Is Pyongyang Different in Washington and Seoul? English and Korean Language Policy Discourse on North Korea

By Jeffrey Robertson

Abstract

During 2017-18, international attention turned to the Korean Peninsula as the threat of conflict reached new heights. This led to an explosion in the growth of "North Korea watchers"—the community of scholars, analysts, government officers, NGO advocates, and journalists who commit a portion of their lives to following events in North Korea. Divides emerged in overlapping regional, professional, institutional (political), and linguistic differences that saw individuals take conflicting positions on key issues. This paper investigates just one of these divides—how language and culture impact policy discourse on North Korea.

The study explores language as a source of division in the North Korea watching community. It uses Einar Wigen's argument that international relations should be conceptualized as inter-lingual relations, which suggests that despite the narrowing of political vocabularies, residues of politico-cultural differences remain in how concepts are contextualized into discourse, even between close partners. The study assesses compatibility between English and Korean language conceptualizations of North Korea, through an assessment of core inputs into policy discourse. The study then discusses the implications for U.S.-South Korea relations, and ongoing efforts to strengthen Korean Peninsula security.

Key Words: North Korea, South Korea, United States, language, culture, public discourse

Introduction

During 2017-18, international attention focused on the Korean Peninsula. Between Kim Jong-un, Moon Jae-in, and Donald Trump, a perfect storm of populism and strategic change saw a sound-bite-ready, often undiplomatic, frantic rhythm of events develop.[1] Most analysts agree, the threat of conflict reached new heights. It also led to an increase of "North Korea watchers"—the community of scholars, analysts, government officers, NGO advocates and journalists who, for one reason or another, commit a portion of their lives to following events in North Korea.[2]

When North Korea watchers come together at conferences, workshops or impromptu events addressing emerging crises, they exhibit certain characteristics that highlight a very real cultural identity—a sense of common understanding; recognition of familiar language, symbols and oral narrative; and in broad terms, even a shared sense of mission. Yet, they also work in a community with very real hierarchies, rivalries, jealousies, mutual skepticism, and distrust. With the recent growth in number and greater attention, competition among North Korea watchers increased.

Divides among North Korea watchers emerged in overlapping regional, professional, institutional (political), and linguistic differences that saw individuals take conflicting positions on key issues, contributing to concerns of a rift between Washington and Seoul. This paper investigates just one of these divides—how language and culture impact policy discourse on North Korea.

The study commences with an introduction to Einar Wigen's argument that international relations should be conceptualized as inter-lingual relations, which suggests that despite the narrowing of political vocabularies, residues of politico-cultural differences remain in how concepts are contextualized into languages, even between close partners. The study then determines the degree of compatibility between English and Korean language

Jeffrey Robertson is an Assistant Professor at Yonsei University and a Visiting Fellow at the Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy at the Australian National University. The views expressed are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of any organizations they are affiliated with. This paper is the hundred-and-fourth in KEI's Academic Paper Series. As part of this program, KEI commissions and distributes approximately ten papers per year on original subjects of current interest to over 5,000 Korea watchers, government officials, think tank experts, and scholars around the United States and the world. At the end of the year, these papers are compiled and published in KEI's On Korea volume. For more information, please visit www.keia.org/ aps_on_korea

conceptualizations of North Korea, through an assessment of core inputs into policy discourse, including academic journals, think-tank reports, and media commentary. The study concludes with how these findings point to weaknesses in current efforts to address Korean Peninsula issues.

