

DIPLOMACY THROUGH IMPOSITION:  
U.S. POSTURE TOWARDS IRAN AND NORTH KOREA

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**DEDICATION**

*David Armin Sorter*

*[1958 – 2019]*

## **ABSTRACT**

The nuclear capability of Iran and North Korea has been a concern for American policymakers for decades. Successive U.S. presidential administrations have used sanctions to impose their will on both nations, but the severity of these sanctions have not been equal. With North Korea, sanctions are typically minor, despite the real and present nuclear threat North Korea and its six nuclear tests present. However, with Iran, crippling sanctions are imposed as a preventative measure, even though the Middle Eastern nation has not tested a nuclear weapon to date. This unbalanced U.S. policy seems to indicate trust for North Koreans and distrust toward the Iranians. The question is: why? Through a comprehensive literature review and extensive primary source analysis, I argue the United States allows grudges over past altercations and the influence of third-party nations, such as Israel, China, and South Korea, to impact its foreign policy with Iran and North Korea. Whether to appease these third-party nations or to compete with them, the U.S. provides different postures toward Iran and North Korea that do not accurately respond to their levels of non-compliance. Furthermore, the research highlights that the intent of these sanctions are not solely related to nuclear deterrence. Questions of regional influence, religious fears, and economic factors are present as well. The paper concludes that these factors do not prioritize U.S. national security, and that a reevaluation of the conduct of U.S. foreign policy toward Iran and North Korea is past due.

On September 25, 2018, President Donald Trump spoke at the U.N. General Assembly on the state of U.S. foreign affairs. During his statement, Trump commended North Korea's leader, Kim Jong Un, on taking steps toward denuclearization, followed by a condemnation of President Hassan Rouhani for allegedly violating the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)<sup>1</sup>. In response, President Rouhani addressed the Assembly, stating: "by violating its international commitments, the new U.S. administration only destroys its own credibility and undermines international confidence in negotiating with it, or accepting its word or promise."<sup>2</sup> The administration's partiality toward North Korea over Iran reiterates a decades-long motif shown by U.S. leaders that negatively affects U.S. foreign policy.

The nuclear capability of both Iran and North Korea has intimidated U.S. policymakers for years and remains a concern. In response, American presidents and lawmakers issue sanctions and scolding rhetoric in an attempt to mask the feeling of trepidation. However, American animosity toward the two nations encompasses more than the nuclear issue. Nuclear proliferation in Iran and North Korea has been the stated means for sanctions, though the appeasement of third-party nations, such as Israel, China, and South Korea and grudges over past altercations are evident factors as well. Additionally, questions of regional influence, religious fears, and economic factors are present as well.

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Trump, "Remarks by President Trump to the 73<sup>rd</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly | New York, NY," Speech, New York, NY, September 25, 2018, The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-73rd-session-united-nations-general-assembly-new-york-ny/>.

<sup>2</sup> En.radiofarda.com, "Transcript Speech of Hassan Rouhani to the United National General Assembly," *Radio Farda*, September 20, 2018, <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/transcript-of-hassan-rouhani-speech-to-un/28747418.html>.



The United States has utilized sanctions in an attempt to foster regime change in both countries, settle old scores, and act as a means of nuclear deterrence. In an attempt to appear in a positive light to the public eye, U.S. policymakers claim only the issue of nuclear deterrence as justification for economic intervention. This essay analyzes the history of U.S. bilateral relations with Iran and North Korea and the imposition of sanctions on them. Throughout the imposition of these sanctions, the United States' leniency toward North Korea in comparison to Iran is substantial. Though North Korea has proven a bigger threat to national security, the United States resorts to sanctions notably quicker with Iran. In both cases, the United States' actions reinforce Americans' belief that they possess the right to impose their will on Iran and North Korea through economic intervention. This tendency toward sanctioning Iran and North Korea has only fostered a greater animosity between our nations, and a re-evaluation of U.S. interaction with these countries is past due.

### ***A History of U.S. Relations with Iran and North Korea***

In 1953, the United States engaged in the overthrow of Iran's nationalist prime minister, Mohammad Mossadeq. This intervention established Washington as the most prominent foreign power in the sustainability of the Iranian leader, Shah Muhammad Pahlavi.<sup>3</sup> This intercession improved relations with Pahlavi, and up until the Iranian Revolution, proved to be one of the United States' essential means of security in the region.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Enayatollah Yazdani and Rizwan Hussain, "United States' Policy towards Iran after the Islamic Revolution: An Iranian Perspective," *International Studies* 43, no. 3 (2006): 268, DOI: 10.1177/002088170604300302.

<sup>4</sup> Yazdani and Hussain, 268.

During the same period, North and South Korea signed an armistice agreement, bringing an uneasy halt to the Korean War, which began in 1950. The war itself arose from U.S.-Soviet conflict in regard to claims over Korea following World War II.<sup>5</sup> Korea was divided by the two world superpowers on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, now known as the demilitarized zone (DMZ), proving detrimental to the peninsula, as the respective nations wanted to reunify the territory under their respective regimes.<sup>6</sup>

Nuclear negotiations with Iran date back to 1957 with the signing of a civil nuclear cooperation agreement as a part of the United States Atoms for Peace. However, the Middle Eastern nation did not begin enriching uranium until February 1970, following the signing of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the process of ratification.<sup>7</sup> Four years later, Iran signed the NPT's Safeguards Agreement under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), allowing for inspections of nuclear facilities to verify that nuclear enrichment was being conducted solely for peaceful purposes.<sup>8</sup> Nuclear dialogue between the U.S. and North Korea, however, did not begin for another few decades, though in 1958, the U.S. covertly sent tactical nuclear weapons to South Korea.<sup>9</sup> The weapons remained until 1991. By sending these weapons to North Korea, the U.S. made the first nuclear move on the Korean peninsula; an action that was hypocritically denounced years later when the North Koreans did the same. As a world powerhouse, the

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel Wertz and Chelsea Gannon, "A History of U.S.-DPRK Relations," *The National Committee on North Korea*, Issue Brief (November 2015): 1, [https://www.ncnk.org/sites/default/files/issue-briefs/US\\_DPRK\\_Relations.pdf](https://www.ncnk.org/sites/default/files/issue-briefs/US_DPRK_Relations.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Wertz and Gannon, "A History of U.S.-DPRK Relations," 1.

<sup>7</sup> Wade L. Huntley, "Rebels Without a Cause: North Korea, Iran, and the NPT," *International Affairs* 82, no. 4 (2006): 732, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2006.00565.x>.

<sup>8</sup> Semira Nikou, "The Iran Primer: Timeline of Iran's Nuclear Activities," *United States Institute of Peace*, accessed on April 12, 2018, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/timeline-irans-nuclear-activities>.

<sup>9</sup> Wertz and Gannon, "A History of U.S.-DPRK Relations," 1.

United States must lead by example and be willing to cope with the ramifications of its actions; a lesson which its policymakers repeatedly fail to understand.

On November 4, 1979, nine months after the onset of the Iranian Revolution, a group of Iranian students stormed the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, taking 60 hostages. The affair lasted 444 days. In retaliation, President Jimmy Carter imposed a series of sanctions that got progressively more severe. Initial sanctions on Iran focused on oil import bans, followed by a freeze of all \$12 billion in Iranian government assets in the United States, escalating to a total U.S. trade embargo and travel ban to Iran.<sup>10</sup> On January 20, 1981, the day of Ronald Reagan's inauguration, the Algiers Accords were signed, eliminating these sanctions in exchange for the release of the hostages.<sup>11</sup> The Iranian hostage crisis chauffeured an era of animosity between the U.S. and Iran, in which sanctions became a first resort for the United States, putting peace and negotiation on the backburner.

