



# The Way Forward on North Korea

March 19, 2018

North Korea's nuclear and missile programs and its destabilizing behavior pose a serious threat to U.S. national security. The United States should be confident in its ability to handle North Korea, to protect America and its allies, and to secure American interests through clear-eyed and consistent diplomacy fully integrated with deterrence and containment strategies.

Adapting to today's threat from North Korea requires the United States developing a comprehensive, long-term strategy to protect U.S. citizens, troops, and allies, as well as uphold regional stability. The United States must pursue a three-pronged approach:

- **Seize the diplomatic initiative:** No progress will be possible—on denuclearization, avoiding miscalculations, easing tensions, or anything—without diplomacy. The United States needs to use diplomacy to its advantage and confidently engage in a regular, high-level dialogue that can maximize the chances of success.
- **Strengthen reassurance and deterrence:** The United States must take steps to reassure U.S. allies that North Korea cannot divide the United States from its allies. The United States needs to make sure alliances are as strong as possible and take the necessary steps to bolster our military posture and deterrence capabilities.
- **Increase pressure:** The United States has not yet exhausted the potential of effective sanctions. The United States must cut off North Korea from finding resources for its illicit programs. If China does not ramp up its economic pressure on North Korea, the United States needs to respond with additional secondary sanctions on China.

The strategy must be comprehensive, well-sequenced, and executed with dexterity, and this requires empowering the U.S. Department of State and America's professional diplomats to lead the diplomacy to advance U.S. interests.<sup>1</sup>

---

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Kelly Magsamen and others, "A Responsible Approach to North Korea," Center for American Progress, November 2, 2017, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2017/11/02/442030/responsible-approach-north-korea/>.