

A Structural Analysis of the U.S., China, South Korea and North Korea Quadrilateral Relationship

J. Michael Cole

*Senior Non Resident Fellow,
China Policy Institute, University of Nottingham,
Associate Researcher, French Centre for Research on Contemporary China*

Abstract

The North Korean nuclear issue has challenged negotiators for decades. Involving interactions between various players, the problem also has real and direct ramifications for the security environment of all the participants. Despite unprecedented bilateral summits between North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, Moon Jae-in and Donald J. Trump in the past year, new dynamics in the Asia Pacific arising chiefly from China's growing assertiveness and Beijing's efforts to displace the U.S. as the principal power in the region are adding even greater complexity to the equation and will make resolution of the decades-old conflict in the Korean Peninsula even more difficult to achieve. Recent events have reaffirmed the reality that the China-American relationship is the overarching and transcending factor in the region and the key issue driving the calculations of policy makers in Beijing, Seoul, Pyongyang, Tokyo and Washington on all other issues of concern. Rising China-American tensions amid an unprecedented trade war initiated by President Trump, and closer ties between Washington and Taipei, among other developments, will arguably compel Beijing, the DPRK's sole

ally, to once again use Pyongyang as a proxy and source of instability in the region so as to tie down U.S. and allied forces and dilute their ability to challenge China elsewhere in the region.

Keywords: North Korea, South Korea, United States, China, Denuclearization

I. Introduction

After decades of standoff over the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) nuclear and missile program, U.S. President Donald Trump disrupted the *status quo* earlier this year by extending an invitation to his North Korean counterpart, Kim Jong-un, to hold a summit in Singapore. Though light on substance, the landmark June 12 meeting — the first between a sitting U.S. President and a North Korean head of state — sent shockwaves across a highly complex region in which every shift in the U.S. alliance posture is bound to have repercussions on other relationships.

This paper explores the impact of the summit and subsequent developments affecting four of the key players that are directly involved in the Korean Peninsula, namely: the U.S., China, South Korea, and North Korea. It argues that the centrality of the U.S.-China relationship is essential to understanding the dynamics that influence the other conflicts in the region, including that between Washington and Pyongyang going back to the Korean War of 1950-1953. Every change in the Indo-Pacific security environment exacerbates Beijing's perceptions of its own vulnerability. This was true when Mao Zedong ruled over the newly formed People's Republic of China after 1949, and remains true today under Xi Jinping, whose assertiveness and impatience since 2012 have sparked a countervailing repositioning by the U.S. and its partners in the region.

At a time when China feels it has accumulated enough national strength to challenge American primacy in the Asia Pacific, Beijing is understandably wary of any development within the region which it cannot control. The Trump-Kim summit, which in many ways excluded Chinese involvement, sparked apprehensions in Beijing which forced its leadership to become more proactive in its engagement with the region, not only with Pyongyang, its longstanding ally and security buffer, but with the other principal players in the dispute as well. The prospect of a U.S.-led resolution of the conflict in the Korean Peninsula in which Beijing did not have sufficient agency was something that Xi could not countenance, especially in a context where Beijing believes it, and not the U.S., should be the regional hegemon. Thus, rather than remain a bystander, Beijing stepped in to ensure it played a role that was commensurate with its power and prestige, thus adding complexity to the entire process. Later on, a trade war between the U.S. and China became another impediment to progress on North Korean denuclearization.

II. Trump's Curveball

The unprecedented meeting in Singapore between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un was held with much fanfare and yielded grandiose pronouncements of newfound friendship and commitments to denuclearization. A declaration, signed that day, stated that the North Korean leader “reaffirmed his firm and unwavering commitment to complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” while Trump agreed to “provide security guarantees” to the DPRK.¹ Short on specifics, the document also failed to stipulate that denuclearization

1. “Full text of Trump-Kim signed statement,” *CNN*, June 12, 2018, <<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/06/12/politics/read-full-text-of-trump-kim-signed-statement/index.html>>.

would be “complete, verifiable and irreversible,” which many analysts saw as essential for a durable resolution of the conflict. Nevertheless, President Trump announced he would end the regular military exercises the U.S. holds with South Korea as part of a “freeze for freeze” initiative.