For most of the 1980s, following the failed backing of the Shah, the United States shifted its support from Iran to Iraq, backing it during the Iran-Iraq war that lasted most of the decade.<sup>12</sup> Specifically, Washington helped Saddam Hussein obtain an arsenal of weapons to use against Iran, which he then used to harm his own people, and later, the people of Kuwait.<sup>13</sup> The United States spent the 1980s toying with the balance of power in the Middle East, failing twice. Having an ally like Israel did nothing to benefit American influence in the region, and supporting Iraq only furthered the burden of U.S.-Iranian rancor. U.S. policymakers acted with questionable intentions in the region,

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<sup>10</sup> Patrick Clawson, "The Iran Primer: U.S. Sanctions," *United States Institute of Peace*, accessed on April 7, 2018, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/us-sanctions>.

<sup>11</sup> Clawson, "U.S. Sanctions."

<sup>12</sup> Anthony Lake, "Confronting Backlash States," *Foreign Affairs* 73, no.2 (1994): 48, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20045918>.

<sup>13</sup> Lake, "Confronting Backlash States," 48.

operating solely for U.S. benefit, when they should have looked for a mutually beneficial scenario. Additionally, in 1983, the Iranian-backed terrorist group, Hezbollah, bombed U.S. barracks in Beirut, killing 241 Marines.<sup>14</sup> Reagan once again implemented sanctions in an attempt to pressure Iran to cut its ties with the terrorist organization. Hypocrisy presents itself in these sanctions, as the Reagan administration was caught red-handed with the secretive sale of arms to the revolutionary Contras in Iran, known as the Iran-Contra affair.<sup>15</sup> In 1987, under pressure from congress, Reagan would impose a full U.S. import ban from Iran.<sup>16</sup>

While, at the same time, tensions with North Korea were not as high, altercations along the DMZ between the North and South were not uncommon. One such altercation, known as the “Second Korean War” took place in the 1960s.<sup>17</sup> Also, in 1976, a handful of North Korean soldiers attacked American and South Korean soldiers in the Joint Security Area, leading to two American fatalities.<sup>18</sup> In 1985, North Korea joined the NPT under pressure from the Soviet Union, making the possibility of a North Korean nuclear weapons program an issue for the United States.<sup>19</sup> The Korean War and the near 34,000 American deaths remained a fresh wound, and fueled American worry about the North

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<sup>14</sup> Ray Takeyh and Suzanne Maloney, “The Self-Limiting Success of Iran Sanctions,” *International Affairs* 87, no. 6 (2011): 1300, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2011.01037.x>.

<sup>15</sup> Takeyh and Maloney, “The Self-Limiting Success of Iran Sanctions,” 1301.

<sup>16</sup> Clawson, “U.S. Sanctions.”

<sup>17</sup> Mitchell Lerner, “”Mostly Propaganda in Nature”: Kim Il Sung, the Juche Ideology, and the Second Korean War,” *North Korea International Documentation Project*, Working Paper #3 (December 2010): 2, [https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/NKIDP\\_Working\\_Paper\\_3\\_Kim\\_Il\\_Sung\\_Juche\\_Ideology\\_Second\\_Korean\\_War\\_web.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/NKIDP_Working_Paper_3_Kim_Il_Sung_Juche_Ideology_Second_Korean_War_web.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Wertz and Gannon, “A History of U.S.-DPRK Relations,” 2.

<sup>19</sup> Huntley, “Rebels Without a Cause,” 732.

Koreans' military capability.<sup>20</sup> Then, in 1986, U.S. intelligence detected the early makings of a plutonium production reactor and reprocessing plant in the city of Yongbyon, which was not subject to IAEA inspection.<sup>21</sup> Soon afterward, the North Koreans announced that they anticipated their withdrawal from the NPT.<sup>22</sup> Later, in 1988, following the bombing of Korean Airlines Flight 858, Washington added North Korea to the list of state sponsors of terror.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, in the Middle East, the Iran-Iraq Arms Non-Proliferation act was signed in 1992, applying identical license prohibition to Iran as those to Iraq under the Iran Sanctions Act of 1990.<sup>24</sup> Also, during the 1990s, President Bill Clinton and his administration viewed both Iran and North Korea as national security threats, though neither nation proved a clear and present danger to the American homeland. Clinton's Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, called Iran a "rogue state."<sup>25</sup> The Clinton administration's stance toward North Korea was just as uneasy. According to Chanlett-Avery et al., the administration, at one point, seriously considered using military force on the North Korean nuclear facility in Yongbyon. Then, in 1994, former president Jimmy Carter traveled to Pyongyang and eased U.S.-North Korean tensions through diplomatic dialogue, paving the way for the 1994 Agreed Framework.<sup>26</sup> This ambassadorial effort put forth by Washington was not mirrored in dealings with Iran, however, representing

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<sup>20</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "America's Wars," America's Wars Fact sheet, accessed on May 5, 2018, [https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/fs\\_americas\\_wars.pdf](https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/fs_americas_wars.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Emma Chanlett-Avery et al., "North Korea: U.S. Relations, Nuclear Diplomacy, and Internal Situation," *Congressional Research Service*, CRS Report R41259 (July 21, 2015): 4.

<sup>22</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., "North Korea: U.S. Relations," 5.

<sup>23</sup> Wertz and Gannon, "A History of U.S.-DPRK Relations," 2.

<sup>24</sup> Sasan Fayazamanesh, "The Politics of the U.S. Economic Sanctions against Iran," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 35, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 229, DOI: 10.1177/0486613403254535.

<sup>25</sup> Sasan Fayazamanesh, "The Politics of the U.S. Economic Sanctions against Iran," 228.

<sup>26</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., "North Korea: U.S. Relations," 5.

the first of many instances in which the United States was coarser toward the Iranian people than the North Koreans.

Under the Agreed Framework, the North Koreans agreed to comply with IAEA inspections of nuclear facilities and ship its plutonium-laden spent fuel rods abroad.<sup>27</sup> In turn, the U.S. sent North Korea two light water reactors, in addition to heavy fuel and a hefty monetary supplement under the newly established Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO).<sup>28</sup> In addition, a goal to obtain “full normalization of political and economic relations” between Washington and Pyongyang was established, including the reduction of North Korean arms sales abroad.<sup>29</sup> The Agreed Framework shows the United States’ attempt at a carrots-and-sticks approach.<sup>30</sup> This methodology employs economic incentives, the carrot, while simultaneously maintaining a stance of containment and isolation on the communist North Korea, the sticks.

Iran, however, got only the sticks. In 1995, Clinton initiated a complete trade and investment embargo on Iran, backed by a worry of Iran’s support for terrorist organizations like Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.<sup>31</sup> In 1996, these sanctions morphed into the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA), which initiated a multilateral coalition against investments in Iran’s oil and gas industries.<sup>32</sup> In addition to deterring Iran from supporting terrorist organizations, ILSA attempted to slow the

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<sup>27</sup> Wertz and Gannon, “A History of U.S.-DPRK Relations,” 3.

<sup>28</sup> Curtis Martin, “Rewarding North Korea: Theoretical Perspectives on the 1994 Agreed Framework,” *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 1 (January 2002): 53, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/425257>.

<sup>29</sup> Wertz and Gannon, “A History of U.S.-DPRK Relations,” 3.

<sup>30</sup> Huntley, “Rebels Without a Cause,” 732.

<sup>31</sup> Kenneth Katzman, “Iran Sanctions,” *Congressional Research Service*, CRS Report RS20871 (August 12, 2011): 6.

<sup>32</sup> Clawson, “U.S. Sanctions.”

progress of the Iranian nuclear program.<sup>33</sup> At this time, U.S. opposition of Iran's nuclear energy was solely for the purpose of deterring the petroleum sector, which accounts for nearly one-fifth of Iranian gross domestic product (GDP), and had no correlation to the proliferation of nuclear weapons.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, on the Korean Peninsula, North Korea found a way around the Agreed Framework: uranium enrichment.<sup>35</sup> Adding to the situation, North Korean conventional arms sales abroad did not die down, and in 1998, the country launched the Taepodong-1 rocket, marking of the first use of long-range missile technology by North Korea.<sup>36</sup> In 2002, President George W. Bush admonished North Korea for not fully complying with IAEA safeguards and its uranium enrichment. In response, the North Koreans removed IAEA officials from their nuclear sites and withdrew from the NPT.<sup>37</sup> The North Koreans repeatedly show a motif of non-compliance throughout their history of negotiations with the United States, though instead of heavily sanctioning in response, the U.S. resorts to scolding rhetoric and minor sanctions, a luxury not experienced by the Iranians.

