

Continuity and Change in the Perception of Iranian Elites toward the Korean Crisis in Donald Trump's Presidency

Donald Trump'ın Başkanlığında İran Elitlerinin Kore Krizi'ne İlişkin Algılarında Süreklilik ve Değişim

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Abstract

The escalation of conflicts on the Korean Peninsula during the first half of Trump's presidency, also the new developments following the Trump – Kim summits in Singapore, Hanoi and the DMZ in one side and the U.S. unilateral withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the other side have made the Iranian intellectuals to review the Korean crisis more thoroughly and reflect their attitudes about the future of issues in the peninsula and the U.S. options towards Pyongyang. Although, it seems most of the Iranian scholars believe the Korean crisis has no military solution and the only path for peace in the Peninsula would be serious and balanced negotiations with a special focus on the roots of the crisis, two trends of perception toward the crisis could be identified among the Iranian elites. The findings of the paper demonstrate that the U.S. behavior toward JCPOA, has raised further negative views about the future of any constructive negotiation on North Korean nuclear program among the Iranian intellectuals but their focus on U.S. use of hard power and harsh options have shifted to the implementation of American soft power and psychological war.

Keywords: North Korea, Nuclear program, Iranian intellectuals, JCPOA, Donald Trump

Öz

Donald Trump'ın cumhurbaşkanlığının ilk yarısında Kore Yarımadası'nda yaşanan çekişmelerin artması, aynı dönemde Singapur, Hanoi ve Askerden Arındırılmış Bölge (DMZ)'de gerçekleştirilen iki Trump – Kim zirvesi akabinde yaşanan yeni gelişmeler ve ABD'nin Kapsamlı Ortak Eylem Planı olarak bilinen İran nükleer anlaşmasından tek taraflı olarak çekilmesi, İranlı siyasi elitleri Kore Krizini daha yakından takip etmeye, yarımada'daki sorunların geleceğine dair tutumlarını ele almaya ve ABD'nin Pyongyang'a yönelik seçeneklerini değerlendirmeye sevk etmiştir. İranlı siyasi elitlerin çoğu Kore Krizinin askeri bir çözümü bulunmadığına ve Yarımada'da barış için tek yolun özellikle bu krizin kökenine odaklanan ciddi ve dengeli bir müzakere sürecinden geçtiğine inanmaktadır. Bununla

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birlikte, İranlı elitler arasında Kore Krizi'ne ilişkin iki temel algı eğiliminin varlığından söz edilebilir. Makalenin bulguları, ABD'nin İran nükleer anlaşmasına yönelik tutumunun İranlı entelektüeller arasında Kuzey Kore nükleer programı için yapılabilecek herhangi bir yapıcı müzakerenin geleceğine yönelik daha olumsuz bir algıya yol açtığını, ancak İranlı entelektüellerin ABD'nin sert güç ve diğer sert seçenekler kullanacağı fikrinden uzaklaşarak daha çok yumuşak güç ve psikolojik savaşa yoğunlaştığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kuzey Kore, Nükleer program, İranlı entelektüeller, JCPOA, Donald Trump

1. Introduction

Korean Peninsula as an ancient and strategic land, is the place of one of the most complex and difficult riddles of the international scene. North Korea's nuclear issue and the division of the peninsula not only have affected the people of this land, but also the whole region of Northeast Asia. Korean Peninsula have been the strategic battlefield of self-interested global and regional powers for centuries and due to its geopolitical position has become a buffer zone between powers who aimed to distance their competitors from their territory. Although after the end of World War II and then the Cold War, it was expected that Korea would regain its lost unity and become a united country, it still hosts the conflict of regional and global powers' interests and their competitions.

Also, the longstanding separation of northern and southern part of Korean peninsula has caused the creation of two countries and people on the sides of the 38th parallel who are quite different from each other now. On one side, South Korea has developed a progressive economy and a state based on Liberal Democracy which along with its alliance with the U.S. has adopted an active diplomacy in the international arena. On the other side, North Korea has not been successful in economic development and after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the removal of its huge assistances, has suffered from humanitarian crisis. Therefore, while developing a socialist government based on patrimonial pattern of power transition, North Korea has prioritized the development of its nuclear and missile programs as the main factors of its regime's survival. Accordingly, a series of political, economic, cultural and military challenges in line with the deterrent role of major powers, has prevented the occurrence of Korean reunification or actual development between the two countries.

United States as a major player in the affairs of Korean peninsula had been adopting the strategic patience policy toward North Korea and tried to accelerate the regime collapse in this country. The 1994 agreement between the United States and North Korea was expected to help the parties reduce tensions and normalize the mutual relations step by step. But the failure of this agreement not only raised the hostility between the two countries, the long-term impact of its failure was the deadlock in the so called six party talks and an unexpected speed in North Korean nuclear and missile program which has made the situation in the Korean peninsula even more critical and dangerous.

The new season of tensions in Korean peninsula was started from the beginning of Donald Trump's presidency when he declared the end of strategic patience toward North Korea and rejected the policy of former U.S. presidents regarding Korean peninsula and the nuclear issue in the region. But the outcome had been numerous military exercises by the regional and global powers around the peninsula in one side and new missile tests by North Korea –including a non-confirmed hydrogen bomb – in another side. Although increased tensions and military movements have led to a new round of talks between North Korea and the United States and the Trump – Kim summit has raise hopes for a constructive turning point regarding the crisis in the peninsula, the concurrence of Korean negotiations with the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the nuclear deal with Iran and the non-compliance of the U.S. to many of its international obligations in various treaties has raised the uncertainties toward the outcome of these negotiations. Many political elites have serious doubts about the future of these talks, taking into account U.S. behavior, especially its new government and Donald Trump. Particularly Iranians who have closely observed the developments in recent years and the U.S. behavior to its commitments and finally its illegitimate withdrawal from JCPOA.

Although the Korean Crisis has been extensively studied by International Relations scholars and policy experts, the present article adopts an innovative stance on the study of the topic and takes it from the perspective of Iranian Elites whom their country is also engaged in a yet to-be-resolved diplomatic crisis with United States partly due to its nuclear program. Such a perspective would attract attention to how a similar crisis is experienced by two different countries and that focuses on how elites of a country are observing the response to the other for a greater insight into the future challenges of their own country.

The new developments have raised the question among the Iranian elites that if not strategic patience, what would be the U.S. policy toward North Korea and what could be the outcome of this new policy and negotiations? Does it stop the North Korean missile and nuclear program? What would be the outcome of possible failure of current negotiations? Would it pave the way to the collapse the North Korean regime or instead accelerates the development of its programs and would result in a more complicated situation in the peninsula and even a second Korean war which not only ruins the Korean peninsula, but gravely affects the whole regional – or possibly global – stability?

In this regard, the present article would review the continuity and changes of Iranian elites' attitude toward the Korean crisis before and after the Kim – Trump summits. For this aim, the article would review the developments in Korean peninsula from the viewpoint of Iranian scholars and university professors, politicians, former and current diplomats and journalists that have been selected due to their expertise in foreign policy and Korean affairs. In this way, after a brief survey on the research method and historical background of crisis in Korean peninsula (including the fundamental reasons of present situation), the U.S. options toward North Korea would be perused from the perspective of Iranian elites in two different but continuous periods, including pre Trump-Kim summits and post Trump-Kim summits.

