

# Introduction

SU-MI LEE AND TERENCE ROEHRIG

North Korea's interest in acquiring nuclear weapons began in the 1950s, but for three decades its nuclear ambitions received little attention from officials and analysts. By the mid-1980s, the evidence of a North Korean nuclear weapons program began to mount as did concern for the impact of this program on regional and international security. Since that time, the international community has employed various measures including diplomacy, incentives, and coercion to persuade North Korea to relinquish its goal of acquiring nuclear weapons. Negotiations with North Korea have been able to bring about notable bilateral and multilateral agreements that seemed to offer the possibility of progress including the North-South Joint Denuclearization Agreement (1992), the Agreed Framework (1994), the Six-Party Talks' disarmament principles (2005), the North Korea Denuclearization Action Plan (2007), and the Leap Day Deal (2012). The efforts by the Trump administration and the plethora of summit meetings in 2018 and 2019 also raised hopes for progress but little was forthcoming. Despite these many agreements and countless efforts to engage and coerce North Korea, the goal of achieving the denuclearization of North Korea is becoming an ever more distant possibility.

While many policy approaches have been used to address the complicated and challenging problem of North Korea, in this book we focus on the history of the negotiations between the six key players—North Korea, South Korea, the United States, China, Japan, and Russia—and seek to answer two fundamental questions: How did the unique nature of

these multiparty negotiations affect the chance for a successful outcome to achieve denuclearization? and Was there ever a window of opportunity when the negotiations could have succeeded? To address these questions, we bring together country experts with negotiation specialists and utilize their different approaches in a complementary fashion to structure the analysis in this book.

From the perspective of negotiation scholars, talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons program are multiparty negotiations, but not multilateral. Multiparty and multilateral negotiations are different. Multiparty negotiation refers to dialogue involving more than two parties. However, a multiparty negotiation could be multilateral or bilateral. In multilateral multiparty negotiation, each party represents its own interests but they are not grouped together with similar goals. Bilateral multiparty negotiations imply that the parties are divided into two sides based on their overarching common goals and interests. In the case of North Korea nuclear negotiations, six parties participated but negotiations were largely bilateral, with North Korea on one side and the remaining five on the other. Thus, North Korea nuclear negotiation is an example of bilateral multiparty negotiation as it involved multiple parties that were divided into two camps with one camp seeking to denuclearize North Korea while the other had different goals.

Multiparty negotiations are difficult because there are simply too many interests and goals to satisfy and accommodate. Bilateral multiparty negotiations are particularly difficult because not only do each party's goals, motives, and strategies individually affect the negotiation process and outcome but also the dynamic and cohesion within each subgroup collectively can alter the course of negotiation. For example, in the case of North Korea, China and the United States had significant differences in their primary goals though both were on the same side in seeking denuclearization. The pursuit of divergent goals by individual members within one side of the negotiation would make it challenging to facilitate a zone of agreement with the other side that is acceptable to all the involved parties. Thus, in bilateral multiparty negotiations, parties need to prioritize their goals within their side before they can negotiate with the other side. Uncoordinated or underutilized strategies employed by individual members or subgroups might undermine the overall process of negotiation. The different factors that motivate individual members to become involved in the negotiation will dictate the extent of the con-

cessions they are willing to make and their commitment to implement the agreement in the post-negotiation period. Without a cohesive action plan or voice from each side, it is highly unlikely that negotiation would be fruitful, sending mixed messages to the other side. Scrutinizing the differences of each party, this book seeks to highlight how the divergent goals, strategies, and motives of the six parties were coordinated/managed and affected the negotiation process and outcome in the case of North Korea nuclear negotiations.

For the second question—Was there ever a chance for success?—this book will apply the ripeness theory of William Zartman<sup>1</sup> to the case of North Korea to answer whether or not there was ever any window of opportunity for successful negotiation and, if there was, how the parties failed to grasp the opportunity to lead to a successful outcome. Has there ever been a ripe moment for success in the decades-long negotiations aiming to denuclearize North Korea? For a moment to be ripe, all parties must perceive: (1) a mutually hurting stalemate (MHS) where the parties do not see a chance of winning unilaterally, and (2) a way out (WO) where parties recognize a way to minimize their losses and reach an agreement through accommodation.<sup>2</sup> When the status quo is unbearable or costly, hurting both parties with no chance of winning unilaterally, parties are willing to choose to accept any negotiated outcome over the status quo. At the same time, for the ripeness of negotiation, they should also be optimistic about the prospect of an agreement, perceiving that it will lessen their losses.