In 2001, following the tragic events on September 11, Iran, who had entered into an era of rapprochement with the United States toward the end of the Clinton administration, once again was in the scope of Washington's radar.<sup>38</sup> For reasons of harboring terrorists and the revelation of a nuclear facility in Natanz, President Bush renewed ILSA and

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<sup>33</sup> Katzman, "Iran Sanctions," 6.

<sup>34</sup> Katzman, "Iran Sanctions," 6.

<sup>35</sup> Wertz and Gannon, "A History of U.S.-DPRK Relations," 3.

<sup>36</sup> Marin, "Rewarding North Korea," 57.

<sup>37</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., "North Korea: U.S. Relations," 5.

<sup>38</sup> Akbar Torbat, "Impacts of the U.S. Trade and Financial Sanctions on Iran," *The World Economy* 28, no. 3 (March 14, 2005): 413, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9701.2005.00671.x>.

named Iran as an ‘axis of evil’ member during the 2002 State of the Union address.<sup>39</sup>

During the Bush presidency, Iran continued providing weapons and support for terrorist groups, and contributed to the war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, as well as the conflict in Gaza in 2008.<sup>40</sup>

In April 2003, diplomatic dialogue between the U.S., China, and North Korea began. The Six-Party Talks, as they were dubbed, also included Russia, South Korea, and Japan.<sup>41</sup> This diplomatic tactic was part of a two-track approach, the other of which consisted of an “Illicit Activities Initiative.” As part of this initiative, the U.S. hampered the North Koreans’ access to hard currency accumulated through illegal activities, such as drug smuggling and money laundering.<sup>42</sup> On September 19, 2005, following the fourth round of the Six-Party Talks, the Joint Statement was signed. This statement included a North Korean concession to stop producing nuclear weapons, rejoin the NPT, and once again allow IAEA officials into nuclear facilities.<sup>43</sup> In addition to denuclearization, the talks addressed issues like U.S.-North Korea and Japan-North Korea relations, and the quest for peace on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Stephen J. Hadley, “The Iran Primer: The George W. Bush Administration,” *United States Institute of Peace*, accessed on May 7, 2018, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/george-w-bush-administration>; Torbat, “Impacts of the U.S. Trade and Financial Sanctions on Iran.”; George W. Bush, “President Delivers State of the Union Address,” Speech, Washington, D.C., January 29, 2002, The White House, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Hadley, “The George W. Bush Administration.”

<sup>41</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., “North Korea: U.S. Relations,” 5.

<sup>42</sup> Wertz and Gannon, “A History of U.S.-DPRK Relations,” 4.

<sup>43</sup> Dianne Rennack, “North Korea: Economic Sanctions,” *Congressional Research Service*, CRS Report RL31696 (October 17, 2006): 3, <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a461417.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> Scott Snyder, “U.S.-North Korean Negotiating Behavior and the Six-Party Talks,” *North Korea’s Second Nuclear Crisis and Northeast Asian Security* 1, Ch. 8 (January 2013): 156, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/txstate/detail.action?docID=438429>.



In November 2005, the fifth round of talks began, under severe tension between the U.S. and North Korea. The North Koreans believed the United States placed “financial sanctions” on them that violated the sanctity of the Joint Statement. In actuality, the sanctions were an advisory issued on September 15, four days before the agreement, and dealt with allegations of North Korean money laundering through Banco Delta Asia (BDA).<sup>45</sup> Following the announcement of sanctions, the Macau Monetary Authorities froze questionable accounts of the Macau-based bank, deterring the North Koreans from negotiations. In both July and October 2006, North Korea conducted missile and nuclear tests.<sup>46</sup> Following these tests, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1695 (UNSCR 1695) and UNSCR 1718, aimed at restricting the trade of weapons and luxury goods, while reducing financial transactions and travel restrictions to North Korea.<sup>47</sup> Nor did the Bush administration ignore Iran.

In 2005, Bush froze assets going toward Iran and in 2006, he enacted the Iran, North Korea, and Syria Nonproliferation Act, following Iran’s declaration that it intended resuming research and development on its centrifuges in Natanz.<sup>48</sup> Following the inauguration of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as the Iranian President in 2005, along with his accompanying anti-U.S. rhetoric, tensions between the U.S. and Iran escalated once again.<sup>49</sup> Contrary to statements made by U.S. policymakers, it is clear that sanctions have an over-reaching goal than just nuclear deterrence. In measuring Iranian rhetoric versus

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<sup>45</sup> Snyder, “U.S.-North Korean Negotiating Behavior and the Six-Party Talks, 164.

<sup>46</sup> Snyder, “U.S.-North Korean Negotiating Behavior and the Six-Party Talks, 157.

<sup>47</sup> Yong Suk Lee, “International Isolation and Regional Inequality: Evidence from Sanctions on North Korea,” *Journal of Urban Economics* 103, (2018): 36, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jue.2017.11.002>.

<sup>48</sup> Kenneth Katzman and Paul Kerr, “Iran Nuclear Agreement,” *Congressional Research Service*, CRS Report R43333 (May 31, 2016): 1.

<sup>49</sup> Hadley, “The George W. Bush Administration.”

the nuclear tests conducted on the Korean Peninsula, the minor sanctions placed on North Korea are a slap on the hand in comparison to those placed on Iran.

In May 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced that the U.S. would join France, China, Russia, Germany, and Britain in the P5+1 talks.<sup>50</sup> Whenever progress seemed to be evolving, President Ahmadinejad scolded the purpose of the talks, and continued to expand Iranian nuclear activities.<sup>51</sup> Then, in February 2007, despite the nuclear tests and insufficient sanctions placed on North Korea, the Six-Party Talks continued. The talks resulted in another agreement that laid out an economic aid package and removal of North Korea from the Trading with the Enemy Act and list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, in exchange for deactivation of North Korean nuclear facilities.<sup>52</sup> The agreement, however, was verbal and never written into law. The North Koreans refused to comply with every measure; again, expelling IAEA inspectors from its nuclear facilities following a ballistic missile test in April 2009.<sup>53</sup> In May 2009, the North Koreans performed their second nuclear test.<sup>54</sup> The only response from the newly inaugurated administration of President Barack Obama administration was merely a tightening of sanctions and condemnation by the U.N., expressed in UNSCR 1874.<sup>55</sup>

In 2009, the Obama administration made Iran the centerpiece of its foreign policy. In September of that year, U.S. intelligence announced the discovery of a secret nuclear facility outside the city of Qom. The Iranian government played down the allegation, and in June 2010, the UNSC passed Resolution 1929, threatening heavy sanctions for

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<sup>50</sup> Hadley, "The George W. Bush Administration."

<sup>51</sup> Hadley, "The George W. Bush Administration."

<sup>52</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., "North Korea: U.S. Relations," 5.

<sup>53</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., "North Korea: U.S. Relations," 6.

<sup>54</sup> Wertz and Gannon, "A History of U.S.-DPRK Relations," 6.

<sup>55</sup> Lee, "International Isolation and Regional Inequality," 36.

noncompliance of IAEA regulations.<sup>56</sup> True to form, Iran disregarded Resolution 1929, and the United States responded with the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act (CISADA), targeting the petroleum refining industry in Iran.<sup>57</sup>

Following CISADA, several international oil firms followed suit, cutting off ties to Iran.