2. Research Method

Comparative-historical analysis (CHA) is part of a longstanding intellectual tradition that seeks to explain substantively important outcomes through a distinctive set of methodological and theoretical tools. CHA is defined by a concern with causal analysis, an emphasis on temporally oriented analysis, and the use of systematic, case-based comparative research (Northwestern University, 2019). CHA is the means to find the causes of a relevant outcome or political phenomenon from the perspective of historical processes. This is one of the most important differences between CHA and quantitative methods based on multivariate regression analysis (MRA): while the first is concerned with the causes of consequences, the second seeks above all to understand the consequences of causes (Neto & Rodriguez, 2016, p. 1004).

While not unified by one theory or one method, all work in this tradition does share a concern with causal analysis, an emphasis on processes over time, and the use of systematic and contextualized comparison. Also, comparative historical inquiry is distinctive because its practitioners engage in systematic and contextualized comparisons of similar and contrasting cases. In viewing cases and processes at a less abstract level, comparative historical analysts are frequently able to derive lessons from past experiences that speak to the concerns of the present. Even though their insights remain grounded in the histories examined and cannot be transposed literally to other contexts, comparative historical studies can yield more meaningful advice concerning contemporary choices and possibilities than studies that aim for universal truths but cannot grasp critical historical details (Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003, pp. 9-13).

As stated before, Comparative historical analysis encompasses a variety of methods and techniques, but first step of CHA is to identify the main (or sufficient) causes that interact with the necessary conditions. To find the necessary conditions concerning the presence or absence of the outcome that is to be explained, necessary question involves the proposition that the outcome would not have occurred in the absence of it (Neto & Rodriguez, 2016, p. 1008).

In this regard, considering the hostile behavior of the United States towards the Democratic People Republic of Korea and the Islamic Republic of Iran since the establishment of the two states especially in Donald Trump's Presidency (that is much more hostile than the era before him), using comparative-historical analysis would help to identify the similarities and differences between the two mentioned cases and also provides a comprehensive view about the future of U.S. behavior toward the two countries that roots in the history of engagement and conflict between the parties.

Additionally, the mentioned necessary condition in the present cases, could be considered to be the lack of political will in American administration to accept either Iran or North Korea as countries with different ideologies and political intuition, that has caused permanent confrontation in different forms via using direct and indirect military operations, political pressure, economic sanctions, non-compliance to commitments and so forth that would be further discussed.

The paper also uses Discourse Analysis Methodology in order to process the perception of Iranian Elites toward the Korean Crisis. By definition, Discourse analysis is used as method to examine or deconstruct the underlying meanings in speech or other form of communicative text (Harvey, 2019). In this regard, the viewpoint of Iranian elites including scholars and university professors, politicians, former and current diplomats and journalists have been selected due to their expertise in foreign policy and Korean affairs from a variety of forms that includes their scientific and research articles, analysis of developments, press interviews, tweets and content published online or in social networks as well as in-person interviews.

3. The Historical Background of Crisis in Korean Peninsula

The footprints of the roots of the Korean crisis should be sought in the first half of the twentieth century, when the United States and the Soviet Union divided the Korean peninsula into two independent countries, despite the opposition of most Koreans. Previously, at the end of the Russian-Japanese War in 1905, Japan became the protector of Korea and the whole Korean peninsula was annexed to this country in 1910. In November 1943, in the midst of the World War II, U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Chinese President Chiang Kai-Shek met in Cairo to decide on the fate of the occupied colonies of Japan. They decided that all the countries that Japan had forcibly built up, would have to withdraw from Japan. In a statement released after the conference, the future of Korea became a discussion subject. They concluded that Japan should be expelled from all the territories which she has taken by violence and greed. They agreed that Korea shall become free and independent in an arranged timeline but this has never happened so far (Aminabadi¹, 2013). The division of a nation and a land into two totally separate sections had such deep effects and consequences that soon and with the stimulation of the superpowers led to a bloody and destructive war between them.

Although the Korean War had its background based on the respective Imperial Japanese Rule, It was the first major conflict that resulted from the cold war. North Korea and South Korea were both used in a proxy war for the bipolar system rivals, where the Soviet Union supported North Korea and the United States was backing South Korea (Baqi, 2018, pp. 2-11).

The North Korean Army launched the “Fatherland Liberation War” with a comprehensive air-land invasion using 231,000 soldiers, who captured scheduled objectives and territory, among them Kaesong, Chunchcheon, Uijeongbu, and Ongjin. Their forces included 274 T-34-85 tanks, some 150 Yak fighters, 110 attack bombers, 200 artillery pieces, 78 Yak trainers, and 35 reconnaissance aircraft. In addition to the invasion force, the North Korean KPA had 114 fighters, 78 bombers, 105 T-34-85 tanks, and some 30,000 soldiers stationed in reserve in North Korea. In contrast, the ROK Army defenders were vastly unprepared, and the political establishment in the south, while well aware of the threat to the north, were unable to convince American administrators of the reality of the threat. ROK forces were in a low combat readiness situation. The ROK Army

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had 98,000 soldiers (65,000 combat, 33,000 support), no tanks (they had been requested from the US military, but requests were denied), and a 22-piece air force comprising 12 liaison-type and 10 AT6 advanced-trainer airplanes. There were no large foreign military garrisons in Korea at invasion time, but there were large US garrisons and air forces in Japan (Appleman, 1998, pp. 3-15).

The war in the Korean peninsula was also the first major test for the five-year-old United Nations. On June 25, 1950, the United Nations Security Council met to address the crisis. The Soviet Union did not attend the session, boycotting the UN because the international body did not recognize communist rule in China. In this situation, the U.S. proposed the UN intervene in Korea with armed force on June 27th. Considering the absence of Soviet representative to veto the measures, the resolution was passed and in addition to South Korea and the U.S., 15 other member nations sent military forces to stop the attack (Cumings, 2010, pp. 153-159).

By the entrance of international forces to defend South Korea, the situation was considerably reversed, but their advance toward the Yalu River and the respective Chinese entrance to the war (in support of North Korea) made the war field situation more complicated. While no party could permanently preserve its advances, there was no prospect of victory for either sides. As a result, the conflict that was started based on a difference in ideologies, was escalated without a winner until the North and South Korea were separated for all these years and without a solution for that matter (Baqi, 2018, pp. 2-11).

The Korean War lasted until July 27, 1953, at a cost of two million human beings (Campbel, 2014). While the death toll is already huge and unbelievable, the fact is that, viewing the war within its international context, the total isolation of Korea and the severe censorship that US and English authorities put on reporters blocked the dissemination of what really happened in Korea from reaching the public. Therefore, unlike in the Vietnamese War, the Korean War was not fought on TV. Consequently, the Korean War could be one of the bloodiest wars of modern history which resulted in several million deaths and several times that number of wounded and maimed. Despite such violent fighting and enormous casualties, the Korean War, and especially the aspect of mass killings, has remained a “forgotten war” (Kim, 2004, pp. 524-540).