Culture, Conceptual Compatibility, and Political Vocabularies

In a seminal study on international relations as inter-lingual relations, Einar Wigen of the University of Oslo posits that despite the expansion of international society and the narrowing of political vocabularies, residues of politico-cultural differences remain. Translations can have "different connotations that rest on specific historical experiences" with divergent meanings that will "inevitably lead to divergences in the legitimacy of political practices."[3] As is understood by practitioners, translation and interpretation is as dependent on cross-cultural communication as it is on inter-lingual communication.[4]

Conceptual translation is particularly difficult. Concepts travel across linguistic divides as individual interpretations.[5] They are in the first instance singular definitions, devoid of context, which limits observation, generalization, discrimination or differentiation, and abstraction. Over time, additional individual interpretations cross the linguistic divide. The definition then becomes contextualized and is integrated into the recipient language and culture. In certain circumstances, concepts can multifurcate as different interpretations take on more or less influence from the source language, or are contextualized to a greater or lesser extent. Similarity in semantic meaning between the source language and recipient language correlates to the degree of conceptual compatibility.

Anthony Milner of the Australian National University suggests that we could benefit from taking a closer look at how culture impacts the conceptualization of points of contest in East Asia. In a study of how culture impacts the South China Sea dispute, Milner finds that "calculations regarding international behavior" are "shaped by taken-for-granted notions about the nature of states and sovereignty, and the operation of power."[6] Milner convincingly argues that culture deserves attention as an explanatory factor in East Asia's international relations.[7]

Milner's argument suggests anecdotal differences in how North Korea watchers in Seoul and Washington view Pyongyang could be explained by cultural differences in the conceptualization of core concepts, such as peace, threat, risk, escalation, crisis,

conflict, negotiation, and resolution. Indeed, at the heart of the matter, differences could be explained by cultural differences in conceptualizing North Korea itself. Inevitably, these cultural differences result in differing foreign policy discourses. Policy discourse is a rhetorical act in which problems are defined, debated, and framed. As noted by Frank Fischer and John Forester, the policy process is:

> ...a constant discursive struggle over the criteria of social classification, the boundaries of problem categories, the intersubjective interpretation of common experiences, the conceptual framing of problems, and the definition of ideas that guide the ways people create the shared meanings which motivate them to act.[8]

Accepting Wigen's assertion that conceptual compatibility and entanglement can determine a state's capacity to engage with partners; and Milner's assertion that culture deserves attention as an explanatory factor in East Asia's international relations; this study seeks to determine the degree of compatibility between English and Korean language conceptualizations of North Korea. It assumes that concept formulation occurs in the process of policy discourse, and that through an assessment of core inputs, including academic journals, think-tank reports, and media commentary, we can assess the degree of compatibility between English and Korean language conceptualizations of North Korea.

North Korea Watching in Washington and Seoul

With the aim to determine the degree of compatibility between English and Korean language conceptualizations of North Korea, the study undertook an assessment of core inputs into policy discourse. Reflecting findings expressed in an initial survey of North Korea watchers, the core inputs into policy discourse on North Korea include academic journals, think-tank reports, and media (including social-media) commentary. The methodology, data results, and limitations are discussed below.

Methodology

Two samples of inputs into policy discourse on the subject of North Korea were selected from materials published between January 1, 2017 and March, 30 2019. The period corresponds to the 2017-18 North Korea nuclear crisis, subsequent easing of tensions in 2018-2019, and stasis after the second Trump-Kim summit in February 2019 ended without an agreement.

The first sample consisted of 330 inputs to policy discourse in the English language. The second sample consisted of 330

inputs to policy discourse in the Korean language. The samples are statistically insignificant to the corpus of inputs into policy discourse, but contextually significant. The purposive sample was compiled by (a) direct selection, based on recognition of North Korea watcher name; (b) referral by interviewed/ surveyed North Korea watchers; (c) rank in academic metasearch databases; (d) rank in social media appearance; and (e) rank in prominent media search engine and/or search index. The result was a sample of inputs that could be considered to drive policy discourse on North Korea.

Each sample was assessed on date, author, gender, affiliation, product type, publisher, word count, keyword, subject, methodology, sources, findings, and results. A second round of assessments added policy positions where possible, including pro/anti-engagement with North Korea; pro/anti-alliance; and status-quo/innovative. Sixteen of twenty authors contacted were interviewed to secure further information on characteristic examples of inputs into policy discourse.

