

Book Guide

# North Korea's Foreign Policy: The Kim Jong-un Regime in a Hostile World

In *North Korea's Foreign Policy: The Kim Jong-un Regime in a Hostile World*, CFR's Scott A. Snyder and University of British Columbia's Kyung-Ae Park offer a robust examination of North Korean foreign policy under Kim Jong-un, including its domestic drivers, summitry diplomacy, and nuclear program.

## Summary

Since Kim Jong-un's assumption of power in December 2011, North Korea has undergone expanded nuclear development, political isolation, and economic stagnation. Kim's early prioritization of simultaneous economic and military development, known as the *byungjin* policy, highlighted his goal of transforming North Korea's domestic economic circumstances and strengthening its position in the world as a nuclear state. The central dilemma shaping Kim Jong-un's foreign policy throughout his first decade in power revolves around ensuring North Korea's prosperity and security while sustaining the political isolation and control necessary for regime survival.

To evaluate North Korea's foreign policy under Kim, *North Korea's Foreign Policy: The Kim Jong-un Regime in a Hostile World* examines the impact of domestic factors that have influenced the formation and implementation of Kim's foreign policy, Kim's distinctive use of summitry and effectiveness of such meetings as an instrument by which to attain foreign policy goals, and the impact of international responses to North Korea's pursuit of nuclear capabilities on North Korea's foreign policy.

This book is suitable for the following disciplines in undergraduate and graduate courses:

- International Relations
- East Asian Studies and History
- Contemporary East Asian Foreign Relations
- Asian Security

## Discussion Questions

### Courses on International Relations

1. What is the impact of North Korea's development of nuclear weapons on its global stature and image?
2. How do states use summitry as a tool of diplomacy?
3. How have international sanctions influenced the goals and methods of North Korea's foreign policy?
4. What are some lessons that can be drawn from UN responses to North Korean nuclear and missile development?

### Courses on East Asian Studies and History

1. How does the *byungjin* policy fit into the history of North Korean politics?
2. How has North Korean engagement with other states both in East Asia and with the international community evolved throughout the past decades?
3. Historically, what have been factors shaping North Korea's bilateral relations with China and Russia?
4. What are the predominant patterns that have characterized North Korea's foreign policy?

### Courses on Contemporary East Asian Foreign Relations

1. What lessons can be drawn from North Korea's recent summit diplomacy with South Korea, the United States, China, and Russia?
2. Given North Korea's nuclear and economic strategies, what can we project about diplomacy and deterrence in East Asia?
3. What are some lessons that the leaders of East Asian countries and the United States can learn by studying North Korea's history of nuclear development and diplomacy?
4. What are the implications of the intensifying U.S.-China strategic competition on regional dynamics in East Asia and North Korea's foreign relations?

### Courses on Asian Security

1. How do North Korea's nuclear and missile programs exacerbate the security dilemma facing U.S. allies in the region?
2. What is the future of the U.S. nuclear umbrella and extended deterrence in East Asia given North Korea's advancing capabilities?
3. What role do North Korean cyber activities play in regional security dynamics and response options by the United States and UN?
4. What can be expected of the alliance dynamics in East Asia in light of advancements in North Korean nuclear and missile capabilities and trilateral U.S.-South Korea-Japan responses?

### Essay Questions

1. How did Kim Jong-un consolidate his power between 2012 and 2017? Compared to his predecessors, what are the different economic and military approaches Kim adopted and why?
2. What led Kim to initiate summits with different leaders in 2018 and 2019? What was his objective, and what lessons were learned from the summitry?
3. What are some of the tools and channels North Korea has used to engage with the international community? Which have generated the greatest benefits for North Korea?

### Supplementary Materials

Bechtol, Burce. *Red Rogue: The Persistent Challenge of North Korea*. Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2007.

Becker, Jasper. *Rogue Regime: Kim Jong Il and the Looming Threat of North Korea*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Cha, Victor and Kang, David C. *Nuclear North Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.

Cumings, Bruce. *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2005.

Eberstadt, Nicholas. *The North Korean Economy: Between Crisis and Catastrophe*. Edison, N.J.: Transaction Books, 2007.

Fahy, Sandra. *Dying for Rights: Putting North Korea's Human Rights Abuses on the Record*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

Fifield, Anna. *The Great Successor: The Divinely Perfect Destiny of Brilliant Comrade Kim Jong Un*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2019.

Grzelczyk, Virginie. *North Korea's New Diplomacy: Challenging Political Isolation in the 21st Century*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Haggard, Stephan and Noland, Marcus. *Famine in North Korea: Markets, Aids, and Reform*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

Kim, Byung-Yeon. *Unveiling the North Korean Economy: Collapse and Transition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Kim, Sung-Chull and Cohen, Michael D. *North Korea and Nuclear Weapons: Entering the New Era of Deterrence*

Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2017.

King, Robert R and Shin, Gi-Wook. *The North Korean Conundrum: Balancing Human Rights and Nuclear Security*. Stanford: Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, 2022.

Lankov, Andrei. *North of the DMZ: Essays on Daily Life in North Korea* Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and Co., 2007.

Mallory, King. *North Korean Sanctions Evasion Techniques* Rand Corporation, 2021.

Martin, Bradley K. *Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader: North Korea and the Kim Dynasty* New York: Thomas Dune Books, 2006.

Natsios, Andrew S. *The Great North Korean Famine: Famine, Politics, and Foreign Policy* Washington, D.C.: The United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001.

Pak, Jung H. *Becoming Kim Jong Un: A Former CIA Officer's Insights into North Korea's Enigmatic Young Dictator* New York: Ballantine Books, 2020.

Snyder, Scott. *Negotiating on the Edge: North Korean Negotiating Behavior* Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999.

Suh, Dae-Sook. *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

White, Geoff. *The Lazarus Heist: From Hollywood to High Finance: Inside North Korea's Global Cyber Warfare* London: Penguin UK, 2022.

[Visit Book Page](#)