



Mural of Kim Il-sung in Wosan, North Korea. Photo by yeowatzup, 2008. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

FECKLESS: OUR HEARTLESS NORTH KOREA POLICY

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It is past time to take North Korean crimes against humanity and the North Korean military threat very seriously. The North Korean people have endured unimaginable and worsening horrors for too long, and the North Korean regime is demonstrating alarming progress in its decades-long quest to possess deliverable nuclear weapons. Let us contemplate the Kim dynasty's atrocities and growing nuclear and ballistic missile capability. What better reminder of what doesn't work in American foreign policy than today's North Korea?

American foreign policy at its best combines strategic and moral concerns, emphasizing national security and global stability, human rights and political freedom. The United States incorporated hard lessons from World War II into successful Cold War policies, vowing "never again" to be morally and strategically complacent. Presidents from Truman to Eisenhower to Kennedy to Reagan understood that downgrading American power or deemphasizing American ideals would lead to a more hostile, more oppressive world.

Today, however, we pay too little attention to America's geopolitical position and military alliances, and too little attention to the world's suffering and oppressed. Since the Iraq War, many, if not most, Americans

have succumbed to the idea that *either* we refrain from an active foreign policy *or* we'll end up with "boots on the ground." They recoil from attempts to influence events and ideas in dangerous parts of the world, fearing that influence will translate into military involvement. Yet, World War II taught that war is *more likely* when democratic nations bury their heads in the sand and retreat from the world stage. Scaling down defenses and doing nothing to defend democratic principles allows the *escalation* of atrocities, weapons programs, and hostilities, and only increases the chance that we'll be forced into war by events spiraling out of control.

IT IS NOT ONLY that North Korean camps are comparable to the concentration camps

that we vowed would "never again" mar this earth and degrade the human being. It is that the country itself is like a concentration camp, wherein the people endure ubiquitous, omnipresent repression.

In North Korea, central plans—benefiting the state, which is glorified, and its leaders, who are deified—are everything; individual initiative and human longing are nothing. North Koreans are taught that individual goals are capitalist sins and that communal-state goals constitute the duty and purpose of every communist. The state controls every aspect of life—where one lives, what one can say, whom one associates with, whom one may date and marry, what one does for work and after work, what one eats, what one wears, what songs



Detail from a North Korean propaganda mosaic mural that is roughly two stories tall. Photo by Mark Fahey, 2011. Source: Flickr.

one hears, what art one sees, what books one reads, what rank one has in society, and what regions, if any, one can travel to.¹ Reading a novel or a work of history, religion, or philosophy; watching an unapproved movie; listening to non-Korean news; or privately questioning the regime—all are “crimes” that could send one to the gulag for life.²

Communism subsumes family life, and family members are expected to spy on each other. Most mothers spend all day working in factories, after which they must attend hours of indoctrination sessions. A refugee stated in a recent interview, “Brainwashing tactics begin from an early age. The government even instructs kindergarten teachers to tell young children to spy on their own

parents.” The government is increasing pressure on teenagers not only to confess their own anti-revolutionary transgressions in mandatory “self-criticism sessions,” but also to report the transgressions of others.³ The only pictures permitted (and mandated) on the walls of homes are portraits of “Eternal President” Kim Il-sung, “Supreme Leader” Kim Jong-il, and “Supreme Leader” Kim Jong-un.

Highlighting a recent report by Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Marcus Noland describes the results of a codified doctrine “that virtually deifies the Supreme Leader and demands total subjugation by the people.” Religious practitioners are typically classified into the hostile class and subject to severe repression. Christians, whose

activities are deemed anti-revolutionary and anti-nationalist, are especially vulnerable: “Christians are routinely sent to the *kwanliso* or political prison camps. There they are subjected to torture including beatings, being hung on a cross over a fire, crushed under a steamroller, herded off bridges, trampled underfoot, and used as test subjects for medical training and experimentation.” Even contact with Christians “is sufficient to warrant execution or consignment to a political prison camp upon repatriation.”⁴

Yet, refugee testimony suggests Christianity in North Korea continues to grow. In China, Christianity has grown like wildfire in spite of fevered government attempts to keep it under control. Noland ventures, “My own gut instinct is that if there

were any genuine relaxation [in North Korea], there would be an explosion of repressed religiosity.”

