

Forum: Six Party Talks (SPT)
Question of: Negotiating an end to the Korean War
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Introduction

After the Japanese Empire withdrew from the Korean peninsula, which it had annexed in 1910, after its defeat in the Second World War (1939-45), the peninsula was divided: a communist North (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) supported by the Soviet Union and Communist China, and an anti-communist South (the Republic of Korea) backed by the United States. The DPRK's invasion of the ROK on June 25th, 1950 was intended to unify the peninsula under communist control, but a US-led United Nations military intervention, officially called a "police action" by the UN, defended the ROK and waged a bloody war against the DPRK and the People's Republic of China. By 1951, both sides began negotiations to reach an armistice, or a cease-fire, at Panmunjom. Talks proceeded slowly, but pressure by the Soviets and Chinese on a reluctant DPRK, as well as the 1952 electoral victory of Dwight D. Eisenhower, who promised to end the fighting in Korea, were major catalysts in the negotiations. Finally, on July 27th, 1953, the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed by the United Nations Command, the Korean People's Army of the DPRK, and the People's Volunteer Army of the PRC. Despite this, two major flaws were apparent in the armistice: firstly, the ROK never signed the armistice due to President Syngman Rhee's desire to militarily reunify the country; secondly, by virtue of the agreement being an armistice and not a peace treaty, the Korean War has officially continued on, making it one of the longest-lasting ongoing wars today. Negotiating a peaceful settlement to officially end the Korean War (1950-53) has been a complex geopolitical issue that has complicated diplomacy in East Asia for almost 70 years, but with any luck, the bonds of unity that connect the member states of the Six-Party Talks will promote effective, multilateral dialogues to reach a peaceful resolution.

While a *de facto* state of peace has existed between the DPRK and ROK ever since 1953, the failure to reach an official peace settlement to resolve the Korean War has had several major ramifications. For one, violent conflict has flared up between both sides repeatedly over the last several decades. In 2011, the ROK accused the DPRK of having violated the armistice on 221 separate occasions.¹ Some of these violent confrontations included the 2010 artillery engagement around Yeonpyeong island,

¹ Shin, Hae-in. "N.k. Commits 221 Provocations since 1953.'" The Korea Herald. The Korea Herald, January 5, 2011. <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20110105000563>.

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in which an ROK artillery exercise provoked a DPRK bombardment that killed two soldiers and two civilians,² and the earlier sinking of the *Cheonan*, an ROK naval vessel, allegedly by the DPRK. Secondly, hostilities on the Korean peninsula have been a major impetus in the DPRK developing a nuclear weapons program starting in the 1960s.³ The DPRK tested its first nuclear device in 2006,⁴ and subsequent negotiations held by the Six-Party Talks failed to ensure concrete, agreeable terms towards denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.⁵ Officially ending the Korean War would undoubtedly go a long way towards reducing the risk of a nuclear conflict erupting in East Asia, demonstrating the need for substantive action to peacefully resolve the Korean War. Finally, tensions caused by the ongoing war and the DPRK's nuclear program have led to crippling sanctions being placed on the DPRK, primarily by the United States and South Korea and enforced by the UN. Modern economic sanctions like the ones imposed on the DPRK, according to contemporary experts like Cornell's Nicholas Mulder, have become "warlike" in the sense that they have the same capacity for devastation on civilian society as a conventional war.⁶ Additionally, sanctions generally fail to impact the DPRK's ruling elites,⁷ disproportionately exacerbating the suffering of the rural poor by increasing starvation, denying access to clean water, and preventing life-saving medicine from reaching the DPRK.⁸ With an official state of peace between the DPRK and ROK, the necessity of these debilitating sanctions would clearly diminish.

Another lingering effect of the ongoing Korean conflict is the militarization of the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), the frontier between the DPRK and ROK. One of the world's most armed borders, the DMZ hosts two million soldiers on both sides,⁹ as well as over one million landmines.¹⁰ The prevalence of landmines is particularly distressing, considering that landmines can remain dormant for

² "Two South Korean Civilians Died in Attack by North." BBC News. BBC, November 24, 2010. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-11827080>.

³ "Yongbyon: The Heart of North Korea's Nuclear Programme." BBC News. BBC, February 28, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-47397699>.

⁴ "Fact Sheets & Briefs." Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy | Arms Control Association, n.d. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron>.