Results

Policy discourse on North Korea in both the English and Korean languages classify the policy problem as a core national interest. This is reflected in the social status of authors, the institutions to which they are affiliated, as well as the type of products and publishers used to contribute to policy discourse. However, there are differences in the inputs to English and Korean language discourse.

First, the sample shows that more Korean language authors hold higher degrees than English language authors. At the same time, more English language authors hold experience in government and/or military. Essentially, Korean language policy discourse is more influenced by academia, whereas English language media is more influenced by government and/or military, which demonstrates content validity with the findings on keywords, subjects, methodology, and sources.

Second, males are substantially more represented in Korean language discourse (312/330) with a particularly high representation in think-tank and academic discourse. Males are also more represented in English language discourse (277/330) with a more even balance in academic and media.

Third, policy discourse on North Korea in both Washington and Seoul is spread across a wide range of institutional affiliations. However, while English language discourse is widespread, there are a small number of sources that are substantially more prominent. Specifically, think-tanks are substantially more prominent in media and social-media. Korean language discourse is less widespread, with academic and think-tank discourse dominating. In particular, government-sponsored think-tanks are well-represented.

As noted, the item samples were selected based on a range of criteria. Within specific item types, individual criteria were devised based on influence with subsequent face validity checks with North Korea watchers. For example, Korean language reports were substantially higher than the number included in the sample. The Korea Development Institute (KDI) produced 50 reports on a variety of subjects relating to North Korea during the period. On reference hits—online searches, social media references, and interviews with North Korea watchers—the number included in the sample was substantially reduced. Similar

Table 1. Item Types Examined		
	English Language	**Korean Language**
Academic (appearance in registered academic journal)	21	31
Report (institutional affiliation)	40	34
Research note (institutional affiliation, less than 2500 words)	28	22
Blog (international relations/strategic studies)	36	25
Op-ed (mainstream online press)	75	84
Media (mainstream online press)	87	97
Social media (Twitter)	36	32
Other (multimedia, vlogs, podcasts, etc.)	7	5
	330	**330**

criteria were devised for all item types, with final decisions for inclusion resting upon relevance of item to North Korea watchers expressed in interviews.

As seen in Table 1, both English and Korean language mainstream media and mainstream media op-eds are not significantly different in representation. The greatest difference is the influence of English and Korean language academic papers and think-tank reports. Relatively speaking, Korean language academic papers hold a higher degree of influence in policy discourse. In contrast, English language institutional reports hold a higher degree of influence in policy discourse.

However, to a degree this may be explained by the means of discrimination between academic papers and reports used in the selection, and the contrasting methodological approaches, methodology, and sources utilized in academic papers and reports between the two samples. In English language policy discourse, there is a larger proportion of policy-focused academic papers and institutional reports. These items contain only limited theoretical arguments and limited supporting evidence. Instead, they focus on reasoned argument and policy prescriptions with the vast majority relying on tertiary sources, including media reporting and other academic/institutional reports. This includes

a proportion of the academic articles, which, in other fields would arguably not be published due to the lack of supporting empirical evidence. In contrast, Korean language policy discourse has a greater proportion of standardized, long-form manuscripts with well-developed theoretical arguments, supporting empirical evidence, and references, tables and/or figures. Further, unlike English language discourse, policy arguments in Korean language discourse also utilize secondary data to justify arguments. Indeed, a large number of Korean language institutional reports, including government sponsored think-tanks, follow a more traditional standardized academic format.