Whatever optimism existed after the summit proved ephemeral. Merely two months after the meeting, any notion that the exchange had been “a complete success,” as President Trump described it, was put to rest. Pyongyang began adding conditions, including its insistence that before it provided “a detailed, written disclosure of all its atomic weapons stockpiles, its nuclear production facilities and its missiles as a first major step toward denuclearization,” the U.S. should declare that the Korean War is over.² In its “demand of our time,” Pyongyang also stated that peace treaty talks should commence before it provided any details about its arsenal.³ Pyongyang also repeatedly turned down a U.S. proposal that it hand over 60-70 percent of its nuclear warheads to the U.S. or a third country within six to eight months.⁴

In a statement on *Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)*, Pyongyang said it was still willing to implement the broad agreement made during the June summit, but that as long as Washington “clings

2. David E. Sanger & William J. Broad, “Once ‘No Longer a Nuclear Threat,’ North Korea Now in Standoff With U.S.,” *New York Times*, August 10, 2018, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/10/us/politics/north-korea-denuclearize-peace-treaty.html>>.

3. “N. Korea Repeats Calls for US to Agree to Declare End to Korean War,” *KBS*, August 9, 2018, <http://world.kbs.co.kr/service/news_view.htm?lang=e&Seq_Code=138473>.

4. “Pyongyang Rejects Washington’s Proposal to Cut Nuclear Arsenal by 60-70%,” *KBS*, August 9, 2018, <http://world.kbs.co.kr/service/news_view.htm?lang=e&Seq_Code=138487>.

to the outdated acting script which the previous administrations have all tried and failed, one cannot expect any progress in the implementation.” It also criticized the U.S. for enforcing international sanctions against the DPRK despite “goodwill moves” by Pyongyang.⁵

The inability to make any progress prompted remarks by U.S. officials and commentators who argued that the North Koreans had not taken the necessary steps towards denuclearization. In fact, the two sides reportedly could not even agree on a definition of “denuclearization.” Like his predecessors, critics said, President Trump had been deceived.

In return, the North Korean regime alleged that unnamed officials in the U.S. government were acting against President Trump to “sabotage” the June agreement. In early September, Chung Eui-yong, the national security adviser to South Korean President Moon Jae-in, told media that Kim’s faith in President Trump remained “unchanged” and that he wanted denuclearization and an end to hostile relations with the U.S. before the end of Trump’s first presidential term. According to media reports, Kim told Chung he had a “fixed stand” to turn the Korean Peninsula into “the cradle of peace without nuclear weapons and free from nuclear threat” and was frustrated over “the doubt raised by some parts of the international community about his willingness to denuclearize, and asked us to convey his message to the United States.” Chung made the remarks ahead of a planned third summit between the leaders of the two Koreas later that month.⁶

5. Haejin Choi & David Brunnstrom, “North Korea chides U.S. sanctions pressure on denuclearization process,” *Reuters*, August 9, 2018, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-usa/north-korea-chides-u-s-sanctions-pressure-on-denuclearization-process-idUSKBN1KU1M8>>.

6. Hyonhee Shin & Susan Heavey, “North Korea’s Kim sets denuclearization time

Pyongyang's personalization of the issue was an interesting element which suggested that the DPRK believed it had a better chance of maximizing its interests by dealing directly with the U.S. president than with the U.S. government as a whole, where enthusiasm to lift sanctions against North Korea, let alone remove the 28,500 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea, is lukewarm at best. Besides the risk of leaving South Korea exposed, the removal of the U.S. military presence in the Korean Peninsula would be a major strategic gain for China.⁷ For that reason, it is not difficult to imagine that the U.S. Department of Defense would be reluctant to see its military presence in the region in any way diminished, as doing so would have repercussions for the security of allies and partners like Japan and Taiwan.