⁵ "Fact Sheets & Briefs." The Six-Party Talks at a Glance | Arms Control Association, n.d. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/6partytalks>.

⁶ Nutt, David. "Economic Sanctions Evolved into Tool of Modern War." Cornell Chronicle, January 11, 2022. <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2022/01/economic-sanctions-evolved-tool-modern-war>.

⁷ "The Humanitarian Impact of Sanctions on North Korea" (Korea Peace Now! Women Mobilizing To End The War), accessed July 22, 2021, <https://koreapeacenow.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/The-Humanitarian-Impact-of-Sanctions-on-North-Korea.pdf>

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Sang-hun, Choe. "North Korean in Diving Gear Crosses Border into South Korea Undetected." The New York Times. The New York Times, February 17, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/16/world/asia/north-korean-defector-dmz.html>.

¹⁰ "The DMZ Home to over 1 Million Landmines." The DMZ home to over 1 million landmines : North Korea : News : The Hankyoreh, n.d. http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/913843.html.

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years before being inadvertently triggered by civilians, as evidenced by tragic cases of landmine-caused deaths in countries like Colombia¹¹ and Cambodia.¹² Due to this militarization, any possible war that could erupt in the Korean peninsula is projected to be incredibly devastating: it is estimated that up to 300,000 people could die within several days of a conventional war on the peninsula breaking out. Ultimately, the threat of nuclear and/or conventional war always looms over the Korean peninsula, an issue that is unlikely to be fully resolved until a comprehensive peace treaty is signed.

Historically, due to open hostilities between the DPRK and ROK, very few if any attempts have been made to officially end the Korean War. However, a major step towards peace came in December 2021, when then-ROK president Moon Jae-in announced that both Koreas, the US, and China agreed in principle to sign a formal declaration ending the war officially.¹³ Moon also expressed hope that the agreement could lead to further progress on denuclearization, giving the DPRK security guarantees, and reducing the level of militarization of the Korean peninsula. Despite this, Moon left office in March 2022, and was replaced by the conservative Yoon Seok-youl, whose foreign policy has been described as noticeably more hawkish and militaristic than Moon's.¹⁴

Definition of Key Terms

Korean Armistice Agreement

Signed on July 27th, 1953 by the United Nations Command, Korean People's Army, and People's Volunteer Army, the Korean Armistice Agreement effectuated an immediate ceasefire in the Korean War, pausing all active hostilities. The ROK never signed the armistice agreement, which has complicated contemporary talks to sign an official peace declaration.

Denuclearization

Denuclearization is defined as the process of removing a country's nuclear weapons and capabilities to develop nuclear weapons, such as the disposal of warheads and the dismantling of weapons infrastructure like nuclear reactors. Denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is a stated goal of every member of the Six-Party Talks, despite past failures to achieve this. The DPRK's nuclear weapons

¹¹ "Colombia: Demining in Colombia Must Remain a Priority - Colombia." ReliefWeb, May 14, 2021. <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/colombia-demining-colombia-must-remain-priority>.

¹² "Cambodia." The HALO Trust, n.d. <https://www.halotrust.org/where-we-work/south-asia/cambodia/>.

¹³ "South Korea: End to Korean War Agreed to in Principle." BBC News. BBC, December 13, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59632727>.

¹⁴ Yeung, Jessie, Paula Hancocks, and Yoonjung Seo. "Exclusive: South Korea's New Leader Says Age of Appeasing North Korea Is Over." CNN. Cable News Network, May 28, 2022. <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/05/23/asia/south-korea-president-exclusive-intl-hnk/index.html>.

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program has been a major impediment to peace talks, as it has significantly raised tensions in the region and sparked fears of nuclear escalation.

Sanctions

Sanctions are defined as punitive commercial and/or financial restrictions placed by one country/organization on another. Originally designed as a nonviolent method of deterrence, sanctions have evolved into a key component of economic warfare, with a vast potential to cripple regional economies and victimize civilian populations. The United States and ROK have imposed a number of sanctions on the DPRK, which have been criticized as ineffective for stalling the delivery of vital humanitarian aid and disproportionately targeting the poor.

Peace treaty

A peace treaty is defined as an official agreement between two or more countries to end a formal state of war. The DPRK and ROK are still technically in a formal state of war, despite the lack of major hostile military operations against each other over the last 70 years. A lack of an official peace treaty between the two parties has resulted in high tensions in the region, sanctions, and occasional flare-ups of hostilities.