In such a situation, the end of the war was accomplished by a ceasefire agreement between the two Koreas, whereas no agreement on a lasting peace has been formally concluded until now. Under the ceasefire treaty, the two parties (including the United States who entered the war in order to protect South Korea) were allowed to patrol in the buffer zone. The United Nations ceasefire watchdogs were also stationed in the buffer zone between the two countries and were charged with monitoring the implementation of the provisions of the agreement.

Ever since North Korea has been established, the United States has always had a hostile attitude towards this country and has played a major role in its international isolation. In September 1956, the United States decided to deploy nuclear weapons on South Korean territory, in breach of clause 13 (d) of the cease-fire agreement. The decision was made at various stages in 1957 and

1958 and efforts of the Soviet Union and its allies in the United Nations to prevent the decision of the United States did not get anywhere (Danesh Yazdi², 2013). Although based on the clause stipulated in the ceasefire agreement, none of the parties had the right to transfer new weapons to neither North or South Korea and were only able to replace the pieces of their equipment, but at the time of President Eisenhower, the American chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Radford, it was revealed that the U.S. military policy and intentions were based on opposition to North Korea and the deployment of nuclear weapons on the peninsula. In this regard, and in spite of the concern of the United States allies and the United Nations, the U.S. informed North Korean delegates that it was no longer bound by paragraph (d) of the cease-fire agreement on June 21, 1975. As a result, in January 1985, The U.S. set up Honest John³ nuclear missiles and a 280-mm atomic cannon in South Korea. One year later, a long-range nuclear cruise missile capable of targeting China and the Soviet Union was set up in the southern parts of Korean Peninsula. (Rezaei⁴ & Farahzdeh⁵, 2018, p. 110). On the other hand, North Korea began to build ground-based underground conventional weapons near the buffer zone whereby South Korean and American forces could be easily targeted. In 1963, North Korea sought help from the Soviet Union to acquire nuclear technology and weapons, but this request was not accepted. Nonetheless, the Soviets agreed to help North Korea's peaceful nuclear program, including training its experts (Danesh Yazdi, 2013). It is worth to say that, despite American introduction of nuclear weapons into Korean peninsula in 1958 in violation of the 1953 Armistice Agreement, North Korea could begin developing its own nuclear weapons only in the 1990s when it could no longer rely on the Soviet nuclear umbrella. Therefore, it was the U.S. who caused the basis of a nuclear armed peninsula. Regarding the longstanding nuclear threat, it seems impossible to expect a country like North Korea to do nothing in response of numerous nuclear weapons targeting its territory, especially when Pyongyang lost its most valuable ally at the end of cold war.

Today, the United States is committed to defending South Korea under the terms of the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea. The United States has nearly 30,000 troops deployed in the Korean peninsula for that purpose. In addition to U.S. troops, many of South Korea's 630,000 troops and North Korea's 1.2 million troops are stationed near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), making it one of the most heavily armed borders in the world. It seems that, the current conflict is one of the many unintended consequences of the continuing Cold War and the arbitrary division of the Korean peninsula that has lasted to this day. As a result, since the Korean War, the so-called "crisis of the Korean Peninsula," with the intervention of international powers, has always been a flame of fire that has erupted with severity and weakness (Aminabadi, 2013).

2 Mehdi Danesh Yazdi has served as Former Deputy Foreign Minister, Director-General of Legal Affairs and Deputy Chief of Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations.

3 The MGR-1 Honest John rocket was the first nuclear-capable surface-to-surface rocket in the United States arsenal.

4 Masoud Rezaei is a professor of international relations in Islamic Azad University, Isfahan Branch

5 Maria Farahzadeh is a PhD student in international relations in Kharazmi University

In such a situation, while the aforementioned set of factors have made the Korean Peninsula a critical place and the crisis becomes more complex every day, unstable decisions of Trump administration have raised the level of uncertainties and contributed to the pessimisms about the United States. Unilateral withdrawal from numerous international treaties such as Paris Pact (Convention on Climate Change), Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and even UN Human Rights Council despite the opposition of its allies have demonstrated the self-centered approach of Donald Trump and inadvertency of its foreign policy team toward the interest of other countries including U.S. longtime allies.

In case of countries with different and conflicting views with the United States like North Korea and Iran, this issue becomes even more complicated. The so called JCPOA was the outcome of long, challenging negotiations between the permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany with Iran. Although the agreement was referred to be a great diplomatic achievement and Iran's adherence has been always confirmed by the International Atomic Energy Agency, it has been violated unilaterally by the United States. Whatever be the perceptions about this kind of American behavior, whether Trump's intention to destroy Obama's legacy or return to the former unilateralist approach. It has undermined the credibility of United States in international assemblies especially about the U.S. compliance with its obligations in any future agreement. In such a situation, despite growing hopes for peaceful resolution of crisis in Korean Peninsula, pessimistic perception of international analysts and elites especially Iranians who directly confront with this inconsistent and arbitrary approach of the United States and Trump's administration, is noteworthy. In this regard, this is well argued that, the unpredictability of Trump's behavior makes it possible to trigger every scenario.

In the case of Iranian experts and elites, two cases could be identified: the first is the continuation of pessimism to the United States and its intentions beyond current negotiations, and the other is some kind of change in relation to the U.S. use of power toward North Korea. It seems that after changes in U.S. national security team and Trump – Kim summits, more attentions have been focused to the use of soft power, pressure and psychological warfare by the U.S. more than harsh scenarios, which will be further discussed.

In the following section, firstly Iranian elites' attitude toward the Korean crisis would be discussed that mainly included harsh scenarios due to the increasing tensions which contributed the danger of a new war in Korean peninsula. In the second part, we will deal with the Iranian approach to the ongoing negotiations and continued distrust toward the United States, especially after its illegal and unilateral withdrawal from JCPOA.

4. Iranian elites' attitude toward the Korean crisis

4.1. Pre Trump-Kim Summits:

Since the tensions between the U.S. and North Korea had been increasing dramatically prior to the Trump – Kim summit and inter-Korean negotiation on nuclear disarmament in peninsula, many Iranian elites focused on the possible harsh and violent scenarios regarding the crisis. Although commencement of talks and the relative reduction of tensions have shifted the attentions on peaceful resolution of crisis in Korean peninsula, due to the pessimisms about the United States' approach, outcome of the negotiations and the U.S. adherence to its commitments, controversial scenarios are still considered. In the following, we will look at these scenarios from the perspective of Iranian elites.