In this book, the chapters of the country experts will provide a detailed assessment of the goals, motives, and strategies of the six parties along with contextual variables of each player such as political, economic, and social conditions while the negotiation scholars will collate and scrutinize the results of these key variables. Based on thorough descriptive contexts provided by the country experts, the negotiation scholars will examine at what point, if at all, cohesion among parties in terms of their goals, motives, and strategies was achieved and whether there was a moment that was ripe for a negotiated outcome.

In chapter 1 on negotiation theory, Su-Mi Lee and Pamela Aall introduce two approaches to negotiation—distributive and integrative negotiation—and discuss key components of negotiation that are applicable to the case of North Korea nuclear negotiations including actors in negotiation, issues under negotiation, motives and intention, power

relationships and leverage, agenda setting and bargaining, strategy and tactics, agreement, ripeness, and party cohesion. By doing so, they situate the North Korea case in the framework of negotiation theory.

To set up the country chapters that follow, in chapter 2, Terence Roehrig reviews the history of the North Korean nuclear challenge with a specific emphasis on the several rounds of negotiations that sought denuclearization. Beginning with a brief overview of the start of North Korea's nuclear program, this chapter examines the first nuclear crisis in the early 1990s that led to the Agreed Framework followed by its collapse and the subsequent Six-Party Talks. The chapter will conclude with the Obama administration's efforts to reach out to North Korea, only to settle into "strategic patience," followed by the Trump administration's journey from "fire and fury" to summit diplomacy.

The next six chapters are the country case studies that address the goals their respective countries sought to achieve during the different periods of negotiation. In particular, was the complete denuclearization of North Korea the only acceptable goal, or were others possible? In North Korea's case, was denuclearization ever a possible goal or was it determined from the outset to acquire nuclear weapons? Each country chapter will also examine the motives and strategy used by their country along with the tools and leverage they chose to use over the years. Finally, these chapters will also assess the domestic and international conditions that affected their country's calculus on goals, motives, and strategy. These six chapters are the data set from which the negotiation scholars drew for their application of negotiation theory and deriving of lessons learned in chapter 9. We follow with a brief summary of each of these six chapters.

Analyzing three decades of North Korean statements and negotiation positions with the United States, Scott Snyder argues in chapter 3 that while the North Korean pursuit of nuclear development remained persistent and enduring throughout these phases of interaction with Washington, North Korean willingness to consider and negotiate alternative outcomes was influenced by the relative capabilities of its nuclear program. The failure of the United States and North Korea to successfully implement joint projects such as the Geneva Agreed Framework generated new obstacles to the establishment of mutual trust. These obstacles were further magnified by the failure of leadership-level summitry between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un, leaving the Kim family regime with no attractive option other than nuclear development as the key to North Korea's absolute security.

In chapter 4, Uk Heo maintains that South Korea has used two types of strategies to achieve North Korea's denuclearization: (1) engagement; and (2) pressure. Progressive administrations (e.g., Kim Dae-jung, Roh Moo-hyun, Moon Jae-in) employed the engagement approach, seeking gradual changes in North Korea through economic aid and trade expansion while maintaining stability on the Korean peninsula. By contrast, conservative governments (e.g., Lee Myung-bak, Park Geun-hye) preferred pressure to force regime change or collapse, largely with economic sanctions to gradually undermine the power base of the Kim family and eventually collapse the regime. However, both of these negotiation strategies failed for three possible reasons. First, policymakers and security experts incorrectly assessed North Korea's willingness to abandon nuclear weapons in return for economic aid. Second, progressive administrations underestimated the risk embedded in providing economic aid to North Korea and, despite massive economic assistance, Pyongyang continued nuclear development and used the aid to support its nuclear programs, helping denuclearization efforts to fail. Finally, both Seoul and Washington underestimated the resilience of the Kim regime, despite extensive economic sanctions, and the North Korean regime turned out to be far more durable than expected. Negotiations require both sides to compromise and North Korea's behavior thus far suggests that it is determined to retain its nuclear weapons.