Peace declaration

A peace declaration, or an “end-of-war declaration,” usually refers to a nonbinding statement of intent between two or more parties to end a conflict. Although it may not necessarily result in the ending of a state of war, a peace declaration has been suggested as a key first step towards peace in Korea, as it would demonstrate intent on both sides to resolve the conflict. Former president Moon Jae-in called for a peace declaration as recently as September 2020 at the UN General Assembly.¹⁵

Non-aggression agreement

A non-aggression agreement refers to a diplomatic agreement in which countries repudiate hostilities between each other. The prevalence of non-aggression agreements has declined in recent years due to the UN Charter, which seeks to uphold international peace, but has major implications for Korean peace. The DPRK and ROK pledged non-aggression in the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement of 1991, but hostilities have still broken out in the years since. Additionally, no official non-aggression agreement exists between the DPRK and the US.

Diplomatic normalization

¹⁵ “Path to Peace,” n.d. <https://koreapeacenow.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Path-to-Peace-WEB.pdf>.

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The normalization of relations refers to an agreement to maintain formal diplomatic ties, and is often interpreted as a sign that both parties are willing to work towards a mutual state of peace. The US has not officially normalized diplomatic relations with the DPRK, despite the 1994 Agreed Framework and 2018 Singapore Declaration, in which both countries agreed to normalize relations in the future.

Timeline of Key Events

June 25, 1950 - July 27, 1953 - Korean War

The 1950 DPRK invasion of the ROK, intended to militarily reunify the peninsula under communist rule, marked the beginning of the Korean War. After a series of escalations in which a US-led UN police force and the People's Volunteer Army of the PRC became involved, the war came to a ceasefire in July 1953 at Panmunjom. The armistice ended all open hostilities, but did not end the formal state of war between the DPRK and ROK.

1965 - DPRK Begins its Nuclear Program

In the 1960s, the DPRK began receiving technical aid from the Soviet Union to develop its own nuclear weapons program, beginning with a Soviet-supplied IRT-2M nuclear reactor and shipments of enriched nuclear fuel. By the 1970s, DPRK scientists were able to further enrich uranium to 80% and independently develop their own nuclear capabilities.

January 23, 1968 - USS *Pueblo* Incident

Shortly after DPRK commandos failed to assassinate ROK president Park Chung-hee, the American reconnaissance vessel USS *Pueblo* was captured by DPRK forces. While the DPRK claimed the *Pueblo* had entered their waters, the US Navy insisted that the ship was in international waters. The incident significantly raised Cold War tensions in East Asia, and marked one of the earliest provocations against the US by the DPRK.

August 18, 1976 - Korean Axe Murder Incident

In 1976, a small US and ROK detachment at the Joint Security Area (JSA) in the DMZ came under fire from DPRK forces. The Americans and South Koreans had been chopping down a poplar tree obstructing their view. North Korean guards responded by bludgeoning two US Army officers to death with axes. Uncharacteristically, the DPRK accepted responsibility for the killings, the first time since the armistice that it did so for any acts of violence at the DMZ.

December 26, 1991 - Collapse of the USSR

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The decline of the Soviet Union, the world's foremost communist superpower, ended in its dissolution in 1991 and the end of the Cold War. This had catastrophic effects on the DPRK, as the Soviets had been the main supporters of the DPRK's nuclear weapons program and its economy. In the ensuing Arduous March, hundreds of thousands of civilians starved to death due to a lack of Soviet economic aid. Another key effect of the fall of the USSR was the increased diplomatic isolation on the DPRK, as it lost its primary ally.

October 21, 1994 - Agreed Framework between US, DPRK

In 1994, the US and the DPRK signed the Agreed Framework, one of the first major agreements on the DPRK's nuclear program. In it, the DPRK agreed to gradually denuclearize in exchange for American economic aid including shipments of crude oil and the infrastructure for building light-water reactors. Additionally, both sides pledged to normalize relations in the future. However, the Agreed Framework collapsed by the early 2000s, as Republicans in America viewed it as appeasement and the DPRK resumed its nuclear program. By 2003, the DPRK withdrew from the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

October 9, 2006 - DPRK Conducts First Nuclear Test

The DPRK conducted its first nuclear test in October 2006, marking the beginning of the DPRK's time as a nuclear power. In response, the Security Council enacted a series of sanctions on the DPRK in Resolution 1718, and gave member states the right to inspect the cargo of North Korean ships.¹⁶ However, the sanctions were unenforceable by member states' militaries,¹⁷ and further sanctions did not stop the DPRK's nuclear weapons program.