The Obama administration's interaction with North Korea was much more sensitive and was conducted under a policy of "strategic patience." Under this policy, the Obama administration continued to apply economic and diplomatic pressure, while still leaving the door open for a return to dialogue,<sup>58</sup> once again showing more leniency on the North Koreans than the Iranians. In August 2010 and April 2011, Executive Order (EO) 13551 and EO 13570 imposed and intensified minor sanctions respectively, targeting certain individuals for practices such as money laundering.<sup>59</sup> When the United States chooses to sanction North Korea, the intent is much more diluted than with Iran, where the civilian population is often harmed. Another key element of the approach toward North Korea was compelling China to subsequently apply more pressure to North Korea. The Chinese are North Korea's largest trading partner – responsible for 90% of North Korean trade and a significant amount of aid.<sup>60</sup>

As expressed throughout Trista Parsi's *A Single Roll of the Dice*, the Obama administration had a strong desire to resolve the nuclear issue with Iran through dialogue with the P5+1, but firmly understood sanctions were necessary for applying pressure.

The goal of negotiations was to encourage Iran to agree to IAEA surveillance of its

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<sup>56</sup> Henner Fürtig, "The Nuclear Agreement with Iran: Successful Settling of an International Crisis," *GIGA Focus International* 6 (2015): 2, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-445166>.

<sup>57</sup> Clawson, "U.S. Sanctions."

<sup>58</sup> Wertz and Gannon, "A History of U.S.-DPRK Relations," 6.

<sup>59</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., "North Korea: U.S. Relations," 6.

<sup>60</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., "North Korea: U.S. Relations," 8.

nuclear facilities, as well as reduction of the amount of enriched uranium.<sup>61</sup> A nuclear warhead can be manufactured from approximately 25-50 kilograms of highly enriched uranium (HEU), requiring the re-enrichment of approximately 1,300 kilograms of low-enriched uranium (LEU).<sup>62</sup> By summer 2009, Iran had amassed more than 1,500 kilograms of LEU.<sup>63</sup> After numerous meetings under the P5+1, the issue of Iran's uranium enrichment could not be resolved, and President Obama imposed "crippling" sanctions. With CISADA in 2010 and The Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012, which targeted transport and insurance of Iranian oil, the U.S. tendency to repeatedly attack the Iranian economy, and thus the innocent civilian population, held true.

Also holding true to form, the Obama administration revamped bilateral negotiations with North Korea to discuss denuclearization in July and October of 2011. Talks were briefly halted in December of that year, following the death of the North Korean dictator, Kim Jong-Il. The dialogue resumed in February 2012 and an agreement was reached on the 29<sup>th</sup>, in which the U.S. sent nutritional aid in return for North Korean compliance. Called the "Leap Day" deal, the agreement included restrictions on North Korean uranium enrichment and allowance of IAEA inspectors in nuclear facilities.<sup>64</sup>

The North Koreans launched a long-range rocket and performed a third nuclear test in February 2013, less than a year after the Leap Day agreement.<sup>65</sup> In response, the U.N. adopted the UNSCR 2087 and USCR 2094, once again tightening sanctions on North

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<sup>61</sup> Katzman and Kerr, "Iran Nuclear Agreement," 8.

<sup>62</sup> Trista Parsi, *A Single Roll of the Dice* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 114.

<sup>63</sup> Parsi, *A Single Roll of the Dice*, 114.

<sup>64</sup> Wertz and Gannon, "A History of U.S.-DPRK Relations," 7.

<sup>65</sup> Chanlett-Avery et al., "North Korea: U.S. Relations," 7.

Korea. To accompany this U.N. response, the Chinese imposed sanctions of their own by publishing a list of sanctioned goods and shutting down accounts with North Korean trade banks.<sup>66</sup> Resolution 2270 was passed after a fourth North Korean nuclear test in 2016, becoming the first UNSCR to specify banned items from trade with North Korea, such as coal, iron ore, and other rare minerals.<sup>67</sup> The U.N. resolution also restricted banking transactions and required U.N. members to inspect all North Korean cargo. To date, UNSCR 2077 is the most rigorous resolution to be enacted on North Korea.<sup>68</sup> Despite this so-called rigorous resolution, the North Koreans conducted a fifth nuclear test on September 9, 2016 and its sixth on September 3, 2017.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's election in 2013 marked a turning point in Iran-U.S. negotiations. In November 2013, the Joint Plan of Action, an interim nuclear accord, was reached between Iran and the P5+1 members, becoming the basis for what became the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The JCPOA came in to effect on July 14, 2015.<sup>69</sup> Under the JCPOA, Iran is given complete and permanent relief from sanctions in response for a significant reduction of the Iran nuclear program and IAEA compliance.<sup>70</sup>

However, President Donald Trump maintains a U.S. aversion toward Iran. Trump, who is incredibly skeptical of, and vocal about, the problems with the nuclear deal, announced in May 2018 that the United States intended to pull out of the JCPOA.

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<sup>66</sup> Lee, "International Isolation and Regional Inequality," 36.

<sup>67</sup> Scott Snyder and See-won Byun, "China-Korea Relations: New Sanctions, Old Dilemmas," *Comparative Connections* 18, no. 1 (May 2016): 91-104, [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/1601qchina\\_korea\\_0.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/1601qchina_korea_0.pdf).

<sup>68</sup> Snyder and Byun, "China-Korea Relations: New Sanctions, Old Dilemmas," 91.

<sup>69</sup> Katzman and Kerr, "Iran Nuclear Agreement," 1.

<sup>70</sup> Katzman and Kerr, "Iran Nuclear Agreement," 8.

President Rouhani declared that Iran would remain in the deal, along with the other nations of the P5+1, and condemned Trump for not honoring international treaties.<sup>71</sup> Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, lauded Trump, calling the move “historic” and showing “courageous leadership.”<sup>72</sup> On May 10, 2018, Israel attacked suspected Iranian military facilities in Syria, following an unsuccessful rocket attack by Iran on the Golan Heights the night before.<sup>73</sup>

Yet, when it comes to North Korea, the Trump administration reiterates Washington’s tendency to be more trustworthy of Pyongyang than Tehran. Though the early days of the Trump administration involved a fair amount of North Korean criticism, on April 20, 2018, North Korean dictator Kim Jong-Un declared “[North Korea] no longer need(s) any nuclear test site or need(s) to test-launch medium-range, or intercontinental-range ballistic missiles.”<sup>74</sup>

In May 2018, evidence of U.S. partiality towards North Korea over Iran became ever more present. On May 8, 2018, the same day that the President officially declared a plan to withdraw from the JCPOA and signed a memorandum to impose the “highest level” of economic sanctions, he announced that his Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, would

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<sup>71</sup> Mark Landler, “Trump Abandons Iran Nuclear Deal He Long Scorned,” *New York Times*, May 8, 2018, [https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/world/middleeast/trump-iran-nuclear-deal.html?ref=collection%2Fbyline%2Fmark-landler&action=click&contentCollection=undefined&region=stream&module=stream\\_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=4&pgtype=collection](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/world/middleeast/trump-iran-nuclear-deal.html?ref=collection%2Fbyline%2Fmark-landler&action=click&contentCollection=undefined&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=4&pgtype=collection).

<sup>72</sup> Landler, “Trump Abandons Iran Nuclear Deal He Long Scorned.”

<sup>73</sup> Isabel Kershner and David M. Halbfinger, “Israel and Iran, Newly Emboldened Exchange Blows in Syria Face-Off,” *New York Times*, May 10, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/10/world/middleeast/israel-iran-syria-military.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news>.

<sup>74</sup> Choe Sang-Hun, “Sanctions are Hurting North Korea. Can They Make Kim Give In?,” *New York Times*, April 20, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/20/world/asia/north-korea-trump-sanctions-kim-jong-un.html>.

travel to North Korea for a nuclear summit.<sup>75</sup> The announcement of a Trump-Kim Summit marked a historic breakthrough for U.S.-North Korean relations. The next day, three American detainees were released from North Korea.<sup>76</sup>

The U.S. tendency to trust the North Koreans is not a notion that is reciprocated. On May 15, one week after the announcement of the nuclear summit, North Korea canceled talks it had planned with the South Koreans and threatened to do the same to the Trump-Kim summit. The reason for this sudden cancelation was cited as discontent with South Korean-U.S. joint military drills.<sup>77</sup> Repeated failure of North Korean compliance has not swayed U.S. posture toward the North Koreans, though it has made the United States look weak both domestically and internationally. When North Korea dictates the execution of U.S. foreign policy, U.S. credibility is lessened. Washington has become a pawn for Kim Jong-Un, as he dictates every move.