4.1.1. War

More than sixty years ago a war broke out in the Korean peninsula which cannot be considered as the war of two Koreas, but the continuation of the East Asian wars in the mid-20th century which was imposed to the people of Korean peninsula by some influential powers. The result of that three years bloody war was hundreds of thousands of deaths, injuries, displacements and the destruction of billions of dollars of people's income and savings. According to the statistics, estimated casualties, including deaths, injuries or missing persons in the war, amounted to three million and five hundred thousand who were mostly Korean and Chinese. In this war, one million and two hundred thousand troops and also two million and 500 thousand civilians were injured. In this terrible clash, 35000 American soldiers were killed and more than 100,000 more were wounded, missing or captured. Also, more than 137000 Chinese soldiers were killed and more than 350000 other Chinese were injured. In other words, half a million Chinese troops have been killed or injured in support of the North Korean regime in the war as well as 300000 from the U.S and other countries who supported South Korea. Also, over 150000 South Korean soldiers were killed and more than 710000 injured, missing or captured. On the other hand, 294000 people were killed and 640000 injured from North Korean military personnel (Shahmoradi, 2017, pp. 32-34). What was said is just the indication of the casualties of the military of the countries involved in this heavy conflict, with civilian casualties estimated to be 2.5 million. Now, after 65 years of ceasefire between the two Koreas, the non-belligerence situation in peninsula seems critical once again, and the leaders of the influential countries on the peninsula are threatening each other. Now the question raises that, if such a war occurs again, what would be the destructive consequences of such a conflict?

A look at the capabilities of North Korea's missile and nuclear capabilities, as well as the efforts to continue developing its plans for this matter, suggests that this country has a different definition for the two basic concepts of international politics, including "survival" and "balance." They don't want to repeat the path which resulted in the collapse of Soviet Union. Although, North Korean current policies has resulted in strong international isolation as well as economic and

security crisis (Rezaei, 2018). Like the other issues, there is always a minority who prefers the war scenario more than any other solution. But in case of North Korea, the danger is that, war scenario becomes the dominant discourse inside the United States. War supporters say it's time to "blow up" North Korea. They believe the time is coming to an end and Pyongyang will soon complete its ability to attack the whole United States' soil. The argumentation of the militants is that they should throw North Korea's nuclear program with a "shocking attack" – a kind of unexpected strike which destroys all nuclear facilities inside North Korea. Such a way of thinking is reminiscent of the Iraqi war. Although taking Iraq was easy for American army but the result was not as it was as expected for U.S. leaders. The situation in North Korea is more complicated and the war would be more catastrophic. Although the United States has the most powerful army in the world, such a force cannot guarantee that Washington will eliminate all threats, including the ones from North Korea. The war with North Korea won't be like the first and second Persian Gulf War, Kosovo, Yugoslavia or Afghanistan, because the outbreak of such a war could destroy South Korea, Japan and even the United States (Baghi, 2017).

Morteza Soltanpour⁶ states: "it is estimated that the result of a limited and short-term conflict would be the killing of three million people in the area. The main reason of such a disaster is the massive changes as well as the accumulation of highly advanced and modern weapons in the peninsula and the pacific, which are by no means comparable to the weapons that the parties used in the 1950s". He believes that: "in the first 24 hours of the war, 200,000 troops will face each other, which will amount to 1 million and 300,000 people in the first week, including U.S. troops and two Koreas, possibly China and Japan, and several other countries. It will also call for 3 million reserve forces in the north and south of the peninsula. It seems that, the conflict which would be the world largest military arrangement in a region, could result in the killing of a million people including U.S. military and other nationalities, especially Koreans and Chinese during the first 10 days of the war. In addition to that, if both sides use destructive weapons of mass destruction, the depth of disaster would be unpredictable (Soltanpour, 2017).

Another aspect of such a war would be the unpredictable actions of North Korean leaders. For instance, Kim can resort to a number of ways to evaluate U.S threats such as selecting an attack using conventional means to create fear, an asymmetric attack to South Korea or attack the South Korean civilian nuclear infrastructure. Seoul has 24 nuclear power plants that can be attacked by Pyongyang. Given their close proximity, North Korea could destroy them by its Surface-to-air missile and create a massive humanitarian crisis. They can also use Special Forces. They can use their existing tunnels to enter Seoul and bring terrorist attacks to such centers. Such an action could have consequences beyond Chernobyl, destroying millions, and turning South Korea into an untenable land for generations (Baghi⁷, 2017). Even the verbal exchange of threats is very dangerous for peace keeping in Korean Peninsula because the history has proven us that a false perception of enemy can result in a catastrophe. In case of North Korea such a perception can

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7 Mohammad Hossein Baghi is a researcher in International Relations and expert in Korea affairs.

cause numerous actions by its leadership, for example: It would be probable that North Korea attacks American bases in the region, if the country were to make sure the United States is seeking to attack and change the regime. Secondly, North Korea may attack Seoul and launch short and medium-range missiles to all other parts of Northeast Asia simultaneously. In these two scenarios, the United States and its allies will launch a counter-attack – mainly Pyongyang mass destruction weapons. However, Kim may hide a few bombs deep into the ground and, by making the final decision, will launch a nuclear attack on Seoul and Tokyo. When the U.S. allies are moving forward, throwing these nuclear bombs can push them back and create a nuclear Pearl Harbor. Kim knows that in such scenarios, American forces will target weapons of mass destruction from the earth, the sky and the sea, and will pass through the 38 degrees. In such a situation, he may throw a bomb to every city, Seoul, Pusan, Incheon, Tokyo, Sandia and Nagoya. Several million people will be killed before his defeat. Another possibility is that North Korea, according to its leaders, targets the United States which is a “center of corruption” directly with nuclear weapons. In this scenario, the cities of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle and Portland will be on the fly. Even biological and chemical attacks will not be out of reach. All of these scenarios are dangerous and there will be terrible consequences (Poursina⁸, 2017). Soltanpour estimates, the damage to the second possible war on the Korean Peninsula would be 18 times bigger than the first one. It is firstly because the number of troops in the two Koreas is now 10 times bigger than 65 years ago. Regarding the financial damages of such a war, he compares the first and the possible second war and claims that: “If we look at economic damage during the first-year of first Korean War, it is seen that 69 percent of the population and 65 percent of Korea’s economic capital were seriously damaged. But if the incident happens again on the peninsula, the human and financial losses in this area will be 18 times higher”. He concludes: “if such an incident occurs on the peninsula, the world should be felicitous with the Korean race. So the occurrence of such a terrible war is a far from global rationality” (Soltanpour, 2017).

It should be noticed that, the particular geographic location of North Korea is a winning advantage in the hands of its leaders because none of its neighbors seek a U.S. military strike on North Korea. On one hand, South Korea and Japan are worried about the security of their large and populated cities as well as their economic zones. On the other hand, Russia and China are in a serious rivalry with United States and do not prefer a military confrontation near their borders. Washington itself has no faith in military option since it is well aware of the fact that U.S. and its allies cannot manage the possible consequences of such a war in the region. They have seen the outcome of their threats against Pyongyang when in return it has also increased the level of threats against United States and its regional allies (Shafiei, 2018). Even the public opinion in the U.S. is not in favor of such a war. The Washington Post poll on the extent of American public support for a pre-emptive war with North Korea showed that 67 percent of Americans believe Washington should only attack North Korea when it launches an attack on the United States or its allies. (Washington Post, 2017).