A 2009 East-West Center survey of North Korean prison camp experiences as revealed in refugee testimony and satellite technology concluded: “The portrait that emerges is of a Soviet-style gulag characterized by an arbitrary judicial system, an expansive conception of crime, and horrific abuses. These abuses include extreme deprivation, particularly with respect to food and medical treatment, torture and public executions.”⁵ In 2010, UN special envoy on human rights Vitit Muntarbhorn reported on “harrowing and horrific” human rights violations, stating that “sadly on many fronts the situation has actually gotten worse.” In 2012, human rights investigator David Hawk and the US Committee for Human Rights in North Korea issued a report that portrayed a country beset by repression, terror, prison camps, torture, and executions. A long overdue UN report in 2014 accused North Korea of “unspeakable atrocities,” citing persecution, execution, enslavement, starvation, torture, forced abortion, and rape. It described a totalitarian state without parallel in the contemporary world, which the head of the report compared to Nazi Germany. Making dire conditions even worse, Kim Jung-un, who became “Supreme Leader” after the death of his father in 2011, stepped up intimidation, persecution, and punishment of would-be escapees.

In *The Aquariums of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korean Gulag*, Kang Chol-hwan describes the barbarity of life inside the camps. In the infamous labor camp

Yodok, his family learned how to make do with inadequate water and without subsistent levels of food and heating fuel. Adults toiled under backbreaking, slave-labor conditions and hours. Young Kang attended classes where most “instructors” used their position to terrorize as much as to teach. Beatings and verbal degradation were the method of one. Another “sometimes punished his students by making them stand naked in the courtyard all day with their hands behind their backs.”⁶ Once a year, prisoners were allotted uniforms that quickly turned to rags and provided no protection from the elements. Corn, sometimes supplemented with acorn paste or herbs, was the only diet, so Kang “was always hungry and had problems digesting the little food.” Death by starvation was common.

The fear of punishment was omnipresent, as everyone was ordered to inform on everyone else, and punishment was extreme. Kang writes, “In North Korea—as I later learned was the case in the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany—camp guards aren’t satisfied to do all the surveillance themselves.”⁷ Prisoners were sent to solitary confinement in the “sweatbox” for trivial offenses such as responding to a guard’s command with insufficient zeal, and the ordeal of the sweatbox was so great that the poor soul subjected to it either died or emerged damaged for life. Kang’s terrifying description of the sweatbox should be enough to stir the hearts of even the most hardened “realists” and the most dogmatic “progressive pragmatists.”⁸

If we were honest about our real-world cynicism or one-world relativism, we would admit that it is not ignoring human

suffering for the sake of diplomatic deals or “peaceful coexistence” that is likely to create a more stable or cohesive world. Furthermore, when we fail to speak out against atrocities it is not a matter of accepting geopolitical realities or respecting other cultures for, as the most influential country in the free world, our saying nothing does positive harm. The speech, as well as the failure to speak, of American leaders affects everything from human rights to the confidence (or lack thereof) of enemies and allies, to national priorities and global standing, to the foreign policy “discussion,” and to policies themselves. It’s easier to conciliate the wrong nations if no one emphasizes their nefarious nature. It’s easier to choose morally bereft policy if no one points out moral imperatives.

Progressive-realists do not support the underlying idea of the American founding that individual rights are human rights; that rights are inherent, God-given, and universal; that they are not granted by government, nor does any government have the “right” to take those rights away. They are therefore free to ignore the fate of the people within the countries they bargain with.