Why have several American presidents been unsuccessful in achieving North Korean denuclearization? In chapter 5, Paige Price Cone conducts a comparative analysis across seven U.S. administrations that have attempted to negotiate with the DPRK. In doing so, several patterns emerge that help provide an understanding of why the United States has hitherto been unsuccessful in its negotiation attempts. First, leaders come into office with prior beliefs about the importance of and means to deal with nonproliferation generally, and North Korea specifically, that influence their willingness to use sanctions or rewards. Second, each administration faced a combination of domestic and international constraints that specifically shaped how it dealt with North Korea. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, internal tensions between more hawkish and dovish administrations meant that hawkish presidents came into office with an "anything but [my predecessor]" policy that was detrimental to negotiations. Taken together, this analysis highlights why several U.S. administrations have been unsuccessful in dealing with North Korea and highlights a path forward for future administrations.

In chapter 6, Fei-Ling Wang argues that China's negotiation strategy has been driven by the Chinese Communist Party's political interest, rather than China's national interest, and Beijing has been walking a tightrope between opposing nuclear proliferation in Northeast Asia and seeking to resist, reduce, and replace American power in the region. China thus oscillates between supporting and sabotaging the course of peaceful denuclearization of North Korea. In hindsight, there was a small window of opportunity when the party's political interests overlapped with China's national interests, and essentially lined up with the interests of the United States and its allies. But that opening was conditional and transient. As the strategic rivalry between an assertive China and an alarmed United States unfolds and a new U.S.-led alliance network emerges in the Indo-Pacific, Beijing has jumped back to its North Korean comrades for its top strategic goal of regime survival. As long as the institutional and ideological incompatibility remains between the PRC-DPRK alliance and the USA-ROK/USA-Japan alliances, Beijing will talk the talk but not walk the walk, without much real effort employed for denuclearizing North Korea. Creative thinking and reframing actions are needed, therefore, to open any new window of opportunity.

We turn to Japan in chapter 7, written by Yuki Tatsumi. Over the last couple of decades, the Japanese government has shifted its North Korea policies as the North developed significant capacity to threaten Japan's national security. Initially pursuing a policy of bilateral diplomatic normalization until the development of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs in the 1990s, current Japanese policy goals vis-à-vis the DPRK are a patchwork of goals meant to cover a wide swath of concerns, while adequately addressing none of them. Japan's broader goal of addressing its colonial legacy through normalization of relations is at odds with the dangers of North Korea's expanding weapons programs, and the Japanese persistence in prioritizing the abduction issue, aggravated by the politicization of this concern into a necessary precondition for any negotiation with North Korea, has effectively eliminated Japan's ability to engage directly with the DPRK on any other matters. This has also forced Japan to rely on the United States to reflect Japan's priorities in their policy platforms for North Korea. If Japan is to move forward in North Korea negotiations, it must adopt a more flexible position that allows for negotiation directly with the North Korean government while simultaneously exploring the entire diplomatic toolbox to establish a more effective incentive system of both carrots and sticks that can achieve Japan's policy objectives.

In chapter 8, Richard Weitz reviews Russia's main objectives regarding the North Korean nuclear program and argues that the Russian government does not want North Korea to have nuclear weapons due to the elevated war risks, Western countermeasures, economic obstacles, and other problems presented by DPRK nuclear efforts. Yet, Moscow has long joined China in opposing the vigorous sanctions and further coercive pressure to induce the DPRK to change its position. Russian officials argue that such measures are counterproductive because they increase North Korea's sense of insecurity. They also do not want to see regime change in North Korea that could remove a strategic buffer for the Russian Far East. Resolving the DPRK nuclear dispute might remove international sanctions that impede realization of Russian commercial objectives in Northeast Asia, but economic goals have always been of secondary importance in shaping the policies of the Russian government toward the DPRK nuclear weapons program. Other Russian objectives have included remaining a significant player on DPRK nuclear issue, exploiting the crisis to gain diplomatic leverage with other countries, and aspiring to broker any settlement through Moscow-led mediation.

Focusing on the two primary concepts of negotiation, party cohesion and ripeness, chapter 9 explores whether or not there was a window of opportunity in the North Korea nuclear negotiations. Lee and Aall show how a lack of cohesion within the group of the five parties on one side of the negotiations—South Korea, the United States, China, Japan, and Russia—in terms of goals, motives, and strategies prevented a window of opportunity from being created and that not all parties experienced a mutually hurting stalemate at the same time.

The book ends with some of the lessons from our study for future negotiation strategies and for effective ways to address future proliferation challenges.

## Notes

1. William Zartman, "Ripeness: The Hurting Stalemate and Beyond," in *International Conflict Resolution after the Cold War*, ed. Daniel Druckman and Paul C. Stern (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2000), 226.
2. Zartman, "Ripeness," 228.