8 Behrouz Poursina is a senior researcher at the Institute for International Energy and Security Studies

The most important point is that; The East Asian region is a region dominated by the “soft power” equations. In other words, the power of the countries of this region, specifically Japan and South Korea, originate from their soft economic power, not the “hard power” of their military. But the soft power of these countries will collapse in the event of such a war in the region (Shafiei, 2018)

Therefore, the military option to deal with the present situation is very dangerous and can kill millions of innocent people and bring many unfortunate consequences for the whole region. In fact, any kind of conflict in Korean peninsula, including low or high intensive war would be the most dangerous scenario for all the actors involved and the worst option for the United States. As a result, it seems that the North Korean crisis has no longer a military solution because any military operations is doomed to become a real catastrophe for the region and even the whole world.

4.1.2. Exacerbating Pressures for Regime Change in North Korea

Many of the United States and Western officials believe that the international community should stop North Korea’s destabilizing efforts through increasing pressure. Since 2008, the United Nations Security Council has approved nine resolutions against North Korea, but it has not only failed to significantly change its behavior, resulted in the intensification of North Korean missile tests proving the ineffectiveness of sanctions. In the latest resolution, approved by all the Security Council members, oil sanctions against North Korea went up and the country was deprived of the sale of textiles and the labor income abroad (Karimi⁹, 2018).

From a comprehensive point of view, North Korea does not matter to the United States in terms of domestic capacities; that is, it alone cannot be a major threat to the U.S. existence. Earlier, it was said that the United States considered North Korea to be the last frontier of the Cold War and therefore it sought to overthrow the ruling system. This idea is also in the minds of the North Korean politicians. They believe that the United States and its allies are seeking to destroy the North Korean political system. That’s why North Korea is equipping itself with a nuclear bomb and long-range missiles. The pretext for the Koreans is that the United States has deployed its invading weapons in the southern part of Korean Peninsula and also holds several exercises with South Korea and Japan. Pyongyang considers these as threats to their existence. Hence, it considers its missile weapons as a defensive and reactive weapon against the present threats.

Nozar Shafiei¹⁰, believes that the Americans are not seeking to overthrow the North Korean political system because North Korea is an opportunity for the United States rather than a threat. The United States is justifying its presence in the East Asian region in the light of North Korea’s existence. The United States is now a hegemonic power only in the western hemisphere, but it

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10 Nozar Shafiei is an Iranian university professor and political analyst. He is also a former member of the Islamic Consultative Assembly.

seeks to become a hegemony in the international arena. In order to be an international hegemony, U.S. must be present in different geographic regions, and this presence can only be justified in the light of the crisis, as their presence in the Middle East or the Eastern Mediterranean is only possible in the light of the crisis existing in those regions. From this perspective, North Korea's presence in the East Asian region is an important source for the military presence of the United States. The existence of a "threat", called North Korea, has become an excellent excuse for the transfer of U.S. forces from the Atlantic to the Pacific. In fact, the United States of America, uses North Korea for limiting China. As an example, Washington has recently deployed THAAD missile defense system in South Korea. The radar of this system has a thousand kilometers of range, and the United States not only take into account North Korean activities, but also all military movements in China (Shafiei, 2018). In the same vein, Ismail Bashari¹¹ states: "Imagine the North Korean regime being overthrown and a Western-backed liberal system has formed in the country. Under these circumstances, how can the United States justify its presence in the region? Therefore, the current confrontation in the East Asian region cannot be seen as the confrontation between the United States and North Korea, but between the United States and China. On the other hand, the United States is seeking to strengthen its presence in East Asia, to complete its hegemonic control circle around the world and somehow strengthen its containment policy toward China (Bashari, 2017).

On the contrary, the Chinese do not accept the intensified U.S. presence in the region. In this regard, Javad Mansouri¹², believes that, the current trade war between the United States and China is rooted in the North Korean crisis. He assumes, the issue of North Korea is of great importance in China-U.S. relations. So, the North Korean crisis and the non-alignment of Beijing with Washington have led the United States to use economic war against China (Mansouri, 2018). Considering the complexity of China-U.S. relations and Chinese capabilities in the region, any major pressure on North Korea needs the Chinese to cooperate. Therefore, in case of regime change United cannot consider Chinese interest in Korean Peninsula, so Chinese would never commit to regime change in Pyongyang. It's necessary to remember that China is against any policy leading to the installation of a regime hostile to China on the other side of the Yalu River or pushing the U.S. military to the River boundaries. North Korea serves as a valuable buffer between China and the U.S. military. Consequently, China does not want to lose such an important military barrier against United States. In a same pattern, Russia does not accept an increased U.S. military presence in the region near its borders (Shahmoradi, 2017, pp. 90-93). Alongside the uncertainties about North Korea's internal situation, considering these facts, it would be very difficult for United States to overthrow the North Korean regime

It's worth to say that, beyond the regime change scenario, for any U.S. effort perusing major changes in the North Korean regime behavior, a comprehensive plan is needed and should take into account the interests of the two great powers – China and Russia. The two countries have the

11 Dr. Ismail Bashari is a researcher in international relations and expert in disarmament issues.

12 Javad Mansouri is an Iranian politician and the former deputy foreign minister for Asia and Oceania. He also served as Iranian ambassador to Beijing and Islamabad.

power to veto or block American efforts and as a result, United States must make it clear to the two countries that their interest are considered and its efforts will not affect their vital national interests.

4.1.3. Decapitation of North Koran leaders

In the past, the assassination of foreign leaders who were either not sufficiently defending the United States or in the Soviet camp was a principle in American politics. However, in case of North Korea, there is a possibility that the assassination of Kim or high-ranking generals responsible for the nuclear weapons and missiles becomes a source of fear among other officials in the country. Although this policy may be favorable by some extremists, it can be very dangerous and if it fails, it can be costlier than ever thought. As a comparison, such an action could work for Saddam's regime, because the country was actually disarmed and had nothing to lose, but North Korea has a nuclear arsenal and considerable ballistic missile capability. Additionally, the country is like a black hole that does not leak any information (Karimi, 2018). Therefore, it would be difficult for Washington to find the right option among its leaders. Moreover, nobody knows that the person who succeeds Kim will be a woman or a man? Is he/she as unpredictable as he is? It should be mentioned that, assassination of such a leader clearly means to declare war and would have numerous consequences for the U.S. officials and government. However, the only outcome of this policy could be forcing China and Russia to become more involved. Therefore, it does not seem that, decapitation of North Korean leaders can be considered as a serious option for United States.

5. Post Trump – Kim Summits

5.1. Focusing on Negotiation and Peaceful Resolution along with More Pessimism toward the United States

As mentioned before, the options of the United States to overcome the Korean crisis have been subjected to various restrictions. In one side, the most important thing that lies in the negotiating option for United States is the perception of a defacto recognition of North Korea as a nuclear power in the world which seems to be very difficult and unacceptable for the American leaders. But on the other side, North Korea has proved its resistance in response to the international pressures. Years of recession and various kinds of sanctions have failed to stop North Korea from developing its nuclear missile program. Therefore, the cost and consequences of any military confrontation between the two countries have intensely increased and this has pushed the parties to consider peaceful measures more seriously.