March 26, 2010 - ROKS *Cheonan* Incident

In 2010, the controversial sinking of the ROK naval vessel *Cheonan*, in which 46 sailors died, took place in the Yellow Sea. A South Korean-led investigation argued that the *Cheonan* was sunk by a DPRK midget submarine, a finding that has since been questioned by academics. The DPRK denied responsibility, but the ROK passed a series of punitive sanctions called the May 24 measures in retaliation, which ended most commercial ties with the DPRK.

November 23, 2010 - Shelling of Yeonpyeong

¹⁶ "Security Council Committee Established Pursuant to Resolution 1718 (2006) Security Council," United Nations (United Nations), accessed July 22, 2021, <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1718>.

¹⁷ "Haggling Delays N Korea Sanctions Vote," Haggling delays N Korea sanctions vote | International News | News | Telegraph, March 11, 2007, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070311054556/http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=%2Fnews%2F2006%2F10%2F15%2Fwnkor15.xml>.

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Several months after the *Cheonan* incident, hostilities flared up again in the Yellow Sea. Regarded as the gravest crisis in the region since the Korean War,¹⁸ the Yeonpyeong crisis began when ROK forces conducted an artillery exercise in disputed waters. Shortly thereafter, DPRK forces fired around 170 shells and rockets at Yeonpyeong island, killing two soldiers and two civilians. The shelling was interpreted by experts as a deliberate provocation by the DPRK, and one possibly ordered by North Korean leader Kim Jong-il himself. The ROK government allegedly planned a counterstrike in response, but was talked out of it by then-President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

2018 - 2019 - Diplomatic Thaw Between DPRK & ROK, US

After years of frosty ties, fresh political leadership in the DPRK, ROK, and US provided the grounds for an eventual diplomatic thaw on the Korean peninsula. In 2018, Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un met with South Korean president Moon Jae-in and former American president Donald Trump several times, including at Panmunjom between the two Korean leaders, and at Singapore between Kim and Trump. Panmunjom and Singapore produced the Panmunjom Declaration and the Joint Statement, respectively, which reaffirmed all parties' dedication to denuclearization and ending the Korean War.

2020 - 2022 - Continued Development of the DPRK's Nuclear Program

Despite the limited progress made between Kim, Moon, and Trump from 2018-19, the DPRK displayed no signs of halting its nuclear weapons program in the subsequent years, especially as the country was supposedly devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In late 2020, the DPRK displayed a large intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in a military parade,¹⁹ while in January 2022 alone, it conducted 7 missile tests.²⁰ Additionally, changes in political leadership in the US and ROK have occurred, with Trump being replaced by Joe Biden, who has also expressed his willingness to meet with Kim but has yet to do so, and Moon being replaced by the considerably more hawkish Yoon Seok-youl. However, there is still hope that new bonds of unity can be forged to ensure peace in Korea.

Position of Key Member Nations and Other Bodies

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

¹⁸ Lee, Jiyeon. "U.N. Security Council to Hold Emergency Meeting on Korean Crisis." CNN. Cable News Network, December 19, 2010. <https://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/asiapcf/12/18/north.korea.richardson/index.html>.

¹⁹ Lendon, Brad. "North Korea Unveils Massive New Ballistic Missile in Military Parade." CNN. Cable News Network, October 10, 2020. <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/10/10/asia/north-korea-military-parade-new-missiles-intl-hnk/index.html>.

²⁰ Lendon, Brad, and Yoonjung Seo. "Kim Jong Un Wants the World to Know He Still Matters. Seven Missile Tests in a Month May Prove It." CNN. Cable News Network, January 31, 2022. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/30/asia/north-korea-missile-tests-analysis-intl-hnk-ml/index.html>.