A SURVEY OF DECADES OF NEGOTIATIONS with North Koreans reveals that our circumspection regarding their regime type has done no good. Sure, they have very occasionally come to the table, but they have not kept agreements or changed course. As did Hitler and as do today’s Iranian leaders, the Kim dynasty uses negotiations as cover. North Korea plays to our weaknesses—which include our own academicians who apologize for the regime and blame its behavior on our “insults”; our belief that even

totalitarians are “rational actors” who will abide by negotiated agreements; and our susceptibility to false promises and verbal games. North Korea has used the negotiating process to play for time, violated every agreement, and steadily reinforced its nuclear program and bellicose posture toward its neighbors and the West.

Like their predecessors, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton tried diplomacy with North Korea; but, unlike their predecessors, they continued to pursue diplomatic solutions even after North Korea proved duplicitous, intransigent, and intractable. The Obama-Clinton foreign policy team saw the world in post-Cold War, post-ideological terms. In place of the assertion of democratic principles and the construction of grand strategy were attempts to “talk” with dictators ... and to limit the terms of dialogue to “practical” matters such as proliferation and economic relations. The end goal of this “smart power” approach, which stressed “shared interests” rather than moral or strategic differences with extreme regimes, was some sort of compromise that enabled us to get along. Indeed, Obama and Clinton enunciated the normalization of relations with North Korea as a goal. And, no matter what the provocation, the administration was quick to indicate that negotiations, compromise, and material assistance were still possible if cooperation ensued.

Even with Obama’s “outstretched hand,” relations with North Korea got off to a strained start. Having scrapped all military and political deals with South Korea, North Korea informed the United States it had enough weaponized plutonium for four to five nuclear bombs, threatened to “destroy

meddlers,” fired a Taepodong-2 missile over Japan, and torpedoed and sank a South Korean warship. In response, in July 2010 Secretary Clinton announced sanctions on the individuals in the North Korean government and the banks that assist the trade of arms to North Korea. But these sanctions were really nothing new since UN sanctions already banned North Korea from importing or exporting weapons. As if to expose the inadequacy of the “international community” response, in November North Korea ratcheted up aggression, launching an artillery attack on Yeonpyeong Island in South Korea. Although the Western press suggested this was a “reaction” to President Lee Myung-bak’s recent retraction of South Korea’s Sunshine Policy, another way to look at this is that sunshine policies had failed.⁹

This was the thanks South Korea got for seeking a normalization of relations and trying to “live and let live” with its brutal northern neighbor by looking away from North Korean atrocities. For the sake of peace and harmony on the peninsula, the people within North Korea had been forsaken. But, oh how little peace and harmony that policy of indifference had produced. In announcing an end to the Sunshine Policy, the South Korean Unification Ministry called that policy of “peaceful engagement” with North Korea “a failure.” The ministry issued a paper, which found that a decade of cooperation, cross-border exchanges, and billions of dollars in aid did not change Pyongyang’s behavior or improve the lives of North Korean citizens.

Incredibly—given all the verbal references to the Six-Party Talks by the Obama foreign policy

team and all the respectful references to the concept in the American press (so many that a well-read person could be excused for thinking Six-Party Talks were a successful reality)—the talks never got going. The new Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un did, however, agree to a bilateral “Leap Day” agreement in February 2012, in which the United States pledged *240,000 metric tons of food over the following year* in exchange for a freeze on nuclear and missile tests. Note that the condition for food aid was no longer an *end* to the nuclear program but simply a *freeze* on tests. Very shortly after the “food for nukes” agreement, evidence arose that North Korea was nevertheless planning a third nuclear test. The White House warned North Korea that it might retract the offer for aid, noting the predilection of the regime to spend money on weapons systems rather than starving people.¹⁰

However much a relief that at such a point was finally made, the circumstances stood as a reminder of the peril of over-relying on diplomatic compromise with extreme regimes, and of falling for the words of fanatical leaders who, when they want something from us, tell us what we want to hear. Six-Party Talks had occurred in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007. And yet, the very administration that was willing to pay the highest price for talks, that kept persistently quiet about atrocities, that promised recognition of the “legitimacy” of the regime if only “progress” were made on the nuclear issue, that was willing to change US goals from eliminating the nuclear program to limiting it, that saw “talking” (engagement and negotiations) as the key to resolving international problems, could not get the talks going.

