

## FAQs for Korea Peace Advocacy Week

### Why do we need a Korea peace agreement?

The Korean War (1950-'53) never technically ended and was only suspended by an armistice agreement.

- Without a peace agreement, renewed military conflict could break out at any time.
- A peace agreement would be a crucial step toward denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula by providing North Korea with the security assurances it says it needs.
- A peace agreement that normalizes relations would help open the door for millions of separated Korean families to be reunited.
- A peace agreement would improve the day-to-day conditions for millions of North Koreans, who rely on humanitarian aid to survive.
- A peace agreement would be a step toward shifting resources away from endless wars and toward more basic human needs.

### Why does the U.S. have to sign a Korea peace agreement? Isn't the conflict between the two Koreas?

The main parties to the Korean War were North Korea, South Korea, China, and the U.S. (as head of the UN Command). Except for the U.S., all parties have since declared peace or normalized relations:

- In the Panmunjom Declaration (April 2018), the two Koreas declared that “there will be no more war and a new era of peace has begun on the Korean peninsula.” They have since taken concrete steps to transform the DMZ into a peace zone.
- China has normalized relations with the U.S. and South Korea.
- Within the UN Command, 14 of 16 countries that fought in the Korean War have normalized relations with North Korea, and many have embassies in Pyongyang. The U.S. and France are the only countries without diplomatic relations with North Korea, and France has a liaison office in Pyongyang.

The U.S. is a key party to the ongoing war as it has wartime operational control in Korea. If war resumes, the U.S. will command the U.S.-R.O.K. combined forces and execute the Pentagon's operational plans.

Americans do not want more war; it's time for the U.S. to formally end the Korean War and replace the armistice with a peace agreement.

### Can we trust North Korea as a negotiating partner?

- From 1994 — when the Clinton administration and North Korea negotiated the [Agreed Framework](#) — until 2002 — when then-President George W. Bush reneged on U.S.

commitments and [declared](#) North Korea part of the “axis of evil,” North Korea’s nuclear program remained frozen.

- As long as the United States and North Korea were engaged in dialogue, North Korea honored its end of the bargain. In fact, it was during the Obama administration when the U.S. shut down dialogue that North Korea [sped up](#) its nuclear weapons program.
- The only way to know if we can trust North Korea as a negotiating partner is by negotiating and holding them to their word.
- A binding peace agreement would at least make it clear that wartime rights to use of force have ended. There’s absolutely nothing about the situation now that prevents either side from using force.
- It’s irrational to keep pursuing the same strategy for 70 years and expect new results.
- If we’re worried about the dangers of the North Korean regime, it would make more sense to stabilize the situation.

### **How can we make peace with a regime that violates human rights?**

Peace and human rights are not in conflict with one another. In fact, they are mutually reinforcing.

- Endless war threatens human rights.
- Peace can succeed in strengthening human rights where pressure has failed. There is no evidence that US policies of sanctions, isolation and military threats have improved human rights in North Korea.
- No country can control other countries through coercion or force. But we can do everything possible to help and not harm.
- The US is in a state of peace with many countries with poor human rights records, such as Saudi Arabia.
- UN human rights special rapporteur Tomás Ojea Quintana [said](#) sanctions are having a dire impact on the economic and social conditions of the North Korean people. If Americans are concerned about the human rights of the North Korean people, the U.S. should adjust its humanitarian policies toward North Korea, such as obstructive sanctions regulations and travel restrictions, that hinder the delivery of humanitarian aid.

### **Aren’t peace negotiations a reward for bad behavior?**

- Peace is a reward for everyone — North Koreans, South Koreans, and Americans. 67% of Americans support a peace agreement with North Korea.
- Being in a state of peace with North Korea is not a gift or stamp of approval. It is meant to be the norm and keep the risk of catastrophic violence off the table.
- The United States normalized relations with China, which was also a party to the Korean War, so there’s no reason why we can’t normalize relations with North Korea.
- The DMZ has thousands of troops sitting just a few miles apart every day. Every day there is a risk that something could go wrong. Continuing that risk is irresponsible.

### **How does the new South Korean administration impact efforts for peace in Korea?**

The recent election of Yoon Suk-yeol will likely complicate efforts for peace in Korea:

- In contrast to former President Moon Jae-in, Yoon [opposes an end-of-war declaration](#) with North Korea and takes a [harder stance](#) against China—a position that will surely raise tensions in the region.
- Yoon [aims](#) to achieve North Korea's denuclearization via “peace through power”—normalizing U.S.-South Korea joint military exercises and developing pre-emptive strike capability against North Korea.
- Yoon [opposes](#) suspending joint U.S.-South Korea military exercises because he believes it will cause a rift in the alliance between Washington and Seoul. (Joint military exercises have [proven](#) to provoke—rather than deter—North Korea.)

That said, Yoon's desire to strengthen the U.S.-R.O.K. alliance also means that South Korea will likely follow the Biden administration's lead on North Korea.

Also, most South Koreans support ending the Korean War. According to a [Sept. 2021 poll](#) conducted by the National Unification Advisory Council, 67 percent of South Korean adults believe an end-of-war declaration is “necessary.” Thus, negotiating a formal end to the Korean War is something the U.S. should do to support the South Korean people.

### **What will happen to U.S. troops in South Korea and the U.S.-R.O.K. alliance after a peace treaty or agreement is signed?**

The legal basis of the U.S.-ROK alliance is the [Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953](#). A peace agreement between the U.S. and North Korea has no legal bearing on the Mutual Defense Treaty, which can only be terminated if either side chooses to do so. Ultimately, the question of whether or not U.S. troops should remain in South Korea should be determined by the South Korean people.

### **What do you say to the argument that North Korea must give up its nuclear weapons, or at the very least, open up to weapons inspectors, before the US will come to the table?**

- Right now, the table isn't even set. We've tried denuclearization without peace and gotten nowhere. We need to try a new strategy.
- North Korea has been consistent in seeing nuclear weapons as part of their defense strategy. If we have a binding peace agreement and reduced military tensions, then we have an opening to change that strategy.
- The only way to break this dangerous deadlock is a peace agreement that officially ends the war and opens the door for a diplomatic resolution to the nuclear standoff.

### **Some experts say that the US lacks enough leverage to change North Korean behavior, is this true?**

- The problem is that the United States is using its leverage in the wrong way. We've got 28,500 troops there, spend massive amounts on annual military exercises, impose crippling sanctions and isolate North Korea diplomatically — but it hasn't worked.
- In our attempt to push North Korea into a corner all we've done is push everyone to the edge of renewed open conflict.
- [A peace agreement](#) would give us the leverage to move forward on all the other issues.

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