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The DPRK, as a frequent instigator of tensions in the ongoing Korean conflict, is a key participant whose needs must be addressed to end the Korean War. A primary motive for the DPRK's hostilities is its economic and diplomatic isolation, which was exacerbated multiple times throughout its history, including the fall of the USSR, the Arduous March, and the death of Kim Jong-il. The DPRK has been receptive towards efforts at economic cooperation and diplomatic rapprochement intended to denuclearize the DPRK and/or take steps towards ending the conflict in the past, however, with examples ranging from the 1994 Agreed Framework, the Kaesong Industrial Zone with the ROK, and the diplomatic agreements at Panmunjom and Singapore. While the DPRK continues to pursue its nuclear weapons program and flout economic sanctions, it does still officially maintain a stance in favor of a peaceful resolution to the Korean War, but not one that could endanger the national security and sovereignty of the state.

Republic of Korea

The ROK also maintains a stance in favor of a peaceful end to the Korean War in the Panmunjom Declaration, and has also expressed support for reunification as an ultimate end goal for a peace agreement, with ex-President Moon Jae-in expressing hope for a unified Korea by 2045. However, presently the ROK has major considerations to make regarding a negotiated settlement to the conflict. One issue is that of family separations caused by the war, with an estimated 10 million families separated.²¹ One step made by both sides to address this has been the state-sponsored reunion meetings held by both sides; however, Koreans living abroad, especially in the United States, have generally lacked these opportunities. Another issue to consider is that of demilitarizing the DMZ, especially with landmines. As discussed previously, dormant landmines have had devastating consequences even decades after they were planted, and with an estimated 1 million landmines at the DMZ, it is imperative to remove them if any peace agreement is to be made.

United States of America

The United States officially expresses support for a peace declaration, as shown by the Singapore Declaration, and even reunification as a future goal for both Koreas. Ending the Korean War would have some major implications for American foreign policy, however. For one, it would almost certainly mean a complete withdrawal of the approximately 30,000 American military personnel in the ROK from the peninsula, as it is unlikely that the DPRK would agree to a negotiated peace as long as American troops remain. This could complicate American desires to act as a counterbalance to growing Chinese influence

²¹ "U.S.-North Korea Divided Families." NCNK, August 3, 2020.
<https://www.ncnk.org/resources/briefing-papers/all-briefing-papers/u.s.-north-korea-divided-families>.

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in East Asia. Secondly, the US could have to lift major economic sanctions on the DPRK, many of which disproportionately harm the civilian populace by withholding necessities like food and medicine.

Additionally, it is unclear what might happen to the DPRK's nuclear weapons program in the event of a peaceful settlement, a key concern for the US since it could threaten the safety of the ROK or Japan, two American allies.

People's Republic of China

As a signatory party to the 1953 armistice, the PRC remains involved in the Korean War by technicality despite a lack of open hostilities with the US or ROK in the intervening years. China's chief envoy to the ROK, Xing Haiming, has expressed that China should be a part of the negotiating process, which appears increasingly likely in the event that negotiations take place.²² China is the DPRK's only major ally, involved in 90% of its trade.²³ China is also the ROK's largest trading partner, with a long history of involvement and intervention in the Korean peninsula. Additionally, the PRC has mediated past diplomatic talks on North Korea issues, given its role in the Six-Party Talks of the 2000s. While China has also enforced key UN sanctions in response to the North Korean nuclear program, it has also served as a waypoint for the DPRK to evade sanctions. What's more, US desires to limit Chinese hegemony in East Asia may lead to conflict over how involved China should be, if at all, in negotiations to end the Korean War.

Japan

Unlike its American and South Korean allies, Japan leans against declaring a formal peace to the Korean War. Japan's main concern is the lack of a concrete guarantee that if a peace settlement is reached, the DPRK would fully denuclearize,²⁴ neutralizing a threat to Japan's national security. Additionally, Japan is hesitant to engage in talks because of its historical grievances over the DPRK-sponsored abductions of Japanese citizens, an issue that deserves to be addressed if Japan is to be included in negotiations.

Russian Federation

²² "China Should Be Part of Process to Formally End Korean War, Envoy Says." South China Morning Post, November 23, 2021.
<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3157091/china-should-be-part-process-formally-end-korean-war-envoy>.

²³ Marschik, Quinn, Min hee Jo, Troy Stangarone, Gi-Wook Shin, Charles K Armstrong, Minseon Ku, Liubomir Topaloff, et al. "China's Integral Role in Korean War Peace Talks." East Asia Forum, May 27, 2018.
<https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/05/27/chinas-integral-role-in-korean-war-peace-talks/>.

