



LATEST UPDATES



The Koreas are not in a good place right now. They have two crises going on simultaneously: North Korea's continued proliferation of WMDs and the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected both Koreas. But if you live in the North, there is a third crisis: a severe shortage of food and medicine. This problem needs to be solved in order for peace to last on the Korean Peninsula.

Although it's easy to adopt a pessimistic attitude, seeing things through a more positive lense shows us that the possibilities for a constructive peace movement are definitely there.

Progress has been made towards peace on the Korean Peninsula over the past few years, and it's time to reap the fruits of this labor.

To put things in perspective, there haven't been any nuclear tests by North Korea since September 3, 2017. They also haven't conducted a long-range ICBM test since November 28, 2017 and the U.S. has even scaled down its military exercises in the region. There are also no U.S. foreign detainees in North Korea. Most importantly, the U.S. and North Korean leaders have met face-to-face on multiple occasions.

The U.S. is even receptive to supplying humanitarian aid to North Korea, as illustrated by President Trump's comment this past March; "If they need help, we will help them." And according to a U.N. Panel of Experts report in February, there is no indication of any kind of operational activity of the 5 MWe reactor in Yongbyon since the end of 2018.

There are more examples of bold and productive actions, including war remains given to the U.S. by North Korea in 2018, which could help identify 200 missing people. Even one of the most important issues has seen some progress; the proliferation of WMDs has decreased according to testimony given during this year's Jan. 28 U.S. House Armed Services Committee. The entire region, it appears, is bending over backward to make the Korean situation better. The peace door is open. The parties just need to walk through it.

Diplomatic relations, treaty additions, more top leadership meetings, and trade is important, but three even more critical steps remain. The first one is the delivery of humanitarian aid to North Korea. Second, the start of the elimination of WMDs from the region. Finally, the gradual suspension of sanctions by the U.N. and the U.S. against North Korea. These three components of the process can overlap, but when they can begin and how fast these components are implemented will be determined by the speed and success of the previous steps.

But feeding hungry people must come first. This requires no explanation. Mandatory denuclearization can then follow and WMDs disposed of. Also, when sanctions suspensions begin, they should target livelihood provisions first as laid out in China and Russia's draft resolution to the U.N. Security Council of December 2019.

There can be no effective peace plan if people are starving. Humanitarian aid is not servitude as recently mentioned by the North Korean media; its teamwork and very beneficial for the North Korean people. Teamwork is when all parties contribute equally to the genesis and implementation of the goals and the mechanisms for refining them. No human voice should be suppressed by any means, that would be a sure-fire way to handicap any team. All sides should thus have their voice be heard loud and clear. Everyone has a role to play in peace, and all roles are essential from youth to allies to neighboring nations to NGO's. By exercising effective teamwork, the process of bringing lasting peace will be made exponentially easier.

It's important that this work begins as soon as possible. The food situation in North Korea is especially bad this year, given severe food shortages caused by the border blockade with China. Playing politics is not a good idea and we don't have time to wait until the next election. Administrations can change at any time, not only as a result of elections, and the behavior of each leader is highly unpredictable. It's therefore important to establish an international consensus on providing much-needed medical and food aid to North Korea.

Each government's main responsibility is to protect its citizens. Speaking as a citizen of the United States, I do not feel safe with the current situation on the Korean Peninsula. But regardless of the precarious situation, we must work to make the best of any situation no matter what that is, or as the saying goes, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade."

More than ever, it makes sense right now to take active steps towards achieving peace on the Korean Peninsula. It would be beneficial to all sides involved. Although we might be a whisker away from war, we are even closer to a potential peace plan.

It is therefore imperative that we overcome doubt with courage and keep our eyes on the prize, which is a lasting peace that will bring prosperity to Korea, the region, and the world. We can't let attitudes get in the way of moving forward; instead, all parties should strive to be fair and reasonable. There aren't very many pieces left to complete this Korean peace puzzle, and it could be as simple as saying: "stop the violence, feed the people."