III. The China Factor

Besides President Trump's overtures to Pyongyang, another development that has exacerbated fears in Beijing that it could be left out of the process is the engagement by South Korean President Moon Jae-in with his North Korean counterpart. After months of negotiations and high-level exchanges, Moon and Kim met at Panmunjom on April 27, 2018, for the third inter-Korean summit (the first two were held in 2000 and 2007), during which the two leaders issued a joint declaration for peace and cooperation.⁸

line, prompting thanks from Trump," *Reuters*, September 6, 2018, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-southkorea/north-koreas-kim-says-wants-to-denuclearize-in-trumps-first-term-seoul-idUSKCN1LM07M>>.

7. Matthew Carney, "China is a clear winner from the Singapore summit with Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un," *ABC News*, June 13, 2018, <<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-06-13/trump-kim-summit-provides-challenges-and-opportunities-for-asia/9862214>>.

8. "Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula," *Reuters*, April 27, 2018, <<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-northkorea-panmunjom-declaration-for-peace-prosperity-and-unification-of-the-korean-peninsula>>.

Consequently, one week after the Singapore summit, Kim and Xi held talks at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, their third meeting since March that year. Among other things, Kim sought assistance from China on international sanctions against his regime.⁹ For Beijing, the meeting ensured that the DPRK would coordinate its response to the South Korean and U.S. efforts with Beijing, which feared Kim going it alone on a process that inevitably would have implications for China's security. Kim's June meeting with Xi received unusual coverage in Chinese media to remind the international community that China remains a key participant in the Korean Peninsula and the Asia Pacific.

As China-U.S. relations began to deteriorate due to an imminent trade war, pushback by Washington against China's assertiveness, and closer ties between Washington and Taipei, Beijing also sought to improve its bilateral ties with U.S. partners in the region — and by June 2018, it could be argued, however tentatively, that the DPRK had become a partner of the U.S. Reverting to its longstanding foreign policy strategy, Beijing aims to have closer relations with the countries involved than each had among themselves. Beijing understood by then that it could not afford to be isolated. This explains the three successive meetings from March 2018 with Kim, with whom the Chinese government had hitherto had a “frosty” relationship since he assumed office in December 2011. Meanwhile in Moon, Beijing saw a potential partner given his early opposition to the militarization of the conflict in the Korean Peninsula and the deployment of a U.S.-operated Ter-

southkorea-summit-statement/panmunjom-declaration-for-peace-prosperity-and-unification-of-the-korean-peninsula-idUKKBN1HY193>.

9. Lily Kuo, “Kim Jong-un meets Xi Jinping for third time,” *The Guardian*, June 19, 2018, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/19/kim-jong-un-meets-xi-jinping-for-third-time>>.

minal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile system in South Korea (after getting elected, Moon eventually acquiesced to, but still delayed, the deployments).¹⁰ Moon went to Beijing in December 2017, a state visit that was described as an attempt to repair bilateral ties after the dispute over the THAAD deployment, which China believes is aimed at its own missile arsenal.¹¹ During a May 2018 telephone conversation, Moon and Xi agreed to strengthen cooperation on the Trump-Kim summit in Singapore the following month and to “maintain and strengthen communication” for an eventual declaration of the end of the Korean War and a peace agreement.¹² Beijing has also signaled its willingness to accommodate a state visit to Beijing by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe in October 2018 and for Xi to reciprocate with a visit to Tokyo in early 2019.¹³

By reinforcing ties with Pyongyang, Seoul and Tokyo, Beijing was assuring a continued role for itself in the negotiations over denuclearization. It provided moral, diplomatic and material support for Pyongyang as it negotiated peace and denuclearization with Seoul and Washington. Lastly, it gave it the ability to make sure that whatever the outcome of the negotiations was, China’s security would

10. International Institute for Strategic Studies, “The North Korean Challenge: East and Southeast Asian Reactions,” in International Institute for Strategic Studies, ed., *Asia-Pacific Regional Security Assessment 2018: Key Developments and Trends in Asia-Pacific Security* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2018), p. 39.

11. Christopher Bodeen, “South Korean President Moon in China on visit to repair ties,” *The Associated Press*, December 14, 2017, <<https://www.apnews.com/429a387af9ce49e98b70738c7ca3cf4f>>.

12. “President Moon Jae-in talks with Xi Jinping to complete rounds of ‘telephone diplomacy’ with leaders of US, China, Japan and Russia,” *Hankyoreh*, May 5, 2018, <http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/843419.html>.