Therefore, the research approaches in the two samples are different (Table 2.) English language academic papers and institutional reports are predominantly descriptive, with a smaller number of exploratory or explanatory approaches. Korean language discourse with more formal, traditional academic approaches use explanatory approaches, quantitative methods, and source materials from either primary (defector and refugee testimony) or secondary sources (trade statistics, and government statistics). It could be argued that on the surface, inputs into Korean language discourse on North Korea demonstrate more academic rigor than that of English language

Table 2. Methodology and Sources in Academic Papers and Institutional Reports				
	English Language		Korean Language	
	n=89	%	n=96	%
Research purpose				
Exploratory	29	32.58	18	18.75
Descriptive	46	51.69	25	26.04
Explanatory	14	15.73	53	55.21
Methodological approach				
Quantitative	22	24.72	51	53.13
Qualitative	5	5.62	11	11.46
Mixed methods	1	1.12	3	3.13
N/A (policy brief/argument)	61	68.54	31	32.29
Sources				
Primary	7	7.87	34	35.42
Secondary	9	10.11	32	33.33
Tertiary	43	48.31	19	19.79
N/A (policy brief/argument)	30	33.71	11	11.46

discourse. However, as has been reflected elsewhere, academic processes, such as peer review differ between English and Korean language academic communities.

Policy discourse on North Korea in English and Korean also demonstrate significantly different boundaries and conceptual framing of issues. The way boundaries are formed, and the way concepts are framed determine whether policy approaches are viewed as viable or even possible. In the U.S., policy discourse boundary formation and framing occurs through constant interaction between political leaders, the media, and the public.[9] Importantly, it can be highly dynamic with boundaries and frames able to evolve in reaction to events and policy aims. There are a number of differences in policy discourse boundary formation and framing in policy discourse on North Korea in the English and Korean languages.

First, English language discourse overwhelmingly conceptualizes North Korea within a national security frame. While keywords in both English and Korean language policy discourse on North Korea center on "nuclear," "missile," "denuclearization," "summit," and "Kim Jong Un," the sample highlights additional national security centered keywords in English language policy discourse, including "sanctions," "conflict," "strategy," "trust," and "compliance." On the other hand, additional keywords in Korean language policy discourse include less national-security centered terms, such as "reconciliation," "unification," "Kaesong," "economy," and "China."

Similarly, subjects of sample items show differences in English and Korean language policy discourse. Subject matter in Korean language policy discourse goes beyond the focus on nuclear and missile, foreign policy, and leadership issues, with similar numbers of items on economic affairs, economic cooperation, as well as social and cultural affairs. Within each subject, contributors to policy discourse provide a narrative that sets the tone and reason behind their commentary or research. Narrative reasoning can be thought of as textual and/or visual stories, which connect, enhance and give contextual meaning to sequences of human action, in this case commentary or research.[10]

Narrative reasoning in English and Korean language policy discourse on North Korea is significantly different. Table 3 divides narrative reasoning into three categories of opportunity, uncertainty, and risk, and a temporal context of short-term (0-1 years), medium term (2-5 years), and long-term (6-10 years). As demonstrated, there is substantial difference between narrative reasoning in English and Korean language policy discourse on North Korea. English language discourse is heavily weighted in favor of short-term risk, while Korean language discourse is weighted in favor of short to medium-term opportunity, and a significantly more positive long-term opportunity.

Limits

The study is limited by a number of background and tractable assumptions. First, as reflected in the title, the study assumes that the end result of policy discourse are decisions made in Washington and Seoul. While policy discourse occurs outside of the capitals, policy decisions are assumed to be made in Washington and Seoul. Second, the study assumes a relationship between Korean and English language inputs in Washington and Seoul's policy discourse. The study assumes English is the primary language for inputs into policy discourse in Washington, and that Korean is the primary language for inputs into policy discourse in Seoul. Language hierarchy theory in sociolinguistics suggests that dominant/subdominant language pairs, such as English (L1) and Korean (L2), should demonstrate certain characteristics. The percentage of L1 speakers amongst the L2 population will be greater than the percentage of L2 speakers amongst the L1 population. This implies a broader flow of ideas from L1 to L2, and at the same time, a smaller flow of ideas from L2 to L1. Additionally, dependent on numbers, the limited flow of ideas from L2 to L1, will create a 'gatekeeper' social role that enables specialization. The current study broadly reflects these expectations.

