should-go-small/2019/03/14/1c47aece-442f-11e9-8aab-95b8d80a1e4f_story.html)

<sup>99</sup> Demirjian Karoun:” Senate aims to force White House’s hand on North Korea with mandatory sanctions”, *The Washington Post*, 20 June 2019, at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/senate-aims-to-force-white-houses-hand-on-north-korea-with-mandatory-sanctions/2019/06/20/d06e7306-939b-11e9-b570-6416efdc0803\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/senate-aims-to-force-white-houses-hand-on-north-korea-with-mandatory-sanctions/2019/06/20/d06e7306-939b-11e9-b570-6416efdc0803_story.html)

<sup>100</sup> Gabuev Alexander: “Bad Cop, Mediator or Spoiler: Russia’s Role on the Korean Peninsula”, *The Moscow Times*, 24 April 2019. “Kremlin: Six-party talks only efficient way to tackle nuclear North Korea”, *Reuters*, 24 April 2019, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-russia-kremlin-idUSKCN1S01BN>. Ferris-Rotman Amie and Denyer Simon: “Putin: Kim Jong Un needs international security guarantees to give up nuclear arsenal”, *The Washington Post*, 25 April 2019, at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/putin-arrives-in-russian-far-east-ahead-of-first-ever-summit-with-kim-jong-un/2019/04/24/a2d941f8-65c6-11e9-a698-2a8f808c9cfb\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/putin-arrives-in-russian-far-east-ahead-of-first-ever-summit-with-kim-jong-un/2019/04/24/a2d941f8-65c6-11e9-a698-2a8f808c9cfb_story.html)

<sup>101</sup> Hyung-Jin Kim and Kim Tong-Hyung: “China, North Korea look to strengthen ties amid US disputes”, *The Washington Times*, 18 June 2019, at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2019/jun/18/what-china-north-korea-are-looking-to-achieve-with/>; Golman Russell: “The Unspoken Agenda at the Xi-Kim Meeting? Could Be Messaging Trump”, *The New York Times*, 19 June 2019, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/19/world/asia/kim-xi-summit.html>.; “Xi calls for new development of China-DPRK relations in new era”, *China Daily*, 19 June 2019, at <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201906/19/WS5d09c259a3103dbf1432916d.html>

<sup>102</sup> Brunnstrom David, Wroughton Lesley: “South Korea urges North Korea summit before Trump Seoul visit, U.S. door 'wide open' “, *Reuters*, 19 June 2019, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-northkorea-southkorea-idUSKCN1TK1XS>

<sup>103</sup> Hyung-Jin Kim: “North Korea urges South to stop mediating between North, US”, *Associated Press*, 27 June 2019, at <https://apnews.com/article/85ddff8bb228487885ae9ef0b76e5c12>

<sup>104</sup> Woodward Bob, *op.cit.*, p. 176-177.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p.178-179.

<sup>106</sup> Shin Hyonhee: “Envoy says U.S. ready for 'constructive' talks with North Korea: South Korea”, *Reuters*, 28 June 2019, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-usa-idUSKCN1TT0Q9>

<sup>107</sup> Crowley Michael and Sanger David E.: “In New Talks, U.S. May Settle for a Nuclear Freeze by North Korea”, *The New York Times*, 30 June 2019, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/30/world/asia/trump-kim-north-korea-negotiations.html>

<sup>108</sup> Wong Edward: “Trump Officials Are Split Over Approach to North Korea Talks”, *The Washington Post*; 1 July 2019, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/01/us/politics/trump-bolton-north-korea.html>

<sup>109</sup> Lee, Matthew: “Pompeo dismisses North Korea’s rejection of him as U.S. negotiator”, *Associated Press*, 19 April 2019. Cirilli Kevin and Wadhams Nick: “Pompeo Says U.S. Still Wants North Korea Talks Despite Launches”, *Bloomberg*, 25 July 2019, at <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-07-25/pompeo-says-u-s-still-wants-north-korea-talks-despite-launches>

<sup>110</sup> Brunnstrom David: “U.S. wants North Korea freeze as beginning, not end, of denuclearisation”, *Reuters*, 9 July 2019, at <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-northkorea-usa-idUKKCN1U42M2>

<sup>111</sup> “Special Representative Biegun’s Travel to Brussels and Berlin”, Statement by the Department of State, 6 July 2019, at <https://www.state.gov/special-representative-bieguns-travel-to-brussels-and-berlin/>

<sup>112</sup> Cirilli Kevin and Wadhams Nick: “Pompeo Says U.S. Still Wants North Korea Talks Despite Launches”, *Bloomberg*, 25 July 2019, at <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-07-25/pompeo-says-u-s-still-wants-north-korea-talks-despite-launches>

<sup>113</sup> Biegun Stephen: “Remarks by Special Representative for North Korea Stephen E. Biegun at the University of Michigan”, 6 September 2019, at <https://kr.usembassy.gov/090619-remarks-by-special-representative-for-north-korea-stephen-e-biegun-at-the-university-of-michigans-weiser-diplomacy-center/>

<sup>114</sup> The possibility of full sanctions relief was very complicated at bilateral level, given the fact that the US had leveled sanctions on North Korea for different reasons, terrorism, human rights violations, money laundering, weapons trade, and offensive cyber operations. At international level, China and Russia supported easing of sanctions to North Korea. at the United Nations.

<sup>115</sup> Report on 5th Plenary Meeting of 7th C.C., WPK, KCNA, 1 January 2020, at <https://kcnawatch.org/newstream/1577829999-473709661/report-on-5th-plenary-meeting-of-7th-c-c-wpk/>

<sup>116</sup> The U.S. trade deficit in goods with South Korea in 2019 reached the figure of \$20,931.1 billion. "Trade in Goods with Korea, South", United States Census, at <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5800.html>. But if we count the services figure, the amount is substantially minor. In 2019, U.S. goods and services exports to the ROK totaled \$81.0 billion, while imports totaled \$90.9 billion. A \$9.9 billion deficit. See "South Korea: Background and U.S. Relations", CRS, 22 April 2020, at <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10165>. President Trump mentioned only "losing \$20 billion a year on trade", Bolton John, *op.cit.* p.350.

<sup>117</sup> Woodward. Bob, *op.cit.*, 186.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p.83-88, 191-192.

<sup>119</sup> Bolton John, *op. cit.* p.350-351

<sup>120</sup> Reduced to command post and communication network exercises. Woodward Bob, *op.cit* p.109-111.