This helped lead the Human rights blog *FreeKorea* to lament, “Jesus wept. Where are the plans to mobilize global opinion, bring Twitter to North Korea, sanction the leaders of North Korea’s internal security forces, or bring Chapter VII sanctions at the Security Council over the matter of North Korea’s concentration camps?”¹¹ Fair questions, especially given President Obama didn’t even mention North Korea in his 2012 State of the Union speech despite that North Korea has been cited in nearly every State of the Union address since 1995. However, in his first visit to the demilitarized zone he finally noted the stark contrast between the two sides: “It’s like you’re in a time warp. It’s like you’re looking across fifty years into a country that has missed forty or fifty years of progress.” He added, “Bad behavior will not be rewarded.”¹²

It goes without saying that this statement, although an improvement over previous statements, stands in weak contrast to the statements of Kennedy and Reagan when they stood at the Berlin Wall. *“Bad behavior” had been rewarded—again and again.* Thanks to our renewed promise of food aid, Kim was able to point to concessions he’d wrested from the “imperialist pigs” and to promise the starving people relief. In an editorial entitled “The U.S. Falls Again for North Korea’s Tricks,” the *Washington Post* intoned, “As part of the bargain, the Obama administration effectively ratified the next generation of one of the world’s worst tyrannies, declaring that it has ‘no hostile intention’ toward North Korea.”¹³

In April 2012, North Korea went ahead with the rocket launch, which was widely assumed to be a cover for testing long-range

missile technology. The rocket disintegrated over the Yellow Sea, indicating failure, but not total failure; it constituted another step in refining that technology and another successful slap in the face of the United States. Soon afterwards, the administration suspended the Leap Day agreement. But the “diplomatic” approach of the Western world, combined with the sponsorship and support of China, continued to work to North Korea’s advantage. The UN Security Council didn’t impose additional sanctions even though the rocket launch violated two of its restrictions. In addition to concluding that the international community would do little to stop its nuclear program, the North Korean regime no doubt concluded that it could inflict terror and misery on its populace with impunity since the international community was impulsive and ineffective on this issue as well. Impassioned pleas for the North Korean people remained exceedingly rare, and rationalizations for moral indifference persisted.

Once engagement policies were more widely acknowledged to have failed, an interesting narrative twist emerged. Some of those who previously argued that we shouldn’t mention North Korea’s internal horrors because it might “insult” and “provoke” it, began, after the failed rocket launch, to say that we shouldn’t insult the regime because it was no threat to the powerful United States. We must ask, *Which is it?* The first reason for ignoring human rights is that it might inspire a threatening response. The second reason is that the regime isn’t really a threat. Those who complain when democracies call oppression “oppression” tend to be the same ones who stay silent when totalitarians commit

atrocities, foment hostilities, and call us “puppet warmongers.” If our occasional criticism of the totalitarian state were really the cause, as some argue, for the North Korean “fear regime,” why, during years when we flatter and mollify the regime, does it pursue nuclear weapons, sink ships, lob missiles, and step up repression?

In spite of canceling the food for nukes deal, the Obama administration indicated it still wanted negotiations and hinted it would still consider food aid if North Korea came back to the negotiating table. Forsaking this opportunity, in October 2012 North Korea announced that the US mainland and South Korea were “within range” of its missiles, and launched a satellite into orbit that uses the same technology as a missile with a warhead. Unlike the one in March, this missile launch was a success. In February 2013, North Korea conducted its third nuclear test, detonating a miniaturized nuclear device in defiance of further sanctions threatened by the UN. Coming so close on the heels of the missile launch, the test was seen as putting North Korea one step closer to developing a nuclear warhead.