The study's methodology further relies on two tractable assumptions: first, that items in the sample influence policy discourse; and second, that policy discourse actually influences foreign policy decision-making. Both of these assumptions deserve further attention.

The items in each sample were selected from (a) direct selection, based on recognition of the North Korea watcher name (b) referral by interviewed/surveyed North Korea watchers; (c) rank in academic metasearch databases; (d) rank in social media appearance; and (e) rank in prominent search engine and/or search index.
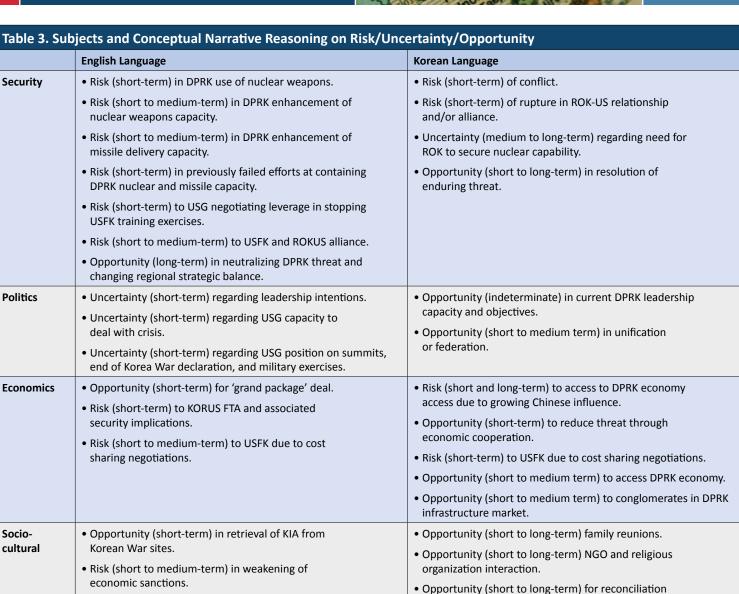
Table 3. Subjects and Conceptual Narrative Reasoning on Risk/Uncertainty/Opportunity

	English Language	Korean Language
Security	• Risk (short-term) in DPRK use of nuclear weapons. • Risk (short to medium-term) in DPRK enhancement of nuclear weapons capacity. • Risk (short to medium-term) in DPRK enhancement of missile delivery capacity. • Risk (short-term) in previously failed efforts at containing DPRK nuclear and missile capacity. • Risk (short-term) to USG negotiating leverage in stopping USFK training exercises. • Risk (short to medium-term) to USFK and ROKUS alliance. • Opportunity (long-term) in neutralizing DPRK threat and changing regional strategic balance.	• Risk (short-term) of conflict. • Risk (short-term) of rupture in ROK-US relationship and/or alliance. • Uncertainty (medium to long-term) regarding need for ROK to secure nuclear capability. • Opportunity (short to long-term) in resolution of enduring threat.
Politics	• Uncertainty (short-term) regarding leadership intentions. • Uncertainty (short-term) regarding USG capacity to deal with crisis. • Uncertainty (short-term) regarding USG position on summits, end of Korea War declaration, and military exercises.	• Opportunity (indeterminate) in current DPRK leadership capacity and objectives. • Opportunity (short to medium term) in unification or federation.
Economics	• Opportunity (short-term) for 'grand package' deal. • Risk (short-term) to KORUS FTA and associated security implications. • Risk (short to medium-term) to USFK due to cost sharing negotiations.	• Risk (short and long-term) to access to DPRK economy access due to growing Chinese influence. • Opportunity (short-term) to reduce threat through economic cooperation. • Risk (short-term) to USFK due to cost sharing negotiations. • Opportunity (short to medium term) to access DPRK economy. • Opportunity (short to medium term) to conglomerates in DPRK infrastructure market.
Socio-cultural	• Opportunity (short-term) in retrieval of KIA from Korean War sites. • Risk (short to medium-term) in weakening of economic sanctions. • Risk (short to medium-term) in grave violation of human rights, including food, medicine, and religious freedom.	• Opportunity (short to long-term) family reunions. • Opportunity (short to long-term) NGO and religious organization interaction. • Opportunity (short to long-term) for reconciliation through sports.