With Iran, however, the United States is not a pawn, but an inexperienced player assuming it is one step ahead of everyone else, while it is actually two steps behind. On May 21, Pompeo presented a new strategy for revision of the JCPOA with twelve demands, including completely stopping uranium enrichment, ending proliferation of ballistic and nuclear capable missile systems, giving the IAEA “unqualified access to all sites throughout the entire country [of Iran].”<sup>78</sup> Three days later, the IAEA again reported that Iran was in full compliance with the JCPOA. The same day, North Korea claimed to

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<sup>75</sup> Arms Control Association, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy,” Arms Control Association, accessed on March 20, 2019, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron>.

<sup>76</sup> Arms Control Association, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy.”

<sup>77</sup> Arms Control Association, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy.”

<sup>78</sup> Michael Pompeo, “After the Deal: A New Iran Strategy,” Speech, Washington, D.C., May 21, 2018, U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2018/05/282301.htm>.

destroy its nuclear testing site.<sup>79</sup> Journalists were invited to watch the explosion from a distance, though it was never made clear that everything in the site was destroyed. Furthermore, Trump stated that he cancelled the nuclear summit between he and Kim, attributing his decision to “tremendous anger and hostility” from North Korea the day before.<sup>80</sup> This statement by Trump, like many others, was posturing, as the summit was never officially cancelled.

On June 12, 2018, the Trump-Kim Summit took place in Singapore. At the Summit President Trump and Kim Jong-Un signed a joint declaration agreeing to establish new U.S.-North Korean relations.<sup>81</sup> Then, from July 5-7, Secretary Pompeo met with North Korean leaders again. Following the meetings, Pompeo exclaimed that meetings were productive, while the North Koreans viewed the meetings as unilateral and robber-like.<sup>82</sup> One week later, a North Korean uranium enrichment sight was revealed by Ankit Panda, a writer for *The Diplomat*, a Japanese based international news magazine. The article highlighted a facility known as Kangson, located a kilometer off of the Pyongyang-Nampo expressway, a major North Korean road leading into the nation’s capital.<sup>83</sup> According to Panda, U.S. intelligence was aware of the covert uranium enrichment site that produced HEU-235, which is able to be used in nuclear weapons production.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Arms Control Association, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy.”

<sup>80</sup> Trump, Donald. “Letter to Chairman Kim Jong Un.” Letter, issued on May 24, 2018. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/letter-chairman-kim-jong-un/>.

<sup>81</sup> Arms Control Association, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy.”

<sup>82</sup> Arms Control Association, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy.”

<sup>83</sup> Ankit Panda, “Exclusive: Revealing Kangson, North Korea’s First Covert Uranium Enrichment site,” *The Diplomat*, July 13, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/07/exclusive-revealing-kangson-north-koreas-first-covert-uranium-enrichment-site/>.

<sup>84</sup>Panda, “Exclusive: Revealing Kangson, North Korea’s First Covert Uranium Enrichment site.”



Furthermore, the Kangson facility is one of two covert uranium enrichment plants suspected by U.S. Intelligence.<sup>85</sup> The public revelation of the Kangson facility reiterates the North Korean affinity for undermining peace with the international community.

On July 26, 2018, ten republican senators, including 2016 presidential hopefuls Ted Cruz of Texas and Marco Rubio of Florida, wrote to the ambassadors in Washington for Germany, England, and France, urging them for compliance on the re-imposition of sanctions.<sup>86</sup> “[Sanctions on Iran] are not exclusively or primarily “nuclear-related” sanctions, which was not a meaningful category in the American sanctions architecture until it was drafted by the Obama administration as an expansive list to meet what Iran was demanding during nuclear deal negotiations,” wrote the senators.<sup>87</sup> The preceding quote is referring to the human rights violations and support of terrorist organizations, such as Hezbollah, by Iran. The quest for peace in the Middle East by Washington is admirable, but not in exchange for homeland security. By provoking a nuclear Iran through exit from the JCPOA, the U.S. is making the homeland, as well as the Middle East, more susceptible to Iranian hostility. The JCPOA was not a perfect deal, but it was a step in the right direction toward international peace. Chancellor Theresa May, Chancellor Angela Merkel, and President Emmanuel Macron of England, Germany, and

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<sup>85</sup> Ellen Nakashima and Joby Warrick, “U.S. Spy Agencies: North Korea is Working on New Missiles,” *The Washington Post*, July 30, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-spy-agencies-north-korea-is-working-on-new-missiles/2018/07/30/b3542696-940d-11e8-a679-b09212fb69c2\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.6d3617258880](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-spy-agencies-north-korea-is-working-on-new-missiles/2018/07/30/b3542696-940d-11e8-a679-b09212fb69c2_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.6d3617258880).

<sup>86</sup> U.S. Senate, “Sen. Cruz Leads Letter Urging Britain, France, and Germany to Deepen Cooperation Against Iran, Warning on Sanctions,” Press release, July 27, 2018, U.S. Senate, [https://www.cruz.senate.gov/?p=press\\_release&id=3998](https://www.cruz.senate.gov/?p=press_release&id=3998).

<sup>87</sup> U.S. Senate, “Sen. Cruz Leads Letter Urging Britain, France, and Germany to Deepen Cooperation Against Iran, Warning on Sanctions.”

France respectively respond, citing “[respect for] international agreements and a matter of national security.”<sup>88</sup>

On August 7, the first round of unilateral sanctions on Iran went back into effect, including restrictions on purchases of U.S. currency, trade of precious metals, and transactions related to sovereign debt or the automotive sector.<sup>89</sup> Additionally, licensing allowing certain foodstuffs to be exported to the U.S. and Iran to purchase commercial aircrafts are revoked. Nine days later, Secretary Pompeo announced the creation of the Iran Action Group (IAG), responsible for “directing, reviewing, and coordinating all aspects of the State Department’s Iran-related activities.” The Secretary went on to say “[the U.S.] must see major changes in the regime’s behavior both inside and outside of its borders.”<sup>90</sup> Then, on August 22, Senator Cruz and fifteen other Republican senators send a letter to Treasury Secretary Mnuchin to ensure that the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT) disconnected the Central Bank of Iran and all other Iranian financial institutions.<sup>91</sup>

Days prior to this letter from Republican senators, the IAEA released a statement saying, “the continuation and further development of the DPRK’s nuclear program and related statements by the DPRK are a cause for grave concern.”<sup>92</sup> In response, President

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<sup>88</sup> Federica Mogherini et al., “Joint Statement – Re-imposition of U.S. Sanctions Due to its Withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action,” Joint statement, issued on August 6, 2018, French Diplomatie, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/>.

<sup>89</sup> Arms Control Association, “Timeline of Nuclear Diplomacy With Iran,” Arms Control Association, accessed on March 20, 2019, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheet/Timeline-of-Nuclear-Diplomacy-With-Iran>.

<sup>90</sup> Michael Pompeo, “Remarks on the Creation of the Iran Action Group,” Press briefing, Washington, DC, August 16, 2018, U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2018/08/285183.htm>.

<sup>91</sup> Arms Control Association, “Timeline of Nuclear Diplomacy With Iran.”

<sup>92</sup> Yukiya Amano, “Application of Safeguards in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” Report, International Atomic Energy Agency, August 20, 2018.

Trump cancelled Secretary Pompeo's scheduled trip to North Korea due to insufficient progress on denuclearization, via Twitter.<sup>93</sup> One month later, the IAEA reported that Iran was still in full compliance with the JCPOA.<sup>94</sup>

At the end of September, President Trump spoke at the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the U.N. General Assembly in New York City.