13. “Moves being made for Abe to visit China in October,” *Asahi Shimbun*, August 17, 2018, <<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201808170017.html>>.

not be compromised. Thus, while Beijing's role in the Korean Peninsula dispute was less overt in 2018, behind the scenes it solidified its relationships and therefore made sure it was kept apprised of, and had the ability to influence, the latest developments. By doing so, it ensured that no unilateral decisions would be made by any of the participants which could reshape the security environment in a way that was unfavorable to Beijing.

IV. Chinese and North Korean Objectives

The top strategic interest for China is to displace the U.S. as the principal player in the Asia Pacific. Everything else, even peace and the denuclearization of North Korea, is secondary to this overarching consideration. This priority is in turn related to China's insecurity, which paradoxically, at a time when the country "is more powerful than it has been at any point since its founding" is greater than it has been since 1968-1969, "when a major war with the Soviet Union threatened."¹⁴ This mixture of strategic imperatives and (perceived) greater vulnerability has heightened fears in Beijing of being left out as other regional powers rearrange the security architecture. For Beijing, being excluded from those processes is untenable, both because of the role it sees for itself as the rightful regional hegemon and because those developments could, if uncontrolled, undermine its security posture. Such fears were exacerbated after President Trump declared a trade war with China and signed into law bills, such as the *2019 National Defense Authorization Act* (NDAA), which struck a more belligerent tone toward China.¹⁵

14. Sulmaan Wasif Khan, *Haunted by Chaos: China's Grand Strategy from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2018), p. 7.

15. Gregory B. Poling, "Congress fires a warning shot to China with defense budget," *The Hill*, August 6, 2018, <<http://thehill.com/opinion/national-security>>

Within the ambit of that strategy, Beijing hopes to secure a deal involving North Korean denuclearization which would see the reduction or full removal of the 28,500 U.S. soldiers who are currently deployed in South Korea, as well as a weakened bond between U.S. and ROK military forces (South Korean authorities in May debunked the claim that U.S. troops stationed in the country would have to leave if a peace treaty were signed with the DPRK).¹⁶ It also wants the THAAD anti-missile system deployed in South Korea dismantled. Such an outcome would be ideal for China, which subsequently would be in a much better position to challenge U.S. military predominance in the region. Beijing may also hope that a denuclearized DPRK would compel Tokyo to initiate its own efforts to limit the U.S. military presence on its territory, although such a process, combined with greater Chinese military assertiveness in the region, could make it easier for Prime Minister Abe to revise Japan's Constitution and further increase defense spending, an outcome that would not be in Beijing's best interest.

At the same time, Beijing has long regarded North Korea as a gambling chip, a crisis it can reduce or elevate depending on the prevailing conditions in the external security environment. Though highly unlikely for the foreseeable future, a complete resolution of the Korean Peninsula issue — full denuclearization and a peace treaty replacing the armistice — would remove the DPRK as a useful transactional instrument for Beijing. Thus, especially in times of rising

ity/400527-congress-fires-a-warning-shot-to-china-with-defense-budget>.

16. Moon Jae-in said "US Forces Korea (USFK) is a matter of the South Korea-US alliance. It has nothing to do with signing a peace treaty." Quoted in "US troops 'will stay in South Korea' even if peace treaty is signed with North," *The Telegraph*, May 2, 2018, <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/05/02/us-troops-will-stay-south-korea-even-peace-treaty-signed-north/>>.

dispute with the U.S., the *status quo* in the Korean Peninsula is arguably once again the preferred option for Beijing; it can interfere in the process to frustrate President Trump's efforts to move forward with Kim. It can hold that issue hostage and make a more constructive behavior contingent on the U.S. ending its trade war, especially knowing that President Trump has staked his personal reputation on resolving the North Korean issue. While we cannot assume that every decision made by Pyongyang is directed or must be sanctioned by Beijing, there is no doubt that Beijing has substantial influence on the Kim regime and therefore can shape how it responds to threats and overtures by the U.S. and other actors. Finally, Beijing can also frustrate efforts by the international community to sustain sanctions against the regime through assistance to Pyongyang, something it has done for years.