Both (a) and (b) are reliant on individual informed assessments. While this could be expected to provide accurate results, all individuals are influenced by criteria external to quality of analysis, such as prestige, brand recognition, peer expectations, etc. Accordingly, an expert asked "who is the best analyst of North Korea?" or "which recent paper/report has most influenced you?" may respond according to criteria external to quality of analysis. This is particularly relevant when one thinks of academic journal articles versus think-tank reports,

where without substantial author efforts, the former almost immediately retreats into obscurity, while the latter is promoted on a larger scale, and circulated directly to policy makers.

Further, (c), (d), and (e) are the result of search queries undertaken using algorithm-driven software. Algorithms reflect the requirements of the company/creator rather than research validity and reliability. Algorithms can also be manipulated through such means as the determination and utilization of trend keywords, placement of products in authoritative links,

or artificial intelligence (AI) or 'bot' hit rate supplementation. Through interviews as part of the wider project, a number of North Korea watchers noted the ease with which think-tanks supported by marketing and social media engagement teams can influence policy discourse—essentially contending that "noise" rather than "quality" was a determinant of influence in policy discourse. Accordingly, without the capacity to assess the algorithms that determine search query results, it is impossible to have complete confidence that products in the data set actually influence policy discourse.

Even if the items in each sample influence policy discourse, the question as to whether policy discourse actually influences foreign policy decision-making is another story. How policy discourse influences foreign policy decision making is an ongoing debate in the international relations sub-field of foreign policy analysis. Policy discourse can be "a driving force behind foreign policy decisions" and equally "a barrier to decision-making."[11] It can be manipulated and framed by dominant social groups, corporations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the media, political parties, and the government itself. The system of government, and the unique style of individual administrations can determine how the degree of influence policy discourse has on foreign policy decision-making.

Further, policy discourse today is in a period of flux in which previous convictions regarding its impact must be questioned. Social media, foreign interference, populism, political polarization, extremism, and what has been called "the Trump effect" all point to the need to reassess how policy discourse influences foreign policy decision-making. "The Trump effect" is perhaps the most significant. President Trump himself has directly denigrated core contributors to policy discourse on North Korea, stating in a tweet: "So funny to watch people who have failed for years, they got NOTHING, telling me how to negotiate with North Korea. But thanks anyway!" Accordingly, it is impossible to have complete confidence that policy discourse actually influences foreign policy decision-making.

While the above assumptions deserve attention, and should be taken into account, they do not weaken the results. The results demonstrate a high degree of face validity. On reviewing the results, North Korea watchers immediately recognized and agreed that the findings matched their expectations.

Washington and Seoul Discord?

If we assume inputs into policy discourse actually do influence foreign policy decision-making, then the above findings suggest a fundamental discord in policy.

Washington's core policy focus is addressing North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programs. Seoul's core policy focus is reducing the immediate risk of conflict and securing long-term stability. These differing aims lead to distinct platforms of potential solutions, and different policy processes—some of which are inherently incompatible. Intermittently, policy commentators draw attention to these policy differences.[12] However, on the whole, the depth of policy difference between Washington and Seoul does not attract attention. This begs the question, why have these policy differences not been more prominent? The current study suggests a single core reason: crisis diplomacy has allowed long-term policy objectives to remain blanketed by more immediate objectives.

Crisis Diplomacy

The incompatibility of Moon and Trump was recognized from an early stage. Commentators noted during the South Korean election that in ideological convictions, policy objectives, and personalities Moon and Trump appeared to be irrevocably incompatible.