“The Iran Deal is a windfall for Iran’s leaders. In the years since the deal was reached, Iran’s military budget grew nearly 40 percent.... We cannot allow the world’s leading sponsor of terrorism to possess the planet’s most dangerous weapons. We cannot allow a regime that chants “Death to America,” and that threatens Israel with annihilation, to possess the means to deliver a nuclear warhead to any city on Earth. Just can’t do it.” -President Trump<sup>95</sup>

The influence of Israel on U.S. foreign policy, specifically during the Trump administration, reverberates through the international community and causes unnecessary tensions between the U.S. and its allies who remain in the JCPOA. Furthermore, according to the IAEA and U.S. Intelligence, Iran’s compliance with the JCPOA is proof that Iran is not manufacturing these dangerous weapons Trump speaks of. On November 5, the second round of sanctions on Iran went back into effect.

At the U.N. General Assembly, North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho explained that the lack of progress in negotiations with U.S. is attributed to U.S.

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<sup>93</sup> Arms Control Association, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy.”

<sup>94</sup> Arms Control Association, “Timeline of Nuclear Diplomacy With Iran.”

<sup>95</sup> Trump, “Remarks by President Trump to the 73<sup>rd</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly | New York, NY.”

“coercive methods,” hurting trust between the two nations.<sup>96</sup> Ri went on to claim that without trust, North Korea would not disarm its nuclear arsenal.<sup>97</sup> Two weeks later, representatives from Russia, North Korea, and China met in Moscow and released a joint statement reasserting the goal of denuclearizing North Korea and condemning unilateral sanctions. Then, on October 19, the U.S. and South Korea canceled joint military exercises to not appear militant to the neighboring North Korea.<sup>98</sup>

During the Trump presidency, Kim Jong-Un hosted numerous summits with both the Chinese and the South Koreans. South Korea, a U.S. ally, prioritized inter-Korean relations, tying the United States’ hands in the negotiation process.<sup>99</sup> The denuclearization of North Korea is undoubtedly a U.S. priority, but maintaining ties with a newly developed and fast-growing South Korea is important as well. Both parties want a nuclear free North Korea, but the approach is different. South Korea approaches the North with a goal of overall peace, while the U.S. attempts to impose its will first, and focus on peace after it achieves its initial goal. On December 26, Officials from North and South Korea held a ceremony for an inter-Korean railroad project, a monumental event.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, Kim Jong-Un’s summits with the Chinese are a cause for concern for President Trump, who entered into a trade war with the other world superpower.

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<sup>96</sup> Ri Yong Ho, “Statement by H.E. Mr. Ri Yong Ho, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea at the General Debate of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations,” Statement, New York, Ny, issued on September 29, 2018, The United Nations, [https://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/73/kp\\_en.pdf](https://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/73/kp_en.pdf).

<sup>97</sup> Ho, “Statement by H.E. Mr. Ri Yong Ho, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea at the General Debate of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.”

<sup>98</sup> Arms Control Association, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy.”

<sup>99</sup> Gi-Wook Shin and Rennie J. Moon, “North Korea in 2018: Kim’s Summit Diplomacy,” *Asian Survey* 59, no. 1, (2018): 35-43, DOI: 10.1525/as.2019.59.1.35.

<sup>100</sup> Arms Control Association, “Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy,”

Seeing North Korea as a nation that can benefit trade and economic development in the future, the U.S. ability to impose its will on North Korea is weakened, as upsetting the North Koreans has other consequences. In having summits with the South Koreans and the Chinese, Kim Jong-Un has diminished the strength of President Trump and the United States as an international powerhouse.

In late February of 2019, President Trump and Chairman Kim held their second nuclear summit. The meeting was cut short, as the two leaders could not come to an agreement that would progress the denuclearization of North Korea. According to the President in an exchange with reporters, North Korea was unwilling to completely rid itself of nuclear facilities, even if they were completely relieved of sanctions.<sup>101</sup> “I want to take off the sanctions so badly, because I want that country to grow,” said Trump. “That country has got such potential, but they have to give up”<sup>102</sup> Rhetoric such as “give up” does not imply compromise, it implies a desire for dominance. Later on in the exchange, Trump also commented on the role of China and South Korea, stating they have been helpful in the process, but avoided the detail that the reporters repeatedly asked for.<sup>103</sup>

On March 25, 2019, President Trump formally recognized Israel’s claim over the Golan Heights, again reversing American policy and opposing international law.<sup>104</sup> This

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<sup>101</sup> Donald Trump, “Remarks by President Trump in Press Conference | Hanoi, Vietnam.” Remarks, Hanoi, Vietnam, February 28, 2019, The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-press-conference-hanoi-vietnam/>.

<sup>102</sup> Donald Trump, “Remarks by President Trump in Press Conference | Hanoi, Vietnam.”

<sup>103</sup> Donald Trump, “Remarks by President Trump in Press Conference | Hanoi, Vietnam.”

<sup>104</sup> Mark Landler and David M. Halbfinger, “Trump, With Netanyahu, Formally Recognizes Israel’s Authority Over Golan Heights,” *The New York Times*, March 25, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/25/us/politics/benjamin-netanyahu-donald-trump-meeting.html?action=click&module=News&pgtype=Homepage>.

decision came weeks before Prime Minister Netanyahu was up for reelection<sup>105</sup> and Trump's declaration is surely a win the Israeli leader can claim credit for. Moreover, in a fact sheet, issued by the White House, Trump is quoted saying "My administration will always stand in solidarity with our Jewish brothers and sisters, and we will always stand strong with our cherished friend and partner, the state of Israel."<sup>106</sup> Again, President Trump allowed religious bias to influence U.S. foreign policy, choosing sides and taking a step back from the possibility of peace.. That same day, Vice President Mike Pence spoke at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), stating "There'll be no more pallets of cash to the mullahs in Iran!"<sup>107</sup>

The distrust of Iran by the United States has caused uproar in the world community. President Trump's momentous decision to exit the JCPOA reverberated throughout the Middle East, bringing violent protests and military conflict to the forefront. Simultaneously, a willingness to trust North Korea, despite the national security threat that the country posed in the past, has once again surfaced. U.S. policymakers have a predisposition to condemn the nation of Iran for issues in the past and to appease Israel. By letting other third-party nations and past altercations influence U.S. foreign policy, the United States harms the international community and U.S. interests.

### ***The Effect of U.S. Sanctions on Iran and North Korea***

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<sup>105</sup> Mark Landler and David M. Halbfinger, Trump, With Netanyahu, Formally Recognizes Israel's Authority Over Golan Heights."

<sup>106</sup> Donald Trump, "President Donald J. Trump Stands by America's Cherished Ally Israel," Fact sheet, issued on March 25, 2019, The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-stands-americas-cherished-ally-israel/>.

<sup>107</sup> Michael Pence, "Remarks by Vice President Pence at the 2019 AIPAC Policy Conference" Speech, Washington, DC, March 25, 2019, The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-2019-aipac-policy-conference/>.

## *Iran*<sup>108</sup>

According to Torbat, the effectiveness of trade and financial sanctions fulfilled their purpose in harming the Iranian economy, but the desired political effects have not followed suit. For the United States, imposing economic sanctions on Iran does little to no harm to American business interests, as the U.S. has an elastic trade curve, and can easily shift its trading interests toward other, smaller countries.<sup>109</sup> Conversely, smaller countries like Iran have more inelastic trade curves, and depend on countries like the U.S. for trade. In the short-run, U.S. sanctions on Iran have proved effective. For example, sanctions placed on Iran early in the Obama administration are argued to be the driving force in bringing Iran to the negotiating table in 2013.<sup>110</sup> However, in the long run, countries like Iran have shown the ability to adapt to sanctions by shifting trading partners and becoming more self-sufficient.<sup>111</sup>

In 2014 and 2015, following the Obama administration's crippling sanctions on Iran from 2009 to 2013 and prior to the JCPOA, the nation's exports of goods and services as a percentage of GDP fell at an average of around 3.5% annually. In both years, net inflows accounted for about .5% of GDP, and net outflows were even less. In 2016, net inflows increased slightly, though net outflows still dropped. The Iranian economy actually grew in 2014 by almost 4.5%, though proceeded to shrink in 2015. Following the signing of the JCPOA, Iran's economy grew nearly 13.5%. In 2016, GDP per capita grew

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<sup>108</sup> To measure the effectiveness of sanctions on Iran, both an analysis of literature and data obtained from the World Bank will be utilized. To analyze the effects of sanctions, an analysis of both economic and political effects will be utilized.