Conversely, should early hopes of a resolution be frustrated due to intransigence on Pyongyang and/or Washington's part — precedent suggests this is a likely scenario — Beijing can also be expected to use its considerable leverage on Pyongyang to ensure it does not escalate tensions to the extent that war could break out in the Korean Peninsula, as no longer seemed unimaginable after Trump assumed office and up until a few months prior to his summit with Kim.¹⁷ Beijing does not want a massive influx of North Korean refugees, nor does it want to become involved in a shooting war with the U.S. over its neighbor. It also fears the prospects of a united Korea with Seoul in charge and a possible presence of U.S. soldiers along its border.

Skeptics in the U.S. and elsewhere have also been warning that

17. Eli Watkins, "Trump taunts North Korea: My nuclear button is 'much bigger,' 'more powerful,'" *CNN*, January 3, 2018, <<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/01/02/politics/donald-trump-north-korea-nuclear/index.html>>.

Kim, for all his professions of genuine commitment to denuclearization, has been lying to Trump and Moon. Certainly, past experience with his father and grandfather, as well as the nature of the Kim regime, make it difficult to believe that Kim is negotiating in good faith. Such apprehensions have engendered pressure on President Trump — the very unnamed officials Pyongyang has accused of trying to sabotage Trump’s plans. What Pyongyang appears to be banking on is President Trump’s personality, especially when he feels vulnerable domestically and may believe that the window to accomplish a major foreign policy feat may be closing. By personalizing the issue, North Korea may hope that Trump would let his “gut” dictate his policy, and that he would bypass state institutions that are opposed to this type of “grand bargain” with a longstanding enemy. (A peace treaty would make a future U.S. military intervention in the Korean Peninsula a more difficult proposition, especially if such action needed to be taken after a U.S. force reduction.)

V. Structural Pressures

Although a final and peaceful resolution to one of the few remaining legacies of the Cold War would be welcome, the security architecture of an entire region cannot be determined by a gamble, especially not when one of the participants has a long tradition of engaging in deception and receives the backing of another undemocratic regime that wants to see the U.S. expelled from the region. As one Australian security analyst has observed, “An agreement with North Korea which reduced tension, while clearly welcome in itself, could well mark the beginning of the end for America’s longstanding preponderance in Asia.....And that would be a big win for China.”¹⁸

18. Jane Perlez, “On U.S.-North Korea Talks, China May Hold the Cards,” *New York Times*, May 11, 2018, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/11/world/asia/>

While the U.S.-China trade war will likely derail the denuclearization process, growing fears of an increasingly assertive China in capitals from Tokyo to New Delhi will also result in pressure on Washington to avoid any deal that results in a drawdown of U.S. forces from the region. Thus, besides being held hostage by the trade dispute, we must also acknowledge that the Korean Peninsula issue is inseparable from the larger security context in which it occurs: fears of Chinese hegemony are creating incentives for greater engagement with and by the U.S., not less. Whether this takes the form of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific or a more definite multilateral security architecture, it is clear that smaller countries in the region are looking to renewed U.S. leadership to ensure peace and stability in times of Chinese resurgence. Given Beijing's view that such coalitions are hostile and intended to contain China, their consolidation would in turn compel the Chinese leadership to derail denuclearization, if not increase tensions to pin down U.S., Japanese and South Korean forces which otherwise could be utilized to meet the China challenge in other areas, such as the East China Sea, the South China Sea, or the Indian Ocean.

For South Korea, China also remains a challenge, and not only because of its own territorial disputes with its large neighbor. It fears growing Chinese control of North Korea, especially economically — something that could occur both under renewed tensions and resulting sanctions or after a peace agreement. In either case, Beijing has signaled its intention to revive trade with the DPRK. Under a scenario of reunification, a North Korea that has become overly dependent on China could prove especially challenging for Seoul.

[north-korea-china-nuclear-trump-sanctions.html](#)>.

Moreover, the immense challenges that militate against a resolution of the conflict in the Korean Peninsula, regional dynamics, chief among them China's efforts to displace the U.S. as the top player in the Indo-Pacific, are also influencing — and often undermining — negotiations with Pyongyang. The North Korea issue has also been instrumentalized, meaning that it can be used by any of the key regional players as a bargaining chip during negotiations on other matters. This hugely complex web therefore makes it unlikely that denuclearization and a peace treaty will occur anytime soon.