From a more comprehensive perspective, the security environment of East and North-East Asia is evolving and certainly the developments in this region will not be just enclosed to this region, but it can also affect the whole system and international politics. The importance of this is such that it can be said within a decade or two, the Middle East will not be the strategic focus of the

great powers any more. Americans have been well aware of this issue since 2011 and formulated a strategy of turning eastwards into Asia. Although Obama introduced the future plan to focus on the East, from the beginning of Donald Trump's presidency there have been clear signs of increased U.S. strategic focus on the East Asian region and it seems the U.S. has new plans for the region. In this regard, current issues such as the escalation of tensions between U.S. and North Korea, simultaneous with the new economic tensions between United States and China could be seen in accordance with the mentioned policy (Zare¹³, 2017).

In this regard, the news about the first Trump-Kim summit raised the question that, how can a country like North Korea, who has printed stamps and built a memorial in honor of its missile tests, also called its nuclear scientist their national heroes, speaks of denuclearization? Has something new happened in the developments of the Korean Peninsula? And is it the first time North Korea is committed to nuclear disarmament?

Sahand Iranmehr¹⁴ states that it's not the first time that such an ambiguous agreement is signed between the two countries. He expresses: "in October 1994, a consent was reached on the "agreed framework" between the two countries, in which North Korea undertook to suspend its nuclear activities under the supervision of the IAEA, and in return receive technical services for the construction of two peaceful nuclear reactors and heavy fuel oil supplies from the United States. The United States and North Korea did not comply with their obligations and the agreement was abandoned. Again on February 29, 2012, both countries signed a "Leap Day" agreement. North Korea pledged to suspend its uranium enrichment and nuclear tests and in return United States promised food aid to the regime. North Korean satellite launch was considered a missile test, the United States stopped the food aid and the deal was abandoned. So from this point of view, nothing new has happened, but in terms of the level of the meeting, there are major developments" (Iranmehr, 2018).

Regarding the main reasons of starting such negotiations, it seems necessary to consider internal crisis inside both U.S. and North Korea. The point is that, North Korea has not suddenly decided to negotiate. For nearly two decades, North Korean leaders have called for negotiations at the level of the leaders of the two countries, but the presidents of the United States never accepted this request. Bill Clinton sent Madeleine Albright to Korea after repeated North Korean appeals. George W. Bush clearly denied this request and Obama also considered Hillary Clinton (also for the release of two Americans not talking about what the North Korean leader wanted). A phrase used by Obama at that time was: "This is the same pattern of behavior that the United States has seen from the father and grandfather of the current Korean leader." The meaning of that phrase was that the background to this request for a visit and negotiation even reached decades ago. Therefore, the current negotiations are a new tradition from American leaders, not North Koreans.

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14 Sahand Iranmehr is journalist and researcher in international relations.

Iranmehr declares: “It’s a mistake to imagine Kim`s speeches about peace and developing inter-Korean relations has a patriotic origin and not to provoke the United States to enter direct negotiations. His demand for talks is not similar to that of Deng Xiaoping of China because Deng was a developmentalist individual who ultimately favored his country’s interests over ideology and in this way incurred high costs (including long imprisonment and paralysis of his son during the Chinese cultural revolution), while there is no sign of Kim`s desire for such an approach. From this perspective, he did not even resemble Gorbachev, who had the background of the reformist programs of Glasnost and Perestroika” (Iranmehr, 2018).

Considering the issue of internal legitimacy of Kim Jung Un, Ruhollah Souri¹⁵ believes, Kim does not need to directly tell his people about North’s probable obligations in the negotiations, because denuclearization is a long complicated process which practically needs at least 10 years to complete. Therefore, Pyongyang is more likely to go in to step-by-step agreement rather than basic bargaining. For the sake of his internal legitimacy, Kim will pretend to have forced the international community to surrender facing the nuclear capabilities of North Korea. Then, if there was noticeable progress in negotiations and the sanctions will be lifted, Korean people would understand his decision for talking about denuclearization and will support it. In such a way, he could save his regime, promote North Korean international visage and also his internal legitimacy (Souri, 2018).

Regarding the North Korean logic for starting negotiation, Akbar Ghasemi¹⁶ believes that Kim Jong-un has adjusted his actions and behavior toward the United States for five major reasons below:

1. Kim was clever enough to realize that now is the best time to make a major breakthrough in relationships. Because his intercontinental missiles are developed enough to threat U.S. soil and it would be a major advantage in any negotiations.
2. Kim realized the fact that the international pressure on the two countries close to North Korea, including China and Russia, has forced them to accept resolutions against Pyongyang. In particular, the sanctions on fuel supplies and the expulsion of North Korean workers from the two mentioned countries, which impose a lot of economic pressure on the regime. That’s why he realized that now is the time for flexibility.
3. North Korean leader was well informed that the real pressure on Pyongyang will start soon and they should start negotiation before it is too late. Therefore, using the coverage of the Friendship Revival with South Korean brothers in the Winter Olympics, he paved the way for his strategy.
4. Kim cleverly understood that the best possible mediator between North Korea and United States would be the South Korean president who will eagerly support the resolution of the crisis on the peninsula. Therefore, he chose Moon Jae-in to facilitate negotiations with

15 Ruhollah Souri is an international relations researcher and analyst.

16 Akbar Ghasemi is an Iranian politician and former ambassador to Ukraine and Moldova.

Trump rather than giving multiple ransoms to the Chinese and the Russians, and give them all the final revenues. In fact, Kim showed Moscow and Beijing a negative response for their adoption of international sanctions.

5. The simultaneity of negotiation between United States and North Korea with the final decision of Trump about JCPOA would be an advantage for North Korea. They can analyze the American behavior toward their previous agreements and also keeping their own case more ambiguous (Ghasemi, 2018).

On the American side, Nozar Shafiei believes, Donald Trump has faced a number of problems within the United States during his time of presidency. His plan to cancel Obama's health insurance has caused serious problems, his plan to deal with the presence of immigrants in the United States has so far failed and his promise to build the wall on the Mexican border remains unfulfilled. Meanwhile, he has been under the most serious criticism because of his government's relationship with Russians and even for this last reason, he has been forced to make changes in his political team (Nozar Shafiei, 2018). It seems, Trump's foreign policy toward North Korea uses escalate to de-escalate approach, in which he greatly exacerbates tensions and disagreements and makes the situation more critical to reach the political path to his goals. The North Korean leader's offer of talks shows that Kim Jong-Un has used the same policy to provide an acceptable negotiation condition via the threats against the United States. In such a policy, tensions are not meant to create conflict, but actors are looking to get more success in the negotiations. The visit between Trump and UN could be announced as a success in both countries. North Korea, based on the assumption that the United States has accepted North Korean power and entered the negotiations as an equal power, will seek a successful read out of the visit, while Donald Trump will benefit from this success in foreign policy to attract U.S. public opinion when he is internally facing challenges in the White House as well as the controversial issue of possible connection between his election campaign and Russia (Hamed Musavi¹⁷, 2018). Washington is well aware of the complexity of the North Korean military capabilities and the fact that U.S. political goals toward it cannot be urgently obtained. Therefore, accepting negotiations without a precondition means entering a political gambling for United States. Meanwhile, the North Korean target is understandable: the suspension of sanctions, the time buying and preventing a predatory attack by the United States and its allies. On the other hand, North Korea is also aware of its negotiating conditions and benefits. The country won't have bare hands in talks with the United States. Although oil sanctions, shipping, and pressures on China to abandon trade operations, have worsen the condition for Pyongyang. North Korea could easily threaten, the free trade route and U.S. bases in various parts of the world, including Guam, South Korea and Okinawa. Clearly, the current developments shows the severity and objectivity of these threats to the United States, which makes it easier for an opportunist actor like Pyongyang to make efforts from negotiation (Kebriaei Zadeh¹⁸, 2018).