As Obama began his second term, it appeared that North Korea’s nuclear program had advanced so far that DPRK leaders no longer saw the need to downplay it. North Korea declared that its nuclear weapons were not a “bargaining chip” and formally rejected a UN Security Council resolution calling for an end to its nuclear program. It threatened the United States and its Asian allies with destruction, announced the nullification of the 1953 armistice, rattled South Korea with cyber-attacks and military provocations,

and increased already horrific human rights violations against its citizens. Still, North Korean leaders suggested they might be willing to negotiate in the future on matters *other than* nuclear weapons and human rights. In other words, they demanded that the US go even further toward divesting our globalist policies of strategic and humane concerns. Some agreed that we should do just that in the attempt to prevent war and foster dialogue. Others, notably the new South Korea president Park Geun-hye, appeared less willing to surrender democratic principles and squander our military and geopolitical leverage.

LIKE HILLARY CLINTON, John Kerry began his term as secretary of state by trying engagement on the nuclear front, and he initially avoided statements on North Korean human rights. Although the United States did initiate a 2013 Security Council resolution to censure and sanction North Korea for its December rocket launch, Kerry said talks were possible and that the United States was “prepared to reach out” at the “appropriate moment.” Continuing its song and dance, North Korea said it would be willing to hold “disarmament talks,” but not over its nuclear program! Human rights groups that urged Kerry to take a stand on his April 2013 trip to Asia were disappointed, as they had been when Hillary Clinton took her Far East tour, for he focused on nuclear issues *rather than* human rights issues, stating, “North Korea will not be accepted as a nuclear power.” He said this in spite of the fact that David Hawk had published a devastating second edition of *The Hidden Gulag* in 2012, and that a new Human Rights Watch report showed that conditions were abysmal and dire.

In the meantime, an institute tracking North Korea’s nuclear weapons said satellite photos showed it was *doubling* the size of its uranium enrichment plant.¹⁴ In December, signs of new activity at North Korea’s main nuclear complex followed the regime’s repeated assertions that it was strengthening capabilities to produce nuclear arms. Then, in February 2014, North Korea fired four short-range Scud missiles in what was the first confirmed launch in more than nine months. Interestingly, the provocation occurred just after the North and South had held their first high-level talks in more than six years and just after North and South Korean families divided by the Korean War had their first reunions in more than three years—in other words, just at a time of engagement. In March, North Korea reinforced its attitude toward the “international community” by test-firing two medium-range ballistic missiles for the first time since 2009, and in violation of UN resolutions.

Nothing in North Korea had changed for the better. But something in the UN and the US had. Both the United Nations and the American secretary of state started to overtly condemn North Korean atrocities. As Nick Cumming-Bruce suggested in the *New York Times*, the 2014 UN report was significant not just because it exposed North Korean atrocities, but also because it represented the international community finally speaking out.¹⁵ On North Korea, unlike on Syria, Russia, and Iran, Kerry became willing to interrupt globalism’s trajectory—to move away from relativistic hopes of a unified if morally mute world order. He took a stand for human dignity in North Korea and, in so doing, showed that some of the free



world’s differences with others are worth emphasizing. At the United Nations, Kerry declared, “So we say to the North Korean government, all of us here today, you should close those camps. You should shut this evil system down.” On Human Rights Day 2014, Kerry asserted, “You may be hidden, but we can see you. We know you’re there. Your captors can silence your voice and assault your dignity, but they cannot deny your basic humanity.”¹⁶



Detail from a North Korean propaganda mosaic mural that is roughly two stories tall. Photo by Mark Fahey, 2011. Source: Flickr.