References

Books

Khan, Sulmaan Wasif, 2018. *Haunted by Chaos: China's Grand Strategy from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Book Articles

International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2018. "The North Korean Challenge: East and Southeast Asian Reactions," in International Institute for Strategic Studies, ed., *Asia-Pacific Regional Security Assessment 2018: Key Developments and Trends in Asia-Pacific Security*. London: International Institute for Strategic Studies. pp. 37-52.

Online Resources

2018/4/27. "Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula," *Reuters*, <<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-northkorea-southkorea-summit-statement/panmunjom-declaration-for-peace-prosperity-and-unification-of-the-korean-peninsula-idUKKBN1HY193>>.

2018/5/2. "US troops 'will stay in South Korea' even if peace treaty is signed with North," *The Telegraph*, <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/05/02/us-troops-will-stay-south-korea-even-peace-treaty-signed-north/>>.

2018/5/5. "President Moon Jae-in talks with Xi Jinping to complete rounds of 'telephone diplomacy' with leaders of US, China, Japan and Russia," *Hankyoreh*, <http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/843419.html>.

2018/6/12. "Full text of Trump-Kim signed statement," *CNN*, <<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/06/12/politics/read-full-text-of-trump-kim>>.

signed-statement/index.html>.

2018/8/9. "N. Korea Repeats Calls for US to Agree to Declare End to Korean War," *KBS*, <http://world.kbs.co.kr/service/news_view.htm?lang=e&Seq_Code=138473>.

2018/8/9. "Pyongyang Rejects Washington's Proposal to Cut Nuclear Arsenal by 60-70%," *KBS*, <http://world.kbs.co.kr/service/news_view.htm?lang=e&Seq_Code=138487>.

2018/8/17. "Moves being made for Abe to visit China in October," *Asahi Shimbun*, <<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201808170017.html>>.

Bodeen, Christopher, 2017/12/14. "South Korean President Moon in China on visit to repair ties," *The Associated Press*, <<https://www.apnews.com/429a387af9ce49e98b70738c7ca3cf4f>>.

Carney, Matthew, 2018/6/13. "China is a clear winner from the Singapore summit with Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un," *ABC News*, <<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-06-13/trump-kim-summit-provides-challenges-and-opportunities-for-asia/9862214>>.

Choi, Haejin & David Brunnstrom, 2018/8/9. "North Korea chides U.S. sanctions pressure on denuclearization process," *Reuters*, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-usa/north-korea-chides-u-s-sanctions-pressure-on-denuclearization-process-idUSKBN1KU1M8>>.

Kuo, Lily, 2018/6/19. "Kim Jong-un meets Xi Jinping for third time," *The Guardian*, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/19/kim-jong-un-meets-xi-jinping-for-third-time>>.

Perlez, Jane, 2018/5/11. "On U.S.-North Korea Talks, China May Hold the Cards," *New York Times*, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/11/world/asia/north-korea-china-nuclear-trump-sanctions.html>>.

Poling, Gregory B., 2018/8/6. "Congress fires a warning shot to China with defense budget," *The Hill*, <<http://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/400527-congress-fires-a-warning-shot-to-china>>.

with-defense-budget>.

Sanger, David E. & William J. Broad, 2018/8/10. "Once 'No Longer a Nuclear Threat,' North Korea Now in Standoff With U.S.," *New York Times*, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/10/us/politics/north-korea-denuclearize-peace-treaty.html>>.

Shin, Hyonhee & Susan Heavey, "North Korea's Kim sets denuclearization time line, prompting thanks from Trump," *Reuters*, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-southkorea/north-koreas-kim-says-wants-to-denuclearize-in-trumps-first-term-seoul-idUSKCN1LM07M>>.

Watkins, Eli, 2018/1/3. "Trump taunts North Korea: My nuclear button is 'much bigger,' 'more powerful,'" *CNN*, <<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/01/02/politics/donald-trump-north-korea-nuclear/index.html>>.