As tension mounted on the Korean Peninsula, and the very real prospect of conflict began to emerge, it became clear that Moon was pursuing an altogether different strategy from his campaign platform of engagement with Pyongyang. In April 2019, *Foreign Policy* magazine published an online argument piece that encapsulated Moon's efforts address the nuclear crisis:

> *Since taking office in May 2017, Moon moved heaven and earth to save his country from a nuclear war. To do so, he only had to bring together two of the world's most volatile personalities—U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un—and have them meet in person twice. Right up to the second U.S.-North Korea summit in Hanoi, it appeared that Moon was headed toward a spectacular success...[13]*

The above can be put into the context of the current study. President Moon's achievements moving "heaven and earth" used crisis diplomacy. Crisis diplomacy is an interaction between

states (and non-state actors) under a heightened threat of systemic change or conflict. There are usually just two sides to crisis diplomacy. The aggressor uses provocation and the threat of expanded conflict to force a partner to back down in order to secure objectives. The respondent manages or resolves potential conflict in order to avoid descent into expanded, unmanageable conflict.

On the Korean Peninsula, North Korea has been in the role of aggressor, while South Korea has been the respondent. Since the 1990s, crisis diplomacy on the Korean Peninsula has followed a trajectory in which North Korea undertakes limited, often non-directly attributable provocations and South Korea manages, de-escalates, and then regroups. South Korea's initiatives to engage North Korea have been marked by the pursuit of high-level access—often leadership summits or close coordination with the U.S. These initiatives achieved limited objectives—namely, the cessation of the risk of immediate conflict—and have meant accepting options that were previously considered outside the range of acceptable choices, such as economic inducements and financial rewards.

The dynamic on the Korean Peninsula changed with the decision of the Trump administration to reverse these roles. By increasing tension, and threatening escalation, the U.S. assumed an aggressor role. That left South Korea alone in the crisis diplomacy respondent role—on two fronts.

Crisis diplomacy is a process. It involves high-level decision-making and close political control over military engagement; close coordination between partners and allies; and clear signaling to avoid miscalculation and inadvertent escalation. Actors must set limited, achievable goals and be prepared to accept compromises. South Korea's efforts fitted neatly into the mold of crisis diplomacy. The two North–South summits, close coordination with the U.S., and a North Korea–U.S. summit reduced the threat of immediate conflict.

However, the value of crisis diplomacy, and its marketability to stakeholders, reduces as the threat decreases. This essentially places a time limit on associated diplomatic initiatives. While crisis diplomacy provides a set of tools that work for managing and avoiding conflict, it doesn't provide an appropriate set of tools to secure long-term policy objectives. Accordingly, only when the sense of imminent threat recedes can long-term policy objectives rise to the surface.

The current study highlights that there are inherently different policy objectives that lie under the surface—hidden by the urgency of crisis diplomacy. Without effective policy communication, as the sense of imminent threat recedes, these policy differences will once again arise.

The Case for Policy Communication

Policy differences between Washington and Seoul are nothing new. The earliest relations in the modern era were fraught with policy differences that saw both American and South Korean officials question each other's motives. The Korean Peninsula policy environment is crowded—and dominated by North Korea. North Korea attracts all manner of commentators, including those focusing on the two Koreas and other East Asian countries; strategy and deterrence; military and security; human rights and humanitarian affairs; foreign policy and diplomacy; and even tourists trying to turn a four-day trip to North Korea into policy advice. Alarmingly, the Korean Peninsula policy environment under Donald Trump has also become more sensationalized, and in the process, has polarized those inclined to diplomatic and military solutions. Amidst this crowded policy environment, South Korea's voice is easily lost.

President Moon Jae-in's 15 August Liberation Day address is a good example. Moon Jae-in's Liberation Day address stressed that South Korea's requirement of the U.S. to have approval for any military action on the Korean Peninsula —a very important statement—was drowned in a sea of sensationalist articles on North Korea during the same week.