But the administration still sent mixed messages. In Seoul in May 2015, while stressing the international community's united opinion that North Korea had to denuclearize, Kerry stipulated, "We are not seeking conflict, we are seeking a peaceful resolution of the differences that still exist after so many years on the peninsula."¹⁷ Although the United States was certainly right not to seek conflict, it was not necessarily right to tout

"peaceful resolution of the differences," since those words implied naïve belief that the North Korean regime sometimes negotiates in good faith, and indirectly consigned the North Korean people to their awful fate. Obama's preemptive "no first use" offer, and Obama, Clinton, and Kerry's conflation of aggressors and defenders when voicing proliferation concerns, all add to the ambivalence of the message.

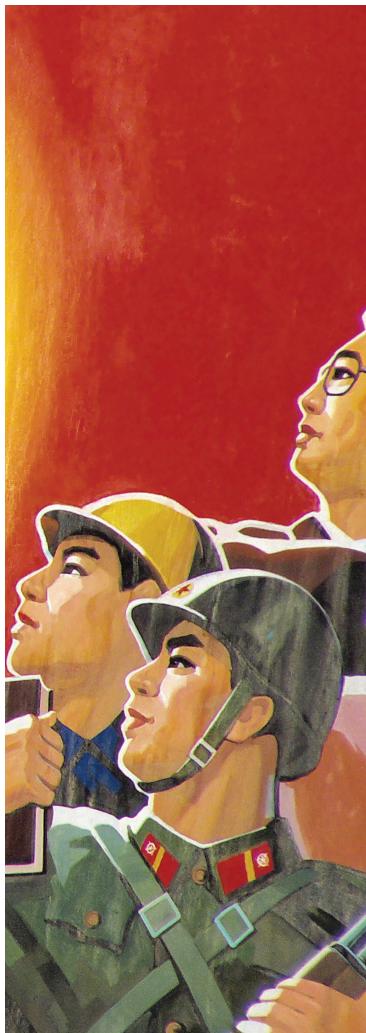
The reason North Korea's nuclear program is so dangerous is the extremism and hostility present in their regime.

An early 2015 report from the US-Korea Institute and the Institute for Science and International Security reached a grim conclusion: North Korea would have a minimum of twenty-nine bomb's worth of weapons-grade materials (with a medium projection of sixty-nine

weapons' worth of materials and fifty actual weapons") by 2020. The study noted a "dramatic build-up in North Korea's nuclear weapons capability" in the last several years.

Indeed, in January 2016 North Korea rattled the world by launching its fourth nuclear test (its third in seven years) and claimed it had detonated a hydrogen bomb. While experts determined that claim was exaggerated, North Korea had nevertheless conducted another test that further advanced its nuclear program. According to the *Wall Street Journal*: "Days before North Korea's latest nuclear-bomb test, the Obama administration secretly agreed to talks to try to formally end the Korean War, dropping a longstanding condition that Pyongyang first take steps to curtail its nuclear arsenal. Instead the U.S. called for North Korea's atomic-weapons program to be simply part of the talks. Pyongyang declined the counter-proposal, according to U.S. officials familiar with the events. Its nuclear test on Jan. 6 ended the diplomatic gambit."¹⁸

The US Congress swiftly passed legislation to broaden sanctions, while South Korea and Japan pushed for strong international sanctions. The North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act sanctions institutions that keep ties with North Korea, especially in China, but the Obama administration has, notably, not enforced the act. According to *Foreign Policy*'s chief national security correspondent Dan De Luce, the administration is "heatedly debating" whether to trigger harsh sanctions, with some officials worrying "that tough economic penalties would cause a serious rift with Beijing." Although new



UN resolutions and US legislation give the administration "far-reaching legal authorities to block assets, file criminal charges, and cancel visas for individuals or organizations violating sanctions rules on North Korea," the administration "has yet to wield those authorities in a decisive manner, taking action in a relatively small number of cases while it seeks to persuade China to take a more assertive role."¹⁹