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18 Hossein Kebriaei Zadeh is an International Relations Researcher at Islamic Communications Organization

The United States and Trump in person are in a situation that are in dire need of moving their internal crises out of the United States. The issue of North Korea, the U.S withdrawal from the Paris Pact, JCPOA and new sanctions against Iran, the gap in relations with Europe and economic war against China are examples of this American policy. Therefore, the Korean crisis would be great opportunity for Trump to attract attentions (Sivani¹⁹, 2018). In the same vein, Seyed Rasoul Musavi²⁰, concludes: “Trump who has been bitterly defeated in all domestic and international politics, thought that as U.S. president Nixon went to Beijing’s airport to open the Chinese gate to the United States and bring American investors to the eastern paradise, He will also be able to cover his defeats by heavy media propaganda through a meeting with the North Korean leader! This perception seems logical, but it does not mean that within North Korea, a 30 million people in an area of 120,000 square miles, despite having followed the “Juche” ideology, could be like the Chinese case. Therefore, it seems to be a symbolic movement and some kind of psychological warfare against North Korea rather than a serious decision to resolve the crisis (Seyed Ali Musavi, 2018).

Keyhan Barzegar²¹ declares: “After the end of media excitement about the likely outcome of the summit between U.S. and North Korean leaders, on June 12, 2018, it is now clear that the agreement focuses on the mutual need of their leaders to achieve a “minimum deal” for managing bilateral relations between the two countries in the global policy equations rather than making a comprehensive plan for future negotiations (Barzegar, 2018). In the same way, Hamid Baeidinejad²² believes: “The most important elements of the one-page and multi-line statement from the two sides, is the commitment of North Korea to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula on one side and the U.S. commitment to providing security guarantees to North Korea from another, which has been repeated over the last 25 years at several stages and the agreements between the two sides” (Baeidinejad, 2018). Ebrahim Mottaghi²³ also believes: “Although North Korea and the United States have now entered the “cold peace” phase from the former phase of Cold War, Cold peace requires tangible diplomatic achievements and if not obtained, there is the possibility of return to the former condition and even worst” (Mottaghi, 2018).

In such a condition, there are two possible negotiation policy for United States. The first route could be financial and economic assistance and the lifting of sanctions, not only to eliminate nuclear weapons, but also to eliminate long-range ballistic missiles. These issues have never been at the top of the negotiations list, and now Donald Trump can make his election promise, on not

19 Hamid Sivani is international relation researcher and analyst.

20 Seyed Rasoul Musavi is international relation researcher.

21 Kayhan Barzegar is the director of the Institute for Middle East Strategic Studies in Tehran and a former research fellow at Harvard University. He also chairs the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the Islamic Azad University in Tehran.

22 Hamid Baeidinejad is an Iranian diplomat who serves as the Iranian Ambassador to the United Kingdom. He was formerly the Director-General for Political Affairs and International Security Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

23 Ebrahim Motaghi is a professor of political science at the University of Tehran. He is the Director of the Department of Strategic Studies at the Middle East Institute for Strategic Studies.

allowing North Korea to be able to target the mainland of the United States. But the second route is more daring, and for this reason it can be very attractive for Trump. This makes it a bigger carrot for North Korea, which is the normalization of diplomatic relations with North Korea and the conclusion of a peace treaty between the parties which means an end to the Korean War and the isolation that has been imposed on North Korea due to its nuclear program (Soleimani²⁴, 2018).

Regarding the fast developments in the Korean peninsula affairs and the recent meeting between the North Korean leader and the South Korean president which has created great hopes for peace on the peninsula, Mohsen Shariatinia²⁵ has compared the hopes for peace and Inter-Korean developments with the beginning of the Arab Spring developments. He assumes: "North Korea has once experienced the brutality of the United States and probably does not want to do it again. That's why Kim speaks of denuclearization on the whole Korean peninsula. Denuclearization of Korean peninsula means an end to the U.S. nuclear and military umbrella for South Korea, an indication of South Korean national security which won't be easy for South Korea nor the United States". He believes that South Korea, despite its tremendous advances and developments is still a consumer of security. Therefore, while North Korea has gained nuclear weapon, United States is the sole source of security for Seoul. Therefore, changing the hub and spoke pattern of security would be very dangerous for South Korea. As a result, he concludes that the long path for peace in Korean peninsula has just begun and it would be such a hard road for all parties. So there is the possibility that like the Arab Spring events, it is only the beginning to be exciting (Shariatinia, 2018).

From another point of view, a very common issue in the current situation is the comparative analysis of Iranian nuclear negotiations and the case of North Korea. But the differences of these two should be mentioned. In fact, the nuclear issue of Iran and North Korea are completely different. Despite all the pressures and sanctions it has suffered due to its nuclear program from decades ago, Iran has maintained its commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, never made a nuclear weapon, and has never had a military nuclear program. Iran has accepted the most accurate inspections in the history of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Iran accepted all major international treaties that prohibit the production and use of weapons of mass destruction. The highest religious authority of the country, prohibits the production of weapons of mass destruction. It is worth to mention that; Iran did not respond to the chemical attacks of Saddam Hussein's regime by retaliation due to the religious beliefs of its leaders. Instead, North Korea has withdrawn from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and has developed nuclear weapons and missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. It also has no religious or secular concern for the use of these weapons against the enemy.

24 Mehdi Soleimani is international relation researcher.

25 Mohsen Shariatinia is a professor at Shahid Beheshti University and senior researcher at the Strategic Research Center of Iran's Expediency Council

Prior to the U.S withdrawal from the JCPOA, Seyed Hossein Mousavian²⁶, in an article published in *Le Monde* newspaper, insisted that Washington should take a model for Iran's nuclear deal to reach agreement with Pyongyang rather than cancel it. He assumed: "Iran has always negotiated with the European countries, China and Russia on regional and other issues, but it is not the case with the United States. The Supreme Leader of Iran has said that accomplishment of JCPOA will be the criterion. If the United States honestly fulfills its obligations, then Iran may negotiate other issues with them. Therefore, the United States must prove its honesty first. But the world has seen Trump's behavior toward the deal recently. If Trump cannot be a member of a global deal like JCPOA, how can North Korea trust the United States? The United States behavior has made it clear for the two major political parties in Iran, that negotiations with the U.S. are useless (Mousavian, 2017). North Korea too has experienced the same with United States. The 1994 agreement between the two countries was ruined by the United States. The purpose of that deal was to normalize bilateral relations and also help North Korea gradually return to the global community but the result wasn't as expected. Therefore, it seems that the trust building process between the two major parties of the Korean crisis is now even harder than before, because the U.S. is getting more and more unreliable (Sajedi²⁷, 2017).