<sup>109</sup> Torbat, "Impacts of U.S. Trade and Financial Sanctions on Iran," 427.

<sup>110</sup> Clawson, "U.S. Sanctions."

<sup>111</sup> Torbat, "Impacts of U.S. Trade and Financial Sanctions on Iran," 417.

about 12%, after falling every year since 2012.<sup>112</sup> Unemployment stood at about 20% in 2014.<sup>113</sup> Information on both oil rents and net borrowing was not attainable for the given years, though Iran had been trading a sufficient amount with both China and Russia, especially in oil. Katzman estimates that sanctions on Iran led to a 60% drop in crude oil sales for Iran. Also, from January 2012 to January 2014, the value of the Iranian rial is estimated to have dropped about 56%.<sup>114</sup> The most effective sanctions on the Iranian economy have been those on the financial sector.

As for the desired impact on Iran's nuclear capability, U.S. intelligence officials have stated that the nation has continued to expand its WMD arsenal. It has been argued that sanctions slowed the development of Iran's nuclear program, but overall the effect has been unsuccessful. Furthermore, Iran allegedly acquired arms from nations that do not abide by U.N. restrictions, such as North Korea.<sup>115</sup>

The political ramifications of U.S. sanctions prior to the Obama administration were ineffective,<sup>116</sup> though the election of Rouhani in 2013 shows they did have an effect. In addition, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei publicly supports the JCPOA. Concurrently, the human-rights impact of sanctions, according to Katzman, is insignificant, as Iranian officials continue to monitor its citizens and censor Internet usage. The humanitarian effects of sanctions are mainly attributed to the lack of ability to

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<sup>112</sup> The World Bank, "World Development Indicators."

<sup>113</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Iran Sanctions," *Congressional Research Service*, CRS Report RS20871 (January 31, 2017): 55.

<sup>114</sup> Katzman, "Iran Sanctions," 56.

<sup>115</sup> Katzman, "Iran Sanctions," 42.

<sup>116</sup> Torbat, "Impacts of U.S. Trade and Financial Sanctions on Iran," 432.



obtain Western medicines like chemotherapy. This humanitarian effect is credited mainly to the sanctions placed on the financial sector of Iran.<sup>117</sup>

### ***North Korea***<sup>118</sup>

The North Koreans reinforce that, despite U.S. sanctions, compliance dealing with their nuclear program is difficult to solidify. In addition, the imposition of sanctions is accompanied with worries about North Korea's possible retaliation on South Korea, and the impact of Russian and Chinese non-compliance.<sup>119</sup> China tends to support the U.N. in sanctioning North Korea, due to the fact that the Pyongyang has constantly ignored Beijing's warning not to conduct nuclear tests.<sup>120</sup> As recently as March 2018, the North Koreans have shown an interest in conducting direct nuclear talks with the United States.<sup>121</sup> Impacts on a possible regime change have been completely absent. Human rights within the nation are still a major issue, as the North Korean population is heavily censored.

As for the restriction on North Korea's exchange of goods and services, U.N. sanctions do not have a significant impact, though there is only a small amount of data available.<sup>122</sup> Trade with China still appears relatively strong. Moreover, countries such as China are vague in reporting their implementation of sanctions, making it difficult to

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<sup>117</sup> Katzman, "Iran Sanctions," 65.

<sup>118</sup> North Korea does not release data to the World Bank and is thus much more difficult to evaluate. Data obtained on the economy of North Korea was attained from the CIA World Fact Book. It is important to note that this data is based strictly on estimations, and is not completely accurate.

<sup>119</sup> Marcus Noland, "The (Non-) Impact of U.N. Sanctions on North Korea," *Asia Policy*, no. 7 (January 2009): 64, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24904901>.

<sup>120</sup> Noland, "The (Non-) Impact of U.N. Sanctions on North Korea," 63.

<sup>121</sup> Mark Landler, "Trump's Demand to Rewrite Iran Deal Tests a Weakened Diplomatic Corps," *New York Times*, January 12, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/12/world/middleeast/trump-stops-short-of-reimposing-iran-sanctions-but-sets-deadline-to-overhaul-deal.html>.

<sup>122</sup> Noland, "The (Non-) Impact of U.N. Sanctions on North Korea," 62.

gauge how thoroughly they are upheld.<sup>123</sup> Another reason for the insignificance of this impact on trade is that sanctioning nations such as the U.S., Japan, and South Korea already have a small exchange of goods with North Korea, and do not require North Korea to adjust how it interacts with the world.<sup>124</sup>

The only sanctions that demonstrate a significant impact on the North Koreans are targeted financial sanctions such as those placed on the BDA in 2005.<sup>125</sup> While these sanctions may have harmed the North Korean economy, they also served as provocation for the first nuclear test conducted. Because of this threat to global security, the harm done to the North Korean economy is merely a silver lining.

Looking at estimates from the CIA World Fact Book, the North Korean economy has remained rather stagnant in recent years. Growth and loss have fluctuated around 1% since 2013, and estimated GDP is \$28 billion USD. GDP per capita is estimated to have dropped in recent years, sitting around \$1,700, 206<sup>th</sup> in the world. Unemployment as of 2014 looms around 25.5%, and the country has operated under an almost balanced budget, running a miniscule deficit. As expected, China is North Korea's leading importer and exporter. Following a significant appreciation of the North Korean won to the dollar between 2012 and 2013, a steady depreciation has been estimated ever since.<sup>126</sup> While the data are insufficient, estimates show that the North Korean economy, while showing little growth, remains nearly unharmed.

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<sup>123</sup> Noland, "The (Non-) Impact of U.N. Sanctions on North Korea," 66.

<sup>124</sup> Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, "Sanctioning North Korea: The Political Economy of Denuclearization and Proliferation," *Asian Survey* 50, no. 3 (2010): 564, DOI: AS.2010.50.3.539.

<sup>125</sup> Snyder, "U.S.-North Korean Negotiating Behavior," 165.

<sup>126</sup> "Korea, North," The World Factbook: North Korea, CIA, accessed on April 14, 2018. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/kn.html>.

## ***The United States' Approach to Iran and North Korea: A Comparison***

Since the early 1950s, the United States has partaken in intense economic intervention with Iran and North Korea. One of the main arguments from U.S. policymakers for such sanctions are these two nations have nuclear programs capable of producing WMDs and pose a threat to national security. In the case of North Korea, this argument has some traction, as the turn of the century has marked an era consisting of nuclear weapons testing for the communist nation. At the same time, economic sanctions show intent other than slowing nuclear proliferation, as many sanctions on North Korea have targeted the financial sector and the market for luxury goods.

However, in the case of Iran, a nation that has never tested a nuclear weapon, the argument of slowing nuclear weapons production is dead in the water, yet the United States resorts to sanctions more quickly and with harsher intent than with North Korea. The rhetoric and action of U.S. policymakers toward Iran and North Korea is skewed and does not represent the full intention of economic sanctions. Furthermore, due to animosity since the Iranian Revolution and the importance of maintaining U.S. allies in the Middle East, such as Israel, Washington presents a much tougher posture with Iran than North Korea. This leniency toward North Korea is attributed to the factor of China and South Korea and the geopolitical and geo-economic factor they play in U.S.-North Korean relations, as well as a strong desire for U.S. influence in Northeast Asia.