We must, again, learn that weak engagement policies don't work, that our own and our allies' security and peace are at stake, and that the North Korean people who are ruthlessly denied their God-given rights are left behind by those policies. In April 2015, Bruce Klingner of

the Heritage Foundation noted a familiar pattern. Although the year "dawned with perceived signals of North Korea's supposed desire to resurrect diplomatic ties with the United States and South Korea ... [t]he regime subsequently added ever more preconditions, ultimately rejecting even the possibility of talks with either Washington or Seoul."²⁰ In August 2016, Klingner deftly described the military threat North Korea posed:

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is pushing forward rapidly on both nuclear and missile fronts. In addition to submarine missile launches, this year he has successfully tested a nuclear weapon, an intercontinental ballistic missile, a road-mobile intermediate-range missile as well as medium- and short-range missiles, re-entry vehicle technology, a new solid-fuel rocket engine, and an improved liquid-fuel ICBM engine. During Kim's four-year reign, Pyongyang has conducted 34 missile tests, more than twice as many as his father Kim Jong Il did in 17 years in office. ... The accelerated pace of North Korean nuclear and missile tests reflect Kim's intent to deploy a spectrum of missile systems of complementary ranges to threaten the US and its allies with nuclear weapons. Kim affirmed—that North Korea will never negotiate away its nuclear weapons.²¹

In September, North Korea conducted its fifth nuclear test, making accelerated progress in North Korea's nuclear program impossible to deny.

The increasing range of North Korea's ballistic missiles, and its increased ability to miniaturize nuclear devices in order to place them on missiles, means that South Korea, Japan, US bases in the Pacific, and even the US mainland will be increasingly vulnerable.

The United States and South Korea have, accordingly, increased joint military exercises and decided to deploy an advanced anti-missile system—a decision China and Russia strongly oppose—with China warning we will “pay the price.” Now is the time for the United States and Asian allies to show calm resolve, and to put more, not less, pressure on China to cease its sponsorship of North Korea and its forcible repatriation of North Korean escapees. We should heed Reagan’s words at his first inauguration: “No arsenal or weapon in the arsenals of the world is so formidable as the will and the moral courage of free men and women.”

IT IS PAST TIME TO APPLY REAL PRESSURE on North Korea itself. The administration seems to be waking up to that fact, as it recently vowed “all-out defense” against the “grave” North Korean threat. But we shouldn’t wait until the threat is grave to apply severe pressure on severe regimes. Given North Korea’s deception; the dramatic advances in its nuclear program; its bellicosity, threats, and brinkmanship; and its extraordinary cruelty and totalitarian extremes, engagement and diplomacy in lieu of strong moral and strategic pressure is unprincipled and unwise.

Sanctions must be stiffened and continuously enforced, the defense posture of the United States should be enhanced instead of degraded, and military

cooperation with Asian allies should be an utmost priority. Radio Free Asia and the Voice of America should be modernized and used along with the spread of radios and cell phones to counter the regime’s insidious propaganda. Leaders of the “free world” should make Truman-esque and Reagan-esque speeches for universal rights. As chairwoman of the North Korea Freedom Coalition Suzanne Scholte insists, it is important “to name names”—to expose those authorizing and committing the atrocities. Unwavering efforts to save and assist North Korean escapees should be made.

The problem with recent proposals from the usual quarters that diplomacy be increased because sanctions and condemnation have “already” been tried is its upside-down logic. It is diplomacy that has been tried, again and again, whereas initiatives to pressure North Korea and its enablers have been inconsistent and inadequate. Vacillation, incrementalism, moral relativism, and naïve faith in diplomacy with the fanatical regime have been recurring features of US policy, and have been especially evident in recent years. It is past time to take the atrocity committing, weapons-proliferating, threatening North Korean regime very seriously. □

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