²⁴ "Japan Unlikely to Support an End-of-War Declaration with North Korea: Experts: NK News." NK News - North Korea News, November 26, 2021.
<https://www.nknews.org/2021/11/japan-unlikely-to-support-an-end-of-war-declaration-with-north-korea-experts/>.

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Russia's stance on ending the Korean War is highly complex. On one hand, it has officially expressed support to ROK diplomats for doing so, calling it an effort of "trust-building."²⁵ However, some experts are skeptical, calling Russia's diplomacy a "strategic double-play" to weaken South Korean democracy by backing the DPRK behind the scenes. Ultimately, it is highly unclear what role Russia might play in directly ending the Korean War formally.

Suggested Solutions

While past diplomacy towards a peaceful resolution for the Korean War has often yielded successful agreement, no agreement to date has lasted. This lack of long-term success generally owes itself to Cold War hostilities, ongoing tensions over the DPRK's nuclear weapons program, and poor communication on all sides. This indicates that above all, any future resolution by the Six Party Talks would be well served by including short and long-term agreements to dismantle the DPRK's nuclear infrastructure and weapons program, revise current sanctions on the DPRK, cooperate economically, provide humanitarian aid, and demilitarize the peninsula.

One solution with past precedent has been providing economic or humanitarian aid in exchange for the DPRK meeting specific, verifiable denuclearization goals. This was the idea behind the 1994 Agreed Framework, in which the DPRK's progress towards denuclearization was monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). A modern version of the Agreed Framework could hypothetically consist of the US and ROK agreeing to provide the DPRK with aid in exchange for the DPRK scaling back its weapons program. Another example of economic aid could be joint economic programs similar to the Kaesong project, which was a symbol of joint cooperation between the DPRK and ROK. Another solution to consider could be opening up the DPRK to investment by joining the World Bank and/or International Monetary Fund, making loans possible. Financial loans could therefore be part of a comprehensive strategy to provide the DPRK with the capital it desperately requires, acting as a prerequisite to negotiations to end the war.

Another key solution is revising outstanding sanctions on the DPRK. The logic of sanctions is that by penalizing the North economically, the Kim regime will be encouraged to come to the table. While sanctions, such as embargoes of the DPRK and bans on North Korean exported goods, have been the

²⁵ Choi, David. "Russia Is Highly Supportive of Declaring End to Korean War, Diplomat Says." Stars and Stripes, October 15, 2021. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia_pacific/2021-10-15/russia-korean-war-formal-end-armistice-agreement-3250060.html.

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main course of option for most nations in the past, sanctions have generally been ineffective because they have limited humanitarian aid and been rendered moot by the DPRK's ability to evade sanctions on luxury items. Access to clean water, adequate medicine, and food have been put in jeopardy by sanctions, often placed by the US, ROK, or supranational bodies like the European Union and UN. In particular, humanitarian aid workers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have frequently reported on how sanctions have hindered their ability to provide vital aid to the people of North Korea, with the American Friends Service Committee noting that it took over a year and half just to obtain a license to deliver 9-10 pounds (4.1-4.5 kg) of beans to North Korea under U.S. Treasury Department regulations. The humanitarian cost of sanctions calls into question whether currently established sanctions on North Korea that limit the flow of necessary aid should be struck down by the relevant actors in the Six Party Talks. Additionally, since sanctions are considered a form of economic warfare that has become devastating to isolated economies like the DPRK's, lifting them would signal a willingness to negotiate on the part of the US in particular.

A final possible solution offered by this research report would be the demilitarization of the Korean peninsula, specifically conventional/non-nuclear armed forces. The DMZ, one of the most militarized places on the planet, is host to 1 million landmines and 2 million soldiers on both sides, as well as thousands of artillery pieces, making it imperative to withdraw forces from the border on both sides. What's more, the DPRK is unlikely to accept any resolution for peace that does not include the withdrawal of the 30,000-strong US 8th Army from the ROK, meaning that specific timetables should be in mind for US troops to leave (if negotiations are successful). Finally, accounting for the fact that both the DPRK and ROK boast already-large standing armies and a high number of reservists, plans must be discussed for both sides to scale down their militaries to de-escalate tensions and dissuade themselves from launching any unprovoked military operations on the peninsula.

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