The U.S. radical expectations from Iran have been inefficient since decades ago and delayed the peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. The same mistake is now being repeated against North Korea. In response to U.S. threats and severe sanctions against itself, North Korea increased its ballistic missiles capabilities and the strength of its nuclear weapons. Allowing such a triumph can only increase the likelihood of a catastrophic war. Therefore, it is imperative that the United States, change its policy and replace the policy of sanctions and pressures with a practical diplomatic view. Another fact is that Washington should accept the principle of multilateral diplomacy against Pyongyang because the role of other powers especially China and Russia is crucial in Korean crisis. If the United States played a decisive role in the negotiations leading to the Comprehensive Plan of Action, it was in collaboration with the other four permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and Germany which resulted in a comprehensive deal. The third major lesson from the negotiation on Iran's nuclear deal, which is applicable to the North Korean issue, is the fact that the two parties' objectives should be clearly expressed in the talks. (Mousavian, 2017). Undoubtedly, when the United States government condemns the JCPOA and ruins the agreement, it weakens the hopes for possibility of a diplomatic solution for the North Korean crisis, and confidence in the United States and the UN Security Council among North Korean leaders.

The JCPOA model of solving international disputes could have been one of the best solutions to the North Korean case. In the same vein, German Chancellor Angela Merkel told a newspaper she would be prepared to become involved in a diplomatic initiative to end the North Korean nuclear and missiles program, and suggested the Iran nuclear talks could be a model. Merkel stated: "We

26 Seyed Hossein Mousavian is a diplomat, a former senior Iranian nuclear negotiator and a founding member of the Moderation and Development Party. He is currently a research fellow at Princeton University.

27 Mohammad Sajedi is an Iranian International Relations Scholar.

have witnessed that after years of negotiations, we eventually managed to reach an agreement on Iran. This is important in the light of a common diplomacy and it seems to me that the same can be done for North Korea.” (Reuters 10/9/2017). But Trump’s policies have shown that the United States does not value its signing. The JCPOA has been negotiated and signed but now it does not accept it. The U.S. does not respect the International Atomic Energy Agency’ because the Agency has confirmed Iran’s compliance with its obligations. It does not respect the Security Council’s resolutions because the resolution is approved by the council, and Trump violates it.

Considering the U.S. unilateral withdrawal from JCPOA, the debate among Iranian analysts and even the Westerners has arisen that while Iran was not interested in going through the North Korean route, the Trump’s approach showed that North Korea’s road to nuclear weapons and bringing U.S. to the table from the position of power is maybe better than Iran’s method, which has tried to ensure international society, that it does not want to become North Korea (Tajik, 2018). In this regard, many scholars and elites in Iran believe that while JCPOA with the backing of the Security Council resolution and the sign of five other world powers has such a fate, any agreement with North Korea would probably have the same destiny and U.S. won’t be loyal to its commitments (Gol Anbari²⁸, 2018).

6. Conclusion

From the International order perspective, North Korea has challenged the international order. Perhaps this sentence is different from the conventional definition of different levels of order, but in itself, it is a fact that the United States desired regional and international order has been challenged in a major region by North Korea; the order that the United States considers itself to be the main guardian, a nuclear-military discipline which has been created by regimes and regulations that the United States has played a key role in their foundation.

The current developments in Korean Peninsula has made it a focus for international peace studies again. After the successful test of hydrogen bomb by North Korea, U.S. defense secretary warned North Korea that any threat to the U.S. and its entire territory, including Guam Island or against United States’ allies would be answered with a huge military response. Prior to this, the U.S. president also threatened the North Korean regime to face a military strike, but the passage of time and repeated North Korean nuclear and hydrogen tests showed that this country is more powerful than previously thought and any provocative behavior can exacerbate tension, make the situation uncontrollable, and result in a catastrophe. Given North Korea’s nuclear capabilities, it should be acknowledged that the country has 60 nuclear weapons and the ability to install them on ballistic missiles, which enters the country to the nuclear league, meaning that North Korea is not going to accept disarmament through coercion.

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Given the fact that North Korea's immediate disarmament seems to be fantastic, the realistic solution to the North Korean crisis can be set by the following objectives: discontinuing nuclear weapons testing, signing of a comprehensive nuclear test ban and the opening of talks with South Korea and Japan to establish a regional security cooperation system.

The military option to deal with the present situation is very dangerous and can kill hundreds of thousands of people. In fact, the North Korean crisis has no longer a military solution, and there is no way but serious negotiations. Therefore, If North Korea is not able to return to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty because of its nuclear-weaponry status, it can reduce international concern, by accepting the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty on inspections and transparency. In return, global powers must abolish nuclear-related sanctions and provide all the security guarantees necessary to preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As told before, while the United States government condemns the JCPOA, following the declared objectives of Donald Trump, it lessens confidence in United States and reduces the possibility of reaching an efficient agreement. It also ruins confidence toward the efficiency of UN Security Council inside North Korea.

The summits between Kim Jong Un and Donald Trump, could temporarily reduce pressures on both sides and also make China, the main mediator of these negotiations which is an upgrade to an acceptable level in international bargaining for Chinese leaders. However, China has shown that, along with the Security Council's resolutions against North Korea, tries to use the crisis as a tool to manage Trump's behavior and Russia seeks to keep its footstep in Korean peninsula affairs. It could also wipe out the shadow of a new war from the peninsula in the short term and perhaps in the mid-term, but the full and permanent resolution of the conflict on the Korean Peninsula requires the participation and readiness of all parties.

Although developments in Inter-Korean relationships and the direct negotiations between U.S. and North Korea is a considerable condition for ending the old crisis in the peninsula, the U.S. behavior toward JCPOA and other international treaties has raised further negative views about the future of any constructive negotiation on North Korean nuclear program among the Iranian intellectuals like many other international relations researchers and analysts from all around the world. Also the failure of Hanoi summit and the fruitless meeting of Trump and Kim in the DMZ has contributed to these pessimisms. After the abandoned talks in Vietnam and the summit in the DMZ, Washington and Pyongyang have started to consider the other party's behavior as the main reason of failure in negotiations and further developments. In addition, satellite monitoring of North Korean activities suggest that the country prepares for a new satellite or rocket launch as a sign of its abilities. It seems, the U.S. has called for measures beyond the destruction of North Korea's scientific and research centers, which were faced with a North Korean delegation's disagreement. The American side, without giving any privilege, has been seeking to put an end to all North Korean scientific and research activities in the field of nuclear weapons which reminds of its behavior toward other countries such as Iran.

Considering the U.S. behavior and recalling its commitments to the results of 1994 and 2002 talks, it could be concluded that Washington does not have the amount of readiness to accept North Korea and on the other side Pyongyang is not willing to deposit its whole assets by signing two sheets of paper. The nuclear talks, which took 12 years and resulted in a 109-page, 5-attached document called JCPOA, proved the fact that signing some sheets of paper and a few memorable images do not cure these old pains. Eventually the only option would be negotiation but regarding the U.S. behavior toward the JCPOA, most of Iranian elites believe the negotiations are not expected to result in positive peace. Therefore, from their perspective, the most probable future for the Korean peninsula seems to be the continuation of *status quo*, at least in the near future.

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