Since the Iranian Revolution, and more specifically the Iranian hostage crisis, the United States has attempted to foster a regime change through economic sanctions, avoiding military engagement, while still harming the Iranian population. The revolution and new regime that came along with it is associated with the 60 American lives that

spent 444 days as Iranian hostages. Additionally, the taking of the American embassy and the hostages inside received support from the Iranian government.<sup>127</sup> Anti-U.S. rhetoric since the Iranian Revolution, such as coining the United States as “the great Satan” and chants of “death to America” has only further damaged chances of improving relations between our two nations.<sup>128</sup> Also, the constant support of terrorist organizations, like Hezbollah, who is responsible for the 241 American deaths in Lebanon in 1983 and anti-Israeli actions, only increases U.S. resentment toward Iran. U.S. issues with the Iranian regime since the revolution foster a distrust and an aversion to negotiation with the Middle Eastern nation. The notion that nuclear deterrence is the lone goal of U.S. sanctions on Iran is too broad, as distrust in Iran clearly has deeper roots.

The United States also allows the influence of a third-party state, Israel, to impact its foreign policy with Iran. The possibility of a nuclear Iran challenges the balance of power in the Middle East, where Israel has been suspected to be the lone nuclear power in the region.<sup>129</sup> Iranian support for terrorist organizations like Hezbollah and Hamas, both of whom have interfered in Israel, creates worry for Israeli officials. The Iranian backing of these terrorist organizations pose a threat to Israeli national security, showing ambiguity to military conflict with Israel. Furthermore, Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi stated in a 1998 speech that “[Iran] is living at [a] time when the United States supports Israel, which has the biggest arsenals of the mass destruction and nuclear weapons [and] an atomic power is needed in the world of Islam to create balance

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<sup>127</sup> Barry Rubin, “U.S. Foreign Policy and Rogue States,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no. 3 (1999): 72-77, <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/09/rubin.pdf>.

<sup>128</sup> Rubin, “U.S. Foreign Policy and Rogue States,” 76.

<sup>129</sup> Michael Eisenstadt, “Living with a Nuclear Iran?,” *Survival* 41, no. 3 (1999): 124, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396339912331342953>.

in the region.”<sup>130</sup> This statement emphasizes both the intent of an Iranian nuclear program and a cause for concern among the Israelis. This quote from Yazdi also takes into account the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that engulfs the region. Acquiring U.S. support is essential to maintaining power in the region and explains the heavy urging from Israel to oppose Iran.

The United States desire for denuclearization in Iran is driven by the significance of U.S. presence in the Middle East, which has its roots in Israel. If Iran were to obtain nuclear weapons, it would shift the balance of power in the region, asserting itself as a hegemon. As expressed in Parsi’s book, a scholar of Israeli-Iranian relations is quoted, saying “nothing would make any Israeli politician happier than being considered personally responsible for preventing rapprochement between the U.S. and Iran.”<sup>131</sup> In the more recent past, President Trump’s declaration of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital, defying decades of U.S. foreign policy in the region, in addition to the movement of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a formal recognition of the Golan Heights as Israeli territory, and the announcement of the IRGC as a terrorist organization shows a sway in the United States’ allegiance in the Middle East toward Israel and away from Islamic nations.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, since President Trump pulled out of the JCPOA, the rhetoric of Benjamin Netanyahu has expressed Israel’s support for a firm U.S. posture against Iran. By maintaining strong ties with Israel, the United States is able to maintain

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<sup>130</sup> Eisenstadt, “Living With a Nuclear Iran?,” 129.

<sup>131</sup> Parsi, *A Single Roll of the Dice*, 70.

<sup>132</sup> Mark Landler, “Trump Recognizes Jerusalem as Israel’s Capital and Orders U.S. Embassy to Move,” *New York Times*, December 6, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/06/world/middleeast/trump-jerusalem-israel-capital.html>.

influence in the region by sanctioning Iran to the point of a non-factor. The third-party of Israel clearly has influence on U.S. foreign policy toward Iran.

Shifting the focus toward the Korean Peninsula, the role of third-party states again influences U.S. foreign policy. In order to maintain U.S.-South Korean relations and compete with China in the on-going trade war, the U.S. has often turned the other cheek to North Korean non-compliance. Both President Moon, of South Korea, and President Xi, of China, have also held summits with Kim Jong-Un in an attempt to foster peace.<sup>133</sup> Inter-Korean relations are understandably a top priority for President Moon and South Korea is the United States' most important ally in Northeast Asia during this trade war with China. South Korea has declared itself a mediator<sup>134</sup> between the U.S. and North Korea, implying stronger Inter-Korean relations. If Trump does not try and appease South Korea by brokering peace with North Korea, despite the threat it presents, U.S. influence in one of the most prominent economic regions of the world could be lost. Furthermore, China is responsible for over 90% of North Korean trade.<sup>135</sup> If sanctions on North Korea can be removed, the U.S. can claim another partner in Northeast Asia to oppose China in this trade war. Additionally, in this process, Kim has shifted his focus from nuclear to economic development.

In 2006, 2009, 2013, twice in 2016, and again in 2017, North Korea conducted nuclear and offensive weapons testing. The U.S. only sanctioned North Korea in *response* to these tests, unlike the preventative sanctions placed or re-imposed on Iran. President Trump and Kim Jong-Un held two nuclear summits despite these tests and the

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<sup>133</sup>Shin and Moon, "North Korea in 2018: Kim's Summit Diplomacy."

<sup>134</sup> Shin and Moon, "North Korea in 2018: Kim's Summit Diplomacy."

<sup>135</sup> Shin and Moon, "North Korea in 2018: Kim's Summit Diplomacy."

outing of a secret North Korean Nuclear facility outside Pyongyang. Neither of these summits made progress toward denuclearization. The factor of third-party nations has dictated U.S. foreign policy toward North Korea; a factor of which Kim Jong-Un is all too aware. Furthermore, Kim's summits with Presidents Moon and Xi put North Korea in control of denuclearization and economic development, diminishing Trump to a pawn in Kim's strategy.

### ***To Conclude...***

Both Iran and North Korea have shown a motif of non-compliance with the United States, though U.S. interaction with Iran is more preventative, while interaction with North Korea is retaliatory. In both regions, U.S. actions reflect a desire to impose American will and influence in the Middle East and Northeast Asia. U.S. sanctions on North Korea always follow the testing of offensive military weapons and typically are enacted multilaterally through the U.N. Security Council. North Korea continually disregards these sanctions, testing nuclear weapons on multiple occasions, proving a threat to U.S. national security. Despite this repetitive threat to the U.S., both liberal and conservative administrations have resorted back to negotiations rather than crippling sanctions.

Sanctions on Iran are imposed with much less credible threat than with North Korea and notably harsher. Since the Iranian Revolution and the vitriol between Washington and Tehran that came with it, distrust and possibly religious fears have served as driving factors in implementing U.S. sanctions on Iran. Furthermore, the factor Israel plays in U.S.-Iran relations dictates the path U.S. policymakers have followed. President Trump's

decision to back out of the JCPOA and Netanyahu's supportive rhetoric only bolsters the argument that Washington's posture toward Tehran is influenced by the desires of Israel.

The preceding evidence argues that the United States is more lenient on Pyongyang than Tehran, despite the national security threat that North Korea conveys. Additionally, looking at the effect of sanctions, the stated goals of nuclear deterrence have failed, though recent headway with North Korea may prove otherwise. As the history shows, the purpose of sanctions do not solely target nuclear deterrence, as attempted regime change and retaliation for past altercations present themselves in U.S. actions toward Iran and North Korea. If the United States has a desire to alter relations with other nations it is feuding with, it must show a fair and reasonable hand to all it interacts with, rather than the differing and illogical postures it has with countries like Iran and North Korea. Furthermore, to support U.S. interests, American officials must not let third-party nations dictate the execution of U.S. foreign policy.

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