This begs the question, what else could South Korea do to influence U.S. policy discourse on Korean Peninsula affairs? Ultimately, the answer is greater innovation in diplomacy.

First, South Korea should increase direct interaction with the U.S. policy elite. South Korea faced a similar situation in the 1980s when budget and trade deficits turned U.S. public attention to the growing competitiveness of East Asian economies. With Japan already facing scrutiny (and Section 301 investigations) for subsidized exports, government-industry collusion, and unfair trade barriers, policymakers knew that attention would soon turn to South Korea. The answer was the establishment of the Korea Economic Institute (KEI) in 1982, which helped to explain domestic economic concerns and challenges to U.S. policymakers and in doing so, alleviate public demands for action. KEI has since evolved to cover a broader mandate beyond economics

and trade. South Korea should apply this innovative thinking from a previous critical juncture in the alliance to the current one by looking for ways to strengthen its voice in Washington policy discussions.

Second, South Korea currently does not fully exploit its foreign ministry spokesperson – a role that has recently come under greater use in other countries. An excellent example is the work of Russia's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Maria Zakharova. As a youthful, well-spoken, well-presented, intelligent and often witty individual, Zakharova counters the negativity and cynicism of Western media representations of Putin and Lavrov. Essentially, she has become an easily recognizable and influential third voice supporting Russian foreign policy. Currently, South Korea's use of its foreign ministry spokesperson role is limited by tradition; an organizational culture that inhibits the veneration of individual merit; and the linguistic divide between domestic reporters and foreign correspondents. Strengthening the foreign ministry spokesperson role could ensure South Korea's views are more consistently represented in foreign media reporting.

Finally, South Korea could encourage its foreign service officers to take on a larger, more public, social media role. Digital public diplomacy can have a direct and highly influential impact on foreign policy elites and foreign publics. Tweeting diplomats can comprise multiple official identities, promoting policy views through trusted networks, which allow direct interaction with reporters and policymakers themselves. If carefully managed in recognition of the risks and challenges, digital public diplomacy can vastly enhance the more traditional forms of strategic policy communication.

Ensuring the U.S. is aware of and understands South Korea's policy preferences for handling North Korea is a momentous challenge—a challenge that will increase as the sense of imminent threat recedes.

Pyongyang *is* Different in Washington and Seoul

This study demonstrates that Pyongyang is indeed different in Washington and Seoul. The inputs into policy discourse on the subject are fundamentally different in the two capitals. Inputs to policy discourse in Washington are primarily centered on materials relating to the nuclear weapons and missile programs, and U.S. policy. Inputs into policy discourse in Seoul are more diverse, with a significant spread of materials relating to reconciliation, unification, economy, politics and leadership, and society, in addition to nuclear weapons and missile programs, and U.S. policy.

On North Korea, there is incomplete conceptual compatibility between Washington and Seoul. The study highlights incompatibilities in the historical processes and resultant political vocabularies used by the United States and South Korea to conceptualize North Korea. As demonstrated, these incompatibilities imply different policy aims and processes. If we assume political discourse actually influences foreign policy decision-making, then the compatibility between Washington and Seoul should lead to distinct foreign policy objectives.

However, the distinct foreign policy objectives of Washington and Seoul have not yet attracted attention. While a small number of commentators intermittently touch upon the different positions of Trump and Moon in the lead-up to major events or meetings, there is a broad assumption that both sides are pursuing compatible objectives. Crisis diplomacy explains why these differences have remained hidden. The immediate threat of conflict forced the Trump and Moon administrations to accept an intermediate position. As the threat of immediate conflict recedes, both sides are likely to return to their long-term policy objectives. As demonstrated, the policy discourse in both countries is distinct and will ultimately lead to different policy objectives and processes. To address the potential for misunderstanding, the Moon administration must articulate more transparent long-term objectives, and pursue more effective public diplomacy.

Endnotes

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